

Catholic Semiotics in Shakespearean Drama

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Presented for the degree of D.Phil. at the University of
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The preoccupation with the biographical question “Was Shakespeare a Catholic?” has obscured the literary significance of the residual Catholicism in his plays. Problematically representing England’s heritage and also its contemporary enemy, Catholicism has an awkward but unavoidable resonance when it appears in early modern drama. On the one hand polemic and (some) legislation produced a firm sectarian binary whereby superstitious, hypocritical and treacherous papists differentially defined a Protestant ideal. But on the other, English religious identity was a hybrid of traditional beliefs, non-theological nostalgia and political-religious disapprobation of Romish corruption. Attending to both flux and dichotomy, I demonstrate that looking at the way Catholic signs signify enriches our understanding of the texts of which they are a structural and structuring part. I consider a diversity of plays to show that just as Catholic resonance alters according to context, generic difference is also partly determined by ideological content. Catholicism was associated with ideological fraud and thus its literary presence renders the early modern concern about the moral and philosophical validity of fiction both more evident and more pressing. I explore what Shakespeare’s use of residual Catholicism tells us about his attitude to the value of creativity.

The wide application of an understanding of Catholic semiotics is demonstrated through a consideration of a variety of dramaturgical features. The linguistic focus of Chapters 1 and 2 encompasses the dramatic implications of Catholic metaphors and oxymoron in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Comedy of Errors*, and the

links between verbal and theological slippage created by the use of topical onomastics in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The next two chapters explore dramatic epistemology by looking at the productive difficulties of characterising a famous Catholic in the multi-authored *Sir Thomas More*, and the fabrication of layered identity through the use of Catholic costume in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. Chapter 5 concentrates on *King Lear*, and in particular on Shakespeare's reading of a polemical tract that denigrates Catholic ritual as a dangerously fraudulent fiction. Concluding with *The Winter's Tale*, I explore a positive reading of superstition that grants to fiction an emotional and ethical transcendence.

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And thanks finally to John Garai, who made it all happen.

I dedicate this thesis to Danny Owen, with love.

Editions Used

Unless otherwise specified all references are to the following editions:

W. Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, ed. Susan Snyder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)

The Comedy of Errors, ed. Charles Whitworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Cymbeline, ed. Roger Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

King Lear, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997) [references to material found only in quarto or folio will be so cited]

Love's Labour's Lost, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998)

Measure for Measure, ed. N. W. Bawcutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)

Romeo and Juliet, ed. Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

[unless otherwise specified references are to the Q2 text in this edition]

The Winter's Tale, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

References to all other plays by Shakespeare are to *The Riverside Shakespeare: Second Edition*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997).

References to the Folio text are to *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. Charles Hinman (London: Norton, 1968).

The dates given for non-Shakespearean printed plays are the dates of publication.

The dates given for plays by Shakespeare are the compositional dates given in S. Wells and G. Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

Introduction

Paying attention to the Catholic semiotics in Shakespeare's plays reforms our understanding of that drama. Residual Catholicism is found throughout the dramaturgy: in the words the characters utter and the costumes they wear; in the traditional stories and real-life events that haunt the fictions, and the settings that situate the drama as fiction. In order to demonstrate the literary value of the "unreformed" my approach will be deliberately catholic rather than pre-determinedly Catholic, and I engage with the theological and methodological heterogeneity of the past and the present. Critics who speak of the relevance of Catholicism to Shakespeare's works often argue for "buried" Catholic meaning.¹ I am more interested in visible remains: in the unreformed significance available to all members (rather than a minority) of post-Reformation audiences that has a semiotic impact at (rather than beneath) the level of plot, and its broader implications for theatrical form. In the past, the ubiquity of signifiers like friar-

¹ Gary Taylor locates significance in the supposed "burial" itself: "what is surely the most salient fact about those plays is not that an erudite modern scholar can crack the code of their secret Catholic referents and meanings; no, surely the more important fact, historically and culturally, is that any Catholic meanings they may have had were encrypted, simultaneously buried and made cryptic"; "The Cultural Politics of Maybe", in *Theatre and Religion*, ed. R. Dutton et al. (Manchester: MUP, 2003), pp. 242-58 (p. 255). However, in *Secret Shakespeare* (Manchester: MUP, 2004) Richard Wilson rises to the challenge Taylor dismisses, telling the story of Shakespeare the crypto-Catholic and unearthing what he contends are the hidden Catholic meanings in the canon. With even more confidence Clare Asquith announces that she has found the "key" to Shakespeare's consistently coded meaning, going so far as to provide a "Glossary: A Selection of Coded Terms"; *Shadowplay* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), pp. 289-300. Since long before the more recent surge of interest in such matters Peter Milward has argued for the Catholic meanings and messages in the Shakespeare canon, see for example, *Shakespeare's Religious Background* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973). For an account of some of the inconsistencies and inaccuracies in Asquith's argument see A. Barton "The One and Only", *The New York Review of Books*, 11 May 2006; and the subsequent epistolary dispute between Asquith and Barton in *The New York Review of Books*, 22 June 2006.

characters or pre-Reformation idioms has blinded critics to the semiotic importance of dramatic Catholicism, when it should instead prompt us to think about the reasons for this fictional popularity and the ways in which it functioned.²

What then was the significance of Catholicism in post-Reformation England? Representing the nation's medieval heritage and also its most dangerous contemporary enemy (theological and political), Catholicism has an awkward but unavoidable resonance when it appears in early modern drama. It is not that the literature is always "about" Catholicism, but rather that traces of Catholicism play an important part in structuring the effect of fiction. To avoid over-determining the meaning of content that is variously peripheral and paramount in importance it is helpful to formulate a hermeneutic of "residue" (etymologically meaning "remains"). This metaphor also allows us to address the contradictory connotations of signs that are both alive and dead. As "residue" Catholic signifiers mark a degree of continuity with the past, a tenacious resistance to the forces of Reformation. But residual continuity is a

² Arguing against accounts that attach biographical significance to Shakespeare's use of religious language, G. K. Hunter asserts "The vocabulary of the Elizabethans is shot through with ecclesiastical and doctrinal references, and many of these have connotations firmly anchored in the practices of the Roman church. The issue is, however, entirely explicable as a linguistic phenomenon and does not impose any doctrinal consequences. Words always carry traces of the meanings they had when we first heard them; and we should remember that Shakespeare's father and mother (those from whom he learned to speak) had lived their lives inside the Catholic fold. Official regulations can change official behaviour, but at the deeper level of speech meanings do not disappear. Shakespeare's Catholic vocabulary and his sensitivity to its historical resonance is part of his freedom as a writer and does not allow us to decide that he was either a Protestant or a Catholic in doctrine or sympathy"; "Shakespeare and the Church", in *Shakespeare's Universe*, ed. J. M. Mucciolo (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), pp. 21-8 (pp. 26-7). While I share Hunter's reluctance to read biographical meaning into Shakespeare's texts this thesis emphasises the semiotic importance of the "linguistic phenomenon" that in Hunter's account serves merely to dismiss denominational appropriations. The tension between "official behaviour" and the emotional attachment to "the deeper level of speech meanings" has a significant literary effect that at a distance of four hundred years we might all too easily miss.

continuity paradoxically defined by difference, by fragmented survival. Catholic signs speak to a spectrum of emotional and ideological attitudes: to a still vital traditional belief; to a non-theological nostalgia; and to a reformed understanding of such signs as mortally corrupted. It is important to recognise the close proximity of these not necessarily discrete alternatives, and that a single text, or even a single sign, could carry conflicted readings.

Indeed Shakespeare and the members of his audiences might individually have held a variety of such views. James Shapiro cogently describes early modern religious identity in terms of palimpsest, rejecting biographical attempts to give Shakespeare and his family a confessional label:

To argue that the Shakespeares were secretly Catholic or, alternatively, mainstream Protestants, misses the point that except for a small minority at one doctrinal extreme or other, those labels failed to capture the layered nature of what Elizabethans, from the Queen down, actually believed. The white-washed chapel walls, on which perhaps an image of or two were still faintly visible, are as good an emblem of Shakespeare's faith as we are likely to find.³

³ J. Shapiro, *1599* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 167. A common focus for discussion about the religion of Shakespeare's family, more particularly of his father, is the "Spiritual Testament": a recusant document supposedly signed by John Shakespeare. This testament was found at the Shakespeare family house in Henley Street by builders. Edmund Malone published the testament but later denounced it as a forgery. See W. Shakespeare, *The Plays and Poems*, ed. E. Malone, 10 vols (London, 1790), I, Part II, pp. 161-66, 330-31; and E. Malone, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments* (London, 1796), pp. 195-204. This document retains its disputed status in the twenty-first century: it was disregarded by Alastair Fowler during the course of a highly critical review of Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World*, but subsequently defended as authentic in a letter by Richard Wilson. See A. Fowler, "Enter Speed", *TLS*, 4 February 2005; and R. Wilson, Letter, *TLS*, 18 February 2005.

The term “Catholic” (like “Protestant”) represents a rather nebulous category. The very words we use to distinguish different denominational affiliation (often providing both too much and too little specificity) have a peculiar habit of switching sides. Thus while “Catholic” usually refers to the unreformed Christian faith, it was also a label occasionally appropriated for official descriptions of the Church of England’s presumed universality.⁴ Qualifying with the term “Roman” provides a helpful but not necessarily accurate distinction, since the subjects so designated might adhere to the old faith in spiritual matters but patriotically reject the absolute authority of Rome: not every “papist” supported the pope. This literally broad category “Catholic” encompasses “recusants” (those who made an outward sign of their Catholicism by refusing to attend the mandatory Church of England services) and “church papists” (who attended services but secretly rejected the teachings of the state Church). Yet the term “recusant” was also used to refer to people who openly or privately disputed the practices of the Church of England for not being reformed enough.⁵ While I do not want to overstate the practical ambivalence of such terms it is instructive to bear in mind the way this linguistic flexibility reflects the permanent flux of the broader theological and cultural situation. Throughout this thesis I make pragmatic use of

⁴ For further discussion of this and other taxonomic quirks see T. H. Clancy, “Papist-Protestant-Puritan”, *Recusant History*, 13 (1975-76), 227-253.

⁵ A. Walsham, *Church Papists* (Woodbridge: Boydell P for the Royal Historical Society 1993), pp. 1-21; A. Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 14-15; P. Lake, “Religious Identities in Shakespeare’s England”, in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. D. S. Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 57-84 (pp. 71-2).

convenient terms like “Catholic” and “Protestant”, “papist” and “puritan”, but this usage is meant to signal shared characteristics within given groups rather than homogenous identity.

It is necessary to read Catholic significance fluidly. The state religion had changed repeatedly between 1534 and 1559, but as Peter Lake points out, even during a lengthy period of relative stability the official Church was somewhat hybridised:

the religious scene of Elizabeth’s reign is best seen as a number of attempts, conducted at very different levels of theoretical self-consciousness and coherence, at creative bricolage, mixing and matching, as a variety of cases or pitches were made for popular support.⁶

The Elizabethan Settlement patched a vernacular and scriptural religion with residual elements of the old faith (such as the use of the sign of the cross in baptism). Nevertheless, what “Catholicism” did remain was very different from the medieval Catholicism that had been openly celebrated as the national religion. And the “creative bricolage” was underpinned by a network of legal and polemical distinctions that aimed at dichotomy, rather than blurred differences. Regardless of the complexity of both the Settlement and of spiritual conscience, anti-Catholic laws and polemic re-coded previously sanctified signifiers to express sectarian divide. We should not reproduce such binaries ourselves by assuming that good Protestant subjects accepted them unquestioningly, but we should note the cultural availability of sectarian ideas that were

⁶ Lake, p. 79.

lent the weight of orthodoxy. The critical challenge this historical situation presents is the need to be sensitive both to fluid boundaries and binary distinctions.

But, as I have said, my primary concern is literary rather than historical. Instead of using Shakespeare's texts to expound a broader narrative about the post-Reformation era I want to show how "Catholic semiotics" affect theatrical form and literary aesthetic.⁷ The Reformation wrought a change not only in the meaning of sacred symbols, but also in the processes of signification (there was a more thorough, though still imperfect, separation of words from things, as most obviously expressed in the denial of transubstantiation: the Catholic belief that Christ and the Eucharistic sign are one). Analysing the way literary Catholic signs signify enriches our understanding of the texts of which they are a structural and structuring part. I consider a diversity of plays in order to show that just as Catholic resonance alters according to context, generic difference is also partly determined by ideological content. Throughout this thesis I explore the nature of the association between Catholic semiotics and early modern fiction. The illicit status of Catholicism inevitably involved its representation in various senses of fictionality: the depiction of practices from a time marked off as past is automatically "not real", while the portrayal of either medieval Catholicism or contemporary

⁷ Michael Neill makes the case that "historical criticism ought to mean more than simply assimilating dramatic texts to dominant discourses, however rich and compelling the contextual fabric in which these are evoked"; *Putting History to the Question* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000), p. 72.

papistry engaged with what had been exposed as ideological fraud. Because these implications carried spiritual and political force, where Catholicism marks literature the early modern concern about the moral and philosophical validity of fiction is both more evident and more pressing. I suggest that Shakespeare's use of Catholic semiotics not only tells us about his creative choices but also shows us something of his attitude towards that creativity.

I do not speculate, as people have since at least the seventeenth century, on whether or not Shakespeare held Catholic allegiances.⁸ Arguments for Shakespeare's Catholicism are sometimes predicated on reductively circular logic: a lack of evidence is translated as evidence (the prudent Catholic Shakespeare necessarily hides his faith; his silence bespeaks his commitment);⁹ alternatively (or in addition) read in a particular

⁸ Famously, Richard Davies, archdeacon of Lichfield claimed in the seventeenth century that Shakespeare "died a papist". More recently, critics have associated Shakespeare with the "William Shakeshafte" mentioned in the 1581 will of the Catholic gentleman, Alexander Hoghton. Following E. K. Chambers, Oliver Baker and Peter Milward, E. A. J. Honigmann gave this idea its first book-length exploration, suggesting that Shakespeare may have spent time in Hoghton's recusant household in the predominantly Catholic county of Lancashire; *Shakespeare the "Lost Years"* (1985, R/P Manchester: MUP, 1998). Richard Wilson pushes this hypothesis further by arguing that Shakespeare's visit may have coincided with the Jesuit mission led by Edmund Campion; and Stephen Greenblatt gives the theory a graphic dimension: "If the adolescent ['Will'] knelt down before Campion, he would have been looking at a distorted image of himself." See R. Wilson, "Shakespeare and the Jesuits", *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 December 1997, pp. 11-13; *Secret Shakespeare* (as cited above); and S. Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 109. Asquith suggests alternatively that a Catholic Shakespeare might have spent some of his youth in Oxford; pp. 27-8. Other biographies that entertain the possibility of a Catholic Shakespeare include Michael Wood's *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC, 2003); and Anthony Holden's *William Shakespeare* (London: Abacus, 2000). In *That Man Shakespeare* (Hastings: Helm Information, 2005), David Ellis outlines the methodology employed by biographers of Shakespeare, and the academically irresponsible masking of its limitations that is sometimes practised. He responds to Greenblatt's book specifically in "Biographical Uncertainty and Shakespeare", *Essays in Criticism*, 55 (2005), 193-208. However, in the earlier *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2001), Greenblatt's speculations generate a nuanced reading of the tragedy that show the potential of tempered, biographically-inflected criticism.

⁹ This "false syllogism" is pointed out by Michael Davies; "On this Side Bardolatry: The Canonisation of the Catholic Shakespeare", *Cahiers Elisabethains*, 58 (2000), pp. 31-47. Davies also argues that for some critics the theory of hidden religious ideas helps maintain the myth of the timeless Bard: "by proffering Shakespeare as a Catholic [Gary] Taylor is able to have his canonical cake and eat it: he can project a Bard who is denominationally and historically specific and yet who is, simultaneously,

way, (de-contextualised) aspects of Shakespeare's texts supposedly yield biographical information that simultaneously corroborates literary analysis. Of course, the undermining of some critical readings with such syllogisms does not invalidate all biographical lines of inquiry: knowledge of an author's faith (as it changes through time) can enhance our understanding of his or her work. I look at Shakespeare's literature from another angle (deliberately literary and theatrical) not because I think that this is the only correct way to approach the issue, but because it might usefully shed fresh light on issues that are obscured by the shadow of the question "was Shakespeare a Catholic?" Primarily, it lets us sharpen our focus on what is happening in plays that were written for theologically-conscious but heterogeneous early modern audiences.

In recent years theological matters have been examined with productive sensitivity by critics Huston Diehl, Jeffrey Knapp, Paul Whitfield White, Kristen Poole and Bryan Crockett, who have shown the centrality of religion to early modern drama (though they concentrate on Protestant theology).¹⁰ My research is most indebted to Alison Shell's *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660*, which in articulating and explaining the importance of attending both to Catholic and anti-

without any religious identity at all. Or, rather, Shakespeare can be said to have a particular religious identity but one which still demands that all theology, religion, and religious history are to be read as absent from the plays"; p. 39. (Davies here responds to Taylor's "Forms of Opposition: Shakespeare and Middleton", *ELR*, 24 (1994), 283-314.)

¹⁰ H. Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997); J. Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe* (Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 2002); P. W. White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993); K. Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000); B. Crockett, *The Play of Paradox* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995).

Catholic epistemologies has opened a new critical paradigm. Work by critics Frances Dolan and Arthur F. Marotti also provide invaluable insights into the way in which Catholicism differentially (and problematically) defined English national identity.¹¹ Building on this scholarship I want to show the wide application of an understanding of Catholic semiotics.¹² For this reason I not only address a range of genres and a mixture of canonical and less familiar plays, but I also consider a variety of dramaturgical features: wordplay, setting, *dramatis personae*, character, costume, and the use of sources.

Chapters 1 and 2 have a linguistic focus: I show how Catholic metaphors, oxymorons and onomastics have a structural impact on dramatic meaning. Chapter 1 compares tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet*) with comedy (*The Comedy of Errors*), and Catholic Verona with the ambiguously Christian Ephesus, in order to interrogate the availability of Catholic resonance. In both plays the tensions of unreformed meaning supplement the particular generic force of denouement. In Chapter 2 I show alternatively the way in which Catholic significance can illuminate the generic breakdown of *Love's Labour's Lost* whereby the conventional comic ending is postponed beyond the limits of the play. The topicality of the *dramatis personae* has sectarian resonance. In particular

¹¹ F. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999); and A. F. Marotti, ed., *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern Texts* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

¹² Dymphna Callaghan insists "The new questions about Shakespeare and religion should not be, Was Shakespeare a Catholic? but should include, for example, What is the difference between racial and religious identity? How does the production of otherness operate in a culture where others are essentially invisible (unmarked, hidden) and alarmingly proximate? (Your neighbour/brother/friend might be a Catholic)"; "Shakespeare and Religion", *Textual Practice*, 15 (2001), 1-4 (3).

“Navarre” shares his name with the contemporary French King who had recently converted to Catholicism. Shakespeare places the theologically shifty name “Navarre” in a semantic context that is full of slippage, registering anxiety about denominational difference and contemporary controversy at the level of linguistics and generic rupture.

Chapters 3 and 4 develop verbal analysis by examining representations of early modern subjectivity and the ways in which the semiotic presence of Catholicism both problematises and shapes dramatic epistemology. Moving from names to characters, Chapter 3 considers the eponymous lead of the manuscript play of *Sir Thomas More*. In making a protagonist of a man whose Catholic allegiance at once drives the plot and drives the details of that plot offstage, this play experiments with new modes of characterisation that are underpinned by a dynamic between revelation and concealment. Since *Sir Thomas More* was written by a number of authors (one of whom may or may not have been Shakespeare), it enables us to see past a notion of Catholic significance as issuing from the pen of one confessionally-biased author to an understanding of poly-vocal origins. Chapter 4 analyses material polysemy and the epistemological effects of Catholic costumes. Frequently used as disguise on the early modern stage, Catholic vestments were invested with romantic fictionality and deceitful hypocrisy. I situate the Duke and Isabella from *Measure for Measure* and Helen from *All's Well that Ends*

Well in this theatrical context in order to assess the legibility of “performance” (the sincere manifestation of one’s emotions and/or the acting of them) in “problem” plays. I push this theme further in Chapter 5 by looking at the way Shakespeare reads a polemical tract that denigrates Catholic ritual as a dangerously fraudulent fiction. Samuel Harsnett’s *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* makes familiar anti-theatrical links between Catholicism and theatre, staging the exposé in inevitably dramatic terms. Shakespeare’s use of this material probes at the value of fictional fraud while also confounding the confessionally-determined categories of saint and sinner outlined in Harsnett’s text. I conclude with a chapter on *The Winter’s Tale*, a play in which Catholic meaning is condemned as “superstition” but is also (in multiple senses) vital. This ideological irrationality is appropriate to a play that is bizarre in chronology, geography and plot, and is part of the celebration of the play’s fiction (emphasised by its title) that brings the past into the present and remains back to life.

Chapter 1

Recognising Catholicism: *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Comedy of Errors*

In order to understand the importance of the “unreformed” in Shakespeare’s drama we need first to learn how early modern audiences might have recognised representations of Catholicism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that “to recognise” means both to “know by means of some distinctive feature” and to “know again”.¹³ Both senses are especially pertinent to the early modern recognition of Catholicism since signs understood as Catholic were

¹³ *OED*, s.v. “recognize”.

at once markedly unorthodox in the post-Reformation present (“distinctive”) and simultaneously familiar from a pre-Reformation past (“known again”). This dynamic between recognition as understanding through difference and through familiarity shapes response to the dramaturgy. Critics interested in the theological significance of texts sometimes use fictional works to “decode” a particular attitude to religion.¹⁴ However, as I have already suggested, it is more useful to reverse this methodology: to explore the literary implications of religious resonance. Such an investigation allows us to “know again” texts that have become deceptively familiar.

To establish the ways in which we might critically recognise Catholic semiotics I will consider two early plays that are roughly contemporary with one another in the Chamberlain’s Men’s repertory but seem otherwise dissimilar and thus insist on a generically sensitive reading of religious resonance. Where the comedy of *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595) spirals into tragedy, the tragic potential of *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1594) is transformed into comedy. Furthermore, the Catholicism of *Romeo and Juliet* realistically contextualises the action of the play in an Italian present, whereas the Catholic signifiers of *The Comedy of Errors* help to Christianise a classical source. These different religious situations allow us to assess the significance of Catholic semiotics

¹⁴ To isolate just one example relevant to the plays under discussion in this chapter Donna B. Hamilton’s work on *The Comedy of Errors* usefully alerts us to the religio-political resonance of different aspects of the dramaturgy, but in providing a reading that, to use her own term, “decodes” the play she (unconvincingly) reduces its significance to a statement on Church polity; *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 59-85.

in and of fiction. The plays' different figures for duality (oxymoron in *Romeo and Juliet*; twins in *The Comedy of Errors*) enable us to explore the binarisms so overtly important to early modern sectarian discourse (and that also implicitly structure some modern critical methodologies).¹⁵ This chapter will investigate the implications of Catholic semiotics in fundamental aspects of the dramaturgy: setting; the typing of characters; and wordplay. Ultimately, it will be shown that the process of recognising Catholic signs is crucially implicated in the climactic anagnorisis of both plays.

Representational Space

Before looking at particularly Catholic characters or metaphors we need to question whether such representations function mainly as scene-setting devices to establish an alien locale appropriate to a fictional story. "Representational space" refers to the particular context of an individual play as well as the Elizabethan stage on which it appears. Thus an analysis of the representational space might consider the conventions of the early modern stage; the generic expectations generated by a certain play; the contemporary associations with the setting (e.g. Verona, Ephesus) being represented; and the question of whether the fictional nature of the drama is more permissive of unorthodoxy than other kinds of

¹⁵ Binaries were employed not just to describe the difference between Protestant and Catholic but also to explain the sinful structure of Catholicism: "Dualism is crucial to any understanding of anti-popery, whether image-oriented or political"; A. Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 26.

discourse. Theatrical audiences modern and early modern are aware of both the imaginary, represented space on the stage and the non-representational space of the stage that undercuts the illusion.¹⁶ In a sense, Catholic signifiers pull in both directions: they create a fiction that is “Catholicly” other to early modern England; but they also remind the audience that what they see is only fiction since their prominent place as representations of illegality in contemporary discourse would have kept the audience constantly aware of the “real” and contrary space from which they watch. I want to consider whether positive representations are simply a function of verisimilitude in the Catholic Veronese setting, or whether the fictional distance is troubled by the introduction of signifiers that are charged with contemporary controversy.

Elizabethans often represented Italy ambivalently, torn between Italy’s cultural successes (both classical and Renaissance) and its being the seat of the Papal “whore of Babylon” and Machiavellian intrigue. For example, *The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes* (a tract that conflates pagan and Catholic “superstition”) provides two definitions of Rome. The city is first explained as “The Fountayne of the Empyre [...] a consecration of eternall peace”, even though it is pagan; but an alternative description subsequently defines Rome “sithens it [was] ruled by religion” as:

¹⁶ For a discussion of the porous boundaries between these spaces as later evident in the Jacobean period see R. West, *Spatial Representations and the Jacobean Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 12-58.

The Fou[n]tayne of Ciuil dissentio[n], poured into
 su[n]dry
 Kingedomes: A Brothell house for Whores
 mayntenaunce:
 A Sa[n]ctuary for Murtherers, & Theeues: A Pardon for
 homicide,
 the Temple of Idolatry: A depriuation of Vertue: the
 execrable
 face of al y^e furies.¹⁷

This dualistic attitude is also found in works not overtly concerned with religion: in *The Schoolmaster* (1570) Roger Ascham admires Italy's historical achievements but warns against sending young men there since "the Siren songs of Italy" might "untwine [one] from the mast of God's word".¹⁸ The dichotomy informs generic difference in Renaissance theatre. Dramatists seemed to feel that Italy (and Spain) were appropriate sites for revenge drama, but when they present a more positive "stereotype of a courtly, pastoral and humanist Italy, [it is] operative particularly in non-tragic genres".¹⁹ The world of *Romeo and Juliet* is tragic and romantic, but while it is violently vengeful, it is not the same world of Machiavellian dissimulation typical of the anti-Catholic epistemology that imbues other revenge tragedies set in Catholic countries. Shakespeare's representational space alters generic conventions: *Romeo and Juliet* is a (foreign) domestic tragedy and a revenge drama that lacks a Machiavel. The ambivalences of this Italian context operate along different lines to those found in contemporary literature. Since English Catholics did not differ

¹⁷ S. Batman, *The Golden Booke of the Leaden Goddes* (London, 1577), sig. G3v.

¹⁸ R. Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, ed. L. V. Ryan (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967), p. 63.

¹⁹ M. Pfister, "Shakespeare and Italy", in *Shakespeare's Italy*, ed. M. Marrapodi et al. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), pp. 295-303 (pp. 298-9).

from English Protestants by any visual markers such as race they can be understood as “dangerous familiar[s]” to the “orthodox” Elizabethans.²⁰ Their domestic arrangements could mask traitorous activity since Catholic houses (replete with priest holes and secret passages) often doubled as sites in a seditious terrain.²¹ In *Romeo and Juliet’s* Catholic and domestic representational space Shakespeare addresses this real-life threat and renders “familiar” what was conventionally seen as dangerous. For example, “leave to go to shrift” (2.4.65) provides the authorised means by which Juliet is able to leave the Capulet house, first as a cover for marrying Romeo (though the sacrament is an important spiritual prelude to the wedding: she is “shrived and married”; 2.3.170) and second as a way of asking the Friar’s help in avoiding marrying Paris (the only other time she is permitted to escape the house is when she is ostensibly dead, and then she moves to another Capulet space, the tomb). Juliet’s parents read “confession” as a sign of orthodoxy, but the Elizabethan audience would have been instructed in the reformed view that it was, in the words of Shakespeare’s source Arthur Brooke, “the kay of whoredome, and treason” (first prefatory address, ll.24-5),²² so that Juliet’s façade would seem entirely “Catholic”. Brian Cummings points out that:

In hiding, confession was more private than ever: not

²⁰ F. E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999), p. 36.

²¹ See J. Yates, “Parasitic Geographies: Manifesting Catholic Identity in Early Modern England”, in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern Texts*, ed. A. F. Marotti (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 63-84.

²² “The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet”, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. G. Bullough, 8 vols, i (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

only its content, but its very performance was a shibboleth. To protestant persecutors, confession created a powerful signifier of the recusant and missionary community as a secret society.²³

Confession became a secret act within a secret act: a private discourse between two people that was, in addition, necessarily furtive in post-Reformation England. The notion of such secret communication between penitent and priest was threatening to the Elizabethan government. This Catholic sacrament is crucial to the action and wordplay of *Romeo and Juliet*; the word “shrift” appears five times. In 4.1, Juliet’s conversation with the Friar is closely associated with confession given the fact that “shrift” has been her ostensible reason for the visit, and her conversation with Paris at the beginning of the scene focuses figuratively on confession. However, while the Friar does indeed hatch a plot, he does so only with the best of intentions for Romeo and Juliet and Verona as a whole.

If the dangerous is rendered familiar in *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Comedy of Errors* the familiar gets reorganised. The comedy’s fictional world is shown to be diachronically and culturally elastic. Modern and Elizabethan audiences value continuity differently. Theatre historians have identified a mixture of costumes representing multiple eras and nationalities (even at the level of a single costume) in the Peacham sketch of *Titus Andronicus*.²⁴

²³ B. Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p. 348.

²⁴ S. P. Cerasano, “‘Borrowed Robes’”, *SSr*, 22 (1994), 45-57 (47).

Neither an embarrassing anachronism nor an ahistoricising lack of sophistication on the part of Renaissance theatre companies and their audiences, this conventional mixture of visual codes bespeaks an attitude that is comfortable with the diachronic. Indeed, the historiography of this period was often diachronic in conception; hence we find writers like Foxe describing pre-Reformation figures such as Chaucer in terms of proto-Protestantism.²⁵ Unlike Foxe, Shakespeare is not explicitly interested in a causative view of history, but it is illuminating to take into account the ways in which he offsets different times and ideologies that are able to coexist in a theatrical space, but not a “real” space. The interaction between the representational space on the stage and the representational space of the stage is augmented by interactions of past and present, fiction and fact, and orthodoxy and illegality.

The fictional world of *The Comedy of Errors* is shaped by both classical and Christian allusions. Shakespeare re-imagines Plautus’s *Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo* and changes their classical setting to the Christian Ephesus associated with St Paul and his letter to the Ephesians. The deliberate Christianising of the setting is achieved through such references as: “as I am a Christian” (1.2.77), and “O, for my beads! I cross me for a sinner” (2.2.191). Shakespeare thus sets up a silent opposition between his revised Christian setting and the pagan setting of his sources. This classical/Christian dichotomy submerges the contemporary

²⁵ *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: 4th edition*, ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols, iv (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1877), p. 249.

obsession with the bifurcation of Christianity into Catholics and Protestants.²⁶ It is significant that in an age of polemic so intent on labelling the Catholic Church as the Antichrist Shakespeare should use an outlawed Catholic signifier to symbolise Christianity.²⁷ In contemporary discourse rosary “beads” often signified Catholic difference (see for example, the iconography of the woodcut in the 1576 edition of Foxe, depicting Justice and her scales where rosary beads are amongst the “Catholic” items that weigh less than the “Protestant” bible)²⁸. But in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser writes not only of the superstitious (Catholic) Corceca praying “Vpon her beades” (I.III.xiii.7),²⁹ but also of the virtuous (Protestant) Cælia being at her “bedes” (I.X.iii.8). This other 1590s text interrogates the legibility of signs, particularly religious signs. Spenser’s description of Cælia’s prayerfulness rhymes “bedes” with her good “deedes” (I.X.iii.9), while Corceca’s formulaic devotion and recital of “Nine hundred *Pater nosters*” (I.III.xiii.8) and “thrise nine hundred *Aues*” (I.III.xiii.9) leaves no space for charitable acts. In using a Catholic signifier as a point of comparison Spenser

²⁶ This bifurcation was at times complicated by other non-Christian religions. On the one hand the Elizabethan state officially celebrated Catholic victories against “the Turk”, but on the other hand Elizabeth maintained political associations with Murad III that were unpopular in Catholic Europe; see J. Burton, “Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Image of the Turk in *Tamburlaine*”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30 (2000), 125-56. Of course, both Catholicism and Islam could be hybridised for a doubly negative impact. Hence the use of a cross-religious trope for ferocity in Falstaff’s brag about his supposed military action: “Turk Gregory never did such deeds in arms as I have done this day” (*1 Henry IV*, 5.3.45-6).

²⁷ The continued use of rosary beads was highlighted as one of the “key areas of official concern about [...] resistance” in the Episcopal visitations of the early Elizabethan reign; E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992), pp. 571-2.

²⁸ For a discussion of this and other prints see M. Jones, “The English Print, c.1550-c.1650”, in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. M. Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 352-66 (p. 361).

²⁹ E. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (1977, R/P London: Longman, 1997); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

underlines the point where Catholicism becomes unacceptable to him. During this period meaning is under negotiation and the unconventional use of Catholic signifiers seems to contribute to the reworking of modes of recognition.

It is noteworthy that Shakespeare did not use his Plautine source material in the same anti-Catholic manner as the writer of the Tudor interlude *Jack Juggler*. In contrast to *The Comedy of Errors* where the misunderstandings are the result of coincidence, the confusion in *Jack Juggler* is caused by the trickery of the eponymous fraudster (apparently dressed like a Catholic priest).³⁰ Jack's deceit causes Caraway to enrage his master with the suggestion "That on man may haue too bodies & two faces / And y^t one man at on time may be in two placys" (901-2).³¹ Paul Whitfield White points out that this seems to be a negative allusion to the Catholic belief in transubstantiation, a theology seen by Protestants like Calvin as untenable, for who could "conceive of a Christ with two bodies, so that he who sits visible in heaven may lie hidden in secret under the bread?"³² The belief was held to be deliberate Catholic trickery, and the parallels between ecclesiastical fraud and the fraud found in the play are enforced by the title character's name since "the terms 'juggler' and 'juggling,' had strong anti-Catholic overtones in Reformation England".³³ Since "juggler" could mean "conjurer" it aptly pinpointed supposed Romish

³⁰ P. W. White, *Theatre and Reformation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p. 127.

³¹ *Jack Juggler*, ed. B. I. Evans and W. W. Greg (London: OUP for the Malone Society, 1937).

³² As quoted in White, p. 127.

³³ White, p. 126.

chicanery. Shakespeare uses “juggling” for anti-Papal effect in the history plays *King John* (“juggling witchcraft”; 3.1.169), *Henry VIII* (“Is’t possible the spells of France should juggle / Men into such strange mysteries?”; 1.3.1-2) and *Henry VI:I* (Joan of Arc’s sexual activity is referred to as “juggling”; 5.4.68). However, the English representational space of these plays is one of political Protestantism, where anti-Catholic shorthand contributes to a sense of support for the break from Rome’s authority; the classical/Christian Ephesian context of *The Comedy of Errors* is rather different. The same lexicon of “juggling” is employed: Antipholus of Syracuse has heard that Ephesus is a place of “nimble jugglers that deceive the eye” (1.2.98), Dromio of Syracuse worries that he has been “transformèd” (2.2.198) and there are repeated references to witches, wizards and sorcerers. Pinch’s attempt at exorcism follows the Catholic pattern of the rite in the medieval Church since he directly commands “Satan” to leave Antipholus of Ephesus (4.4.55), offers incantatory “holy prayers” (4.4.56) and looks to the mediation of “all the saints in heaven” (4.4.58).³⁴ Exorcism was removed from the rites of the reformed Church and the sign of the cross in baptism was moved to the end of the ceremony and thus lost its “exorcizing function”.³⁵ In line with reforming views Pinch’s attempts at exorcism earn him the labels

³⁴ As we will see in Chapter 5, the Church of England took a polemical stand against puritan dispossessions as well as Catholic exorcisms. Since puritans disclaimed any miraculous ability of their own their dispossessions differentially beseeched the Lord rather than commanded demons (as in Catholic rites). For a more detailed description of exorcism and dispossession see F. W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1993), especially p. 73. For a description of medieval Catholic exorcism see Duffy, pp. 279-81.

³⁵ Duffy, p. 473.

“threadbare juggler” (5.1.239) and “doting wizard” (4.4.59). Yet if this “Catholic” act is here given anti-Catholic associations of witchcraft and trickery, it is through a similar gesture to Catholic exorcism that Dromio of Syracuse attempts to *ward off* magical deception (in the remark noted above): “O, for my beads! I cross me for a sinner” (2.2.191). Both Pinch and Dromio’s attempts at exorcism are farcical and perhaps the Catholic representations operate, in part, to create a fictional and historical distance appropriate to this bizarre, comic world. However, Catholic representations become more prominent once the errors are resolved: it is the Catholic Abbess who offers first temporary sanctuary to the Syracusans, and then interpretative resolution and “satisfaction” for the whole cast of characters. The representational space that Shakespeare creates in *The Comedy of Errors*, like other plays that make nostalgic use of Catholic semiotics to create a “merry world”, is humorously tolerant of the older faith. Shakespeare’s nostalgia uses unreformed signs not just to provide fictional co-ordinates, but also to organise the social reconciliation of the happy ending.

The Legible Friar: Stage Stereotypes

Within the representational space of *Romeo and Juliet* some Catholic signifiers are more recognisable than others. Unlike the problematic Catholics discreetly practising their faith in Elizabethan England, friars and nuns were visibly recognisable as

“papist”. I am going to return to the epistemological problems posed by the (il)legibility of Catholics in Chapter 4, but for now I wish to explore Shakespeare’s early use of a visually “typical” character. While few Elizabethans would ever have seen actual friars or nuns (who had been outlawed at the Reformation), the identifiability of both the male and female religious meant that they were often used in anti-Catholic prints and plays. Friars, in particular, had been stock figures of ridicule since the pre-Reformation days of Chaucer, so that their representation had already accrued associations with bawdy hypocrisy, greediness and Machiavellian intent. This stereotype was reinforced by both polemical anti-Catholicism and the more casual prejudice found in early modern entertainment. With reference to the list of costumes in Henslowe’s *Diary*, S. P. Cerasano comments that friars were among the types that “received special attention and [...] frequently their costumes were more expensive than the average costume”.³⁶ The use of the same kinds of visual codes from play to play established “the friar” as a costume-type, and it seems that this was coupled with conventionalised reading. The ubiquity of the friar-type and its nefarious and lecherous connotations is made clear in Chapman’s *May Day* where Angelo expresses contempt for the clichéd nature of the friar’s costume: “Out vppon’t, that disguise is worne thread bare vpon euery stage, and so much

³⁶ Cerasano, 53.

villany committed vnder that habit, that 'tis growne as suspicious as the vilest" (2.4.146-8).³⁷

Friar Lawrence's archetypal costume is continuously significant, even when the actor wearing it is silent. Yet while the Friar is visually linked to an anti-fraternal convention he is not straightforwardly conventional. In a more general discussion of stage practice Jeremy Lopez remarks that "repetition in the commercial theatre is a good index of theatrical success".³⁸ Every new piece of writing alters or manipulates tradition to some extent, but it is nevertheless important to keep in mind the commercial and ideological risk involved in toying with and frustrating anti-fraternal expectations. As is evident in Friar Lawrence's earlier literary incarnation in Arthur Brooke's "Romeus and Juliet" (1562) the post-Reformation sensibility of the age would seem to generate a pressure to make some sign of one's anti-Catholic credentials when dealing with papist material. In his prefatory address to the reader Brooke enumerates the young couple's misdemeanours, including their receiving counsel from "superstitious friers (the naturally fitte instrumentes of unchastitie)" (first prefatory address, ll.22-3). Such is the shared understanding of anti-Catholic discourse that Brooke does not need to explain why a friar might "naturally" bring about "unchastitie"; but the polarising and polemical nature of the dominant anti-Catholic discourse of the era

³⁷ G. Chapman, *May Day*, ed. R. F. Welsh, in *The Plays of George Chapman*, gen. ed. A. Holaday (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1970).

³⁸ J. Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 4.

requires that this view is articulated. Within the actual poem the Friar is presented rather more positively, initially in a manner which retains an assumed anti-Catholic understanding: he is isolated from the common breed of Friars (“Not as the most was he, a grosse unlearned foole, / But doctor of divinitie proceded he in schoole”; 567-8), and then in straightforwardly positive terms: he has “wisdome” (579) and is “beloved” (578). Even when the Friar confesses to his role in the tragedy the poem refers to a “good barefooted fryre” (2996) and states that nothing can “blot” the “honor of his name” (3000). If Brooke cannot escape the positive suggestions that cluster around the friar in his story, he nevertheless feels the need to affirm his confessional allegiance by means of this conventional anti-fraternal reading, and thus ideologically circumscribes the story.

By contrast there is nothing explicitly anti-fraternal about the representation of Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*. Even if audiences were able to interpret the Friar’s actions as “Machiavellian”³⁹ and motivated by a political desire to “garner sole praise for finding a solution to the long standing feud”,⁴⁰ as critics determined to *read* the Friar in an anti-fraternal light have done, his pacifist desires hardly smack of the “villainy [...] under the habit” that audiences frequently witnessed. One commentator with experience of acting the Friar was not troubled by any sense

³⁹ J. C. Bryant, “The Problematic Friar in *Romeo and Juliet*”, *English Studies*, 55 (1974), 340-350 (347).

⁴⁰ G. Brenner, “Shakespeare’s Politically Ambitious Friar”, *SSt*, 13 (1980), 47-58 (52).

of submerged evil intentions but rather with his less potentially entertaining “bumbling, boring” nature.⁴¹ We can gauge Friar Lawrence’s lack of typical “villainy” by comparison not just with the conventional anti-fraternal types found elsewhere in Elizabethan drama, but also with Shakespeare’s depictions of Machiavellianism (e.g. Iago, Richard III, Edmund). In these instances Shakespeare heightens dramatic irony through the audience’s knowledge of the characters’ nefarious intentions. By contrast, in *Romeo and Juliet* the tension is created through ambivalence, a subject often discussed by Friar Lawrence himself. In a speech (not from Brooke) he philosophises on both the earth and humanity:

The earth that’s nature’s mother is her tomb;
What is her burying grave, that is her womb[.] (2.2.9-10)

Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometime by action dignified. (2.2.21-22)

In both quotations the alternating chiasmic movements between opposites indicate an essential ambivalence that provides a key to understanding the Friar’s own characterisation. The Friar acts out of love for Romeo and a desire for the greater good, but his actions (embedded as they are in a theatrical tradition) when stripped of such characterisation could easily be part of any other anti-Catholic story: the stock dissembling Friar who encourages deceit and works with “magic” potions. I do not think this is a case of

⁴¹ J. Glover, “Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*”, in *Players of Shakespeare 4*, ed. R. Smallwood (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), pp. 165-76 (p. 166).

Shakespeare simply allowing the dominant anti-fraternal tradition to supplement his characterisation by implication.⁴² Rather, Shakespeare makes use of an available and familiar stereotype in order to invert its significance.

Ultimately, Friar Lawrence's fatal ineffectiveness and cowardice may seem to satisfy anti-Catholic expectations. After Romeo has killed himself the Friar enters only to leave Juliet alone again after a half-hearted attempt to "dispose of thee / Among a sisterhood of holy nuns" (5.3.156-7). The very Catholic solution (escape to a convent) is bound up with the idea that the Friar proves unequal to the tragic situation. The words "dispose of" suggest that he is more concerned with ridding himself of a problem than saving Juliet, especially since he then runs away because "I dare no longer stay" (5.3.159). His forty-line speech after he is caught may be expressive of a desire to regain some kind of control through a purchase on the re-narration of Romeo and Juliet's lives that characterises the end of the play, now that he has lost the power to manipulate events. Yet these faults (which do not alter the well-intentioned nature of his earlier plotting) seem rather to confirm the Friar's own philosophy of the ambivalence common to all aspects of the world.

⁴² As argued in Bryant, 343.

The Legible Abbess: Dichotomised Representations

The representation of nuns, like that of friars, was very much implicated in the conventions of anti-Catholic orthodoxy. Nuns had not lived in England for many years and would not find a place in the Anglican Church until the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, at times “nun” was used to signify “a chaste woman”. Texts of *Pericles* say that Thaisa should be anachronistically referred to as a “nun” (5.3.15) since the chastity the term references corresponds with that of the role of a priestess of Diana (though perhaps the residually Catholic implications of this anachronistic term are deliberate in this classical tale retold by the medieval Gower). In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* Margaret’s decision to become a nun after Lacy’s apparent rejection of her is indicative of her virtue and of her passing his “test”, although her speedy revoking of that decision upon Lacy’s declaration of love would seem to deny any real worth in this distinctively Catholic way of life. Indeed, while at one level the nun’s apparel signifies Margaret’s virtue, this view is “perverted” by a deliberate male misreading that is congruent with reforming attitudes to the female religious. The sight of a woman in nun’s clothing standing with an older man prompts Ermsby to declare, “The old lecher hath gotten holy mutton [prostitute] to him” (14.44).⁴³ A nun’s habit marks an emphatic declaration of celibacy; Ermsby’s reaction is a wilful misreading of the nun’s coded appearance following the reforming line that Catholic

⁴³ R. Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. J. A. Lavin (London: Benn, 1969); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

celibacy was hypocrisy at best, and led to sexual perversion at worst. Plays and prints conventionally represented monks and nuns engaged in sexual activity. In Jonson's *The Alchemist* a reference to pornographic images automatically calls to mind a picture of a friar and a nun: "Sure he has got / Some bawdy pictures, to call all this ging; / The friar and the nun" (5.1.20-22).⁴⁴ When nuns are not read sexually their chaste abstemiousness is criticised. Margaret is cautioned "bury not such beauty in a cell" (14.2). The signifying possibility of the "nun" is dichotomised into promiscuity on the one hand or unfruitful waste on the other (in opposition to the Catholic understanding of a spiritual marriage to Christ). Such Re-formed representations circumscribe any positive semantic potential of this appropriated Catholic signifier.

Some references within the Shakespeare canon would seem to utilise these polarised conventions. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Theseus offers Hermia the "livery of a nun" (1.1.70) as an alternative to the death sentence/marriage to Demetrius options her father delimits. Yet Theseus frames this possibility with vocabulary expressive of sterility: "barren sister" (1.1.72), "cold fruitless moon" (1.1.73) and "withering on the virgin thorn" (1.1.77). In *All's Well That Ends Well* Lavatch includes the fitness of "the nun's lip to the friar's mouth" (2.2.26-7) in a bawdy list of other elements that "fit" together. In both these examples Shakespeare uses conventional shorthand to achieve a localised

⁴⁴ B. Jonson, *The Alchemist*, in *Five Plays*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (1988, R/P Oxford: OUP, 1999). See also discussion in Jones, p. 363.

effect (Hermia's nightmare situation and Lavatch's bawdy joke). However, (as we will again see in Chapter 4) when he actually presents us with nun characters Shakespeare complicates such convention. The lack of consistency between the representations in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Comedy of Errors* should warn us against reading particular representations as symptomatic of a consistent religious view and indicate the importance of contextualising Catholic signifiers within the plays in which they appear. The conventionalised remarks form part of Shakespeare's characterisation of Theseus and Lavatch, rather than his characterisation of Catholicism. The fact that Shakespeare at times uses certain conventions should make us more attentive to the moments when he alters them. As in *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Comedy of Errors* Shakespeare's representation of a religious clashes with an anti-Catholic horizon of expectations. Shakespeare's Abbess neatly opposes the reforming connotations both of sexual licentiousness and chaste infertility. This Abbess is also a mother, whose productive sexuality was licitly channelled through marriage. As Laurie Maguire points out, her current status as an Abbess as well as a wife and mother juxtaposes chasteness with fertility in a manner that calls to mind the Virgin Mary. This allusion is highlighted by the reference to "Thirty-three years" (5.1.402), the number of years Christ lived on earth.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ L. Maguire, "The Girls from Ephesus", in *The Comedy of Errors: Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. Miola (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 355-91 (p. 367).

The rich signification of the Abbess is again in contrast to other dramatic representations of nuns who, even when not appropriated into a sexual parody of their chaste cloisters, were often denied semiotic force beyond the confines of an anti-Catholic stereotype. In *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* the Prioress welcomes Milicent's mother's desire to place Milicent in the "holy Sisterhood" (3.1.2)⁴⁶ in the following terms:

Iesus, Daughter Maries childe,
 Holy Matron, woman milde,
 For thee a masse shall still be sayd,
 Euery Sister drop a bead;
 And those again succeeding them
 For you shall sing a Requiem. (3.1.6-11)

The closing of each short couplet with a masculine rhyme would seem to reflect the efforts to circumscribe the semiotic potential of the Catholic signifiers within them. These signifiers of Catholic "difference" are squeezed into seven/eight syllable lines, which run at a tetrameter speed, emphasised by the (catalectic) trochaic/iambic rhythm. The Catholic-ness of the Prioress is over-represented: we are bombarded with a Catholic oath ("Iesus, Daughter Maries childe"), an allusion to the Hail Mary ("Holy Matron, woman milde"), the notion of dedicating masses to people ("For thee a masse"), a reference to rosary "bead[s]", the endless iterability of Catholic ritual ("And those again succeeding them / For you shall sing a Requiem") and of the pre-Reformation concept of the efficacy of prayers for the dead ("Requiem"). Such is the

⁴⁶ *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, ed. L. Proescholdt and K. Warnke (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1884); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

compression of this quantity of signifiers that there is no exploration of the ideas they signify, but rather they are present as Catholic ciphers: a code to tell us how Catholic this character is. This is not to deny the complexity of the dramaturgy, but to acknowledge that this scene deliberately evokes a contrast between the Prioress and the main characters in the play whose language escapes into lines longer than eight syllables and generates more meaning than these flat Catholic signifiers. This linguistic characterisation reduces the Prioress to a mere “type”, whose old-fashioned verse underlines the way she belongs in the past, distanced from the more sophisticated reformed present. But the Abbess’s language is much freer, and rather than being read by others (like the “nun” in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*) it is she who provides the crucial interpretative analysis of the play, and even “appropriates the Duke’s authority and all but concludes the play.”⁴⁷

Catholic Metaphors

The linguistic Catholicism of both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Romeo and Juliet* does more than delineate character types. In Catholic theology “signs” can be entirely meaningful: the Eucharist is Christ’s body. Reformers sought to reclassify such signs as figurative, so that some of the sacraments that Catholics considered outward signs of inward grace were condemned as

⁴⁷ D. Kehler, “Shakespeare’s Emilias and the Politics of Celibacy”, in *In Another Country*, ed. D. Kehler and S. Barber (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1991), pp. 157-78 (p. 161).

mere outward forms. However, when Shakespeare uses Catholic signifiers such as “shrift” or statues of saints, he does not seem to be participating in the reforming de-literalising of Catholic signs. Quintilian saw metaphor as a means for “providing a name for everything”,⁴⁸ and Shakespeare’s theologically-ordered metaphors introduce a Catholic taxonomic system into the plays that has artistic consequences. Catholic metaphors implicate the audience in a shared understanding, in contrast to the dissociating “difference” created in orthodox discourse; but they also retain negative associations created in that dominant orthodoxy.

Catholic signification provides much of the dynamism of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* and, in particular, clusters around the relationship of Romeo and Juliet.

When Romeo and Juliet first meet they share a sonnet loaded with metaphors of saints, statues and pilgrims. These specifically Catholic images were among the signifiers which reformers used to mark difference between the old and new Church. In the 39 *Articles* of 1563 the twenty-second article states that:

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping and adoration as well of images as of relics,
and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented,
and grounded upon no warranty of scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 4 vols, iii (trans. H. E. Butler, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1920-22), VIII.vi.5.

⁴⁹ As quoted in D. Cressy and L. A. Ferrell, *Religion and Society in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 65.

The ideological impact of the article works by first identifying the listed items as “Romish” before then condemning them as “repugnant to the word of God” in a way which metonymically denounces Catholicism and separates it from the Church of England. The aim is to effect a dissociation of the reading subject from such “Romish” practice. This language of saints, statues and pilgrims is not found in the corresponding passage in Brooke; Shakespeare deliberately adds these politically charged signifiers.

The religious imagery in this sonnet is not simply a shorthand method of indicating superlative praise within a Petrarchan discourse, such as we find in Romeo’s artificial lamentations about Rosaline. Rather, the Catholic reading of “saint” provides the dynamic force behind the sonnet and the physical action of kissing. Romeo has intruded into the Capulet home and broken the rules of the feud which would exclude him from Capulet areas: Catholic semiotics bind together the new and separate linguistic space (a sonnet) that the couple create for themselves, apart from the feuding discourse of Verona. Romeo’s divine praise of Juliet is fused with a flirtatious request for a kiss:

If I profane with my unworhiest hand
 This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

(1.4.206-9)

Juliet responds in the same idiom, taking on his figure of the saint and the pilgrim and examining it in similarly amorous terms:

For saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss. (1.4.212-13)

There is a *frisson* in allowing a touch, but delaying a kiss – she teases Romeo with another religious image: that of two hands joined together in prayer. When Romeo asks, “Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?” (1.4.214), he blurs the distinction between the saint signified by the statue at a shrine, and the signifying statue. It was this very fusion that iconoclast reformers were anxious to expose and then remove with the destruction of religious statues. The “Homilie agaynst perill of Idolatry and superfluous deckyng of churches” (by far the longest homily in the 1563 official *Book of Homilies* which was read at churches throughout the country) frequently makes the point that images in Churches risked “most horrible Idolatry” since the “simple and vnwyse” would worship the image itself rather than the deity represented because “Idolatry is to Images [...] an inseparable accident.”⁵⁰ Indeed saints were no longer recognised as necessary intermediaries between the supplicant and God. While the power of the images themselves was “indifferent”, the gravity of the potential sin that accompanied them emphatically was not. Juliet responds in kind to Romeo’s play on saint/statue:

Romeo O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Juliet Saints do not move, though grant for prayer’s sake.

Romeo Then move not while my prayer’s effect I take.
He kisses her[.] (1.4.216-19)

⁵⁰ *Certaine Sermons appoynted by the Quenes Maiesty* (London, 1563), sigs. Bb6v, Gg2v.

Juliet points out (in contradiction to Article 22) that while their statues do not move, saints can grant prayers. In standing still like statue but “granting” like a saint Juliet wins a kiss; thus the “Catholic” chain of signification allows her an active role.⁵¹ Debora Shuger has stated:

Generally speaking, the sacramental/analogical character of premodern thought tends to deny rigid boundaries; nothing is simply itself, but things are signs of other things and one thing may be inside another, as Christ is *in* the heart, or turn into something else, as the substance of the eucharist bread turns into the body of Christ. With the advent of modernity the borders between both conceptual and national territories were redrawn as solid rather than dotted lines.⁵²

The Catholic freer association of saints and images fits into what the play structures as an expression of genuine feeling. In order to comprehend this crucial first meeting the audience must follow the Catholic chain of association, so that they are included in a thought process that reformers sought to differentiate as both alien and

⁵¹ Not just the Reformed but also the Roman Church regarded idolatry as a sin. The Catholic controversialist Nicholas Sander explained “For he is bond to the Signe, either who taketh it for the thinge it selfe, or els worshippeth it as a Signe, and yet knoweth not what it signifieth. But we that are made free in Christ, both know our Signes and Images to be Images and signes [...] and we knowe moreouer, whereof they are the Signes [...] and we refer the worship of them, not finally to any creature [...] but vnto one God, by Iesus Christ our Lord”; *Treatise of the Images of Christ* (Saint Omer, 1624), sig. P7v. (This text was first printed in 1567 and was issued again in 1625.) Nevertheless, Catholics often celebrated miracles that collapsed the gap between the earthly signifier and the heavenly signified. See, for example, the Jesuit writer Orazio Toresellino’s *The House of Our B. Lady of Loreto* (Saint Omer, 1608) which celebrates and publicises the repeated translation of the house in which the annunciation allegedly took place, and asserts the spiritual presence of the Virgin in her image at that shrine. My point is not that Romeo’s blurring of the distinction between saint and statue was theologically Catholic but rather that such conceptual slippage was commonly *understood* as Catholic.

⁵² D. K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990), p. 11.

erroneous. Juliet also uses Catholic theology to refuse flirtation, as in the brief stichomythic dialogue with Paris concerning confession in 4.1. This occasion acts as a good counterpoint to the reciprocal emotion she expresses with Romeo and emphasises the degree to which she is immersed in a Catholic ideology that allows her to “find a name for everything”.

Such a taxonomy is not so pervasive in *The Comedy of Errors*, though early in the play Adriana articulates her desire to tend to her husband’s body and soul by means of a Catholic metaphor:

Husband, I’ll dine above with you today,
And shrive you of a thousand idle pranks. (2.2.210-
211)⁵³

Adriana suggests that “shrift” would figuratively absolve her husband of his supposed philandering. Both visual and verbal reforming propaganda often denigrated the sacrament of confession through representing it as bawdy hypocrisy: Malcolm Jones describes prints depicting “naked female penitents” and friars using “corporal chastisement”.⁵⁴ Shakespeare’s metaphor transforms these salacious associations, since the act of shriving here stands for the regulating of sexual behaviour.⁵⁵

In one of the play’s many duplications the earlier passing reference takes on greater significance as the wife/Abbess, Emilia, also makes reference to the old sacrament. In the final act of the play she asks the company to join her in the Abbey to “make full

⁵³ Maguire (1997), p. 367.

⁵⁴ Jones, p. 362.

⁵⁵ The first act of *1 Henry VI*, which many textual critics doubt to be the work of Shakespeare, makes a conventionally bawdy reading of the Catholic sacrament: “Doubtless he shrives this woman to her smock” (1.2.119).

satisfaction" (5.1.401). As well as referring to "obligations" (monetary and legal) this word also signifies the last part of confession, the "performance by a penitent of the penal and meritorious acts enjoined by his confessor as payment of the temporal punishment due to his sin".⁵⁶ Reformers taught that confessors were "trecherous traitours" for contending "that they are succeeded in the roome of Iesus Christ, to iudge the spirituall leprosie",⁵⁷ and the presumption that "our dooings"⁵⁸ in the form of penance could please God. The act of auricular confession would not officially return to the Anglican Church until the nineteenth century. In using the metaphor of "satisfaction" in the part of the play where errors are resolved, Shakespeare colludes with a Catholic reading of the efficacy of making satisfaction, if only at a figurative level.

In recognising such tropes as distinctively and therefore troublingly Catholic the audience feel the friction between the logic organising the fictional world and that underpinning the real world. This tension is particularly acute in the shared sonnet in *Romeo and Juliet* due to the extended nature of the metaphor and the intimate situation which both includes and excludes the audience. The juxtaposition, or rather the compounding, of illegal otherness with Catholic signification that moves along a romantic axis serves to make permeable the othering differences asserted by polemical

⁵⁶ *OED*, s.v. "satisfaction", 2.

⁵⁷ J. Calvin, *The Sermons of M John Caluin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie*, (trans. A. Golding, London, 1583; facs. edn., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), p. 849.

⁵⁸ Calvin, p. 140.

discourse. It is not that the play immediately unhinges the workings of Catholic difference, but rather that because Catholic signification is inescapably also embedded in a reforming doctrine, certainties are questioned. Metaphors are fundamentally unstable because they are formed by the linking of multiple elements that happen to share points of correspondence but are mostly different. If the transformative element of the metaphor (the saintly statue) is itself a site of semiotic tension (permitting diametrically opposed sectarian readings) then this “instability” is increased, as is the realm of potential signification. In keeping with the dominance of the figure of oxymoron in this play Catholic semiotics are entangled with their reformed opposite.

Idols had a central position in anti-Catholic polemic. In writing to Elizabeth about the evils of images in churches, Archbishop Parker joined a familiar iconoclast refrain, asserting that the Book of Wisdom “said the invention of [images] was the beginning of spiritual fornication”.⁵⁹ Just as the Roman Catholic Church itself was often figured as the “whore of Babylon” (superficially beautiful but internally disgusting and luring men to spiritual depravity akin to adultery to the “true Church”) so too was there uneasiness about the sensual (sensory and sexual) allure of visual images. Hence the condemnation of idols was often figured in gendered terms. This trope of a female saintly statue in a scene marking the initiation of sexual love may have seemed ominous.

⁵⁹ *The Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, ed. J. Bruce and T. T. Perowne (Cambridge, 1853), p. 82.

Another foreboding connotation might have arisen due to the frequent assertion that idols were “dead”.⁶⁰ In the first part of the “Homilie agaynst perill of Idolatry” we are told that “they be dead, haue eyes and see not, handes and feele not, feete and can not go, &c. and therefore they can not be fytted similitudes of the lyuyng God.”⁶¹ The second part declares that “it were an vnworthy thing that the Image of the lyuyng God, shoulde become the ymage of a dead ydoll.”⁶² The “dead and dombe works of mans handes” are also railed against in the third part: “Howe can a dead and dombe Image, expresse the lyuyng God?”; “they be no yimages of Saintes, whose soules raighe in ioy with God, but of the bodies of Saintes, whiche as yet lye putrefied in the graues”.⁶³ This “unholy” conflation of the living image and the dead idol seems likely to have been a concept familiar to Shakespeare and his audience through such homilies.⁶⁴ The sense of the saintly statue imagery being both positively dynamic in the romance *and* also ominously associated with death fits in with the play’s ambivalent drive towards *Eros* (love as the urge for life) and *thanatos* (desire for annihilation) that Coppélia Kahn has noted.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ For an analysis of reformist efforts to assert the absolute “deadness” of inorganic substances and the troublingly organic corpse see S. Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), pp. 24-89; and also my discussion of *The Winter’s Tale’s* lively statue and animated corpses in Chapter 6.

⁶¹ *Sermons*, sig. Cc4r.

⁶² *Sermons*, sig. Ddr.

⁶³ *Sermons*, sigs. Gg3r, Ff4v, Ff6v.

⁶⁴ It should be noted that the use or rejection of images was a contentious issue. Elizabeth made changes to this homily that reduced the stridency of its iconoclasm and also tightened the restrictions on the people invited to read the third part, and while she permitted the second book of Homilies (in which it appeared) to be printed, unlike the first book it “carried no explicit royal directions for use”; M. Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988), p. 324.

⁶⁵ See C. Kahn, “Coming of Age in Verona”, in *The Woman’s Part*, ed. R. Swift Lenz et al. (Urbana and London: U of Illinois P, 1980), pp. 171-93.

Juliet affirms the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signifieds, not only declaring “That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet” (2.1.86-7) but also claiming that Romeo can “doff” (2.1.90) the social meaning (“enemy”; 2.1.81) of his name “Montague” and even lose the label “Romeo” so that they can live unfettered by onomastic associations. The outcome of the play suggests otherwise, asserting the inescapability of onomastic significance: “Romeo” means “pilgrim” so he is destined to love Juliet; he is also a Montague to Juliet’s Capulet, and they live in a social realm where those patronymics mean feud and death.⁶⁶ Shakespeare’s representations of Catholicism in the play tread a similar line, at once denying their contemporary anti-Catholic significance and simultaneously embedding the representations in that semantic realm. Both the Catholic and anti-Catholic readings of Catholic signifiers take real effect and play a part in the chiasmic force of the play. During the shared sonnet of 1.4, Juliet’s association with a saintly statue may well have called to mind those anti-Catholic connotations of a dead interior, and this trope takes “real” force in the drama’s action. This sense of Juliet being linked with death is drawn out by a string of references to her in which death is her bridegroom.⁶⁷

While the chiasmic instability of Catholic metaphor is congruent with the artistic pattern of *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Comedy of Errors* the potential bifurcated meaning of the Catholic

⁶⁶ Discussion taken from L. E. Maguire, *Studying Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 23-6.

⁶⁷ 3.2.136-7, 3.5.139, 3.5.200-1, 4.1.107-8 and 4.4.61-65.

signifier is held together by the Christian context of the play. In a drama that seeks to cope with the paradoxes within one entity (one appearance/two twins, one word/two meanings) this play tacitly ignores the potential division of Christianity into Catholics and Protestants. That Shakespeare uses Catholic signifiers (contemporary referents of this bifurcation) ensures that the audience would have been aware of this unspoken unification. Catholic metaphors thus operate differently in the two plays, but in both they are subversive of conventional anti-Catholic discourse.

Endings and Catholic Structures

In *Romeo and Juliet* the force of denominational ambivalence is unleashed not just conceptually, but also in terms of the outcome of the play: a sign that is read differently in different semiotic systems has both of those meanings fulfilled within the terms of the plot. These actual meanings accumulate in the tragic dénouement. When Romeo (“pilgrim”) enters Juliet’s tomb he apparently completes his pilgrimage begun at that first shared sonnet with his “dear saint”. The tomb is a shrine for his idol. On seeing her he declares:

Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,
 Hath had 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. (5.3.92-6)

In keeping with the contemporary Protestant polemic examined earlier here is a lively-seeming idol ostensibly dead on the inside.

Anti-Catholic propaganda is actualised as the Catholic pilgrim finds a dead idol. But the reforming reading of the idol as an unholy oxymoron (living appearance and dead reality) is complicated by the further paradox of Juliet's being alive.⁶⁸ Our emotional involvement with the romance of the situation means we are desperate for the image of the "dead" idol to be exposed as false.

The inevitably tragic close of the play sees the remaining characters attempting to reinterpret the lives of Romeo and Juliet in a civic narrative that is most pertinent to those still alive. The Prince declares:

See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love[.]
(5.3.292-3)⁶⁹

Here the Prince strives to contain the couple in a judicial discourse supported by the weight of divine judgment. Meaning is focused on those left alive and living under his rule: the repetition of "your" puts the emphasis on the parents' loss and the parents' crime, rather than on Romeo and Juliet as individuals. But we also learn that the lovers' metaphorical statue is to be materialised:

Montague For I will ray her statue in pure gold,
That whiles Verona by that name is known,
There shall no figure at such rate be set
As that of true and faithful Juliet.
Capulet As rich shall Romeo's by his lady's lie[.]
(5.3.299-303)

⁶⁸ Ultimately, paradox is also ontologically realised since, as Rosalie L. Colie tells us, suicide is "self-contradiction at its irrevocable extremity"; *Paradoxia Epidemica* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1966), p. 486.

⁶⁹ This appropriately paradoxical gloss eschews the sectarian interpretation that contemporary polemicists attempted to attach to suicide whereby the writers of both confessions sought to label the "other" faith "the doctrine of desperation" and a cause of suicide. See M. MacDonald and T. R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990), p. 67.

Funeral monuments were popular in early modern England.⁷⁰ As we shall see more fully in Chapter 6 their effigial art at once provided an orthodox substitute for pre-Reformation religious images and were also ideologically attached to what they replaced. A minority of reformists continued to articulate an iconoclastic distaste for this function throughout the period, so that in 1592 there were people for William Wyrley to mock as “so precise [...] that they do disallowe altogether the setting foorth of any memory of well deseruing men”.⁷¹ However, the more common complaint lodged against funeral monuments was the breach of propriety whereby those lower down the social scale were memorialised with materials that conservatives thought should be restricted to the celebration of nobility.⁷² The gold of the proposed statue in *Romeo and Juliet* is a hyperbolic realisation of both concerns. Since the substance of “highest rank” in funerary art reserved for use “on the tombs of princes” was bronze,⁷³ gold seems dangerously ostentatious. This material also flags up the superstitious potential of effigial art since, as Philippa Berry points out, the proposed statues provide an “idolatrous echo of the cults of saints”.⁷⁴ Indeed

⁷⁰ See N. Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 6-14.

⁷¹ W. Wyrley, *The True Vse of Armorie* (London, 1592), sig. C3r.

⁷² Llewellyn, p. 248.

⁷³ M. Howard and N. Llewellyn, “Painting and Imagery”, in *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Great Britain: Vol. 3 Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. B. Ford (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 222-59 (p. 241).

⁷⁴ P. Berry, *Shakespeare’s Feminine Endings* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 36. Barbara A. Mowat tells us that one of Montague’s lines is usually (though not in the Oxford edition used here) emended from Quarto 2’s use of the word “ray” to read: “I will raise her statue in pure gold.” Describing her own methods of editing the play Mowat says “After checking early uses of *ray*, finding that it could be the short form of ‘array’ or ‘decorate,’ checking the dialogue in which the line appears, which contains the declaration that Juliet’s statue will *lie* by that of Romeo, and meditating on Shakespeare’s other references to sarcophagi and their gilding (for example, Sonnet 55, with its reference to ‘the gilded monuments of princes’), we decided to break with tradition and retain Q2’s *ray*”; “The Problem of

the “Homilie agaynst peril of Idolatry” complains that “the corruption of these latter dayes, hath brought into the Church infinite multitudes of ymages [...] decked with golde and syluer”.⁷⁵

Funeral monuments provided a means for the living to concretise a narrative about the departed and about their own social standing. As much as these monumental plans celebrate the young lovers they also appropriate their tragedy as a familial discourse. The statues will paradoxically transform and perpetuate the feud as Capulet and Montague compete in exhibitions of generosity: Montague promises a statue that is “more” (5.3.298) than Capulet’s “jointure” (5.3.297) and Capulet meets the offer with another monument “As rich” (5.3.303). Furthermore, the statues will bespeak the continued presence of Romeo and Juliet in the civic narrative of Verona while simultaneously indicating their absence. The theological problematics associated with the golden statues thus play a part of the broader contradictory tensions that are figured in the denouement. The chiasmic mode of the play endures through its final moments in a manner that deepens the major tragic paradox: the death of the lovers is at once a consummation of their love and a pitiful waste. Shakespeare shows that oppositional elements often coexist in the world and it is appropriate that the play’s chief spokesperson for ambivalence,

Shakespeare’s Text(s)”, in *Textual Formations and Reformations*, ed. L. E. Maguire and T. L. Berger (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998), pp. 131-48 (p. 143). The promise of a *gilded* statue lexically links the terms of this truce with anti-Catholic rhetoric about the deceptively beautiful surfaces of idols.

⁷⁵ *Sermons*, sig. Bb6v.

Friar Lawrence, is given the task of the lengthy narration of the action of the play. Georgia Brown describes paradox as:

question[ing] traditional frameworks of apprehension
by turning established categories into new formulations
that nevertheless have their roots in those old categories.
Liminal forms, such as paradox, that work on the endless
dialectic of statement and counter-statement are ways of extending
thought whilst still remaining within the limits of the
thinkable.⁷⁶

Shakespeare's juxtaposition of Catholic and anti-Catholic semantics is a part of, not the point of, the tragedy's paradoxical mode. In this dramatic consideration of love and death one of the different "traditional frameworks" by which these topics are usually apprehended is religion, and it is loosed from its discursive coordinates. Sectarian meaning is not schematised into the two sides of the feud, Capulet and Montague. Rather, by verbalising a "new formulation" of sectarian difference not as a neutral binary but as a fluid dialectic Shakespeare creates textual images that are of the audience's world, but which do not insist on orthodox (that is, conventional and de-personalised) responses. *Romeo and Juliet* is thus not only what some call a "timeless" text, but also a timely one, that engages with the epistemological identity of its post-Reformation audience.

In the final scene of *The Comedy of Errors* the mistakes and the insistent ticking of the clock in the main body of the play

⁷⁶ G. Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 28.

transform to a romance world replete with a Catholic space (the Abbey) and character (the Abbess). In the first four acts of the play references to clock time abound; they structure ideas of domesticity: “The clock hath stricken twelve upon the bell, / My mistress made it one upon my cheek. / She is so hot because the meat is cold” (1.2.45-7), “My wife is shrewish when I keep not hours” (3.1.2); of mercantile agreement: “He had of me a chain. At five o’clock / I shall receive the money for the same” (4.1.10-11); and of civic justice: “I’ll limit thee this day / To seek thy hope by beneficial help” (1.1.149-150). The immediacy of the world of errors is created not simply through the pressure of the ticking clock, but also by the way these temporal allusions are tethered to aspects of everyday life to which the audience can relate. Time in Ephesus corresponds ideologically with Elizabethan time.

The slowing of pace that occurs with the second entrance of the Abbess creates a different temporality. For all that the new order that she brings seems more “normal” and “real” (with the resolution of coincidence that could only perpetuate to such a degree in an imaginary space), it is nevertheless simply a different kind of fiction that lays bare its fantastical nature through temporal codes. The Abbess steps onto the stage from the world of romance, where long-lost family members find each other; she speaks of “nativity” (5.1.406) and her associations with Virgin Mary call to mind the beginning of Christian time; and she steps out of a Catholic past. The only way an Abbess could appear in Elizabethan

England was as a representation and thus her very presence is a visible fiction. When the characters move into the future, beyond the limits of the play, they move into a Catholic space that the audience do not share: the Abbey's interior is beyond the limits of the staged setting and also out of reach of the Elizabethan present – part of a Catholic past marked off in legal terms by the Reformation. Comedies often end with marriages, procreative bonds which point to the future. In *The Comedy of Errors* the characters move on to the renewal of previous family ties, while Shakespeare shows his audience a past that contemporary polemics made difficult to reconcile with the present in the same unifying terms that the play has explored. The nostalgic implications of celebrating unity and old bonds trouble contemporary, conventional anti-Catholic sentiment. There is perhaps a sense of loss that the Catholicism of the comedy's future is already part of the audience's past.

Even after Emilia has provided the crucial narrative explanation for the day's farce (“thou be'st the man / That hadst a wife once called Emilia, / That bore thee at a burden two fair sons”; 5.1.342-4) accurate interpretation of the sets of twins proves comically difficult: the Duke declares “I know not which is which” (5.1.365) and Adriana asks “Which of you two did dine with me today?” (5.1.370) and “are not you my husband?” (5.1.372). The play's anagnorisis takes the form of the recognition of sets of twins so that, as Ros King points out, “reconciliation [is achieved]

through an acknowledgement of *difference*.”⁷⁷ For the audience this process is ideologically inflected. Full interpretive resolution is proposed through story-telling in the Abbey, where the Duke is to “hear at large discoursèd all our fortunes” (5.1.397). This discourse is linked with the Catholic sacrament of confession through “satisfaction” (5.1.401) and the more generally Christian sacrament of baptism through the metaphor of the “gossips’ feast” (5.1.407). Since the Duke plans to “gossip at this feast” (5.1.409) he becomes, figuratively, a part of the reunited family, through a “contracted spiritual affinity”.⁷⁸ The unification Paul urged of the Ephesians to whom he wrote is achieved by Shakespeare’s Syracusans and Ephesians. The new linguistic stability (the play’s insistent punning has fallen away), the understanding of errors and the reunion of a family is spatially (due to the Abbey) and metaphorically (due to the Catholic imagery) found in Catholic representation. At the end of Renaissance plays we find a drive to the “reconciliation of individual and social desires”⁷⁹ and at the end of this play we find that reconciliation ordered through Catholicism, but a Catholicism that has not been expelled from Christian signification.

Iconography and Bazmark

⁷⁷ W. Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors: Updated Edition*, ed. T. S. Dorsch, introduction by R. King (1988, R/P Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 11.

⁷⁸ *OED*, s.v. “gossip”, 1.

⁷⁹ L. E. Beuler, “The Structural Uses of Incest in English Renaissance Drama”, *Renaissance Drama*, 15 (1984), 115-45 (145).

Like its early modern source Baz Luhrmann's post-modern film *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996) employs Catholic semiotics to structure its artistry. The religious persuasion of "Verona Beach" is registered through iconography: the writing of Catholic images on different surfaces.⁸⁰ Tybalt's bullet-proof vest is embroidered with the image of Christ with the sacred heart; Friar Lawrence is tattooed with a Celtic cross; angel stickers are glued onto Juliet's bedroom wall; one of the Capulet boys has a cross shaved into the back of his head; Tybalt's gun is imprinted with a picture of the Madonna with a burning heart; and the sacred heart is also found stamped into the brass of the church door, stitched into Friar Lawrence's vestments and printed on the front of one of Romeo's Hawaiian shirts. This list is far from comprehensive. Such Catholic iconography forms part of the film's desirable aesthetic (made up of vivid colours, teenage fashions and beautiful bodies). A fan-website devoted to the movie enumerates "Signs that you are obsessed with *Romeo + Juliet*", number eleven of which is: "You suddenly have an obsession with angels, Catholic imagery and bright Hawaiian shirts."⁸¹ The coupling of "Catholic imagery" with "Hawaiian shirts" indicates the way in which Bazmark's (Luhrmann's production company) Catholicism of the surface is readily commodifiable; indeed it has found its way onto

⁸⁰ For a discussion on "superficiality" in Luhrmann's film see C. Lehmann, "Strictly Shakespeare?", *SQ*, 52 (2001), 189-221.

⁸¹ As quoted in J. N. Loehlin, "These Violent Delights Have Violent Ends", in *Shakespeare, Film, Fin de Siècle*, ed. M. T. Burnett and R. Wray (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 121-36 (p. 131).

much of the merchandise of the film. Catholic iconography acts as a kind of tribal marker both within the film and for its teenage fans.

If the vast majority of Catholic representation in the film is at the level of a surface, there is no sense that Luhrmann's aim is to criticise the visuality of Catholic ritual. Juliet's Barbie-doll relationship with her Madonna statues provides her with a space for expression when Luhrmann has her pray her "serpent heart" thoughts about Romeo before her mini-shrine. Luhrmann himself has said that he wanted to create a world where religion was at the centre of the state: architecturally the Jesus statue stands central.⁸² Catholic iconography plays an important role in creating the "mythic aesthetic" of the film. Not unlike Shakespeare's diachronic space, Luhrmann's post-modern Verona Beach is an unreal amalgam of geographies (Mexico and L.A.), ethnicities, cinematic genre (Westerns, gangster movies, and James Dean films, etc.) and, of course, of Elizabethan language in a modern world. The excessive Catholic iconography contributes to the post-modern feel of the film where all these mixtures "operate allegorically, and involve the viewer in sophisticated strategies of interpretation. So we are required to decipher what this constructed world stands for and how it comments on our own."⁸³ A central image in the Bazmark-Catholic iconography is that of the "sacred heart" which not only appears on the surfaces listed above, but also flashes onto

⁸² DVD commentary, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* [1996] (Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2002) ASIN: B000050WVNZ.

⁸³ J. Arroyo, "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang", in *Action/Spectacle Cinema*, ed. J. Arroyo (London: British Film Institute, 2000), pp. 205-10 (p. 207).

the screen almost subliminally during the Friar's fantasy of a Capulet/Montague peace and in Romeo's nightmare recollection of Tybalt's death. The image is one of a heart (drawn symbolically rather than with anatomical accuracy) that powerfully burns and radiates light, but is also wounded by the thorns twisted round it. In Catholic theology this image recalls Christ's human and divine state, and foregrounds a heavenly love that endured human suffering to bring life through death. The icon thus symbolizes central Christian paradoxes. In Luhrmann's film it adds to the oxymoronic mode of Shakespeare's text, just as we have seen that a 1590s' understanding of the representations of Catholicism also reinforced the play's paradoxes. Tybalt declares "Peace? I hate the word" while bearing the emblem of Christ with the sacred heart across his chest. He kisses the image of the Madonna with the burning heart on his gun before firing it. Thus Catholic images of peace and love are proudly revered prior to actions of violence and hate. This paradoxical juxtaposition may recall the movie stereotype of Catholic Mafiosi (see, for example, the end of *The Godfather: Part I* where images of Michael Corleone's sacramental rejection of Satan are inter-cut with shots of the murders he has organised as he becomes a spiritual and mafia Godfather). The iconographic nature of the recurring sacred heart image gives a spiritual resonance to the love of Romeo and Juliet, while simultaneously foregrounding a contrary sense of aesthetic (through its overtly iconographic status) and the act of

representation, thus interrogating our position as consumers of a love story, revelling in the beauty of the representations themselves. Both Shakespeare's theatrical and Luhrmann's filmic use of Catholicism engage the audience in interpretative possibilities rather than polemically delimiting meaning.

Having given Catholic semiotics the artistic recognition that is often ignored in critical accounts too eager to distort drama into dogma and assert rather than analyse binaries, I will now turn to a play where the religio-political allusions, obscure to most twenty-first-century spectators, would have been immediately recognisable to Elizabethan audiences. And I am going to take up Juliet's question: "What's in a name?" (2.1.86).

Chapter 2

Naming Conversion: *Love's Labour's Lost*⁸⁴

⁸⁴ I am grateful to Henry Woudhuysen for his invaluable advice on an earlier draft of this chapter, and to the participants and auditors of the "Shakespearean Catholicities" seminar at the 2005 SAA Conference where I presented material from this paper.

Navarre of *Love's Labour's Lost* shares his name with a man who for a short period prior to 1593 was "the most famous and beloved non-English person of the time."⁸⁵ Henri IV of France, King of Navarre had been fighting the Protestant cause in the French religious wars, to great acclaim in England. However, in July 1593 the name "Navarre" gained new Catholic significance when Henri abjured Protestantism and converted to Catholicism in a move which if not spiritually insincere was certainly politically expedient. The Catholic signifiers that we found in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Comedy of Errors* are imbued not just with the anti-Catholic associations of the Elizabethan present but also the Catholic meaning accrued over many centuries prior to Reformation. The "Navarre" of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Ferdinand rather than Henri) alludes to a Catholic signifier that has, peculiarly, a Protestant history. Furthermore, Shakespeare's Navarre is a representation that apparently does little to represent its topical referent, and is a character that has few individuating characteristics.

For the English populace throughout the 1590s, anxiety about Protestant Navarre's martial success and Catholic Navarre's spiritual health was felt in a range of different ways. Morning and evening prayers featured petitions to God for the success of the Protestant King in winning his country from the Catholic League,⁸⁶ the English Government sent money to assist this operation, and

⁸⁵ P. Voss, *Elizabethan News Pamphlets* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001), p. 103.

⁸⁶ *Liturgical Services of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. W. K. Clay (Cambridge: CUP, 1847), pp. 647-51.

families sent loved ones as soldiers to protect the Protestant faith generally and England specifically.⁸⁷ The proximity of France rendered it a potential station for Catholic invasion should the Catholic League defeat Navarre. Furthermore, English Protestants could respond emotionally and spiritually to a martial hero whose endeavours looked set to confirm their view that the rest of the world would join England in a providential and reformed future. In order to secure victory in Paris the man who was once famed for his Protestantism converted to the infamous Roman Catholic religion. Gabriel Harvey cited “Nauarre wooes Roome” as an example of how 1593 was a “wonderfull” (i.e. astonishing) year.⁸⁸

In the past, the (few) critics who have demonstrated the topical nature of certain names in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* have not considered Henri of Navarre’s conversion as central to the contemporary connotations.⁸⁹ Even Paul Voss, whose fascinating and detailed analysis provides the foundation for this chapter, speculates that the “newly corrected and augmented” extant text has been supplemented by an oath-breaking story missing from an original play written prior to Henri of Navarre’s 1593 denominational change.⁹⁰ It seems incredible to Voss that

⁸⁷ Elizabethan subjects were also prohibited from assisting the French King’s enemies; see *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, 3 vols, iii (New Haven: Yale UP, 1964-69), pp. 77-9.

⁸⁸ G. Harvey, *A new letter of notable contents With a straunge sonet, intituled Gorgon, or the wonderfull yeare* (London, 1593), sig. D3r.

⁸⁹ See C. Asquith, “Oxford University and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*”, in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity*, ed. D. Taylor and D. Beauregard (New York: Fordham UP, 2003), pp. 80-102; M. E. Lamb, “The Nature of Topicality”, *SS*, 38 (1985), 49-59; H. Richmond, “Shakespeare’s Navarre”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 42 (1978-79), 193-216; A. H. Tricomi, “The Witty Idealization of the French Court in *Love’s Labor’s Lost*”, *SSt*, 12 (1979), 25-33; and Voss.

⁹⁰ *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, title page to 1598 quarto. Arthur Freeman and Paul Grinke have discovered documentary evidence for an earlier quarto of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: a catalogue of Viscount Conway’s books lists “Loves Labours Lost by W: Sha: 1597” (an edition which would have been lost with the

Shakespeare, writing before 1593, could coincidentally anticipate an act of oath-breaking; but he thinks it equally unlikely that the playwright would choose to write a play with a central character called Navarre after the topical counterpart's maligned conversion.⁹¹ Given the centrality of the theatrical Navarre's oath-breaking to an otherwise plotless play I am unconvinced by this argument. It is my proposal that the topical constellation of names is introduced precisely *because* of the anxiety generated by the conversion and the violent struggles to succeed to the French throne. Voss's argument is influenced by his awareness of the disappearance of one kind of textual representation of Navarre: the news pamphlets celebrating the soldier king cease to be published at the same time that Navarre ceases to be a Protestant, even though the wars were to rage on until 1598. But *Love's Labour's Lost* is not a eulogistic piece of journalism and so we should not think it subject to the same imperatives as the popular Protestant press. Instead it is important to situate Shakespeare's Navarre in this newly-created representational void. The absence of the previously ubiquitous Navarre-focused news quartos indicates how this particular conversion confounded the familiar strategies of representing the French King. Recent criticism has shown how Spenser uses the Burbon episode in *The Faerie Queene* to foreground the moral difficulties attendant on Elizabeth's

rest of Conway's books in a fire of 1641); "Four New Shakespeare Quartos", *TLS*, 5 April 2002, pp. 17-18 (p.18). (Though note that the number of "discovered" lost plays was reduced to three in their letter to *TLS*, 14 June 2002, p. 17.) Since even this earlier edition post-dates Navarre's conversion it remains unlikely that the oath-breaking story formed part of the later quarto's "augmentations".

⁹¹ Voss, p. 138.

continued support of the apostate king,⁹² and so it is not implausible that Shakespeare should introduce onomastic tension into his text by writing about a “Navarre” after Henri of Navarre’s conversion. This chapter will consider the ways in which Shakespeare associates these denominationally difficult onomastics with linguistic slippage and consider how the French civil war context influences the structure and generic rupture of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Ironic Onomastics

The names of the main male characters in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* are insistently topical. Not only does this comedy feature a king called Navarre, but that contemporary frame of reference is highlighted and widened by the presence of Berowne (alluding to Armand de Gontant, Marshall Biron, a loyal adherent of Navarre), Longaville (Henry of Orleans, the Duke of Longueville, a loyalist Catholic who came to fight against the League with Navarre),⁹³ Dumaine (Charles of Lorraine, the Duke of Mayenne, a well-known Catholic opponent until 1595),⁹⁴ Boyet (Boyet, leader of the Huguenot forces). Even Moth and Marcade have their topical counterparts

⁹² See L. Gallagher, *Medusa’s Gaze* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991); T. Gregory, “Shadowing Intervention”, *ELH*, 67 (2000), 365-97; and A. L. Prescott, “Foreign Policy in Fairyland”, *Spenser Studies*, 14 (2001), 189-214.

⁹³ See Voss, p. 135.

⁹⁴ Known as the “Duke de Maine” and as Navarre’s enemy in a great number of texts. See, for example, *The Mutable and wauering estate of France* (London, 1597), sig. M3v; *An excellent ditty made vpon the great victory, which the French king obtayned against the Duke de Maine, and the Romish rebels in his kingdome* (London, 1590); and *A briefe declaration of the yeelding vp of Saint Denis to the French king the 29. of Iune, 1590* (London, 1590), sigs. B2v. For an alternative reading of the contemporary literary significance of the Marcade-Mercury-Boyet nexus see F. W. Clayton and M. Tudeau-Clayton, “Mercury, Boy Yet and the ‘Harsh’ Words of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*”, *SS*, 27 (2004), 209-24.

(the French governor of Gravelines, la Mothe and the Catholic Duke of Mercouer respectively).⁹⁵ Armado may also allude to the Spanish support of the Catholic League in France. Numerous news quartos celebrating Navarre's martial and spiritual heroism kept the Elizabethan public aware of this context. Voss points out that given the accessibility and proliferation of information on current events in France, audiences in the 1590s were more likely to be familiar with the topicality of the reference in *Love's Labour's Lost* and its deviations from news stories, than they would have been with classical or chronicle sources to other plays.⁹⁶

The representation of characters who share names with famous living people in *Love's Labour's Lost* is unique in the Shakespeare canon and unusual in other Renaissance drama. Of course sixteenth-century productions, like twenty-first-century drama, often carried contemporary allusions. Plays might hide contemporary references beneath a character name, but they simultaneously lampooned real people with devastatingly accurate representations. (Middleton famously got into trouble with the Privy Council for the similarity between the former Spanish Ambassador, Gondomar, and the character of the Black Knight in *A Game at Chess*.) *Love's Labour's Lost* inverts this analogical process. The names of the chief male protagonists are glaringly topical to a 1590s audience and yet their contemporary

⁹⁵ See Voss, p. 125; and W. Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998), pp. 67-8, 344-45.

⁹⁶ Voss, pp. 129-30.

associations with sectarian warfare and conversion are transmuted into romantic comedy's battle of the sexes and the failure to keep an over-the-top oath of scholarly asceticism. Shakespeare uses specifically famous names only to avoid historical detail. Instead of engaging in character assassinations, he represents his four lords as markedly similar, though their real-life counterparts differed in age, religion and political opinion.⁹⁷ Catholic characters in Renaissance drama more often invite scornful laughter rather than joyous delight. In representing Catholic characters such as friars or bishops as comic stooges, Protestant playwrights were able to ridicule the Catholic faith in a manner that both made a specific theological point (clergy are hypocritically lecherous, greedy etc.) and also marked that faith as contemptuous. For all that an Elizabethan audience might have found it satisfying to see the great soldier king and notorious womaniser reduced to a foolish lover who is repeatedly humiliated, the play invites the audience to "delight" in his mistakes.⁹⁸ Albert H. Tricomi describes Shakespeare's representation of the lords as an "idealization" that "charmingly refuses to acknowledge [contemporary sectarian issues] in any but a metaphoric way"⁹⁹. Certainly this was a period of Reformation, of re-forming old signs in a way that purged them of their Catholic meaning. (For example, papist holy water stoups were translated into secular wash troughs, and sanctus and sacring

⁹⁷ Voss, p. 135.

⁹⁸ In using the term "Elizabethan audience" I do not mean to imply that we should understand as homogenous a group of people who were varied in their confessional and political allegiances, but acknowledge the way the Elizabethan public were subject to certain strategies of acculturation.

⁹⁹ A. H. Tricomi, "The Witty Idealization", *SS*, 12 (1979), 25-33 (31).

bells were hung on sheep and cows.¹⁰⁰) But to see Shakespeare as another reformer, stripping Navarre of Catholic meaning and representing him as a neutrally comic figure is to elide the more problematic aspects of the play: its strange ending, the perpetual linguistic slippage, and most importantly, the fact that irony and idealisation make poor bedfellows.

Kenneth Burke tells us that another word for irony is dialectic.¹⁰¹ The ironic naming system in *Love's Labour's Lost* means that the play does not simply move away from the disturbingly topical, but rather ensures that the audience's understanding oscillates between the contemporary and the comic. To understand the play only in terms of escapism is to deny the way irony continually returns the audience to that from which they are trying to escape. For instance, the audience's attitude to the theatrical Navarre's oath-breaking is the inverse of what we would expect to be the popular Protestant attitude to the real Navarre's conversion. The dramatised oath has undertones of ascetic Catholicism (pithily summed up by Berowne as "Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep"; 1.1.48) and dramatic expectation means the audience *want* Navarre to break it. Prior to his conversion not only was Henri reputed to be "a true fulfiller of his word and promise" in general terms,¹⁰² but his reformed faith was also figured in terms

¹⁰⁰ See E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992), p. 586.

¹⁰¹ K. Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945, R/P Berkeley: U of California P, 1969), p. 503.

¹⁰² *The Coppie of a Letter sent into England* (London, 1590), sig. Bv.

of an “oath” and a “promise”. The Huguenot Du Bartas celebrated Henri’s Protestant allegiance thus:

[The world d]id neuer’ see a prince religiouslie more
 loath
 To shake in any sort his honnor-binding oath.
 Offer vnto my Lord the crowne of *Germanie*
 The diadem of *Spaine*, the Turks *Grand-Signorie*:
 Yea make him *Monarch* of the world (by guile)
 Hee’l spurne al sceptres, fore his faith defile.¹⁰³

Even some French Catholics, who prayed for a heartfelt conversion on the part of their king, understood his Protestantism as “the expresse commandement that his mother the Q. of Nauarre at her decease gaue and left vnto him, as it were a testamentarie legacie” and cautioned against a conversion based on expediency using language which related religion to promises: “Banish the ceremonies of our vows in matters of greatest co[n]science, as religion, and ye shall ere ye be aware banish a great part of all religions”.¹⁰⁴ Thus the dramatised Navarre’s promise also alludes to a spiritually and politically important oath that reformed Elizabethans did not want or expect the real Navarre to break. Frightening sectarian instability is transformed into a genre intended to delight. The fact that poems from the play appeared in Elizabethan anthologies simply as love poems indicates how beguiling this aspect of the drama is.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the topical is not so easily transmuted, especially since Shakespeare lays bare

¹⁰³ G. du Bartas, *A Canticle of the victorie obtained by the French King, Henrie the fourth* (trans. Joshua Sylvester, London, 1590), sig. [B2v]. [For EEBO access see STC 21672, UMI collection/reel number: 469:08.]

¹⁰⁴ *An answere to the supplication Against him, who seeming to giue the king counsel to become a catholike* (trans. Edward Aggas, London, 1591), sigs. B3r, B3v.

¹⁰⁵ See *The Passionate Pilgrim* (London, 1599); *England’s Helicon* (London, 1600); *England’s Parnassus* (London, 1600); and *Belvedere* (London, 1600).

the problems of representation, signification and escapism.

Notably, the lords twice fail to live out their escapist fantasies: sexual desire disrupts their chaste scholarly programme, and death and female scepticism delay their attempt to validate that desire as a romantic happy ending.¹⁰⁶

While France's ongoing wars of religion receive no mention in the play, martial imagery is used to describe the lords' attempts at scholarly exclusion and romance, and the ladies' defence against courtship:

Therefore, brave conquerors – for so you are,
That war against your own affections
And the huge army of the world's desires –
Our late edict shall strongly stand in force. (1.1.8-11)

King [...] And, soldiers, to the field!
Berowne Advance your standards and upon them,
lords!

Pell-mell, down with them! But be first advised
In conflict that you get the sun of them. (4.3.340-3)

Prepare, madam, prepare!
Arm, wenches, arm! Encounters mounted are
Against your peace. Love doth approach disguised,
Armed in arguments: you'll be surprised.
Muster your wits, stand in your own defence,
Or hide your heads like cowards and fly hence. (5.2.81-
86)¹⁰⁷

The military theme from the news quartos which stop being printed with Henri's conversion gets displaced into the alternative textual space of a play; it is further distanced by its metaphoric status in the drama. Combined with the topical names in the play the military metaphors serve to remind the audience of what is *not*

¹⁰⁶ Some productions have highlighted the wilful insistence on this naïve if delightful retreat, with the Branagh film, for example, setting the play against a backdrop of World War II.

¹⁰⁷ Other military language is to be found at 2.1.86, 2.1.225, 3.1.61-2 and 3.1.78.

being represented. If the comic comments on the topical names as an idealistic expression of how life can be, then the topical puts pressure on the comic, making clear its inadequacy to report on all aspects of life.

Theological Mutability and Linguistic Slippage

If this revision of the convert King into a comic oath-breaker is deliberately unsettling, then it is an appropriate response to the nature of conversion. Conversion destabilises meaning. While it may have been something of a fiction, Elizabethans were taught that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism were distinct and oppositional confessional categories. Michael Questier tells us:

When an individual converted to Rome, he demonstrated the existence of a hidden fund of latent popery about which Protestants had every reason to be anxious. Paradoxically, most conversions from Rome also emphasised the instability of the religious settlement since they dressed up the providential Protestant home-coming in the language of escape from almost certain spiritual death and the alluring attractiveness to the majority of idolatry and superstition. Virtually all conversions, therefore, were a visible index of man's general tendency to stagger in religion.¹⁰⁸

The conversion of Henri Navarre enacted a particularly disruptive change in meaning. Elizabethans primarily knew him as

¹⁰⁸ M. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) p. 8.

a Protestant, one whose confessional allegiance had been defined by his martial opposition to Catholicism. One news pamphlet declared that:

The Lord [...] hath preserved this most worthy Prince,
for the better
enlarging of his Gospell, to be a worthy follower of our
most
famous King, King Henry the eight, in [the] pulling
down of
Papistry, and all their diuelish deuises.¹⁰⁹

This pamphlet's representation of the "worthy Prince" elides national and temporal boundaries: at one with the past anti-Catholic victories of "our [...] King Henry the eight", Navarre's current martial struggles work to bring about the reformed future ordained by "The Lord". The epistemological glue that seals this typological image is Navarre's active Protestantism. Reformed Elizabethans had equated Navarre's religion with fidelity itself. In 1590, pamphlets containing *The oration and declaration of the French king* celebrated Navarre's fidelity to his faith in the face of temptations to recant and keep the support of the Catholic nobles.¹¹⁰ His constancy and his Protestantism are shown to be symbiotic. He asserted that "neyther this Crowne, nor the Empire of all the whole earth were able to make me chaunge the Religion wherein I haue bene brought uppe" and that "I am resolved [...] not

¹⁰⁹ *A briefe declaration of the yeelding vp of Saint Denis to the French king the 29. Iune, 1590* (London, 1590), sig. B2v.

¹¹⁰ This pamphlet was published by Shakespeare's Stratford contemporary, Richard Field, so it is possible that Shakespeare had particularly easy access to such material given that he seems to have maintained contact with the man who printed *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) and who is alluded to in *Cymbeline* as 'Richard du Champ' (4.2.377).

to varie nor chaunge in any wise my religion".¹¹¹ But change and vary he does, and it is in these terms that he comes to be understood. Navarre's conversion marks the climactic conclusion of a work that sets out to illustrate what a "slipperie and vncertaine estate" the realm of France is:

Thus this noble and renowned Monarke, the hope (as it were) of al that fauored Gods truth, whom God had beautified with so many excellent graces and notable virtues, as courage, wisdom, zeale, and constancy in so many apparant dangers [...] and to the admiration and wonderment of all men continually protected him in despite of all those who sought his ruine and ouerthrow, is another argument of the mutabilitie and interchangeable estate of all things in the world.¹¹²

"Navarre" represented a person who had changed and a person who was change itself. His conversion to Catholicism denied stability of representation and identification.

In the modern world a famous figure's divergence from their celebrated representational persona is exposed and analysed in graphic detail in the media. By these standards Elizabethan reactions to Henri's conversion seem curiously muted. Modern newspapers detail every aspect of the ideological hypocrisy displayed by politicians. After 1593 however, Elizabethan news pamphlets simply stop being printed about Navarre. While a work detailing the fraught history of France might utilize Navarre's

¹¹¹ *The oration and declaration of the French King, Henrie the fourth of that name and by the grace of God, King of Nauarre* (London, 1590), sigs. AIIIr and AIIv.

¹¹² *Mutable*, sig. [N3v].

conversion to make a broader point about mutability, there are apparently no works that focus on Navarre's conversion to a religion that in orthodox terms has to be regarded as "false and superstitious".¹¹³ This does not suggest that the conversion was unremarkable in the sense of being unworthy of mention, but rather that it was difficult for the news pamphlet writers to pass remark on such an event because it caused representational crisis. While it would of course have been politically dangerous to criticise a king who continued to receive military aid from Elizabeth, the fact that we do not find post-1593 pamphlets that celebrate Navarre's war-time exploits but which simply avoid religious themes indicates how important sectarianism was to representation and identification.

I think it is significant, then, that Shakespeare should put his fractured and ironic representation of the un-represented convert in a play where language and signs constantly mislead. We can understand *Love's Labour's Lost* as being influenced by sectarian reversal and semiotic difficulty. As the play opens the audience are pointedly made aware of the lords' topical names: the scene centres on their subscribing their names to an oath already "passed" (1.1.19, 49). As Katharine Maus points out, this focus on oaths and contracts means that the play opens with "performative" language:

This kind of language is not referential; it performs actions

¹¹³ *Mutable*, sig. [N3v].

rather than describe or point to an extralinguistic reality.

As such, performative utterances seem to close the gap between signifier and signified, *verba* and *res*, word and world.¹¹⁴

Navarre looks on his and his lords' names as epistemological anchors:

Your oaths are passed, and now subscribe your names,
That his own hand may strike his honour down
That violates the smallest branch herein. (1.1.19-21)

That Navarre should view names as a guarantor of an oath would have suggested a degree of irony to an Elizabethan audience since the news pamphlets' representations of the king as resolute in character and an exemplar of "constancie" were now notable by their absence.¹¹⁵ Navarre's own name, rather than sealing the deal, breaks it, and supplements the comic expectation that the oath will be broken.¹¹⁶

Words relating to oath-breaking saturate the play: forms of the verb *forswear* appear twenty times and forms of *perjury* appear thirteen times. Yet such words are in concert with the antithetical word *faith* which (with its cognates) appears seventeen times in the text. "Faith" is popular as an exclamation in *Love's Labour's Lost* (4.3.8; 4.3.22; 5.2.280; 5.2.577; 5.2.671); its meaning is poised liminally between interjection (an almost meaningless verbal tic) and asseveration (an emphatically meaningful assertion). When the

¹¹⁴ K. Maus, "Transfer of Title", in *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. I. Kamps (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 205-223 (p. 209).

¹¹⁵ *Oration*, sig. A11v; *A Discourse Vppon a Question of the Estate of this time* (trans. Edward Aggas, London, 1591), sig. A4v.

¹¹⁶ Maus notes that the lords' names are representative of patrilineage and inheritance, undermining Navarre's hope of individual and eternal fame (depending, as they do, on forefathers and death); p. 210. I will return to the implications of the gendered structure of the play's onomastics.

Princess wittily asks if Longaville named the masked Katherine a “Qualm” when he believed her to be the woman he loves (Maria), she replies “Yes, in good faith” (5.2.279-80). This commonplace phrase is charged with burgeoning meaning: it indicates Longaville’s (misplaced) trust that underpinned his exchange with Katherine and it also suggests the romantic faithfulness that the lords hope to display; but at the same time this phrase ties the ladies’ deceitful game to the lords’ breach of faith (their perjury) which motivates the trick.¹¹⁷ “Faith” is repeatedly used to describe the lords’ original oath of scholarly asceticism:

If I break faith, this word shall speak for me:
I am forsworn “on mere necessity”. (1.1.151-2)

Ah, never faith could hold, if not to beauty vowed.
Though to myself forsworn, to thee I’ll faithful prove.
(4.2.106-7)

You would for paradise break faith and troth;
And Jove for your love would infringe an oath.
What will Berowne say when that he shall hear
Faith infringed which such zeal did swear? (4.3.140-3)

[...] good Berowne, now prove
Our loving lawful and our faith not torn. (4.3.280-1)

In each instance faith is thought of as either broken or potentially broken. As well as referring to a linguistic act (a promise), “faith” also has obvious religious connotations so that the historical Navarre’s switching (and breaking) of his celebrated Protestant faith is kept in the audience’s minds. Prior to his conversion Henri’s faith (in both senses) was celebrated as absolute: “For what

¹¹⁷ For other examples of faith as romantic love see 5.2.50, 5.2.454 and 5.2.822.

Prince was there euer more carefull of his faith then the King?"¹¹⁸
 Even Catholics who hoped for the day when their king would share their faith were concerned that a sudden conversion would be "very vnseemely" to Navarre's reputation of "inuiolable faith [...] to his constancie".¹¹⁹ Given that these fears were expressed prior to Navarre's convenient conversion it seems likely that they were *felt* after it. Gabriel Harvey annotated his copy of Du Bartas's *A Canticke of Victorie* (cited earlier) which acclaims Henri's heroism and steadfast Protestant allegiance:

*An vnquam fides Heroica frigeat? Quicquid non est ex fide, est peccatum. Nisi quatenus Sol interdum latet; aut etiam patitur Eclipsin.*¹²⁰
 What if heroic virtue cools? Whatever is not of faith is a sin, lest the sun hide or even suffer eclipse.¹²¹

Shakespeare's repeated references to broken faith would seem to support an understanding of the play as influenced by topical conversion. In particular it relates religion with semiotics, a sectarian shift with an individual's fractured word, and a more general sense of ruptured linguistics. Henri of Navarre's post-conversion absence from eulogistic news pamphlets in the mid 1590s indicates that sectarian signification provides an essentially unstable foundation for representation. The theatrical Navarre's "torn faith" is multiplied throughout the linguistics of the play.

¹¹⁸ *Discourse*, sig. B3v.

¹¹⁹ *Discourse*, sig. A4v.

¹²⁰ As cited in E. Relle, "Some New Marginalia and Poems of Gabriel Harvey", *RES*, 23 (1972), 401-16 (414).

¹²¹ As translated in Prescott, 206.

Much of the dialogue of the play is concerned with semantic slippage: the many puns split signifiers into different signifieds and its synonyms split signifieds into multiple signifiers. It is not just the initial performative language that is subject to fracture.

Contemporary English “hard word” dictionaries defined the word “apostate” as “a backslider”.¹²² No longer following Henry VIII, Navarre was now celebrating a religion prior to that king’s reforms. Shakespeare chooses to use the name of this famous backslider in a play that, as Patricia Parker tells us, puts “relentless emphasis on the inversion of order and sequence, on the reversal of beginning and end, front and back, prior and ‘posterior’”¹²³. Where language is high sounding (for example, Armado’s multisyllabic “*sweet understanding*” and conscientious “*duty pricks me on*”; 1.1.253, 254) it often connotes the bodily and the sexual. There are even toponymous hints about the issue of rebounding apostasy. Berowne asks Rosaline “Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?” (2.1.114), but the reference is doubled back as Rosaline simply repeats it word for word. Brabant was a core province in the Low Countries that, although officially converted to the Dutch Reformed Church, in large part apostasised to Catholicism in the 1580s and 1590s.¹²⁴ Onomastic allusions to contemporary theological

¹²² See E. Coote, *The English schoole-maister* (London, 1596), sig. L2r; and R. Cawdry, *A table alphabeticall* (London, 1604), sig. [B5r]. While the strict canonical meaning of apostasy is the defection of the baptised from the Christian faith, “Converts in this period tend to be called apostates by those they are leaving behind because the polemical tendency is for the controversial writer to identify as closely as possible the institutional structure to which he belongs with the true Church, visible and invisible”; Questier, p. 70.

¹²³ P. Parker, “Preposterous Reversals”, *MLQ*, 54 (1993), 435-82 (443-4).

¹²⁴ The significance of Brabant to the issue of apostasy is highlighted by J. Maxwell; *The Part of Allusion* (unpublished D.Phil thesis, Oxford, 2004), p. 159.

(backwards) slippage form another important strand in this play's interrogation of signs. At one point the Princess punningly relates aesthetic, semantic and theological value. When the tongue-tied Forester unintentionally denies the Princess's beauty she gives him money:

Princess Fair payment for foul words is more than due.
Forester Nothing but fair is that which you inherit.
Princess See, see, my beauty will be saved by merit!
 O heresy in fair, fit for these days! (4.1.19-22)

Being "saved by merit" alludes to the Catholic doctrine of saving one's soul by good works (or by literal or metaphorical monetary purchase, as the reformers understood this dogma). In pointing out that this is "heresy in fair, fit for these days" the Princess also underlines the change in value of theological signs. The detail of "these days" paradoxically could be specific (for example, referencing the newly Catholic Court of Navarre) or entirely general (heresy can exist wherever there is orthodoxy), but in either case the audience is reminded of a relativity of value that extends beyond the theatrically pleasing pun to the nature of divine truth.¹²⁵

Shakespeare's linking of linguistic slippage with a character called Navarre stands in contrast to the way Spenser writes about Navarre in *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser allegorises the French King as a character called Burbon. It seems that Protestants (and

¹²⁵ Similarly, when Berowne asks "who can sever love from charity" (4.3.339) he potentially alludes to the instability of biblical linguistics, since Tyndale rejected the Vulgate's translation of the Greek *agape*, "charity", and instead substituted the word "love".

some Catholics including the Pope) were suspicious of the integrity of Navarre's newfound Catholic faith.¹²⁶ The writer of *The mutable and waurering estate of France* describes "continual practising to draw the king to the liking of Poperie: wherein there was such paines taken, and so farre humane pollicie preuailed" resulting in "apparant inclination to Poperie" (my emphasis).¹²⁷ Elizabeth herself implies to Navarre that he has done "ill that good may come of it".¹²⁸ Spenser seems to reflect such opinions when he describes Burbon's forsaking of his shield (read "conversion") as merely an act of temporising. Spenser's focus is on the ethical tension this causes. Artegall calls temporising "forgerie", and declares it wrong "Vnder one hood to shadow faces twaine. / Knights ought be true, and truth is one in all" (*FQ* 5.11.55, 56.7-8). However, just as Elizabeth continued to send Navarre martial support after what she calls an "iniquitous" act,¹²⁹ so too does Artegall aid Burbon. It is character motivation and morals that are primarily called into question.

By contrast, Shakespeare registers these problems in linguistic terms. Rather than present us with one character who is

¹²⁶ In 1599 one Protestant considered Henri Navarre to be a politically immoral example of a "counterfeit Catholic"; *CSPD 1598-1601*: April 28/May 8 1599, p. 189. It suited the Catholic League to suggest that Navarre's conversion was insincere and thus claim that they had "undertaken the war upon a just cause"; *CSP Venetian 1592-1603*: No. 232, November 6 1593, p. 113. The Pope, however, feared that the abjuration was "a ruse suggested to him by the Queen of England"; *CSP Venetian, 1592-1603*: No. 130, January 30 1593, pp. 57-8; see also No. 215, September 11 1593, p. 106.

¹²⁷ *Mutable*, sigs. N3r-N3v.

¹²⁸ *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. G. B. Harrison (1935, R/P London: Cassell, 1968), p. 225.

¹²⁹ Harrison, p. 225. Her pragmatic support was premised on the idea that the dominance of a Catholic Navarre was preferable to the dominance of the Catholic League. In any case it seems that her religious indignation may have been emphasised because of her political displeasure with Navarre's organisation of the war; N. M. Sutherland, *Henry IV of France and the Politics of Religion, 1572-1596*, 2 vols, i (Bristol: Elm Bank, 2002), pp. 521-4.

shifty and untrustworthy, he places that character in a semantic context that is full of slippage. Whereas Burbon's crime is his alone, Shakespeare quadruples Navarre's perjury, making the three other lords simultaneously break their oaths with him. Indeed the revelation of this fact occurs in a scene that pointedly prioritises stylisation and symmetry: each lord in turn reveals his love and then hides and overhears the next lord admit his love; they come out of hiding in reverse order and expose the previous lord's secret.

The lords are casual about their perjury, betraying an attitude to language that prioritises the surface meaning of words at the expense of their referents. Berowne believes he can satisfy the lords' request to "cheat" perjury by a process of deferral along a chain of signifiers (4.3.284). He simply reclassifies women's eyes as "the books, the arts, the academes" (4.3.326) and thus relies on signifiers that seem convenient rather than have any actual fidelity to meaning. Berowne claims, "It is religion to be thus forsworn" (4.3.337). The juxtaposition of the contrary words "religion" and "forsworn" evidences Berowne's rhetorical skill while simultaneously referring to Henri of Navarre's religious forswearing. Berowne predicts perjury in the first scene: "Necessity will make us all forsworn" (1.1.147). Spenser's Burbon justifies his infidelity in the same terms:

To temporize is not from truth to swerue,
 Ne for aduantage terme to entertaine,
 When as necessitie doth it constraine. (*FQ* 5.11.56.3-5)

This might reflect English Protestants' best hope, that Henri Navarre's apostasy was an act of temporising, a hiding behind the signifier of Catholic conversion while biding time until he could display his true, Protestant faith. However, Shakespeare shows this attitude to language to be flawed. While the play celebrates the transformative power of language, allowing its audience to revel in comic puns, the ladies put pressure on the lords' reliance on signifiers. They switch love tokens and wear masks, deceiving the men with external signs and causing them to swear love to the wrong partner. This game exposes the problems of semantic temporising, making the lords look foolish and indicating how they have "wooded but the sign of she" (5.2.469).

Furthermore, the ironically topical naming of the lords comments on their attitude to language. Berowne's casual (if virtuoso) rhetoric is introduced by his disregard for the significance of naming:

These earthly godfathers of heaven's lights,
That give a name to every fixed star,
Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.
Too much to know is to know naught but fame,
And every godfather can give a name. (1.1.88-93)

Astronomers are "earthly godfathers" because they name stars, an act that does not impress Berowne who subsequently pluralizes godfathers and presents "giv[ing] a name" as a common and unremarkable activity. In describing knowledge as "fame" Berowne does not simply reject scholarship as vanity, but also

suggests that knowledge is merely the knowledge of the names things have been given rather than of the things themselves. It is this belief in the unsurpassable distance between *verbum* and *res* which allows Berowne casually to reclassify women's eyes as books. To him there are no true correspondences between the signifier and the signified and so there is no need to be limited by traditional semantic relationships. However, while words may not be the things themselves, *Love's Labour's Lost* reveals the importance of the kind of meaning that is located in words and names, the "fame" of the communal understanding of a thing. Ironically, these male characters go about their theatrical existence and "wot not what they are", blissfully unaware of the topical suggestiveness of their names. Words are not the things themselves, the actors are not French lords and these characters are not French military leaders, but nevertheless, the play does not release the characters from their onomastic associations (embedded as they are in a whole network of onomastic contemporary allusions, military metaphors and in a plot that constantly refers back to oath-breaking). The characters are not determined by their names in any Cratyllic sense whereby etymology would predetermine their actions; instead it is contemporary "fame" that matters to their representation and which has real significance (just as the onomastics of the feud and Catholic and anti-Catholic connotations took real effect in *Romeo and Juliet*). When the lords cruelly mock Holofernes for attempting

to represent Judas Maccabeus even though there is another (in)famous Judas who haunts that name, the audience watch characters similarly onomastically afflicted.¹³⁰

Navarre in Different Genres

Topical fame presents literature with problems. Modern critics have often castigated Spenser for his inclusion of the Burbon episode in *The Faerie Queene*, considering the allegory to be too thin at this point due to the familiarity of the contemporary reference. More recently, some have seen Spenser's representation in terms of anxiety over Elizabethan foreign policy that in turn complicates and comments on the mechanics of the allegory. When Artegall reluctantly assists Burbon, he is aiding a character who is aligned with Grantorto and other markedly "bad" characters, and thus the poem would seem to question both polarity in allegorical presentation and pragmatic politics in the real world.¹³¹

Marlowe's apparently vitriolic propaganda piece, *The Massacre at Paris*, deals more directly with French politics than either *The Faerie Queene* or *Love's Labour's Lost*, representing Navarre and his contemporaries as themselves. *The Massacre* ends before Navarre's apostasy, with the newly acceded French

¹³⁰ The name "Holofernes" had a double-jointed sectarian significance. On the one hand Catholic polemicists used the name as a type of Protestant tyranny so that in *A True, Sincere and Modest Defence of English Catholics* (1584) William Allen claimed that William Carter "was made away" for claiming that Catholics should like "*Judith* cutt of the head of *Holophernes*"; as cited in Maxwell, p. 70. But reformers reversed this symbolism, with Leonard Wright, for example, likening Elizabeth to Judith, who "cut off the heade of proud Holifernes"; *The Hunting of Antichrist* (London, 1589), sig. C4r.

¹³¹ See, for example, Gregory (as cited above, note 9).

king swearing vengeance on Catholics for the “fatal death” of Henri III (*Massacre* xxv.112).¹³² Like Spenser’s and Shakespeare’s representations of Navarre, this re-creation of contemporary events seems to end mid-action, with the phrase “fatal death” on the one hand tautologically emphasising the finality of death in conjunction with the end of the play, and on the other pointing to future action where Henri III’s death proves “fatal” to Catholics. It means that Navarre, whose dialogue has previously been dominated by Christian aphorisms, is (possibly unsettlingly) subsumed into the analogical structure of a revenge tragedy, which until this point has motivated only the play’s nefarious Catholics. Even if the Marlovian Navarre’s acceptance of the revenge tragedy role is not seen by a Protestant audience as a failure in character, the fact that the play continued to be produced in the years after the real Navarre’s apostasy means that many audiences knew this character would ultimately fail in his generic undertaking. It suggests that ironic representations of Navarre were popular with early modern audiences.¹³³

The name Navarre also appears in another early modern drama, *The Trial of Chivalry* (1605). The play is diachronic in style. It is a pseudo-historical romance which locates itself in an

¹³² C. Marlowe, *The Complete Plays and Poems*, ed. E. D. Pendry (London: Everyman, 1976).

¹³³ In rebuttal of Sir Ralph Winwood’s objections to the staging of *l’Histoire Angloise contre la Roine d’Angleterre* in Paris in 1602, it was pointed out that “the Massacre of St. Bartholomews hath ben publicly acted, and this King represented upon the stage”. Winwood won the inhibition but the French counter argument implies some discomfort with the representation of not just the massacre but also Navarre. Marlowe’s Navarre is ostensibly heroic, but after 1593 the nature of this heroism was (for different reasons) uncomfortably anachronistic of both sides of the Channel. See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols, i (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923), p. 323.

unspecified past where knights are prepared to devote their lives to the memory of their friends, and hermits have magic potions to cure faces poisoned by spurned lovers. On one hand the names used in this play simply connote “historicity”: there is a “Lewes, *King of France*”, King of “Nauar” and a Duke “Burbon”.¹³⁴

However, these onomastics intriguingly reproduce the recent French civil wars. This situation is more immediately politically resonant than that in the source from which significant events in the play are taken: Sidney’s *Arcadia* (a text which itself, as Blair Worden has shown, is deeply concerned with questions of succession in Elizabethan England).¹³⁵ The play opens with Navarre and France about to go to war, with the English Pembroke supporting Navarre. The temporary peace initially agreed upon is broken down, in part because of the machinations of the topically named Burbon. Elizabethans would have known of the elderly, Catholic Cardinal Charles de Bourbon (Henri Navarre’s uncle) as the Catholic League’s preferred successor to the French throne, prior to his death in 1590.¹³⁶ Interestingly, while the

¹³⁴ *The Trial of Chivalry* (London, 1605; facs. edn., [London]: Tudor Facsimile Texts, 1912), sig. A2r; all subsequent references are to this edition, incorporated in the text. Of course the toponymous names had different referents in different periods. For example, the play’s union between the French prince Philip and the Navarrese princess Bellamira was historically enacted in 1286 when the princess of Navarre (Joan rather than Bellamira) married the French heir who would become Philip IV of France.

¹³⁵ For Worden’s political reading see *The Sound of Virtue* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996). The story of Philip, Bellamira and Burbon (in which Bellamira’s face is poisoned by her spurned lover Burbon but her true love Philip remains faithful) is taken from that of Argalus, Parthenia and Demagorus in Book 1, Chapters 5-7 of the *New Arcadia/Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, and the part of the plot concerning Ferdinand, Katharina and Pembroke (where Katharina falls for Pembroke who woos her on behalf of his friend) uses material from the story of Philoxenus, Helen of Corinth and Amphialus in Book 1, Chapters 10-11. See also C. R. Baskerville, “Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’ and ‘The Tryall of Chevalry’”, *Modern Philology*, 10 (1912), 197-201.

¹³⁶ Spenser’s “Burbon” obviously represents Navarre as the first Bourbon king, but perhaps there is also an onomastic underlining of the way that the apostatising Henri becomes the very threat he had fought against.

French King is called Lewes and is referred to as such in the speech prefixes, when Navarre engages in war against him for the second time, he is most frequently called “Fraunce” (see, for example, Fv, F2r and Ir).¹³⁷ The two kings are symmetrical characters: they each have a daughter and a son (who is in love with the other King’s daughter), a parallel situation that is underlined by the use of repeated lines between the two factions (as in most of the first scene where they enter from opposite sides of the stage and then again when war breaks out again at Fv). In this way the religious difference that kept the actual French civil wars raging for so long is here effaced by theatrical stylisation. This Navarre is no oath-breaker, and whether or not the play was written before the “wonderfull yeare” 1593, the way the play resolves the two Kings’ tendency to violence is significant. The backdrop of a topically resonant “ciuill butchery” (I4r) is pacified only once the younger generation successfully work through a romance narrative and the daughters and sons of the two kings are secure in their love for one another. Military strategy enables Pembroke to stop the fighting, but it is marriage which secures long term peace:

[...] and now Nauar and Fraunce,
 Here end your strife, and let all hatred fall,
 And turne this warre to Hymens festiuall. ([K2r])

This ending stands in telling contradistinction to that other highly patterned play featuring a King called Navarre.

¹³⁷ Perhaps coincidentally the name given to the young prince of Navarre is the same as that given to Shakespeare’s king of Navarre in the opening stage direction to *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: Ferdinand.

“Making War Against Her Hair”

Two of the plays featuring a character called Navarre, then, look at civil war from different angles. Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris* re-enacts the way in which the cross-faith marriage between the Protestant Navarre and the Catholic Margaret of Valois resulted in the devastation of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and the revenge cycle of civil wars that followed. This “funerall wedding” stayed in the public memory long after the French wars had ended,¹³⁸ and Protestant Elizabethans had been relieved when marriage negotiations between their Queen and the French Catholic François Hercule, Duc d’Alençon (suggested at 2.1.61 and 2.1.194 of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*) had failed in the 1580s.¹³⁹ By contrast, *The Trial of Chivalry* effaces differences and shows marriage to be a salve for violence, uniting opposing sides and solving the problem of succession (“What matter ist who weares both Diadems, / When the Succession liues in eythers heyre?”; A3r). The anxiety that a problematic succession leads to civil war is briefly alluded to in *The Comedy of Errors*. In a parodic blazon, Dromio of Syracuse relates the foreign and the female by representing Nell’s body in terms of national spaces, stabilising the threat of her sexuality by mapping her out in representable forms.

This includes a reference to France, which is to be found “In her

¹³⁸ Vignolle, *Abridgement of the life of Henry the Great, the fourth of that name* (London, 1637), p. 3.

¹³⁹ See R. Corum, ““The Catastrophe Is a Nuptial””, in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. P. Fumerton and S. Hunt (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999), pp. 271-298 (p. 284) for the view that both *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and Elizabeth avoid the bloodshed of the historical and theatrical *Massacre at Paris*.

forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her hair” (3.2.126-7). As well as providing a particularly ungenerous image of Nell’s hair line, the pun on *hair/heir* (orthographically present in the Folio’s “heire”) defines the French civil wars as Navarre’s difficulty in securing his succession to the throne in the face of the Catholic League’s “armed” opposition.¹⁴⁰

Indeed the French wars were a constant reminder to the English of what could go wrong when there was no immediate heir to succeed to the throne. That there was a persistent anxiety about civil war throughout the early modern period up to the country’s final descent into violence is evident from the number of literary works focussing on that theme.¹⁴¹ In the 1590s this anxiety was specifically related to concern about who would succeed the aging Queen, particularly since the number of candidates for the job made it seem unlikely that the matter would proceed straightforwardly. James VI of Scotland, Lady Arabella Stuart, Catherine Grey and the Spanish Infanta, to name but a few, all had claims to the English throne.¹⁴² Indeed in the 1590s James was making it clear that he would not let the matter go without a very literal fight.¹⁴³ Wishing to preserve her own safety and that of any

¹⁴⁰ Charles Whitworth notes that Henri Navarre might have been considered an “heir” to the French throne until he was crowned in 1594, and thus the topical reference does not challenge his argument that “*The Comedy of Errors* looks like a new composition, purpose-written for the Christmas season, 1594”; W. Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, ed. C. Whitworth (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p. 4.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Lodge, *The Wounds of Ciuill War* (London, 1594); Fulbecke, *An historicall collection of the continuall factions, of the Romans and Italians* (London, 1601); Daniel, *The Civil Wars* (entered 1594); Drayton, *Mortimeriados* (1596). For a discussion of civil war images in England and France see L. F. Parmelee, *Good Newes From Fraunce* (Rochester, NY: U of Rochester P, 1996), pp. 53-73.

¹⁴² J. Hurstfield, “The Succession Struggle in Late Elizabethan England”, in *Elizabethan Government and Society*, ed. S. T. Bindoff et al. (London: Athlone P, 1961), pp. 369-96 (pp. 372-3).

¹⁴³ Hurstfield, p. 393.

potential successor, Elizabeth forbade the publication of any such claims, and her need to do so suggests what an attractive topic it made. In 1593 Peter Wentworth was sent to the Tower for his *Pithie Exhortation* on the subject.¹⁴⁴

In 1594 the Jesuit Robert Persons (under the pseudonym R. Doleman) printed his book, *A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crowne of Inghland* (Antwerp) and it was smuggled into England in 1595. This lengthy debate favoured (unsurprisingly given Persons' Catholicism) the Spanish Infanta's claims as well as facetiously stirring up political trouble with a dedication to the Earl of Essex.¹⁴⁵ This book made manifest in print the concerns about the uncertainty of the country's future:

were the tymes neuer so quiet, and religion neuer so vniforme: yet are ther great doubttes in many mens heades, about the lawfulness of diuers pretentions of the famylies before named: but if you adde vnto this, the
said
wonderfull diuersity in matters of religio[n] also, which
this
tyme yealdeth: you shal finde the euent much more doubtfull.¹⁴⁶

A Conference prompted a number of Protestant rebukes, which, though contrary in religious bias, served to keep the debate alive and to indicate how Persons was correct in his claim that sectarian difference made the event "more doubtfull".¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Hurstfield, p. 372.

¹⁴⁵ See P. Holmes, "The Authorship and Early Reception of a *Conference about the Next Succession to the Crown of England*", *The Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), 415-29.

¹⁴⁶ R. Doleman, *A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crowne of Inghland* (1594; facs. edn., Menston: Scolar P, 1972), sig. B3v.

¹⁴⁷ Replies to Persons' book included Henry Constable's *A Discouerye of a Counterfecte Conference* (Paris, 1600); and John Hayward's *An Answer to the First Part of a Certaine Conference* (London, 1603).

The years when *Love's Labour's Lost* was probably written (1594-5) were years when concerns about succession and civil war were both acute and intimately related. Thus far I have stressed the semantic shiftiness of the play and the way that it constantly replays the epistemological slippage of conversion. However, not just apostasy, but also issues of civil war and succession are notable as absent presences in this text. Since many of the male characters share their names with military leaders, the frame of reference is as much martial as it is sectarian. It is significant that these particular characters (rather than their less topical comedic companions in the canon) fail to secure marriage at the end of the play. Finally the lovers are neatly paired but the women refuse to marry the men until they pass a "trial" that is to last the fairy tale duration of a year and a day (5.2.797-8).

What is lost with the traditional comic promise of certain marriage, such as we find at the end of most other comedies (and, indeed, *The Trial of Chivalry*)? Marriage is a procreative bond, and as the obstetric pun in the title suggests, in *Love's Labour's Lost* we lose the promise of a labour that would bring forth a child that would perpetuate inheritance cycles and lineage.¹⁴⁸ (Instead, Jaquenetta is pregnant with an illegitimate child and will be "cast away" if Armado refuses to accept paternity; 5.2.672.) If the

¹⁴⁸ Mark Thornton Burnett sees the ending of the play in terms of a gift exchange and Elizabeth's failure to offer her people the gift of an heir to the throne; "Giving and Receiving", *ELR*, 23 (1993), 287-313 (310). We might also note that in 1594 Henri Navarre's mistress gave birth to a much longed-for son, but since Pope Gregory XIII refused to annul Navarre's marriage to Marguerite this potential heir was a labour lost to the realm. For a discussion of the political representations and ramifications of Navarre's sexual impropriety see K. B. Crawford, "The Politics of Promiscuity", *French Historical Studies*, 26 (2003), 225-52.

onomastic allusions to wars of succession render this ending particularly troubling, then in some ways the play's onomastic structure also explains the open-ended finish. Anne Barton notes that speaking characters in Shakespeare's comedies tend not to have surnames.¹⁴⁹ The Lords' topical names expand their nominal definition beyond a first name (Navarre is a *Ferdinand* only to a reader of the text, since this name never appears in the play's dialogue). It is as if they have stumbled into the wrong genre. They are nominally incompatible with the more comedically appropriate "Rosaline", "Maria" and "Katherine".

The lack of a promise of immediate marriage at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost* is tied up with expressions of theatrical failure:

The *scene* begins to cloud. (5.2.716, my emphasis)

Our wooing doth not end like an *old play*:
 Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy
 Might well have made our sport a *comedy*. (5.2.862-4,
 my emphasis)

That's too long for a *play*. (5.2.866, my emphasis)

Irresolution dominates the final scene, since we do not know if the Lords will finally be able to keep their promises. The topical concerns raised by many of the names make this irresolution all the more troubling; but it is precisely because historical processes do not have endings that the play cannot round things off and say what will happen tomorrow (though it can offer the realism of an individual's end, death). It is the combination of these topical

¹⁴⁹ A. Barton, *The Names of Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990), p. 36.

onomastics and the comic mode that makes this tension acute, since we look for closure at the end of a comedy in a way that we do not expect it in a history play. As David Scott Kastan points out, “the open-endedness of the history play recognizes the impossibility of isolating the action from its place on the temporal continuum and makes no suggestion of a providential context for this ‘race of time’.”¹⁵⁰ However, history plays do feature attempts at rounding off the action by recourse to a traditional comic ending. For example, *Henry V* sees another King Henry marrying a French Princess. The French King blesses the incipient marriage between his daughter and Henry saying:

Take her, fair son, and from her blood raise up
 Issue to me, that the contending kingdoms
 Of France and England, whose very shores look pale
 With envy of each other’s happiness,
 May cease their hatred; and this dear conjunction
 Plant neighbourhood and Christian-like accord
 In their sweet bosoms, that never war advance
 His bleeding sword ’twixt England and fair France.
 (5.2.348-55)

The comic “marriage” ending is sought specifically because it is hoped that it will solve the problems of succession, and put an end to “war”; that is, it will prevent the very problems that plagued Navarre in the 1590s and looked set to trouble England after Elizabeth’s death. In *Henry V* an epilogue undoes this comic closure as the “issue”, “Henry the Sixt [...] lost France, and made his England bleed; / Which oft our stage hath shown” (Epilogue 9-13). This Epilogue locks Henry into a temporal paradox which

¹⁵⁰ D. S. Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 48.

looks forward in chronological time while looking backwards in theatrical and historical time, so that the cycle of bloodshed begins again. The *Henry VI* plays and *King John* show even more directly the way in which marriage can lead to political disaster. In his comedy that is populated by historically named characters, Shakespeare eschews the comic ending that brings such problems to his other historical characters. Political chaos is avoided, but this marriage-less ending nevertheless carries troubling connotations.

Maus points out that the aristocratic proper name “is normally an inherited name; moreover, it is the name of *what* is inherited, the piece of property that guarantees its owner income and status.”¹⁵¹ Thus, the proper name is also a toponym. In a manner contrary to other comic characters in the canon, the lords’ names raise the question of succession and lineage both by their topical connotations of a war about succession, and in a more general indication of onomastic inheritance that is denied other comic characters. The female characters, as noted above, are primarily known by the first names common to comedy, but it is their inherited names that the Lords are interested in:

Longaville Pray you, sir, whose daughter?
Boyet Her mother’s, I have heard.
Longaville God’s blessing on your beard!
Boyet Good sir, be not offended.
 She is an heir of Falconbridge.
Longaville Nay, my choler is ended.
 She is a most sweet lady. (2.1.200-6)

¹⁵¹ Maus, p. 210.

Longaville departs without learning Maria's first name, he is more interested in her lineage and what kind of inheritance she could share with him.¹⁵² The Princess is known only by a positional name which simultaneously nominates her a neutral fairy-tale type and marks her out in accordance to her position to her father, the French King, on whose business she comes to the Court of Navarre. At the very moment that the Princess becomes a Queen (and is accordingly addressed as "your majesty"; 5.2.720), the moment when succession is in action as royal title passes from deceased father to living daughter, she refuses a move that would secure succession for the generations after her. Like England's contemporary Queen she prevaricates when it comes to the subject of marriage.¹⁵³

Not trusting Navarre's oath, the new queen sets him the year's task of enduring "frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds" (5.2.795) in some "forlorn and naked hermitage" (5.2.789), while she shuts herself up in a "mourning house" (5.2.802). The preposterous commencement of a romance tale where a comedy should end also looks temporally backwards, to a pre-Reformation time of hermits and mourning houses. Structurally this mirrors Henri of Navarre's "backsliding" to a world of Catholic ritual, an act that left Elizabethans uncertain about the future.

¹⁵² For further references to inheritance and "issue" see 1.1.7, 1.1.73, 2.1.5, 2.1.40-3, 2.1.194, 2.1.247-8, 4.1.20, 4.1.81-2, 4.3.342-3, 5.2.172 and 5.2.668-73.

¹⁵³ The play's final song with its "cuckoo" (cuckold) call that "Mocks married men" (5.2.887-9, 896-8) also further undermines any hope of straightforward patrilineage. The owl's "Tu-whit, Tu-whoo" (5.2.906, 915) sustains through puns the play's romance in typically "preposterous" form: fornication ("to it", i.e. to have sex) precedes courtship ("to woo").

Diachronic Spaces

What are we to make of the Catholic symbolic residue embedded in *Love's Labour's Lost's* open ending? It is useful to compare its initiation of romance story with *The Trial of Chivalry*, which follows a romance narrative to its end.¹⁵⁴ As I have noted, to contemporary audiences the depiction of warring Kings called Navarre and France would have inescapably called to mind the French civil wars of the 1590s. The narrative displaces these onomastic allusions into an unspecified past. Alex Davis tells us that romance texts bear a “temporal signature” and are “pervaded by [a] spirit of ‘pastness’”.¹⁵⁵ Thus while *The Trial of Chivalry* might have been written and performed a number of years prior to its 1605 publication date, I think it is also important to note that the text is deliberately old-fashioned in style.¹⁵⁶ The religious differences between France and Navarre are rewritten as a romance narrative that would seem to bear no relation to recent events.

Nevertheless, the text is full of Catholic residue. For example, Katharina takes Bellamira to “an Hermit” (G2r) for a cure for her poisoned face (translating into a more Catholic register the

¹⁵⁴ Where *Love's Labour's Lost* delays its ending to the completion of a trial that takes place beyond the limits of the drama, *The Trial of Chivalry* makes a drama of the efforts made to achieve an ending agreed upon at the beginning: “A truce for three moneths, so it please your Highnes; / During which time our children shall haue leaue, / With Drum and Trumpet to surueigh the Campe, / To Court our daughters, and to feast themselues, / As fits the sonnes of honourable foes: / And if it proue a match betweene them both, / There end all difference, Ile bequeath my Crowne, / As a rich offering to their nuptial Rites” (A3r-v).

¹⁵⁵ A. Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ See the Appendix for a consideration of a possible date of composition for *The Trial of Chivalry* and the contemporary circumstances of its 1605 publication.

“Phisition” to whom Helen of Corinth sends Parthenia in the source; Lib. 1, ch. 7, p. 50).¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Katharina forms romantic attachments to images in a manner that is humorously exaggerated. She commissions a painting of Ferdinand from which she takes physical comfort when he rejects her:

Giue me his picture: Image far more kind,
Then is the substance, whence thou art deriu'd!
Which way soeuer I diuert my selfe,
Thou seemst to follow with a louing eye.
Thee will I therefore hold within mine armes[.] (B4r-

B4v)

This iconophilia is not just indicative of the misplaced nature of Katharina's love for Pembroke (whereby the plot requires that she obey the play's royal symmetry and fall in love with Navarre's son, Ferdinand), since it is multiplied as she later recognises her love for Ferdinand after gazing on his picture and then his statue when she believes him dead.¹⁵⁸ Where the sight of a picture might cause others (including royalty in the *Arcadia* and real life) to fall in love with a person *before* meeting them, Katharina first rejects the flesh

¹⁵⁷ P. Sidney, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*, ed. A. Feuillerat (Cambridge: CUP, 1912); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

¹⁵⁸ Katharina's iconophilia is in excess of that of her Sidnean counterpart, Helen of Corinth. Certainly, the sight of a picture or “Idol” of Amphialus distracts Helen from telling her tale of romantic misfortune (Lib. 1, ch. 11, p. 67). However, unlike Katharina, she has not actively commissioned this picture. Helen is aware that the image is but a poor substitute for Amphialus's substance: his “mind can be painted by nothing, but the true shape of virtue” (Lib. 1, ch. 11, p. 68). Indeed her understanding of this distinction is acute to the point of bitter pathos: “she saw *Ismenus* (looking to her picture) *Ismenus* (said she) here is my Lord, where is yours” (Lib. 1, ch. 11, p. 73). Ferdinand's source character, Philoxenus, is killed and there is no equivalent of the scenes in which Katharina's love is redirected from Pembroke to Ferdinand by means of a picture and a statue. The grand design of the *Arcadia* shows a concern with the issue of idolatry. As Worden claims, it distinguishes “between ‘true love’ and the love which passion rules”. The narrative educates the princely lovers who are shown (not always unsympathetically) to “practise a popery of the heart”; Worden, pp. 305, 303. However, Sidney's thematic treatment of idolatry is significantly different from the ironic exploitation of the sectarian resonance of images that features in *The Trial of Chivalry*. For a nuanced interpretation of Sidney's understanding of images see C. Preston, “Sidney's Arcadian Poetics”, in *English Renaissance Prose*, ed. N. Rhodes (Tempe, Arizona: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), pp. 91-108.

and blood Ferdinand but then *later* falls for him after contemplating his image (and listening to Pembroke's eulogising speeches – though they had rather the contrary effect earlier in the play). Looking on Ferdinand's picture she fantasises that:

I claspe my Ferdinand betweene mine armes:
So long as I behold this liuely forme,
So long am I refreshed by his smiles:
So long, me thinks, I heare him speake to me. (Gr)

She here blurs the distinction between image and thing in a way that, as we saw in Chapter 1, reformers found idolatrous.¹⁵⁹

Idolatrous or not, when Katharina subsequently comes to speak to Ferdinand's statue as if it were Ferdinand himself (making ambiguous use of the pronouns "thy" and "thou" at H2r), she is rewarded by the real Ferdinand – living and breathing and only pretending to be a statue. Yet the text does not explore the potential Catholic spirituality of such moments. Where one would expect a joyful acknowledgement of mutual love and no small expression of wonder at the apparent animation of a statue and resurrection of the dead, the moment is actually passed over in eight lines, with Pembroke swiftly wrapping matters up: "Of that no more: now let vs haste from hence, / To quiet the dissension lately sprung" (H2r). Obviously, this scene functions very differently to the analogous statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*, and in Chapter 6 I explore in more detail how the interplay between

¹⁵⁹ Like Sidney's *Arcadia*, *The Trial of Chivalry* features a character at the other end of the ideological spectrum whose love Platonically transcends a reliance on physical beauty. Looking at his disfigured fiancé Philip declares "My loue extendeth further then the skin. / The inward Bellamira tis I seeke, / And vnto her will Philip be e[s]pouse" (D3v); c.f. *Arcadia* Lib. 1, ch. 5, pp. 35-6 and Lib. 1, ch. 7, pp. 49-50.

audience omniscience and ideological superiority in *The Trial* compares with the atmosphere of wonder in Shakespeare's late play. However, here it is useful to take account of *The Trial of Chivalry's* self-conscious sense of "pastness". Ironically, this effect is partly achieved through instances of anachronism so that, for example, Bowyer asseverates "and I lye, call me a Iebuzite" (Cv) and later the Clowne (entering the stage immediately after Katharina's raptures over the picture of Ferdinand) compares Bellamira's disfigured appearance to "a tortur'de Image made of playster worke" (Gv). Allusions to Jesuits and iconoclastic ruins enable these comic characters to wink at the audience from the fictional past on the stage, to remind them that what they watch is temporally, ideologically and theatrically circumscribed *as* fiction. Elizabeth Mazzola has shown that "abandoned symbols" persist in occupying space in the mental landscape of any generation.¹⁶⁰ Clearly, Catholic symbols continue to exist even after the Reformation empties them of their sacred significance and categorises them as false. Of such outmoded ideas and symbols Mazzola says:

they fail to describe reality, while ignoring other cultural requirements for meaning, power or guidance. Rather than actively continuing to shape texts or readers, these ideas constitute a secret record of the imagination's failures or an arrangement of its lies. In the same way that Latin becomes

¹⁶⁰ E. Mazzola, *The Pathology of the English Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 1.

a dead language, *these dead or dying symbols become poetry* [my emphasis].¹⁶¹

Catholic symbols are a fiction (a papist lie) and can be used to give a sense of the fictional (something more neutrally distant from the everyday). The Catholic residue of *The Trial of Chivalry* contributes to the fantastic nature of the romance genre, at the same time that the context of the romance genre neutralises the Catholic elements as merely fiction. In pseudo-histories, political thought is provoked by the juxtaposition of different reality states: a non-real space is created where the contemporary problems suggested by the play's onomastics are resolved by fiction, in part, because the Catholic meaning present is *only* fiction (fantastic statues and fairy-tale hermits). It is not so much that the sectarian is idealised as that it is made distant, and importantly, reaches happy closure.

In Shakespeare's play, by contrast, the romance genre enters at the end, not as a strategy for resolving the play's troubles (an actual civil war in *The Trial of Chivalry* and a "civil war of wits" in *Love's Labour's Lost*; 2.1.225), but as a way of leaving them unanswered. Its ending mirrors the mid-1590s situation, with Navarre being forced to undertake Catholic tasks in order to win France/the French Queen. In ending on this particular contingency, in placing irresolution where an audience would look for resolution, Shakespeare makes it clear how unsettling this proposition is to an Elizabethan. But at the same time, whereas the

¹⁶¹ Mazzola, p. 4.

contemporary Navarre was considered “mutable” and untrustworthy *because* of his shift to Catholicism, in the play an already untrustworthy Navarre is given a Catholic trial to make good his flighty nature.¹⁶² The text at once foregrounds a Navarre in need of correction at the same time as it looks hopefully to a future that does not deny his Catholicism as an act of temporising.¹⁶³ Catholic meaning has not only ruptured the generic closure of this play, it has opened up a comedy (one that was once thought to be at a courtly remove) to contemporary concerns about the national and international future.

Naming Papists

Whereas many critics have overlooked or underestimated the significance of the topical resonance of names in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* the Oldcastle/Falstaff debate surrounding *1 Henry IV* has fuelled extensive debate. There is consensus that the character now more familiarly known as Falstaff was once called Oldcastle, the name of a Lollard much revered in the post-Reformation texts like Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. However, the precise reasons why this name was excised from the play (was Shakespeare forced to censor his text due to the complaint of Oldcastle’s enraged

¹⁶² Interestingly, Catholic-League enemies of Henri IV pointed out the failure of the French King to perform the penitential acts which traditionally attested to a convert’s sincerity; see M. Wolfe, *The Conversion of Henri IV* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard UP, 1993), p. 161.

¹⁶³ In a discussion of the genre of romance Simon Palfrey tells us “The irony with which romance could be treated, coming from various sources – ‘public’, academic, courtly – allowed it to be a particularly appropriate genre for social and political criticism. However, the fact that it is a mode with roots in idealism and transformation allows the criticism to include or lead to projections both constructive and, at times, utopian”; *Late Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1997), p. 47.

ancestor, William Brooke, the Lord Chamberlain from 1596 to 1597?) and what the precise sectarian valence this act of naming has (an anti-Protestant or more specifically anti-puritan gesture?) is less certain. Since it seems unlikely that Shakespeare should choose to set out to deliberately offend someone as important as William Brooke it is likely that his onomastic choice has a more general target. His fat knight frequently exchanges nominalist insults with Hal. For example:

Prince [...] This sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this horse-back-breaker, this huge hill of flesh –
Falstaff 'Sblood, you starveling, you [eel]-skin, you dried neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-fish! O, for breath to utter what is like to thee! You tailor's yard, you sheath, you bowcase, you vile standing tuck[.] (2.4.241-8)

Shakespeare's act of naming this character "Oldcastle" might be seen as a similar act of "name-calling", of turning the ostensibly pious Lollard into a "huge hill of flesh" whose martyrdom is mocked by his cowardly feigning of death and reanimation on the battlefield that mockingly contradicts both the martyrdom of the real Oldcastle and the reports of his predictions of his own resurrection. It has been suggested that John Speed classified this onomastic choice as the act of a Catholic, denouncing the "Papist and his poet" with a nicely plosive piece of alliteration grouping the Robert Persons's accusations against the proto-Protestant martyr with Shakespeare's theatrical representation.¹⁶⁴ Naming can become an act of stigmatisation. Gary Taylor was beguiled by the biographical

¹⁶⁴ As cited in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, 2 vols, ii (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1930), p. 217.

hints this offered, claiming it important to note Shakespeare's "willingness to exploit a point of view which many of his contemporaries would have regarded as 'papist'."¹⁶⁵ While other critics may have qualified this argument, it is useful to examine the implications of the naming and name-calling.

On this evidence alone Shakespeare may have been no more a papist than the real John Oldcastle was a drunken coward. Puritans frequently detected "papism" in many aspects of the Elizabethan Settlement and Jacobean Church: secular funeral monuments, clerical vestments, the use of the sign of the cross after baptism, were all potentially "papist", despite the Pope's lack of authority over any of these aspects of the English Church. One could draw a rather complicated (and fluid) Venn diagram of religious categories in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, showing for example, some Catholics agreeing with some Protestants on issues of loyalty to the monarch, while more hard-line Catholics would share the hotter Protestant or puritan views on contractual monarchy. In any case, calling someone a "papist" or allying him/her with papists does not mean that s/he was what we would consider to be a practising Roman Catholic. Name-calling is a way in which people seek not only to distance themselves from the person insulted, but is also a way of making that person feel uncomfortable with him/herself and his/her categorisation. Puritans frequently defended their orthodoxy in the

¹⁶⁵ G. Taylor, "The Fortunes of Oldcastle", *SS*, 38 (1985), 85-100 (99).

face of more moderate Protestants by labelling the moderate stance “papist”, something that was, in orthodox terms, manifestly undesirable. Clearly, the Jesuit Robert Persons was not going to be unduly upset by the more or less accurate name “papist” (though he did remark on the pejorative associations felt by those categorised by this term and the term “puritan”), but it does not mean that Shakespeare was also a “papist”, or that Speed really meant the term in the strict confessional sense.¹⁶⁶ Looked at from John Speed’s perspective, Shakespeare’s naming his character “Oldcastle” is “papist”, whereas from an anti-puritan point of view, it might seem an orthodoxly moderate Protestant joke. When we try to split confessional hairs we must be aware of how what is “heresy [...] for these days” depends very much on who is speaking. Shakespeare gets enmeshed in a similar onomastic net to the one in which he puts Oldcastle/Falstaff and Navarre and his companions. Shakespeare insists that his audiences pay attention to the “fame” of these names by placing the characters in plots that ironically act out their associations. Similarly assessing the shifting and relative value of the name Shakespeare has been called would seem to be the best way of understanding the playwright’s religious context.

I turn now to consider the problems involved in a more direct representation of a historical Catholic identity, and to a drama that

¹⁶⁶ Doleman, sig. Hh3v. For a more detailed discussion of these themes see T. H. Clancy, “Papist-Protestant-Puritan”, *Recusant History*, 13 (1975-76), 227-253.

makes manifest that controversial issues can be the “play” of a collaborative enterprise, rather than the denominational message of one (supposedly) confessionally-biased author.

Chapter 3

Characterising Controversy: *Sir Thomas More*

Executed for refusing to subscribe to an oath that gave Henry VIII (instead of the pope) spiritual authority over English subjects, Thomas More was the first Catholic layperson to act in a manner in which “Catholic” meant not “universal” but “papist”, an opposition to an English monarch. *Sir Thomas More* represents this refusal

and concludes at the point of More's execution, thus making a plot and a character out of a liminal moment where Catholic difference first emerged.¹⁶⁷ The manuscript in which the text survives bears Edmund Tilney's (the Master of the Revels) annotation "*all altr*" next to a passage that forms the crux of the plot: More's resignation from office (and Fisher's impeachment) following the refusal to sign articles sent by the king (4.1.81-105).¹⁶⁸ More's Catholic alterity needed alteration.¹⁶⁹ As Richard Dutton remarks "The most striking feature of the play, in relation to the question of censorship, is that it was written at all".¹⁷⁰ The public memory of More was fractured by legal constraints: only his humanist texts were legally published, his theological works were smuggled into England for the Catholic community, a community which also circulated accounts of his life in manuscripts that could not be printed in England.¹⁷¹ Much of the material found in the play seems to have come from a Catholic source: a manuscript life of

¹⁶⁷ This is not to say that there were no theological differences prior to this point in time – for example, the Lollards had for many years challenged Catholic "truths". But at the Reformation the authority (in England) behind the "universal" significance of Catholic was removed.

¹⁶⁸ *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: OUP for the Malone Society, 1961); A. Munday and others, *Sir Thomas More*, ed. V. Gabrieli and G. Melchiori (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990); unless otherwise specified, all references are to the Gabrieli and Melchiori edition, incorporated in the text.

¹⁶⁹ Gabrieli and Melchiori suggest that Tilney objects to the scene of More's resignation not because it would dramatise Catholic resistance but because in avoiding sectarian specificity it became "politically more dangerous as a questioning of the arbitrary use of royal power against personal conscience"; p. 18.

¹⁷⁰ R. Dutton, *Mastering the Revels* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 81. Dutton uses the play and Tilney's annotations on the manuscript to suggest that "Elizabethan political censorship was a good deal more liberal than it is sometimes given credit for being"; p. 86.

¹⁷¹ M. A. Anderegg, following Hunter, notes that "nearly all of the early More biographies were either written or published at significant moments in the history of English Catholics"; "The Tradition of Early More Biography", in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, ed. R. S. Sylvester and G. P. Marc'Hadour (Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1977), pp. 3-25 (p. 20). More's Catholic identity is an organising feature of the works, and they spoke to a Catholic audience.

More written by the Catholic polemicist Nicholas Harpsfield.¹⁷² The copy of this manuscript at Emmanuel College, Cambridge is inscribed:

This booke was founde by Rich: Topclyff in M^r Thomas Moares [Sir Thomas's grandson] Studdye emongs other bookes at Greenstreet Mr Wayfarers hovse when M^r Moare was apprehended the xiiijth of April 1582.¹⁷³

Whether or not Anthony Munday (who seems to have written the original version of the play) came across the manuscript while working for Topcliffe it seems that he thought there was dramatic potential in what was designated illicit in a prose manuscript form.

The very conception of *Sir Thomas More* seems so shocking because we tend to assume that More, like any Catholic signifier, was to be understood in binary terms: traitor or martyr. Certainly, his post-mortem representation was co-opted into ideologically (and sometimes denominationally) charged discourses.¹⁷⁴ Compare the illicitly circulated Catholic manuscripts with Foxe's polemic disapprobation of More's unnatural political disobedience.

However, by the 1590s both Nashe and Sidney cite More not as a traitor or martyr, but as an author.¹⁷⁵ And Michael Questier asserts

¹⁷² See their edition of the play; and G. Melchiori; "*The Book of Sir Thomas More: Dramatic Unity*", in *Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 77-100. Their work is indebted to M. A. Anderegg; "*The Book of Sir Thomas More and its Sources*", *Moreana*, XIV 53 (1977), 57-62.

¹⁷³ As quoted in Gabrieli and Melchiori, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴ Clark Hulse remarks, "Dead, he is altogether a thing for others to use, a bodily metaphor in the struggle between the Church and the king, or, in our own era, a floating sign in the struggles to define the utopian element in humanism. His portraits, whether in paint or in writing, are signs of signs that are produced, circulated, and consumed in furtherance of this transformation of the body into metaphor and the incorporation of metaphors in the body"; "Dead Man's Treasure", in *The Production of English Renaissance Culture*, ed. D. L. Miller, S. O'Dair and H. Weber (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1994), pp. 190-225 (p. 196).

¹⁷⁵ P. Voss, "The Making of a Saint: John Fowler and Sir Thomas More in 1573" (unpublished paper), p. 1.

that “More’s reputation was not fixed, and, in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was still very much up for grabs.”¹⁷⁶ More was at once an example of steadfast allegiance to the pope and (in some eyes) of Catholic moderation, of (limited) loyalism to the monarch. While Foxe condemned him as a persecutor and a traitor, in 1584 John Aylmer, bishop of London, said that More was a “commendable example of devotion”.¹⁷⁷

In fact the majority of Tilney’s censorship of *Sir Thomas More* is concerned with the play’s vocabulary of and attitudes towards “strangers” in the context of anti-alien sentiment in London. However, apparently written for Lord Strange’s Men, it is the play’s broader “persistent rhetoric of strangeness” that engages with the problems of More’s Catholicism in ways that avoid Tilney’s censure.¹⁷⁸ Censorship structures texts before Masters of the Revels even read them, and is, as Janet Clare argues “perhaps the most potent external force which interacts with the creative consciousness.”¹⁷⁹ This limits what a character can say. Frances Dolan points out that Shakespeare, for example, does not:

whose create a Catholic equivalent of Othello or Shylock,
 to the difference and resulting doomedness are made central
 knows, play’s concerns; there is no Catholic of Rome (or, God

¹⁷⁶ M. Questier, “Catholicism, Kinship and the Public Memory of Sir Thomas More”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), 476-509 (490).

¹⁷⁷ As quoted in Questier, 489.

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion of the link between *Sir Thomas More* and Lord Strange’s Men see S. McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and the Book of Sir Thomas More* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987), pp. 57-73. Masten discusses the “rhetoric of strangeness” in “More or Less”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 29 (2001), 109-31, but without developing its consequences for a characterisation of a famous Catholic.

¹⁷⁹ J. Clare, “Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority” (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990), p. 215.

This of Yorkshire) to match the Jew or the Moor of Venice. absence of Catholic protagonists testifies to the fact that it was not yet possible in England to construe local Catholics as recognizably and unremittingly ‘other,’ or even to define precisely who they were. It also testifies to the extent to which the demonization of Catholicism was the demonization of collectivity. Catholic malice was construed as conspiratorial and collaborative; it was not the work of individual villains but the result of individuals’ slavish submission to a corrupting community.¹⁸⁰

With a character whose Catholic “difference and resulting doomedness” is both central and strangely occluded, *Sir Thomas More* can tell us a lot about the way in which Catholicism can have a structural effect on characterisation. More’s Catholic alterity is at once central and already altered. The dramatists of *Sir Thomas More* actually make use of the difficulties and dangers attendant on representing Catholic difference. Self-censorship has a discernibly literary impact. More is accorded a particular kind of individuality and a particular place within a collectivity (on and off stage) that helps us to rethink the relations between subjects of all denominations. The material remains of the text are fragmented (in paper, binding and Hand), but an aesthetic of fracture and omission is also important within the “text” itself, and in order to explore these dynamics without over-determining the Catholicism

¹⁸⁰ F. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), pp. 75-6.

that has been deliberately diffused, this chapter will be interrogatively eclectic in approach. I will explore different aspects of strangeness and subjectivity in order to show the way in which *Sir Thomas More* engages with a new paradigm of characterisation. But first I want to consider some characters “outside” of the text.

Handling Controversy

Throughout the critical history of *Sir Thomas More* the characters that have most interested critics are those of the authors who produced the manuscript in which the text survives. Even an advert for a recent RSC production (directed by Robert Delamere, 2005) touted *Sir Thomas More* as “Shakespeare’s banned play”. Concisely misleading, two out of three words obfuscate problems that have troubled critics since the re-discovery of the manuscript in 1728. Shakespeare may or may not have written 149 lines (or even 171 lines) of the play and though the annotations of Edmund Tilney indicate that parts of the play were censored (presumably so that it *could* be staged), it is not known if it was ever banned.¹⁸¹ In focussing on Catholic semiotics in plays by “Shakespeare” this thesis, like the RSC, is inevitably invested in ideas of Shakespeare-the-individual and Shakespeare-the-rebel. However, the text of *Sir*

¹⁸¹ As numbered in Greg’s edition of the play lines 123-270 of Addition II are in D’s hand. Blayney found the word “all.” written by Hand D on the verso of folio 9 (previously described as blank) bringing D’s contribution up to 149 lines; “*The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore Re-Examined*”, *Studies in Philology*, 69 (1972), 167-91 (168). Critics sometimes attribute 22 lines of Addition III to Shakespeare even though they are written in Hand C. For example, they are included along with the lines of Hand D in the Riverside *Shakespeare*.

Thomas More and its manuscript materiality teach us how to think about authors and different kinds of rebellion.

If we follow the conclusions of most recent criticism on the play and accept that Hand D probably belonged to Shakespeare what is most interesting is not the fetishistic value of the Bard's handwriting but the fact that we find Shakespeare working in a group (with Hands S, A, B, C and E).¹⁸² What is a problematic condition of authorship, easier to ignore in extant printed texts (even ones for which multiple quartos exist), is an insistent condition of the *Sir Thomas More* manuscript. For example, print displays a homogenised appearance but different Hands are immediately visible through palaeography. The six identified Hands of the *Sir Thomas More* manuscript, however, are not stable units that mathematically provide us with an answer about authorship. The Author is problematised not only because of the apparent presence of multiple authors, but also because writing and authorship do not seem to go hand in Hand.¹⁸³ For example, the Revels edition identifies Hand C as "that of a copyist, or more precisely a professional book-keeper".¹⁸⁴ C is thus denied authorship status. But S was also once thought to be a scribal hand; subsequently identified as that of Anthony Munday, S was

¹⁸² Either D collaborated when the play was first written (thus with the author(s) who stand directly or indirectly behind S) or at the later date when revisions were made (with A, B, C and E). The precise nature of this collaboration is impossible to clarify.

¹⁸³ Stephen Miller's work on *The Taming of a Shrew* implies that "authorship" is a fluid category since he suggests that an "adapter" (or the "compilers" or "plagiarists" behind "bad" quartos) "might well have seen his role as that of 'play doctor'": "*The Taming of a Shrew* and the Theories", in *Textual Formations and Reformations*, ed. L. E. Maguire and T. L. Berger (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998), pp. 251-63 (p. 261).

¹⁸⁴ Gabrieli and Melchiori, p. 23.

promoted to a representation of authorship. Perhaps it is problematic to think of “scribes” (or “copyists”) and “authors” as binary terms. However, Jeffrey Knapp has convincingly insisted that “the primary theoretical model for playwriting throughout the English Renaissance was single authorship.”¹⁸⁵ He objects to the new critical orthodoxy whereby the term “collaborator” has come to mean actor as well as author, pointing out that while the “vast majority” of internal references to authorship in dramatic literature “do characterize the author as ‘our’ man, as part of a collaborative process, they also generally set the author apart from the fellowship that enacts the play.”¹⁸⁶ However, if Hand C is “but” a copyist we see that he has been given the authority (etymologically belonging to authors) to shape the text. The materiality of the manuscript warns us to be aware that a text is shaped by dramatists, scribes, actors, revisers and (a seventh hand in the *Sir Thomas More* manuscript) censors.¹⁸⁷ I would agree with Knapp that these other participants play a role importantly different to “authorship”. But in looking at a text where authorship itself *was*

¹⁸⁵ J. Knapp, “What is a Co-Author?”, *Representations*, 89 (2005), 1-29 (1).

¹⁸⁶ Knapp, 6.

¹⁸⁷ This discussion is indebted to P. Werstine, “Close Contrivers: Nameless Collaborators in Early Modern London Plays”, in *The Elizabethan Theatre XV*, ed. C. E. McGree and A. L. Magnussen (Toronto: P. D. Meany, 2002), pp. 3-20. Scholarship on censorship has shown that restriction has an artistic impact on the text. Richard Dutton suggests that the Masters of the Revels were “perhaps paradoxically [...] an important element in the cultural formula which produced early modern drama” because they offered the theatre a “protective presence” that allowed “a degree of creative and expressive space”; *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 14. William B. Long takes such ideas to unconvincing extremes when he suggests that *Sir Thomas More* “originally was commissioned (or at least suggested or approved) by some government official(s) as an aid in dealing with the problem of anti-alien sentiment in particular and with the dangers of civil uproar in general”; “The Occasion of *The Book of Sir Thomas More*”, in *Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 45-56 (p. 49). Long does not account for why the politically awkward figure of More would be deemed appropriate to such an enterprise, given that his role in the historical pacification of the riots was far less significant than that represented in the play.

collaborative, and where, as we shall see, it is difficult to trace which of the Hands definitely belonged to “authors” it becomes clear that any controversial strangeness (that we tend to individualise) would have had the consent of a network of people, even in singly authored plays. That is, controversial poetics tell us about more than an Author.

Furthermore, the individuals behind each Hand in the *Sir Thomas More* manuscript are not unproblematically single. Scott McMillin speculates that Hands C and D might be the work of the same person, writing at different points in time.¹⁸⁸ Thus another problem typical of most early modern plays – uncertainty about date – is multiplied by the *Sir Thomas More* manuscript, formed as it is of an “original” text (of uncertain date) and additions (of multiply uncertain dates) and featuring Tilney’s censorship (itself of uncertain date and bringing further complexity to the problems of all the other dates in question).¹⁸⁹ McMillin’s suggestion that Hand C might represent a later form of Hand D is slightly tongue-in-cheek, but it importantly reminds us in palaeographical terms of what is also important in epistemological, creative and ideological terms: that individuals can and do change over time.

¹⁸⁸ McMillin, pp. 135-59.

¹⁸⁹ The critical history of these problems once more evidences a desire for singleness. Many commentators claimed that the original play, the censoring remarks and the additions were all written within a relatively short space of time, even though this supposition necessitated increasingly awkward theories as to why the revisions seem wholly indifferent to Tilney’s instructions. See, for example, the otherwise invaluable article by Peter Blayney (cited above). However, more convincingly both Scott McMillin and Gary Taylor have, for different reasons, suggested that the revisions were written considerably later than both the original play and Tilney’s comments (when that censorship would be less relevant); see McMillin (cited above); and G. Taylor, “The Date and Auspices of the Additions to *Sir Thomas More*”, in *Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 101-29.

Stability is comforting, which possibly is why the majority of critics of *Sir Thomas More* have been concerned to arrive at fixed points of authorial reference for the play. It is as if with Shaw's Bannal we object "You dont expect me to know what to say about a play when I dont know who the author is, do you?"¹⁹⁰ The desire to ascribe named authors to texts can be understood as conceptually parallel to the desire to pin a confessional label to an author. In both instances categorisation that seeks to be informative also provides comfort in terms of fixity. Paul Werstine notes the tendency of critics to ignore the "irreducible historical messiness of the actual manuscripts" and instead formulate a linear narrative about their condition, treating extant manuscripts "as the sites of clues to the nature of the lost manuscripts that once lay behind plays now available only in printed texts".¹⁹¹ Similarly, religious aspects in a text are often treated as clues to an author's confessional allegiance in a manner that not only disregards much of the semiotic power of a given sign as it interacts with its literary and social context, but also over-simplifies the nature of religious epistemology. Again the *Sir Thomas More* manuscript challenges our critical methodology.

¹⁹⁰ B. Shaw, *Fanny's First Play in Misalliance, The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, and Fanny's First Play* (London: Constable and Company, 1914), p. 229.

¹⁹¹ P. Werstine, "Plays in Manuscript", in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. J. D. Cox and D. S. Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), pp. 481-97 (p. 482). Werstine's collaborator on the Folger Shakespeare, Barbara Mowat, emphasises the way in which manuscripts have been co-opted into a bibliographical desire for a point of fixed origin. She argues that bibliographers have "frame[d] the problem of Shakespeare's texts incorrectly" because of the "fallacy" that "obtaining manuscripts of the plays would unproblematize the text"; "The Problem of Shakespeare's Text(s)", in *Textual Formations and Reformations*, ed. L. E. Maguire and T. L. Berger (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998), pp. 131-48 (p. 133).

That Anthony Munday, a man who worked with Richard Topcliffe to bring about the executions of Catholics, should have such an apparently large share in the writing of the play focussed on a man whom Catholics held to be a martyr seems bewildering.¹⁹² Critics have felt compelled to explain the disparity between the author and the character about whom he writes. Anderegg speculates that Munday “an opportunist in literature as in other aspects of his life, was not choosy about his subjects”, while Nora Johnson comments, “Perhaps no play attributed to Munday calls up the problem of authorial sincerity as powerfully as does *Sir Thomas More*.”¹⁹³ It seems that religious attitudes are thought to be unsuitable subjects for literary ventriloquism. More is neither condemned nor celebrated in absolute terms in the play, but the text is structured around his experiences in a way that suggests that the authors have had to inhabit creatively the characterisation. That Munday should be able to take part in such a process and also presumably shut off empathy while participating in the execution of Catholics perhaps makes us feel uncomfortable about how little purchase literature has in the real world.

Donna Hamilton’s recent work offers a solution. She suggests that Munday employed “double-voiced strategies” *throughout* the canon of his work whereby he was able to “reinsert

¹⁹² We should also note that other authors involved in the play demonstrate similar (if not so extreme) ideological flexibility in working on a play about a Catholic martyr: Thomas Dekker also wrote the vitriolic, anti-Catholic *Whore of Babylon* (1607) and Thomas Heywood managed to make a Protestant martyr (without the martyrdom) of Elizabeth, whom he showed to be the victim of a nefarious Catholic collective in *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody: Part 1* (1604).

¹⁹³ Anderegg, “Sources” (1977), 58; N. Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 87.

Catholic ideology into mainstream and popular publications” (though she stresses that equivocal writing is always open to multiple interpretations).¹⁹⁴ So, for example, *A briefe discourse of the takinge of Edmund Campion, the seditious Jesuit* superficially condemns the Catholic martyr but also carries valuable details about Campion’s apprehension, behaviour and opinions for Catholics desperate for news about one of their community.¹⁹⁵ Hamilton’s work is a major achievement that covers Munday’s vast canon and situates it in the complicated context of early modern religious discourse. Her depiction of a Catholic Munday is often convincing and usefully insists that everyone negotiates the possibility of this allegiance when thinking about the prolific writer. However, the portrait of Munday that emerges is too simplistic: Munday the crypto-Catholic is but a neat alternative to Munday the anti-Catholic bigot. His writing in all the diverse genres in which he worked is understood to follow the same “double-voiced” logic, imposing an unnatural stability on a life notorious for its variety. Where anti-Catholic writings were once interpreted as having anti-Catholic signification, now they have a Catholic signification; but no attention is given to the literary effect of texts that are supposed simultaneously to function in denominationally opposite ways, that is, to the question of signification as oxymoron. No attention is given to what it would have meant for a Catholic reader to have to unpick encrypted Catholic meaning from a superficially anti-

¹⁹⁴ D. Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560-1633* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 31-2.

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton, pp. 31-72.

Catholic text, or to the epistemological implications of the disjunction between Munday the authorial persona and Munday the person. Of course Hamilton's work makes these debates available, but it problematically implies that our goal is coherence, and though there is coherence to an individual life, there is also fluctuation, contradiction and a lack of control.

While I think it reductive to conflate theatrical characters with their authors, through the character of More the play utters certain truths about people that could help us to think about authors.¹⁹⁶ *Sir Thomas More's* eponymous protagonist stops a riot at the beginning of the play by stressing the virtues of obedience; at the end he is executed for treasonous disobedience. This is a lesson in inconsistency that is also relevant to the authorial character. Furthermore, the speech written in Hand D, where More calms the rioters by asking them to imagine what it would be like to be strangers under attack in a foreign country, is predicated on the notion that individuals exist in a community (empathy assumes that there is difference, even as it fosters an imaginative similarity, between subjects).¹⁹⁷ This play warns us against understanding Catholic semiotics as the utterances of an individuated authorial consciousness. It makes evident what is true of all plays: that they are the product of *individuals* working in

¹⁹⁶ Emma Smith has demonstrated that one reason why it is inappropriate to pair author and character is because there was a "tendency to divorce dramatic authors from their theatrical creations in the period" as she shows that references to "Shakespeare and Falstaff, like Kyd and Hieronimo, seem mutually exclusive rather than inseparably associated"; "Author v. Character in Early Modern Dramatic Authorship", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 11 (1999), 129-142 (139-140).

¹⁹⁷ See Masten for a discussion of how this "cross-identification [...] resonates throughout the play", 117.

collaboration, of writer(s), actors, company patrons, and in printed form, of printers and publishers. Just as it is productive to think about Catholic signs as they interact with their context (generic, theatrical, social, etc.), so it is also helpful to think about the genesis of those signs as taking place in thought *and* conversation, personal opinion *and* empathy.

“Hands off” Doll

Turning to the text itself I should like to begin, as the play does, with Doll Williamson. In not having politically awkward associations with Catholicism, Doll makes for a helpful contrast with More when considering the nature of his characterisation, especially since, as with More, resistance is crucial to Doll’s representation. We meet her as she is being dragged away by, to use the play’s uncensored parlance, the “stranger” Francis de Bard. She demands to know “Whither wilt thou hale me?” (1.1.1). De Bard’s reply establishes the theme of commercial rights that structures the action of the opening section of the play: “Whither I please; thou art my *prize* and I plead *purchase* of thee” (1.1.2-3, my emphasis). Boastfully certain of the superiority of his power of “purchase” de Bard would seem to characterise and confirm a perceived threat in 1590s London that aliens, under the protection

of the authorities, were damaging the livelihood of natural-born Englishmen.¹⁹⁸ However, while de Bard may be a stereotype of the economically and sexually rapacious foreigner, his commodification of Doll is appropriate to the apparent descriptiveness of her name: in early modern English “Doll” was slang for “prostitute”.¹⁹⁹ Doll’s character is formulated as a direct refusal of her onomastic definition: “Purchase of me? Away ye rascal!” (1.1.4). She even uses her name to assert a self that differs from its associations and she transforms potentially sexual language into violent language: “Touch not Doll Williamson, lest she *lay* thee along on God’s dear earth” (1.1.60-61, my emphasis). Later theatrical Dolls are defined by the sexual allusiveness of their surnames: “Target”, “Tearsheet”, “Common”.²⁰⁰ Doll’s representation is also determined by her patronymic, her relation with her husband (she refuses to be snatched by de Bard because “I am an honest plain carpenter’s wife”; 1.1.4-5), but her third-person use of her name adumbrates the way in which this particular patronymic circumscription shapes a subject who is not just subject *to* patriarchal structures but is also a wilful agent. She tells de Bard “I have no beauty to like a husband, yet whatsoever is mine scorns to stoop to a stranger. Hand off then when I bid thee” (1.1.5-7). She does not think of

¹⁹⁸ For an account of these tensions see I. W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 131-40.

¹⁹⁹ G. Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols, i (London: Athlone, 1994), pp. 404-405.

²⁰⁰ In *The Alchemist* Face celebrates the prostitute Dol Common with a range of onomastic alternatives, but sexual innuendo nevertheless organises the grammatical wordplay: “thou shalt sit in triumph, / And not be styled Dol Common, but Dol Proper, / Dol Singular: the longest cut, at night, / Shall draw thee for his Dol Particular” (1.1.176-9); B. Jonson, *Five Plays*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (1981 R/P, Oxford: OUP, 1999); all references are to this edition.

herself as extra-special (“I have no beauty”), but she does assert the value of the self. Of course this is a self that is constructed by nationalistic and patriarchal ideals, but Doll’s “I” and “mine” cannot be entirely reduced to this construction.

Doll’s sense of injury at the actions of de Bard and the strangers in general generates dramatic plot. Her initial verbal resistance develops into the planning and execution of a physical attack on strangers, as she joins with male citizens to, as George puts it, “go forth a-Maying, but make it the worst May day for the strangers that ever they saw” (1.1.129-31). She protects patriarchal ideals by flouting them, as is made sartorially evident when she appears “*in a shirt of mail, a headpiece, sword and buckler*” (2.1.0.2-3).²⁰¹ It was not unheard of for early modern women to take part in politically resonant protests. For example, when Edmund Grindal, bishop of London, placed John Bartlett under house arrest for preaching while under suspension, “‘three-score’ female parishioners of St Giles besieged Grindal’s London residence. The celibate bishop shrank from the encounter, ‘much misliking such kind of assembling’, but sent a message that he was prepared to speak with ‘half-a-dozen of their husbands’.”²⁰² Indeed while there is no equivalent of Doll in Holinshed’s account of Ill May Day we are told that after the riots “proclamations were made, that no women should come together to babble and talke, but all

²⁰¹ Other theatrical Dolls were also violent. See, for example, Doll Tearsheet in 5.4 of *2 Henry IV* and Dol Common’s warning “I’ll cut your throats” (1.1.119) when Face and Subtle have a loud argument that risks arousing suspicion in *The Alchemist*.

²⁰² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Bartlett [Barthlet], John”.

men should kéepe their wiues in their houses.”²⁰³ Peter Stallybrass tells us that in the early seventeenth century women tore down enclosures and participated in grain riots. Rioting men also sometimes dressed as women: “The female grotesque could [...] interrogate class and gender hierarchies alike, subverting the enclosed body in the name of a body that is ‘unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits’”.²⁰⁴

Yet while men dressed as women broke enclosures, Doll dresses as a man and riots to protect the national boundaries that have been symbolised by her body. The Clown refers to her as “my true breeder” (2.1.6). Her somatic boundaries admit no illicit penetration and her riotous traversal of gendered behaviour is shown to be an attempt to maintain the structures of patriarchal society.²⁰⁵ Her character has been produced because of a lack of male character:

if men’s milky hearts dare not strike a stranger, yet
women will beat them down, ere they bear these abuses.
(1.1.56-8)

If our husbands must be bridled by law, and forced to
bear your wrongs, their wives will be a little lawless, and
soundly

²⁰³ Gabrieli and Melchiori, Appendix A, pp. 227-241 (p. 234).

²⁰⁴ P. Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories”, in *Rewriting the Renaissance*, ed. M. W. Ferguson et al. (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1986), pp. 123-142 (p. 142).

²⁰⁵ In *The Alchemist* Face figures Dol Common’s body in terms of national enclosures but only to emphasise his pimping of her to a customer whom he believes to be a “Don of Spain” (3.3.10) come “to make his battery / Upon our Dol, our castle, our *cinque* Port, / Our Dover pier, our what thou wilt” (3.3.17-19). In her (paradoxical) ideological conservatism Doll Williamson differs notably from other early modern theatrical rioters who are damned by their heterodoxy. For example, Parson Ball (historically a Catholic priest) in *Jack Straw* (1594) has post-Reformation papist undertones: he is an “accursed and seditious Priest, that so far swarued from the truth, and his alleageance to his Prince” (1099-1100); *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*, ed. K. Muir (Oxford: OUP for the Malone Society, 1957).

beat ye. (1.1.65-8)

Ay, and if you men durst not undertake it, before God
we
women [will. Take] an honest woman from her
husband!

Why, it is intolerable. (1.1.95-7)

If thou beest afraid, husband, go home
again and hide thy head, for by the Lord I'll have a little
sport now I am at it. (2.1.60-62)

That an “honest woman” should be forced into such inappropriately gendered action would seem to emphasise the disruption the strangers have caused in London and also makes male inactivity, the refusal to riot, seem like another gender inversion that risks destroying patriarchal order. But whereas in the first three examples the promise of action is conditional on male inactivity, by 2.1, when the riot is getting underway, Doll’s violent determination disregards any conditions of her husband’s (in)action and sees her enjoying the sexual frisson of that violence (“sport”).

Indeed the characterisation of the Williamsons is a symbiotic business. Frances Dolan tells us that the early modern traditions of cuckold jokes and shaming rituals seem to suggest that a “wife’s enlargement into volition, speech, and action necessarily implicates, diminishes, and even eliminates the husband” as if there were “an economy of marital subjectivity that leaves room for only one subject.”²⁰⁶ But in seeking to *prevent* her husband being made cuckold Doll usurps his subjectivity because Williamson

²⁰⁶ F. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1994), p. 36.

husband with all his plate, and when thou turnedst her home to him again, mad'st him, like an ass, pay for his wife's board. (1.1.9-13)

Inserted into the historical narrative, Doll refuses, verbally at least, to be assimilated into the precedent found there. As well as providing a colloquial name for prostitutes, "Doll" was a generic name for lower class women, a kind of onomastic abstraction.²⁰⁸ But Doll Williamson asserts the value of theatrical and historical minor characters when, objecting to George's horror at de Bard's threatened "possession" of the mayor of London's wife, she exclaims "am not I as dear to my husband as my lord mayor's wife to him" (1.1.53-4). Doll's assertions that male inactivity necessitates female action show her to imagine herself as part of a similarly minded community of women; she uses the plural forms "wives" and "women". Rather than staging such a threatening community, however, Doll appears as the only woman in the band of rioters. On the one hand this reduces the potential threat of her behaviour, which is visibly aberrant; but on the other hand this makes her appear as "one on her own", a beguiling character. In the most defiant of those remarks the original use of the singular ("I'll have a little sport now I am at it"; 2.1.61-2) is tellingly revised to the plural form ("we ar att ytt"; Greg, Addition II, line 50).

Insisting on her subjectivity and ability to reject official discourses

²⁰⁸ For example, in *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* (London: OUP for the Malone Society, 1971) the name "Doll" is given to a maid, a part among other abstracted characters such as Fancy, Wantonness and Mother Bee. (The title of this drama is falsely attributed to the interlude performed at More's house in *Sir Thomas More*.)

at John Lincoln's execution she announces "say all what they can: / Thou livedst a good fellow, and diedst an honest man" (2.4.71-2).

Moreover, Doll repeatedly imagines herself as a character worthy of her own tale: in plotting the riot she professes "I'll make a captain among ye, and do somewhat to be talk of for ever after" (1.1.134-5) and what she thinks will be her last words before her execution fantasise, in rhyming couplets that advertise the literary potential of her experience, a post-mortem existence in discourse:

Now let me tell the women of this town
No stranger yet brought Doll to lying down.
So long as I an Englishman can see,
Nor French nor Dutch shall get a kiss of me.
And when that I am dead, for me yet say
I died in scorn to be a stranger's prey. (2.4.127-132)

Catherine Belsey tells us that "The supreme opportunity [for women] to speak was the moment of execution."²⁰⁹ Doll seizes this chance to assert herself as an exemplum ("let me tell the women"), though her speech lacks the penitence traditionally expressed in such discourse so that her defiance (paradoxically also a familiar subtext of such speeches) is firmly registered. Her refusal of "a stranger's" attentions implicitly denies the state's designation of her as a criminal deserving death. While audiences may have seen many real-life executions, state executions were only rarely staged in Elizabethan drama; the hanging of John Lincoln just prior to Doll's expected execution provides us with one of only a few examples.²¹⁰ Furthermore, the dramatisation of the execution

²⁰⁹ C. Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 190.

²¹⁰ J. Shapiro, "'Tragedies naturally performed'", in *Staging the Renaissance*, ed. D. S. Kastan and P. Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 99-113; and F. Dolan, "'Gentlemen, I Have One Thing More to Say'", *Modern Philology*, 92 (1994), 157-178 (162).

(though not, of course, the murder) of women was still less frequent.²¹¹ In various ways this play is coy in its representation (or failed representation) of controversy and at this moment the audience are tantalised with the possibility that they might witness something scandalous at an early point in the play (having rather shockingly just witnessed Lincoln's scaffold death). Dolan points out that in contrast with executed men, "women are constituted as subjects who think, speak, and act on the condition that they are represented as transcending bodily suffering and death" and that this, and the actual practice whereby female traitors were not disembowelled and quartered like male traitors, revealed a "commingling [of] reverence for the female body with fear and shame".²¹² However, tensions in *Sir Thomas More* are raised as the audience's attention is drawn to Doll's sexualised body because of the content of her speech and the representation of her physicality (her kissing of her husband is underlined verbally at 2.4.123-124, as is her hand-to-hand contact with the other condemned at 2.4.125-6). But the text promises to stage something risky only to avoid doing so. Immediately after her rhyming defiance, voices offstage shout "Pardon, pardon, pardon, pardon" (2.4.133) announcing a last-minute reprieve that the Earl of Surrey will bring to the stage. The pardon has been won by More, yet the timing of these words mean that the audience hear Doll's "scorn" as winning

²¹¹ Dolan, "Gentlemen" (1994), 163. However, a repentant Rachel is executed on stage in Robert Yarrington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (London, 1601; facs. edn., [London]: Tudor Facsimile Texts, 1913).

²¹² Dolan, "Gentlemen" (1994), 159, 166, 167.

reprieve. Early modern legal practice allowed pregnant women to secure pardons “not because of their own actual or impured status, as men who pleaded benefit of clergy could do, but only on behalf of the ‘innocent’ fetuses they carried”.²¹³ So though Doll is not pregnant, we might perhaps read the theatrical timing of her pardon as celebrating her position as a “true breeder” (2.1.6) rather than as a scornfully articulate woman. Her sexuality, at once resistant and assertive, is here figured not so much as a marital but rather as a national chastity, and her preference for “an” unspecified “Englishman” (only “So long” as there is one in view) offers a patriotic fantasy of a woman who is sexually available to *any* Englishman.²¹⁴

In spite of Doll’s aspirations to textual centrality she is but a minor character who exists because her story allows us to see More’s (unhistorically large) part in quelling the riot against the strangers and win pardon for the rioters and promotion for himself. Doll may escape death but in theatrical terms she is soon finished. But though More may assert his authority (and the value of authority more generally) over Doll when he convinces her and her companions to end the riot, Doll does at least articulate the minor character’s privilege of being able to direct the audience’s perceptions of the main character, warning him “keep thy promise

²¹³ Dolan, “‘Gentlemen’” (1994), 177.

²¹⁴ Dolan tells us that “While eroticizing the condemned man could make him more of a hero and could connect him in festive ways to the crowd who attended his ‘wedding,’ within the script for female self-assertion [...] any eroticizing of the condemned woman might disqualify her from admiration”; “‘Gentlemen’” (1994), 175. I suggest that it is the “eroticization” of Doll, within national limits, that manages the threat of her female subjectivity.

now for the king's pardon, or by the Lord I'll call thee a plain cony-catcher" (2.3.183-4). When it appears that he has broken his promise Doll's bitter irony successfully undermines our sense of More's integrity and maintains Doll's character as a semantically capable and thoughtful subject:

Commend me to that good shrieve Master More,
And tell him had't not been for his persuasion
John Lincoln had not hung here as he does.
We would first have locked up in Leaden Hall
And there been burned to ashes with the roof. (2.4.92-6)

However, after the arrival of the pardon the only remaining work for Doll's character is to correct the characterisation of More and to deflect to the titular character her hopes for tales about herself:

And Doll desires it from her very heart
More's name may live for this right noble part.
And whenso'er we talk of ill May day
Praise More[.] (2.4.155-8)²¹⁵

Doll's resistance is determined by her position as a subject in a hierarchy: she wants to be subject *to* her husband and the text also situates her as sexual subject to Englishmen and dramatic subject to More's story. Paradoxically, it is through limitations that Doll is afforded an individual subjectivity even as she is contained. Similarly, the historical More's resistance was also predicated on a desire to be subject to authority, in his case the problematically dual authority of king and pope.²¹⁶ It would seem that Doll's resistance and the means of representing it would make for the

²¹⁵ The remainder of line 158, Doll's last line in the play, is unrecoverable due to damage done to the bottom of the leaf of the manuscript.

²¹⁶ For a discussion of what "conscience" meant to the historical More see G. Marc'hadour, "Saint Thomas More and Conscience", *Moreana*, XXX 113 (1993), pp. 55-64.

more dramatic character: she is active where More is passive; concerned for her husband where More resists in spite of the consequences for his wife; she gives loud voice to the causes of her actions whereas More, historically famous for his silence, in this play is denied more than a vague allusion to the circumstances that determine the most important “story” of his life.²¹⁷ Female wilfulness can be dramatised, but it is also delimited; the difficulties attendant on representing More’s Catholicism circumscribe the nature of his characterisation, but the dramatists use these contingencies to structure a characterisation in which his wilfulness is strangely more profound.

More and Other Strangers

The first section of the play puts the question of the relationship between subjects (in the political sense) and authorities on a large scale, as native citizens protest that their rights have been eroded by protected “strangers”. In focussing on this issue the dramatists would seem to capitalise on the tensions of 1590s London that reached a peak in 1593 with the publishing of libels threatening violence against strangers.²¹⁸ Ian W. Archer tells us that anti-alien

²¹⁷ Similarly, another character over whom More asserts his authority also refracts some of the questions that concern More “the subject”. In 3.1 More insists that the hirsute “ruffian” Falkner cuts his hair (in spite of a vow) to reduce a prison sentence from three years to one month. After following More’s style advice the Falkner of the original version is blandly repentant but the revised Falkner is far from impressed with his haircut: “I am deposed, my crown is taken from me” (3.1.252). Falkner conceives of his own subjecthood in language that alludes to the issue of royal supremacy (explicit mention of which is avoided in the play), remarking on how authorities treat subjects.

²¹⁸ For a useful discussion of this contemporary context see A. F. Kinney, “Text, Context, and Authorship of *The Booke of Sir Thomas Moore*”, in *Pilgrimage for Love*, ed. S. King (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), pp. 133-60; (however, some of the conclusions drawn concerning authorship and censorship are limited because Kinney fails to engage with either McMillin or the Howard-Hill anthology). Cf. as an example of the polarising readings this

sentiments ran high at periods of economic crisis and that “the aliens were blamed for problems the causes of which lay elsewhere. Anti-alien feeling was one means by which tension in times of crisis was earthed.”²¹⁹ Bearing this in mind it is important to consider why the dramatists chose to compound the controversy already inherent in the story of More by including a scene that would seem to dramatise a violence that was at the point of erupting in contemporary London, especially since the historical More’s role in quelling the riot was small and did not win him promotion as the play suggests.²²⁰

Immigrants from other countries often, though not always, came to London to escape religious persecution. John Woolley, attempting to defend aliens in the midst of the 1593 crisis, employed the same strategy as that of the theatrical More trying to calm the riot: “In the days of Queen Mary when our cause was as theirs is now, those countries did allow us that liberty which now we seek to deny them. They are strangers now, we may be strangers hereafter. So let us do as we would be done to”.²²¹

Unlike More, Woolley draws on denominationally specific common ground and historical precedent. Yet it is worth remembering that while strangers in London might share the Protestant faith of the English Church, the manner in which they practiced it was

play provokes, the previously cited article by Long.

²¹⁹ Archer, p. 140.

²²⁰ Vittorio Gabrieli points out that “the author of *Thomas Lord Cromwell* omits all reference to the London riots of 1517”; “*Sir Thomas More: Sources, Characters, Ideas*”, *Moreana*, XXIII 90 (1986), 17-43 (25).

²²¹ As quoted in Clare, p. 36. Cf. “Would you be pleased / To find a nation of such barbarous temper / That breaking out in hideous violence / Would not afford you an abode on earth”? (2.3.141-4).

different enough to require separate, specially licensed churches in the city.²²² In any case, those with grievances against the strangers were not mollified by ostensible religious similarity: libels provoked by economic resentment were attached to church doors. At around the same time that *Sir Thomas More* was first written, Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* was drawing crowds who were entertained not just by the jingoistic confirmation that Catholics were nefarious, but also by a dramatisation of the genocide of French "co-religionists" that provided a joke with every death.²²³ National differences could make people indifferent to religious affinity.

James Shapiro tells us "When Sir Edward Coke in his *Institutes* defined an alien as 'one born in a strange country under the obedience of a strange prince or country,' he put his finger of the basic problem of the place of aliens within the community: to whom did an immigrant owe allegiance?"²²⁴ This question of allegiance was, of course, the crucial factor that determined the natural-born Thomas More's execution. It was also what lay behind Elizabethan fear of Catholics and the anti-Catholic rhetoric that defined Catholics as strangers. The label of "stranger" helped manage some of the fear of a figure who was familiar in most aspects, but ideologically estranged. Frances Dolan explains that:

²²² See A. Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986), pp. 262-95. Since these churches "had been permitted to institute a form of government and rites significantly more in tune with reformed practice on the Continent than was the English Church" they offered "encouragement [...] even by their very existence, to dissidents inside the English Church", pp. 272, 276.

²²³ Indeed McMillin suggests that *Sir Thomas More* was written for the Lord Strange's Men's provocative repertory, which, appropriately enough, explored various strange characters, not just in *The Massacre at Paris* but also, for example, in *The Jew of Malta*; pp. 57-73.

²²⁴ J. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), p. 181.

Associating Catholics with the foreign, the strange, and the black helped to make them less disturbing, and to mark them out as more acceptable targets of aggression. If their home was someplace other than England, then perhaps they could be sent back there; certainly they could be clearly identified and expelled from England without loss.²²⁵

The structure of *Sir Thomas More* rejects such categorisation. It features antipathy to a group of strangers for whom Elizabethans were supposed to feel religious sympathy and centres sympathetically on the story of a man they were supposed to think of as religiously antipathetic.²²⁶

In *Acts and Monuments* John Foxe emphasises the view that More's religious allegiance to the pope makes him a stranger in national as well as religious terms. We are told that More "wilfully stood in the pope's quarrel against his own prince", that he died "in the quarrel of the church of Rome, that is, in taking the bishop of Rome's part, against [his] own ordinary and natural prince".²²⁷

Treason is the ultimate form of national estrangement, as would seem to be implied when, after the theatrical More avoids signing the ambiguously titled "articles", Surrey comments that "'Tis *strange* that my lord chancellor should refuse / The duty that the law of God bequeaths / Unto the king" (4.1.106-8, my emphasis).

²²⁵ Dolan (1999), p. 42.

²²⁶ In the scene where Catholic More asks the rioters to imagine themselves as strangers Hand D labels him with the speech prefix "Moor" (and at one point "Moo"), as if he were a racial stranger. But within the body of the dialogue his name is orthographically fluid: "shreiuue moor moor more shreue moore"; Greg, Addition II, line 168.

²²⁷ *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: 4th edition*, ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols, v (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1877), pp. 99, 100.

However, the exact nature of More's strangeness has itself been estranged in the play. Just as it was insisted that early modern Catholics were executed as traitors rather than for religious difference, so too does the play suppress, at least on the surface, the religious nature of More's motivation. Surrey's lines are the nearest the text comes to explaining the reason for More's execution and while they disclose the monarch's displeasure, they give us no clues as to More's motivation; it is simply "strange". More himself on five occasions makes verbal recourse to his "conscience" but gives no explanation as to why that conscience would be troubled by the signing of the articles (4.1.74; 4.4.128; 4.4.160-2; 5.1.59-63; and 5.3.10-12). Of course it was the historical More's silent refusal to ascribe to the Oath of Supremacy (rather than any voiced disapproval) that enraged Henry, but in real life the context of the "articles" was not vague, but specific, and once condemned to death the historical More spoke his reasons. The theatrical More, we shall see, is re-appropriated in various ways as "familiar", but his familiarity is compounded with a certain strangeness - strangeness that structures multi-dimensionality rather than stereotype.

Motivated Silence

Jürgen Schlaeger tells us that "biography is about the other".²²⁸

More is thus generically and religiously strange. The fact that

²²⁸ J. Schlaeger, "Biography", in *The Art of Literary Biography*, ed. John Batchelor (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1995), pp. 57-71 (p. 59).

biographies tend to be written about remarkable people emphasises the otherness inherent in the form: the Lieutenant at the Tower remarks that “It’s very strange” (5.3.48) that More (due to his extraordinary charity) should be so poor despite having held the position of Lord Chancellor. However, biographies are also predicated on a notion that something can be learnt of the other, that their subjects can be explained by “those aspects of human life and endeavour which post-modernists have radically called in question.”²²⁹ The problem of knowing the other remains more obvious in *Sir Thomas More* because of the suppression of details relating to his conscience. The structure of the play means that More is situated at the centre of the audience’s narrative desire (the part of More “which runs over 800 lines, is one of the longest in Elizabethan drama”).²³⁰ How, then, does it engage its audience?

Sir Thomas More seems likely to have been written in the early 1590s and revised shortly after 1603. This was a period when professional drama was in its infancy and dramatists experimented with different kinds of characterisation. In general terms, after 1585 theatrical characters were more complicated than their predecessors.²³¹ However, Ruth Lunney suggests that we can also distinguish the (not straightforward) emergence of a different kind of “character” that provokes the audience to think not (as was traditional) about whether that character *should* act in a certain

²²⁹ Schlaeger, p. 65.

²³⁰ McMillin, p. 62. McMillin also notes that the revisions do not seem to shorten the length of this part; p. 79.

²³¹ R. Lunney, “Rewriting the Narrative of Dramatic Character”, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 14 (2001), 66-85 (68).

way, but instead *why* s/he acts that way.²³² Re-conceiving the concept of early modern subjecthood by demonstrating how the nature of the legal system in early modern England influenced the conception and reception of drama, Lorna Hutson has also traced the origins of character motivation in this period. She opposes

those critics of English Renaissance tragedy who have either chosen to see it as anticipatory of Foucauldian discipline in its capacity to fashion self-regulating subjects, or have brought to the traditional critical preoccupation with its violence a new awareness that spectacles of legally inflicted pain are demonstrations of sovereign power[.]

And she notes the inapplicability of Foucault's model to an English legal system that was based on trial by jury.²³³ With particular reference to revenge tragedy Hutson suggests instead that "the shaping epistemology of plot is [...] derived from the common ground that English dramatists perceived to exist between the forensically based plots of Latin intrigue comedy and the popular practices of detection and evidence evaluation that defined their own culture of trial by jury."²³⁴ By contrast with the continental system on which Foucault's work focuses, nothing bound English juries to accept the testimony of witnesses, and "the passing of Marian Bail and Committal Statutes breathed new life into jury trial, shaping a different role for the trial jury *as evaluators of*

²³² Lunney, 68. Lunney's focus on how the audience engaged with a character avoids the fallacy that medieval drama did not deal with interiority; 71.

²³³ L. Hutson, "Rethinking the 'Spectacle of the Scaffold'", *Representations*, 89 (2005), 30-58 (30).

²³⁴ Hutson (2005), 32.

evidence", implying an epistemology that "came to be integrally associated [...] with the very rhetorical structures of probability on which dramatists were beginning to rely for composing plot and character."²³⁵ She also points out the significance of the movement away from Catholic ecclesiastical law:

In a secularized system of justice, lacking the imaginative connection of penance in this life with the corporeality of evidence in the tribunal of Purgatory, the question of inward intent becomes an aspect of the secular probability of guilt or innocence. That is to say, the idea of inward intent contributes to the persuasive imagining of motivation, which implicates other hypotheses and rhetorical commonplaces of likelihood, such as character, age, ability to do the deed, proximity, sex, social status, and so on. In a secular system of justice, then, the domain of inwardness is very nearly identifiable with that of fiction-making, of inventing a plausible character.²³⁶

This has consequences for drama: "whereas sacramental theater is concerned with the audience's experiencing feelings of complicity in human guilt, which lead to feelings of contrition and renewed community, mimetic Renaissance drama invites the audience to speculate on and evaluate the motives and intentions embodied by actors as *dramatis personae*."²³⁷ Ironically, it is through a newly secular paradigm that More's Catholic subjectivity is sketched.

At first glance, *Sir Thomas More* would not seem to engage the audience via this kind of "forensic imagination": the play presents More's legal guilt as straightforward since we witness him refusing to obey Henry's demands to sign the articles.

²³⁵ Hutson (2005), 37, 36.

²³⁶ L. Hutson, "From Penitent to Suspect", *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 65 (2002), 295-319 (313).

²³⁷ Hutson (2002), 313.

Furthermore, we are denied the trial-scene that would explicitly involve the audience in the weighing up of the motivation and legality of all the characters involved. Thus *Sir Thomas More* would seem to occlude the kind of forensic imagination that would engage the audience as subjects holding the power of judgment. Historically and generically, the plot requires that More should “fall” but the meaning of the fall is represented impressionistically rather than in terms of intrigue. Thus while More “goes to his trial today” (5.2.4) the audience are shown the consequences of his condemnation as and when the news reaches his servants at his house. The plot takes place offstage. While More is condemned for being the worst kind of servant, one guilty of treason, his own servants celebrate him in superlative terms: “I think there lives not a more harmless gentleman in the universal world”, “Nor a wiser, nor a merrier, nor an honester” (5.2.11-13). As the plot charts his fall, the dialogue on stage insists on the constancy of his reputation. Critics have tended to read this obfuscation of political meaning as a straightforward avoidance of controversy; but the way the play draws attention to this obfuscation could actually engage the audience in those controversial issues. The play is coy about its political content. More’s Catholic resistance was (in)famous. By not specifying what the articles are (“article” is etymologically linked to religious documents) the dramatists do not so much avoid the issue as highlight the fact that they are not discussing it.

The theatrical More's silence is different from the historical More's pre-sentencing taciturnity regarding opinion on the Oath of Supremacy. Harpsfield tells us: "he did keepe his conscience to himselfe, and would not open his opinion in that matter, especially the causes why he refused the othe".²³⁸ In drama the audience's awareness of a character's silence can foster a sense of interiority and encourage them to assess the values of the play. Think, for example, of Isabella at the end of *Measure for Measure*, or, rather differently, of Iago at the end of *Othello*. The theatrical More is not afforded (what in this case would be a politically dangerous) resonant silence, even though it was a famous aspect of his real-life resistance. Instead we see More repeatedly silencing his wife. When More is banished to Chelsea he allows Roper to discuss the change in fortunes but tries to silence his wife after she has uttered but five words:

Lady We are here at peace.
More Then peace, good wife. (4.4.22-3)

In *The Famous History of Captain Stukeley* (1605) another of the early modern stage's Catholic protagonists also preferred his wife to keep quiet. Shortly after his wedding to a wife chosen for a dowry that could clear his debts, Thomas Stukeley refuses to listen to his wife lamenting his decision to leave to go to war:

Stukeley [...] as thou respects me talk no more to me.
Wife Am I so odious that I may not speak,
 Well I haue listned when you talkt ere now,
 Or words had beene the haruest of your hope,

²³⁸ N. Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore*, ed. E. V. Hitchcock (London: OUP for EETS, 1932), p. 151.

But since to silence I am so enjoined,
I would my life might likewise haue an end[.] (800-5)²³⁹

Both More and Stukeley silence the complaints of the women who would complicate their mythic reputation (though the act of silencing is part of the plays' exploration of such complication). Stukeley's wife equates silence with death and in terms of the dramaturgy this is accurate, since she does not exist without her relationship with Stukeley.²⁴⁰ However, More's silencing of his wife is structured differently, since it occurs as the play enters its final movement (his condemnation and death). When More first arrives back at Chelsea, Lady More, sharing the audience's narrative curiosity, sensibly wants to know "What's the offence?" (4.2.77). But More pushes the controversial narrative explanation to outside the textual space: "Tush, let that pass, we'll talk of that anon" (4.2.78). Unlike Stukeley's wife, Lady More is not easily silenced:

Lady We are here at peace.
More Then peace, good wife.
Lady For keeping still in compass (a *strange* point
In time's new navigation) we have sailed
Beyond our course.
More Have done.
Lady We are exiled the court.
More Still thou harpst on that.
'Tis sin for to deserve that banishment,
But he that ne'er knew court courts sweet content.
Lady O but dear husband—
More I will not hear thee, wife.
The winding labyrinth of thy *strange* discourse
Will ne'er have end. (4.4.22-32, my emphasis)

²³⁹ Indeed Stukeley "will not heare no more" (D2r) from anyone who tries to point out that in seeking heroism he sins against his marriage; *The Famous History of Captain Thomas Stukeley*, ed. J. C. Levinson (Oxford: OUP for the Malone Society, 1975).

²⁴⁰ Beloved of Vernon, Stukeley's Wife remains important to the play since it is the spousal mistreatment of her that provokes Vernon's hatred for Stukeley that in turn generates (in spite of Vernon's attempted avoidance of the hero) much of the action of the plot. But it is telling of male-male rivalry that the woman who ostensibly motivates it is absent for most of the play.

Lady More's fragmented dialogue hints at the religio-political determination of the plot that More repeatedly silences. As we have seen, Elizabethan and Jacobean Catholics were rhetorically and legally designated as "strange", but at this first moment of official schism in the English Church, Lady More remarks on how "keeping still" has caused her family to be *made* "strange".²⁴¹ However, More accepts and confirms this new designation, labelling Lady More's talk "strange discourse". Ironically, he becomes the censor of his own story in a manner that draws attention to what has been suppressed and makes us aware that the question of motivation is relevant, even if it cannot be answered. The substitution of a silencing More for a silent More keeps the protagonist strangely in control of the narrative.²⁴² Anti-Catholic discourse suggested that treasonous Catholic plotters were to be found hidden beneath normal façades. In *Sir Thomas More* the concealed nature of a different kind of Catholic plot (also a treason) is coyly represented as something that is hidden because it has been silenced.

Merry More

²⁴¹ *The Jew of Malta* also explores an idea of "strangeness" as imposed on people, but in Marlowe's play such a practice is shown to be motivated by non-religious colonial and economic aspirations. Emily Bartels tells us that "just as Del Bosco rewrites the conflict between Spain and Turkey as a conflict between Malta and Turkey, so too does the Christian governor, Ferenze, rewrite the conflict between Christians and Turks as a conflict between Christians and Jews"; *Spectacles of Strangeness* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1993), p. 92.

²⁴² Frances Dolan (1999) points out that early modern Catholic men were legally feminised: they were not allowed to take public office or granted public voice; pp. 72-85. By deflecting the silence onto Lady More the play protects More's masculine identity.

However, the play certainly gives voice to the merriness of More's character found in works from across the confessional spectrum: from Foxe to Holinshed to Harpsfield. The "gallows humour" which allowed Mercutio to jest at the point of death "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man" (3.1.97-8) was a recurrent theme in the narratives of Catholic martyrs.²⁴³ Likewise, in Foxe's depiction of Protestant martyrs "The insistence upon joy, upon being 'merry' at the prospect of death, is one of the dominant notes of the martyrs themselves."²⁴⁴ However, Foxe carefully distinguished More's humour as irreverent: "thus with a mock he ended his life."²⁴⁵ This word *mock* damns More as "derisive" where he should have looked to his soul (and perhaps also hints that he is in some way "counterfeit").²⁴⁶ Rather than providing the details of More's trial or providing any information beyond his disobedience to the king, Foxe inserts a lengthy catalogue of More's jokes as he approaches his execution. We could compare More with another victim of the scaffold at the Rose, *The Spanish Tragedy's* Pedringano, described as "the merriest piece of man's flesh" as he is about to be hung (3.7.81-2).²⁴⁷ But where Pedringano really is, to use Foxe's lexicon, a "mock" who does not appreciate the seriousness of his situation and who jokes about his salvation, *Sir*

²⁴³ A. F. Marotti, "Manuscript Transmission and the Catholic Martyrdom Account in Early Modern England", in *Print, Manuscript & Performance*, ed. A. F. Marotti and M. D. Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2000), pp. 172-99 (p. 181); Quarto 1 of *Romeo and Juliet* adds an additional pun to Quarto 2's wordplay on "peppered" (3.1.98-9; Q1 3.1.63) and "worms' meat" (3.1.107; Q1 3.1.64) with "I am fairly dressed" (Q1 3.1.60).

²⁴⁴ J. R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p. 82.

²⁴⁵ Foxe, p. 100; Knott, p. 82.

²⁴⁶ *OED*, s.v. "mock, n."

²⁴⁷ T. Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. D. Bevington (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996).

Thomas More balances More's merriness at death with a serious attitude towards his soul. Where the last words that even Harpsfield reports of More are a joke, the theatrical More dies not "with a mock" but with a meditation: "Our birth to heaven should be thus: void of fear" (5.4.118).

However, to a certain extent, the way in which More's dialogue is glugged with jokes short-circuits questions of the dramatic More's motivations, as if More is simply a merry, mythic figure. Forms of the word "merry" occur at least sixteen times in the play. These instances of "merry" primarily refer to happiness, joy and entertainment but they also carry a sense of "past". From the 1530s a "merry world" proverb was developed that bemoaned the difference of the present from the past, often in terms of denominational nostalgia: "'Surely, surely, good neighbours', they said in the 1530's, 'we had never merry nor wealthy world since abbeys were put down'; and in early Stuart times the old-style parson would lament that 'it was never merry world since there was so much preaching, for now all hospitality and good-fellowship was laid abed'."²⁴⁸ In *Sir Thomas More* the protagonist's merriness is part of an idiosyncratic characterisation of a historical individual and a means of characterising that figure as part of the past. When More appears as a minor character in *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1602) merriness would indeed seem to circumscribe his

²⁴⁸ K. Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England: The Creighton Trust Lecture* ([London]: U of London P, 1983), p. 20.

characterisation. His fifteen lines are in heavy-footed rhyme that linguistically relegates him to the unsophisticated past.

Merriness could be a loaded term in dramatic literature. The anti-Catholic interlude *Lusty Juventus* (1550) features the (papist) personifications of Hypocrisy and Fellowship bemoaning Juventus's lack of merriness when he follows Protestant ways, and celebrating his merriness when he allies himself with them.²⁴⁹ This interlude is listed for potential performance by the players who come to More's house. Ostensibly it is rejected in favour of *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*, though this play (ironically for those who recognise its content) turns out to be *Lusty Juventus* after all.²⁵⁰ The merry, Catholic Thomas More thus acts in a play that denigrates Catholic "merriness" as sinful. Yet while the proverbial nostalgia for Catholic merriness safely construes it as part of the past, the multiple ironies of *Sir Thomas More's* intertextuality confound the temporal organisation of ideological tension. Indeed, the play is situated at a liminal point in time, the hinge between the Catholic past and Protestant present (though the journey between the two proved to be far from linear). In having More take part in an interlude the dramatists juxtapose different paradigms of characterisation. In allegorical drama like *Lusty Juventus* each character is an abstracted element of the self, and so in

²⁴⁹ The merry-world proverb is implicitly turned against papists since it is voiced by Hypocrisy. Objecting to Juventus's insistence that he will obey his parents only in "thinges honest and lawfull" (650) Hypocrisy laments "The world was neuer mery, / Since children were so bolde" (655-6); R. Wever, *Lusty Juventus*, ed. J. M. Nosworthy (Oxford: OUP for the Malone Society, 1971); all references are to this edition.

²⁵⁰ Compare 39-49 of *Lusty Juventus* with 3.2.181-92 of *Sir Thomas More*; and 771-819 of *Lusty Juventus* with 3.2.194-248 of *Sir Thomas More*.

temporarily stepping into the role of Good Counsel More announces his own abstraction, but an abstraction that is not “merry” but that rather interacts with Wit. His improvised dialogue warns us “judge not things by the outward show: / The eye oft mistakes, right well you do know” (3.2.274-5).²⁵¹

Indeed More’s insistent merriness is paradoxically significant in its semiotic obfuscation. When More has been stripped of his titles and banished from court to his house in Chelsea, he tells his wife “my title’s only More” (4.3.71), a line which, as Jeffrey Masten explains, “signifies a cross-identification between lack and excess, reduction and expansion, a self defined as supplement.”²⁵²

Reviewing the RSC production of the play when it moved from Stratford to London in January 2006 Michael Billington seemed somewhat taken aback by this More, commenting “The astonishing thing” about the play “is what a rib-tickler the old boy is.”²⁵³ Early modern humour is found in unexpected places. Thomas Stukeley’s amorality is winningly humorous and Marlowe’s Guise delivers a joke with each death blow in *The Massacre at Paris* (reversing “gallows humour” by usurping the condemned’s privilege of speech

²⁵¹ For a discussion of the nature of allegorical character see E. Burns, *Character* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 39-89.

²⁵² Masten, 119.

²⁵³ M. Billington, *The Guardian*, 7 January 2006. Reviews of the Stratford production more often expressed irritation rather than incredulity at the portrayal of More as a “rather irritating practical joker”; V. Segal, *The Sunday Times*, 3 April 2005. Fiona Mountford and Susannah Clapp both assumed that saintliness and merriness are incompatible: “More is not the noble Catholic martyr of legend but rather a tiresome practical joker” (*The Evening Standard*, 30 March 2005); “a merry fellow with no suggestion of the martyr. He doggedly makes tedious practical jokes” (*The Observer*, 3 April 2005). Clapp, like others, listed the trick played on Erasmus as one of these jokes. Benedict Nightingale was a somewhat lone voice in his praise of the scene as “hilarious”; *The Times*, 28 March 2005. During the Stratford run the RSC responded to the way that More’s relentless humour frustrated modern expectations by removing what Clapp called a “fairly tiresome prank”; *The Sunday Telegraph*, 27 March 2005.

with his own puns).²⁵⁴ However, in both these instances part of the pleasure in the humour derives from its illicit quality. While appreciative laughter might implicate the audience in the anti-heroes' traversal of taboos, it also makes them more aware of those very taboos. Humour functions differently in *Sir Thomas More*. For a personage so renowned for his integrity, More is (here and elsewhere) represented as awfully ironic. Sometimes his jests take the form of puns, as in his gallows humour that exploits the grimly literal meaning of colloquial language as he comes to his execution: "I fear I shall forget my head behind me" (5.4.26); "I am come about a headless errand, / For I have not much to say, now I am here" (5.4.49-50); "lend me thy hand / To help me up. As for my coming down, / Let me alone, I'll look to that myself." (5.4.53-5); "I come hither only to be let blood: my doctor here tells me it is good for the headache" (5.4.83-4). Such jokes display self-possession in the face of death and perhaps are attempts at comforting those around him.

However, other jokes operate as delayed puns and they are misleading to the point of cruelty:

Lady (kneeling) Dear loving husband, if you respect
not me,
Yet think upon your daughters.
More Wife, stand up.
(*Pondering to himself*) I have bethought me,
And I'll now satisfy the king's good pleasure.
Daughters O happy alteration.
Shrewsbury Come then, subscribe, my lord.

²⁵⁴ Kristen Elizabeth Poole argues that Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* counteracted Foxe's depictions of martyrdom as moments of discourse as all of the Protestants murdered are farcically silenced or interrupted in speech at the moments of their death; "Garbled Martyrdom in Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*", *Comparative Drama*, 32 (1998), 1-25.

Surrey I am right glad
 Of this your fair conversion.
More O pardon me,
 I will subscribe to go unto the Tower
 With all submissive willingness[.] (4.4.143-52)

Similarly, in the scene before More's execution, Lady More, More's daughters and son-in-law Roper weep as they visit More and beg him to change his mind:

Roper The world, my lord, hath ever held you wise,
 And 't shall be no distaste unto your wisdom
 To yield to the opinion of the state.

More I have deceived myself, I must acknowledge;
 And as you say, son Roper, to confess the same
 It will be no disparagement at all.

Lady His highness shall be certified thereof,
 immediately.

Offering to depart.

More Nay, hear me, wife, first let me tell ye how.
 I thought to have had a barber for my beard,
 Now I remember that were labour lost,
 The headsman now shall cut off head and all. (5.3.89-

99)

More's rather thoughtless disregard for his family's woe highlights the complexities of martyrdom, the real-life tensions of what it means to put God first. In the RSC production More's pauses as he waited for his family's jubilant response to his apparent change of heart before his "comic" correction of their delusion meant "the disregard for the pain of his loved ones seem[ed] almost callous."

Lady More, played by Teresa Banaham, was "devastated".²⁵⁵

More's repeated comic mis-directions emphasise that his family cannot comprehend his decision. More is a character who playfully foregrounds his essential inscrutability and the jokes would seem to warn his auditors on and off stage of the impracticality of

²⁵⁵ P. Marmion, *The Daily Mail*, 1 April 2005.

inferring too much about him, as if his character holds in reserve something that is inaccessible to other human beings.

When the King's Attorney argued that the historical More's silence proved his opposition to the oath, More countered: "'if the rule and Maxime of the ciuill lawe be good, allowable and sufficient, that *Qui tacet, consentire videtur* (he that holdeth his peace seemeth to consent), this my silence implyeth and importeth rather a ratification and confirmation than any condemnation of your Statute.'"²⁵⁶ Rather disingenuously More insists that his silence signifies consent; thus he apparently asks to be misread. Through such a legal disputation about his own signification More maintains that he is essentially unknowable, that others can only construe and hypothesise his person. In the play it is through *not* knowing the character that a depth of character is indicated.

Michael Anderegg tells us that the early modern biographers of More "were clearly interested in particularity and individuality, two qualities of little or no concern to the medieval hagiographer."²⁵⁷ The theatrical More's jokes are a part of his "individuality", though they contribute to the creation of a mythic status which paradoxically makes him both more and less than a person. In describing the execution Foxe disdainfully catalogues More's jokes in such a way that squeezes out the humanity of the real person. The jokes uttered by the theatrical More, on the other

²⁵⁶ Harpsfield, pp. 185-6.

²⁵⁷ Anderegg, "Tradition" (1977), p. 23.

hand, both label him as “More” and hint at *more*, at an unknowable subject within the character.

Furthermore, where More seems to be most familiar – when he utters his well-known jests – he is actually advertising his essential strangeness, encouraging misreadings. His Catholic conscience is hidden by jokes. But where most Catholic disguises on the early modern stage impelled an externalised plot and Machiavellian intrigue, what intrigues here is the nature of the individual. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost* Navarre seemed blissfully unaware of his topical status, but in this play More is shown to know more than, or rather to know “More” better than, the audience. His jokes keep the “surface” active, but in creating numerous incidents of being misread, they create a character who has an inaccessible interiority.²⁵⁸ His final joke before death is somewhat uncanny: “One thing more, take heed thou cutst not off my beard. O, I forgot, execution [was] passed upon that last night, and the body of it lies buried in the Tower” (5.4.99-101). More’s last joking reference to his beard told us that he was keeping his beard, yet now he appears clean-shaven. Of course, such discontinuity might simply be the accidental product of collaborative work. Nevertheless, the joke also weirdly inverts an anecdote found in numerous early modern texts which tells the joke as one about keeping the beard (the form of the joke in 5.3, cited

²⁵⁸ For a discussion of the theatrical value of puns see J. Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 35-55.

above).²⁵⁹ Such discontinuity both within the terms of the play and within More mythology disrupts that sense of shared innerness that the humour normally provides for the audience. Ultimately, More's character is at once strengthened because he cannot be fully known (we gain an awareness of his selfhood), but also theatrically weakened as he frustratingly distances the audience from the secrets of his Catholic conscience.

Sir Thomas More is rather unsatisfying for modern audiences and readers, because it fails to detail what we think of as the most important aspects of More's story. Reviewing the RSC production, Patrick Carnegy thought that More's lack of "reasoned protest" about his situation was "a serious failure by Munday and his fellow hacks".²⁶⁰ Part of the problem is that modern audiences have a rather different notion of what a character should be, and a rather definite notion (after Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*) of what a "Thomas More" should be.²⁶¹ In the Renaissance play More's one soliloquy is spoken prior to any question of his signing the articles; there are no meditative expressions of his struggle with his conscience, we are merely assured that there has been a "strife [...] 'twixt conscience and my frailer life" (4.4.160-1).²⁶² Not surprising

²⁵⁹ See C. C. Doyle, "The Hair and Beard of Thomas More", *Moreana*, XVIII 71-2 (1981), 5-14.

²⁶⁰ P. Carnegy, *The Spectator*, 2 April 2005.

²⁶¹ Numerous reviews of the RSC production made explicit mention of *A Man for All Seasons*, with Robert Hanks, for example, declaring "I felt a new respect for the way Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* placed the story in a historical context and made the politics so human"; *The Independent*, 29 March 2005.

²⁶² The RSC concluded their 2005 Gunpowder Season (which *Sir Thomas More* had opened) with Frank McGuinness's specially commissioned *Speaking Like Magpies* (directed by Rupert Goold): "a strangely plotless gunpowder plot"; S. Irvine, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 2 October 2005. McGuinness, like the *Sir Thomas More* dramatists, attempts to make use of void. His *Equivocator* presents "A story you know the end of. [...] There is no big bang" (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 1. We are to be taken "to worlds / You could not remember" rather than the familiar historical narrative; p. 1. Critics

then that reviewers of Delamere's production should find a "deficiency of substance in the character" and that "with Henry VIII an offstage presence, and no sense of what More has done to deserve this fate, the tragedy operates in a vacuum."²⁶³ This emptiness did not originate in the RSC's production; Alison Shell points out that "the difficulty about mentioning either Catholic or Protestant tenets leaves a void at the centre of *Sir Thomas More*".²⁶⁴ If we look at More with early modern eyes, wanting to be entertained by his merriness and uneasy with his Catholic strangeness, we see that the dramatists work with expectations to tantalise the audience with the suggestion that there might be more to More. We have seen that experiments were being made with engaging the audience through questions of character motivation.²⁶⁵ In *Sir Thomas More* Doll's gendered transgressions could be explored in far more direct terms than More's Catholicism, and the "why" of why Doll acts the way she does is self-evident in a way that it is not with More. But, paradoxically, our limited access to More's motivations gives us a more profound sense of his innerness. Clearly, More is no Hamlet or Faustus; we

recognised that McGuinness was "concerned with the hidden psyches of the principals" and their "darker feelings"; B. Nightingale, *The Times*, 1 October 2005. But they were frustrated because this did not yield information about motivation: "we are never allowed inside the minds of the conspirators, to find out how they reconcile their Catholic faith with a plan for mass murder"; C. Spencer, *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 2005. In a post-September 11 world critics were unhappy with a play about terrorism that played with notions of void: Spencer objected that terrorist motivation "never receives the stringent analysis it so urgently requires" and Taylor thought it was "an unengaged and unengaging exercise that might have been written in a world where September 11 had never happened"; *The Independent*, 7 October 2005. Reviewers yearned for narrative to provide comfort, while critics of *Sir Thomas More* yearn for authorial labels and confessional stability.

²⁶³ P. Carnegie, *The Spectator*, 2 April 2005; and R. Hanks, *The Independent*, 29 March 2005.

²⁶⁴ A. Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 221.

²⁶⁵ This was not universal, as Lunney points out: characters like Jonson's Volpone, though richly complex, interest the audience ethically rather than psychologically; 68.

are not given the means to think about why he acts the way he does, but the text implies that this is a question worth asking. In *Othello* Shakespeare makes a plot out of a response to such a character. Iago might finally be deemed “motiveless” but he engages Othello through questions of motivation: “Iago’s closedness, suggesting depths which cannot be immediately sounded, produces in *Othello* a mirrored space of fertile apprehensions.”²⁶⁶ More is not such a masterly characterisation, but the way in which the dramatists have used Catholicism (or rather contingencies against representing Catholicism) makes us want to know More.

Familiar Subjects

While the play teases us about its religio-political meaning, More is firmly situated within a domestic context. His motivations are of wider concern than his own individual characterisation. In discussing the subset of domestic tragedies in which patriarchs kill family members Frances Dolan remarks:

Far from presenting property-holding, gentle males as unconstrained and autonomous, these texts reveal the particular strains of accountability to the past and the future, of being inseparable from your family and its ‘house.’ They construct subjectivity as collective and diffused, as spread across bodies and through time.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ R. West, *Spatial Representations and the Jacobean Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 239.

²⁶⁷ Dolan, *Dangerous* (1994), p. 157. Collective subjectivity was important to memorial representations of More. Clark Hulse discusses the Nostell Priory copy of the Holbein picture of More’s family. Made in 1592 and differing significantly from the Holbein this painting “very carefully preserves the body of Thomas More by renewing it within the family. The painting shows five generations of patrilineal descent [...] By the absorption of the physical body into genealogical repetition, the effects of time and death are both annihilated and affirmed. Anne Cresacre appears twice, once as a young woman of fifteen and once as a woman in her fifties. Thomas More II appears

The dramatic More's actions have communal significance. He has benevolently left money to all members of his household but

Catesby remarks:

Thus the fair spreading oak falls not alone,
But all the neighbour plants and under-trees
Are crushed down with his weight. (5.2.54-6)

Catesby is describing the collective grief that oppresses all of More's household, but he also talks in practical terms about the fall that they all share.²⁶⁸ More's family, even more than his servants, constitute a collective "Morean" subjectivity. When More first returns to Chelsea, stripped of his Lord Chancellorship, Roper asserts:

Most honoured father-in-law,
The blood you have bequeathed these several hearts
To nourish your posterity, stands firm,
And as with joy you led us first to rise,
So with like hearts we'll lock preferment's eyes.
(4.4.48-52)

In the present and in the future, in success and failure, the family represents More-the-individual as a unit in a collectivity. However, when it becomes clear that More's refusal to subscribe to the articles will bring him to death this unity is fractured. As his wife and daughters appeal to him "*Kneeling and weeping*" (4.4.126)

More remarks, "See, my lords, / This partner and these subjects to my flesh / Prove rebels to my conscience" (4.4.126-8). Even as

as old as his great-grandfather, old enough, that is, to be grandfather to his own father"; p. 216.

²⁶⁸ Doll Williamson is grateful to More for having made her brother a yeoman: "Th'art a good housekeeper, and I thank thy good worship for my brother Arthur Watchins" (2.3.63-4). Kathleen McLuskie points out that Doll "is mollified by More, less because she is convinced by the arguments of his political theory than because he was at the head of a patronage network which included her family"; *Dekker and Heywood* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 31.

More's determination individuates him, his family's pleading emphasises that he exists not simply as an individual but as a part of a domestic whole and he himself conceptualises his subjectivity as incorporating both "conscience" and the familial "rebels". While the play does not stage More's execution, his ending is multiplied through the telling of his family's prophetic dreams of his demise. Roper has been "troubled" in the night with thoughts of More that he does not relate (4.2.35); but Lady More describes a dream of a watery death by the Tower, separated from the King's "golden fleet" (4.2.19), where her fate is joined with that of her husband: "arm in arm we died" (4.2.26); and Roper's Wife (as the text refers to More's daughter) dreams of More's death as a fatal act of iconoclasm:

Methought I saw him here in Chelsea church,
 Standing upon the rood loft, now defaced,
 And whilst he kneeled and prayed before the image,
 It fell with him into the upper choir,
 Where my poor father lay all stained in blood. (4.2.37-41)

While explicit political and religious details have been repressed in the text, they here emerge in dream form, in the subconscious of minor characters. Those themes are thus explored, momentarily, as having a fatal effect on one political subject and as having a terrible effect on numerous ontological subjects. More lives and dies in his family's subconscious. At the same time these dreams point to his significance in a wider community. His prayer at an anachronistically "now defaced" rood loft situates him in a future

generation of English Catholics. Yet the breadth of subjectivity remains insistently personal. Iconoclasm becomes a story about the death of “my poor father”.

However, the dramatisation of More’s interaction with his loving family is rather troubling. Not only does the play coyly decline to specify the nature of Henry’s “articles”, but the enticements to subscribe to them are more often shown to be domestic rather than political. Lady More pleads, “Ah husband, husband, yet submit yourself, / Have care of your poor wife and children” (5.3.83-4). More responds to this particular plea by offering the safer protection of God, but we have also seen that he twice jestingly misleads his family into thinking that he will subscribe to the articles. Foxe capitalised on the dramatic value of family tragedy in his account of Protestant martyrdoms. John Knott tells us that:

Foxe’s Reformation martyrs demonstrate the purity of their faith and reject the appeals of the world, including those of family. [...] Yet these martyrs are shown to be more closely connected to a sustaining human community, and more fully human themselves. They may turn away from wives and children at the end but make arrangements for their care and write them letters of consolation and exhortation. And they sometimes falter.²⁶⁹

It would seem that the historical More was similarly determined and saddened in the midst of his family tragedy. Harpsfield suggested that More would have liked the religious asceticism of

²⁶⁹ Knott, pp. 45-6.

being locked in the tower for his conscience “if it had not beene for his wife, for her [his daughter, Margaret] and his other children, whom he accompted the chiefe part of his charge”.²⁷⁰ Thus it is claimed that the situation of his family saddened More. However, in the drama More exploits rather more than he pities his family’s grief, as we have seen in the repeated “comic” mis-directions about his intentions. It is notable that in Stapleton’s account of More, the joke about the beard (cited above) is directed not against his family but (it is suggested) could be More’s punishment of a scheming “bore” for “his rude and uncivil manner of speaking and behaving”.²⁷¹ In the play the family are made the butt of the joke that in the source functioned as retribution against a would-be enemy. More’s lack of sympathy for his family problematises the audience’s sympathy for him. While we might have expected ideological condemnation the play has instead complicated the character through domestic misdeeds.

Domestic tragedy often focused on the crime of “petty treason” where the wife or servants killed the patriarch of the household.²⁷² *Sir Thomas More* is a domestic tragedy that is determined by the patriarch’s actual treason against the monarch. Lena Cowen Orlin points out that domestic tragedy focuses on the house and that “It is in his house that the gentleman is king, and that house is seen by the Elizabethan playwright as a little

²⁷⁰ Harpsfield, p. 171.

²⁷¹ Gabrieli and Melchiori, Appendix C, pp. 245-8 (p. 247).

²⁷² See Dolan, *Dangerous* (1994).

kingdom, a microcosm in which tragic action can ensue. Such action is a violation of what is a powerful ideal of order in the house: this is the nature of ‘domestic’ tragedy.”²⁷³ The absence of the character of Henry VIII in *Sir Thomas More* focuses the play on More’s “domestic monarchy”, and while the plot is predicated on his treason against Henry, the fall of the patriarch also enacts another kind of petty treason, aberrantly enacted by Henry against More. Indeed Henry’s own domestic tragedy is repressed. We are not told of Henry’s divorce, still less of his subsequent role as a wife-killer.²⁷⁴ The elements of domestic tragedy that contextualise More’s fall both add personal depth to his characterisation and complicate our sympathy for him; they also keep him as the central character in his story, the king of his own castle.

Executing Memory

Ultimately though More goes to his death by himself. His hidden subjectivity is predicated on a Christian understanding of the soul.

At his execution More declares:

²⁷³ L. C. Orlin, “Man’s House as His Castle in *Arden of Feversham*”, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 2 (1985), 57-89 (82). Harpsfield records Lady More’s impatience at her husband’s refusal to subscribe to the oath and the internment in the Tower that it brought as a domestic complaint: “‘And seeing you haue at Chelsey a right faire house, your librarie, your bookes, your gallerie, your garden, your orchyarde and all other necessaries so handsome about you, where you might in the company of me your wife, your children and housholde, by mery, I muse what a Gods name you meane here still thus fondlye to tarye’”; p. 96. Lady More’s catalogue of second-person possessives emphasises that More is master of Chelsea, out of place away from that household.

²⁷⁴ In *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605) religion structures affection in the Tudor royal family. Edward receives letters from his sister Mary encouraging him to have Cranmer and Bonner “conferre, / About these points of new Religion” (2383-4), but Elizabeth’s letter is more pleasing to him: “Louing thou art, and of me best beloued” (2420). Henry’s ongoing role in the Reformation is shown to be the result of his manipulation by a wife who can discuss the lack of scriptural authority for the instruction to “kneele to Saints” (2255), go on “pilgrimage” (2256) and for the doctrine of “Purgatorie” (2257), but who pretends “womans wit” (2666) and “puny schollership” (2668). Henry signals his reformed assent and faith that Katherine is no traitor in intimate language: “come kisse me *Kate* [...] come sit on my knee *Kate*” (2687-90); S. Rowley, ed. F. P. Wilson (Oxford: OUP for the Malone Society, 1952).

Stay, is't not
possible to make a scape from all this strong guard? It
is.

There is a thing within me, that will raise
And elevate my better part 'bove sight
Of these same weaker eyes. And, master shrieves,
For all this troop of steel that tends my death,
I shall break from you, and fly up to heaven. (5.4.101-
7)

More paradoxically refers to his execution as an escape from execution. The etymological meaning of the Latin *exsequi* is “to pursue to the end” and More here understands his end as moving beyond the moment of earthly execution. His soul is inaccessible to secular punishment, and these notions of escape and inaccessibility relate to his subjectivity that the play has highlighted but not described.

What does his death mean? The play could have been structured to emphasise More's fall as either righteousness or “error”, but this has been avoided.²⁷⁵ Foxe had understood More's fate to be determined by a moral structure:

 this commonly we see come to pass, as the Lord saith,
that
 ‘whoso striketh with the sword shall perish with the
sword,’
 and they that stain their hands with blood, seldom do
bring
 their bodies dry to the grave; as commonly appeareth
by the
 end of bloody tyrants, and especially such as be
persecutors of

²⁷⁵ The structure of *Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1602), by contrast, emphasises its protagonist's guiltless death at the hands of the nefarious Gardiner. The action of the play is determined by a repayment logic whereby it is thematically insisted that debts should be met, and paid with interest to the poor. Cromwell's dying words realise this logic bitterly in terms of rhetoric and rhyme, to indicate its corruption: “As willinglie I goe to meete with death, / As *Gardiner* did pronounce it with his breath”; *The True Chronicle Historie of the whole life and death of Thomas Lord Cromwell* (London, 1602; facs. edn., [London]: Tudor Facsimile Texts, 1911), sig. G2r.

Christ's poor members; in the number of whom were
 this bishop
 [Fisher] and sir Thomas More, by whom good John
 Frith,
 Tewkesbury, Thomas Hitten, Bayfield, with divers other
 good saints of God, were brought to their death.²⁷⁶

The dramatists inverted Foxe's pattern and instead of showing him as a persecutor More wins pardons for Lifter and the rioters.

Readers of the first "biographies" of More were in no doubt as to the nature of his motivations; the texts were written precisely because the nature of his death gave Catholic meaning to his life.

That More was the first secular man to die in the cause of the Catholic faith was thought to be of divinely determined significance. Nicholas Harpsfield commented of his death, "Which notable part to playe, to be therein his messenger for the laitie, it seemeth that God did purposely choose and reserue him, though for the time he were propense and inclined to some lyking towarde a solitarye and religious life."²⁷⁷ More was "our blessed Protomartyr of all the laitie".²⁷⁸ After his rapid promotion and in his only soliloquy the theatrical More likewise recognises God's directing of his life:

It is in heaven that I am thus and thus,
 And that which we profanely term our fortunes
 Is the provision of the power above
 Fitted and shaped just to that strength of nature
 Which we are born [withal]. (3.1.1-5)²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Foxe, p. 99.

²⁷⁷ Harpsfield, p. 213.

²⁷⁸ Harpsfield, p. 213.

²⁷⁹ In what is extant of the original text More has no soliloquies; the revision provides him with one 21-line soliloquy. This may be one of the longer parts of early modern drama but its dramatists seemed to find it technically difficult to provide the role with interiority.

Whereas the intriguing (in both senses of the word) Iago claims that "'tis in ourselves that we are thus and thus" (*Othello*, 1.3.319-20), beguiling the audience with an interiority that is wilful and imaginative, More's articulation of his subjectivity emphasises that he is subject to God. Of course, the tension of the play and of the real More's death derives from the fact that More is also subject to the king. Iago uses the first person plural pronoun "we", tauntingly including the audience in his privileging of selfhood, whereas More speaks only for himself. When he is first faced with the king's "articles", however, he uses plural pronouns, presumably indicating an awareness that he must respond as both a private individual and as the holder of political office: "Stay, let us pause: / Our conscience first shall parley with our laws" (4.1.73-4).²⁸⁰ When he demurs, he does so using the singular pronoun, resigning his office: "I entreat / Some time for to bethink me of this task. / In the meanwhile I do resign mine office / Into my sovereign's hands" (4.1.86-89). More becomes a doubly private individual, resigning his public office and concerning himself with his own motivations.

However, after More has exited to his death, the closing speech of the play (the opportunity to comment on the action of the plot) seems oddly foreshortened:

Exit.

A very learned worthy gentleman
Seals error with his blood. Come, we'll to court.
Let's sadly hence to perfect unknown fates,

²⁸⁰ It is, however, possible that More uses the plural because he is talking to others around him: his next sentence addresses Rochester directly (though the grammatical break and the newly personalised address allows for the possibility that his earlier lines had functioned differently – the "we" of the public/private individual).

Whilst he tends progress to the state of states.
(5.4.118-22)

The abruptness of Surrey's speech and the blunt comment that More "Seals error with his blood" provides a circular logic whereby punishment for the crime authenticates the subject's criminality.²⁸¹ (Marlowe's Edward II aims at this effect when he rages at those who would take his crown: "Their blood and yours shall seal these treacheries"; 5.1.89.)²⁸² Yet Surrey's designation of "error" does not foreclose the audience's interpretation. For one thing, his speech ends the play on a soteriological note framed by a political metaphor that implicitly opposes More's (failed) status as a political subject to the king, to his (apparently successful) Christian status as a subject to the superlative heavenly king. More's punishment is multiplied in the text. The execution is first foreshadowed by the hanging of Lincoln (presumably in the same raised stage space from which More exits) in 2.4. Though the potential for pardons would in real life indicate the benevolence of the monarch, the arrival of news of a pardon that comes too late to save Lincoln deeply undermines the spectacle of what (as I have noted) is one of the few staged capital punishments in extant early modern drama.²⁸³ Where More's inaccessibility can provoke interest, the Henry VIII-shaped void in the play denies a human aspect to More's punishment. State power seems arbitrary. The

²⁸¹ This speech lacks the promise of further discourse about More that is usually promised a tragic hero, and that Doll so actively sought for herself.

²⁸² C. Marlowe, *The Complete Plays and Poems*, ed. E. D. Pendry (London: Everyman, 1976).

²⁸³ E. A. J. Honigmann also discusses the significance of Lincoln's belated pardon in "The Play of Sir Thomas More and Some Contemporary Events", *Shakespeare Survey*, 42 (1989), 77-84 (78-80).

figure of Surrey carries similar implications in 5.4. Surrey and the other remaining characters still have life stories or “unknown fates” to “perfect”, that is, to finish, or perhaps, to bring to perfection. But this verb “perfect” also means to make a person “informed of, or knowledgeable about” something and so Surrey looks to a time when he will “know” what is already “known” to the audience: that like More he will be executed for treason against Henry VIII.²⁸⁴ As the ultimately inscrutable More finally eludes us we know too much about the “unknowing” Surrey, creating an irony that renders the play’s final moments ambiguous. If these past and future executions seem futile in a way that implicitly criticises the state, they also undercut the biographical “meaning” of More’s death, denying him singularity. If martyrdom has been his motivation it here feels a bit empty.

The text thus refuses or is unable whole-heartedly to condemn or celebrate More’s Catholic “difference and resulting doomedness”, and the characterisation of More finally engages the audience in a manner alternative to the representation of exotic, solipsistic heroism. Prior to his execution, More’s subjectivity is explored in spatial and communal terms. Far from providing a demonstration of the absolute power of the state, the site of execution was ideologically unstable:

In attempting to impose its own definitions, to fix its
own

²⁸⁴ *OED*, s.v. “perfect”. In their edition of the play Gabrieli and Melchiori note the dramatic irony of having Surrey voice this speech.

meanings and interpretations on the very violent, powerful and potentially unstable symbols and images released every time a Catholic met his maker on the scaffold, the English Protestant state was forced to enter a religious and ideological arena that no one group could hope entirely to dominate or control.²⁸⁵

More converts the site of his execution and the theatre in which the play is performed into a room in a house that becomes his room:

Truly, here's a most sweet gallery, I
like the air of it better than my garden at Chelsea. By
your patience, good people that have pressed thus into
my
bedchamber, if you'll not trouble me, I'll take a sound
sleep here. (5.4.63-7)²⁸⁶

In one of the play's repeated cross-identifications, the audience is addressed as guests at More's house. During More's lifetime the term "stranger" was used to refer to "A guest or visitor, in contradistinction to the member of the household"²⁸⁷ and so the audience become strangers in the metaphorical space constructed by this Catholic protagonist. The audience's spectatorship is made equivalent to the rather unmannerly behaviour of being "pressed" into More's private space, so that they are made aware of the voyeurism inherent in both biographical and dramatic forms. But this moment is more than just a comment on the theatricality of stage and real-life performances. At this moment we are finally given access to More's interiority. The making public of innerness

²⁸⁵ P. Lake and M. Questier, "Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows", *Past and Present*, 153 (November 1996), 64-107 (73). Marotti also notes that soon-to-be-executed Catholics would try to "convert the place and paraphernalia of execution from the secular to the sacred, from the environment of punishment for felons and traitors to the holy space of martyrdom"; p. 186.

²⁸⁶ For a different reading of the scaffold scene see Johnson, pp. 90-93.

²⁸⁷ *OED*, s.v. "stranger".

always potentially betrays that very innerness.²⁸⁸ More's interiority becomes a mutual space, shared between him and the on- and off-stage audience. Yet all of these "people" are incorporated as separate entities, as gazes are exchanged between More and his guests indicating the division upon which identification is predicated.²⁸⁹

Space is a crucial medium for the transmission of memories.²⁹⁰ Of course Renaissance thinkers, in particular, used architectural spaces mnemonically and the theatre itself (as Nashe and Heywood were at pains to point out) created a memorial space in which history could be re-membered.²⁹¹ As the play dramatises the moment leading up to the crucial event for which More would be remembered he addresses the audience within a spatial metaphor that also curiously operates like a memory of his Chelsea home. While the play memorialises More, and the audience viewing the play are engaged in an act of remembrance, this metaphor transforms those remembering subjects into aspects of

²⁸⁸ See D. Hillman, "The Inside Story", in *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early Modern Culture*, ed. C. Mazzio and D. Trevor (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 299-324; and K. E. Maus, *Inwardness and Theater* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995).

²⁸⁹ Commenting on the work of Kenneth Burke, Christy Desmet tells us that "Identification, like motive, is an act involving division as well as resemblance [...] Identification [...] means both becoming another person and remaining separate from that person"; *Reading Shakespeare's Characters* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1992), p. 32. Robert Weimann tells us "It is the dialectic between identity and relationship, between individual action and social circumstance which is at the centre of the greatest changes in the newly achieved art of Renaissance characterization"; "Society and the Individual in Shakespeare's Conception of Character", *SS*, 24 (1981), 23-31 (29).

²⁹⁰ There are many discussions of the importance of space in cultural memory. For example, F. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); M. J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); and P. Burke, "History as Social Memory" in *Memory*, ed. T. Butler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 97-113.

²⁹¹ The 2005-2006 RSC production of *Sir Thomas More* situated the action within a 1940s movie theatre so that viewing was doubly associated with remembering. Re-enacting is also important in the process of remembering and so the set design rendered the memorial aspects of the play multiply evident through a mnemonic structure that was itself nostalgically marked as past.

More's mnemonic. It is also notable that although the play has celebrated More as a citizen of London, the space of More's fantasy, the place which offers conceptual comfort at the point of death, is that of a country house rather than a civic site. His metaphor addresses the older practices of hospitality that were thought to be dying out in the civic world of contracts. In post-Reformation society Catholic houses were suspected (often correctly) of containing hidden recesses, so that the inner secrecy of "unnatural" Catholics was also realised in terms of architecture. Dolan's work on both Catholics and domestic criminals tells us that the familiar, far from providing a comfort, was often understood as dangerous. Where apocalyptic narratives would strip away the familiar surfaces of Catholic subjects and objects to reveal grotesquely sinful Catholic spectacles, *Sir Thomas More* addresses the audience as guests within a realm, the strangeness of which is not just Catholic but catholic: it is the universal strangeness of each individual. The audience are not *estranged* but part of a network with More that crosses generations, spaces and denominational allegiances. The audience then are not interpellated as Foucauldian subjects who are regulated by a Catholic spectacle, but rather engaged as epistemological beings who can think about, if not finally know, strangeness.

Having seen the ways in which the difficulties of representing Catholicism produce a newer characterisation of human interiority, I want now to think about how externals (Catholic costumes)

further complicate epistemology. As I do so it is important to bear in mind that what has been most interesting about *Sir Thomas More* is not that its subject matter is controversial, but the way it makes subjects out of this particular matter.

Chapter 4

Fabricating Difference: *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*

In an age when actors “doubled” parts, costumes signalled character. If an actor changed costume but not character explanatory dialogue was necessary to make the consistency of the role evident to the audience.²⁹² Thus while we have seen that More’s characterisation is developed through an awareness of an inaccessible interiority, of motivation, it is important to remember that characterisation is primarily external, visible and material. However, surfaces are in a symbiotic relationship with the innerness they cover. Furthermore, Catholic costumes (such as the habits of friars, nuns and pilgrims) are freighted with resonance from theological debate about the representational status of signs and the material nature of Catholicism. Just as the taboo of Catholic consciousness productively helped shape a resonant “gap” as More’s subjectivity, in *Measure for Measure* (1603) and *All’s Well that Ends Well* (1604-5) the Catholic costume is a signifier that problematises even as it labels the signified.

This chapter considers what it means to “fabricate” a staged Catholic. That is, the way in which the rendering material of an identity that is not somatically marked is related to a practice of “making something up”.²⁹³ Focussing on this nexus enables us to pinpoint the awkward overlap between fiction-making and fraud.

²⁹² Sometimes the explanation might be delayed for theatrical effect; T. Stern, *Making Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 106-7.

²⁹³ The *OED* tells us that the “bad sense” of “fabricate” (“To ‘make up’; to frame or invent (a legend, lie, etc.); to forge (a document)”) was not in use until the eighteenth century; *OED*, s.v. “fabricate”, 2. I use the term in its anachronistic sense because it economically labels tensions evident in early modern texts.

Recently, Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have given a literal meaning to the new historicist concept of “fashioning”, pointing out that “To understand the significance of clothes in the Renaissance, we need to undo our own social categories, in which subjects are prior to objects, wearers to what is worn.”²⁹⁴ Clothes can shape the self because “Clothing is a worn world: a world of social relations put upon the wearer’s body.”²⁹⁵ This chapter will consider how the viewpoint of theatrical audiences and the particular structure of Catholic significance support and problematise such contentions. I analyse what fabrication means from different perspectives: that of the polemicist (does he fabricate the deceit he ostensibly reveals when he peels away the sartorial layers of Catholicism?); the wearer (in a post-Reformation context do Catholic clothes reveal or conceal identity? do they inevitably provoke misreading?); the viewer (does the viewing of fabrication lead to the viewer’s conceptual fabrication?). In raising these issues I suggest ways in which legibly Catholic costumes might work in the generically indeterminate plays often categorised as “problem” (a critical label that announces its own inadequacy as a label). In particular, I consider the question of Isabella’s desire to be visibly identified as Catholic and the misreadings that subsequently proliferate; how the Duke’s friar disguise structures characterisation; and the implications of

²⁹⁴ A. R. Jones and P. Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 2.

²⁹⁵ Jones and Stallybrass, p. 3.

Helen's "pretence" (4.3.48) of a pilgrimage. However, we need first to look at how early moderns visualised Catholics.

Legible and Illegible Catholics

During a libel trial in Canterbury in 1560 it was reported "that mr cole sholde say in the pulpit that he did know a papist / | Well ynough by his face. for they loked like dronckers."²⁹⁶ Characters like Friar Lawrence and the Abbess from *The Comedy of Errors* are legibly Catholic because of their vestments, but what about the Catholic body? How could one "know a papist [...] by his face"? Mr Cole's suggested insult not only damns the "merry" associations of traditional religion by contemptuously labelling it profligate (papists as drunkards),²⁹⁷ but it also takes its force from the way in which it claims for the speaker an ability to detect somatic difference at a site/sight that was problematically similar.²⁹⁸ Such a remark simultaneously masks and reveals the epistemological

²⁹⁶ "Examinations in John Bale con. Richard Ugden [Okeden]", in *Records of Early English Drama: Kent: Diocese of Canterbury*, ed. J. M. Gibson, 3 vols, i (London: British Library and U of Toronto P, 2002), ll. 25-6, pp. 184-7; all references are to this transcription, incorporated in the text.

²⁹⁷ Louise Hill Curth and Tanya M. Cassidy show that particular kinds of alcohol could take on particular sectarian resonance: "Anxieties about wine connect with anxieties about southern Catholic Europe, whereas concerns about beer are connected to northern Europe, overwhelmingly with Holland." They quote *Dyets Dry Dinner* (1599), where Henry Butts humorously reports that it has been said "that herisie and beere cam hopping into England both in yeere"; "'Health, Strength and Happiness'", in *A Pleasing Sinne*, ed. A. Smyth (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 143-59 (p. 146).

²⁹⁸ Similar tactics were used in the George Bush/John Kerry presidential election of 2004. The Commerce Secretary Donald L. Evans told reporters that John Kerry "looks French"; Joshua Kurlantzick, "Pardon?", *The New Yorker*, 19 April 2004. (This had also been a familiar theme in the right-wing media; Ben Fritz and Brendan Nyhan, "John Kerry's French Connection", 24 March 2004, <http://www.spinsanity.org/columns/20040325.html>.) Like Mr Cole, Evans and others linked physiognomy to an ideological difference not usually visually signified (in Republican discourse at that historical moment "French" equated with foreign, anti-American, anti-war and cowardly). Damningly, "looks" carries both a specificity (the face is made legible) and a vagueness (it refers to a paradoxically ineffable description) that together with a comic tone renders the central tenet (though not the bigotry) of such insults unanswerable: "I do *not* look French" is an unlikely response from a presidential candidate and instead Kerry came to display "linguistic amnesia" when asked questions in French by European reporters; Kurlantzick.

problem that the English Catholic presented in post-Reformation England. “The contrast between Catholics and Protestants was”, as Frances Dolan points out, “central to the definition of identity and difference in the seventeenth century”, but at the same time:

Undermining Englishness and Protestantism by not being different enough, English Catholics unsettled the nation’s relation to its own past and, with their allegiances divided between England’s sovereign and Rome’s pope, blurred the distinction between the English and foreigners, loyal subjects and traitors, us and them.²⁹⁹

This problem persisted throughout the early modern period.

Proclamations against Catholics promoted the Protestant national order of the day as emphatically “natural” (this adjective is repeatedly linked with nouns like “prince”, “country”, “duty”, “subject” and “sovereign”).³⁰⁰ The reporting of the disobedient papist’s opposition to such order designated him/her as monstrously unnatural. However, this rhetoric also implicitly contained the troubling truth that there was no “natural” distinction that could make evident the difference between English Protestants and English Catholics. So difficult was the visual categorisation of the slippery Catholic subject that the authorities responsible for transporting Edmund Campion from Lyford Grange

²⁹⁹ F. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), pp. 1, 5.

³⁰⁰ See for example, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, 3 vols (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1964-69): “Declaring Jesuits and Non-Returning Seminarians Traitors” (1582), ii, pp. 488-91; “Ordering Suppression of Books Defacing True Religion, Slandering Administration of Justice, Endangering the Queen’s Title, etc.” (1584), ii, pp. 506-8; and “Ordering Martial Law Against Possessors of Papal Bulls, Books, Pamphlets” (1588), iii, pp. 13-17.

to prison stuck a label on him specifying a traitorous identity: “Edmund Campion, the Seditious Jesuit”. As Julian Yates points out, the need to provide a literal label testified “to the instability of this reference”.³⁰¹ The unequivocal sign was needed because the Jesuit body was so manifestly illegible, or more accurately, polysemous. Campion could be read as criminal; traitor; papist; Catholic; innocent; martyr. In the context of a denominationally heterogeneous English populace none of these categories was straightforwardly synonymous or contradictory.³⁰²

The use of torture in this period suggests a belief that bodies (Catholic or otherwise) could be forced to tell the truth,³⁰³ while the display of the hearts and entrails of traitors during the execution process produced treason as physical. But, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Lorna Hutson points out that such practices are contemporaneous with an English trial system that (in contrast to the continental use of Roman-canon law) rejected the use of a tariff of proof and instead freed juries to accept or reject the testimony of witnesses.³⁰⁴ Of course judgments might be based on a reading of somatic clues but such a system denies the availability of unequivocal meaning and objective truth. Katharine Eisaman Maus

³⁰¹ J. Yates, “Parasitic Geographies”, in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. A. F. Marotti (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 63-84 (pp. 80-81).

³⁰² Claiming that English Catholics hoped and prepared for Spanish invasion, J. Baxter suggested that Catholics themselves sought (secret) differentiating labels: “I know that some of you weare the mark of the beast, as a crosse, an *agnus dei*, or some character of the babilonish whore, whereby you hope you shall be marked from Huguenotes, if that day should come that you looke for”; *A Toile for Two-Legged Foxes* (London, 1600), sig. C4r.

³⁰³ From the 1580s Catholics were tortured to elicit information; E. Hanson, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), pp. 24-54.

³⁰⁴ L. Hutson, “Rethinking the ‘Spectacle of the Scaffold’”, *Representations*, 89 (2005), 30-58 (36-7).

tells us that in the early modern period there were two prevailing fantasies:

one, that selves are obscure, hidden, ineffable; the other, that they are fully manifest or capable of being made fully manifest. These seem to be contradictory notions, but again and again they are voiced together, so that they seem less self-canceling than symbiotically related or mutually constitutive.³⁰⁵

Such concepts were not exclusive to epistemological understandings of Catholics, but the wider debate helps explain some of the contradictions attendant on Catholic representation and the analysis of Catholic appearance. Indeed these particular issues were complicated still further by the mixed messages of the Settlement. Even when we put on one side the disjunctions that saw Elizabeth at times refusing to make windows into men's souls and at others being prepared to have the hearts ripped out of Catholics as evidence of their treachery, there is a conceptual paradox at the centre of the state's treatment of recusants and church papists.³⁰⁶ Recusants were fined for their outward display of their religious convictions, whereas the church papists' reluctant attendance at Protestant services was thought to be sufficient "natural" obedience. The validity of "natural" citizenship was located on the surface (signified by one's outward actions), but at

³⁰⁵ K. E. Maus, *Inwardness and Theater* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1995), pp. 28-9.

³⁰⁶ Baxter rejected the Elizabethan commonplace, fantasising "If a window were framed in the breasts of these discontented catholikes [...] then I know full well that many false hearts would be found lurking vnder painted hoodes, and cakes of foule cancred malice, vnder meale mouthed protestations"; sig. Iv.

the same time this policy admitted to a gap between outward actions and an inner reality that was wholly different.³⁰⁷

But if the state often (though, as its treatment of missionary priests makes clear, not always) contented itself with impressions of the surface (i.e. conformity), polemicists prodded at these externals, both exposing what was underneath and lamenting the semantic corruption of the signifying layer itself. As we have seen, Alison Shell identifies and explains the apocalyptic theme in anti-Catholic writing whereby glittering or holy Catholic surfaces were pulled away to reveal repellent and sinful interiors.³⁰⁸ Writers also drew attention to the “normality” of English Catholic appearance.

In his *Anatomie of Abuses* Philip Stubbes describes “papists” thus:

These sedicious Vipers, and *Pythonicall Hydraes*, eyther lurke secretly in corners, seducing her Maiesties
 suiectes,
 and withdrawing their heartes from their Soueraignes
 obedience,
 or els walke openly, obseruing an outward *decorum*,
 and an
 order as others do, and the[n] may no man say blacke is
 their eye,
 but they are good protestantes.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ For a detailed discussion of these contradictions see R. J. Corthell, ““The Secrecy of Man””, *ELR*, 19 (1989), 272-90. With the 1606 Oath of Allegiance James changed (or threatened to change) the situation: “The tendency of the oath [...] is to confuse catholic attempts to keep apart religious and political loyalties so that they could no longer distinguish between their allegiance to the king and the allegiance to the Church of England [...] The recusancy legislation was for the majority a licence to dissent, while the oath could be used to strike at any standing out against conformity at all. Thus the Jacobean regime made a window into men’s souls in a way the Elizabethan regime had only briefly contemplated.” However, “the promulgation of the oath did not annihilate papistry. In addition, towards the end of James’s reign, the attractions of a dynastic match with Spain beckoned, and pressure on catholics was undoubtedly relaxed”; M. C. Questier, “Loyalty, Religion and State Power in Early Modern England”, *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 311-29 (322, 328).

³⁰⁸ A. Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 23-55.

³⁰⁹ P. Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, ed. M. J. Kidnie (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in conjunction with Renaissance English Text Society, 2002), p. 186. This edition is based on the 1595 text. Both the first and second parts of the *Anatomie* were first published in 1583.

Stubbes associates Catholics with treasonous activity: their visual indeterminacy represents the practical problem of hidden criminality. That Catholics should be indistinguishable both when they are secret and when they are open underlines the utter absence of visual markers that would separate these “Vipers” from “good protestantes”. Similar appearance really denotes frightening difference. John Gee’s description of “How to know a Priest” in *Foot Out of the Snare* (1624) likewise emphasises the counter-intuition necessary to decode Catholic appearance:

If, about *Bloomesbury* or *Holborne*, thou meet a good smug Fellow in a gold-laced suit, a cloke lined thorow
with
Rings on
at above
his side,
Priests.
This man hath vowed *poverty*.³¹⁰

velvet, one that hath good store of coin in his purse,
his fingers, a Watch in his pocket, which hee will valew
twentie pounds, a very broad-laced Band, a Stiletto by
[...] then take heed of a Jesuite, of the prouder sort of

Paradoxically, a Catholic priest is identifiable by not looking like a Catholic priest.³¹¹ Anxiety at the visual indeterminacy of Catholics is turned to polemical advantage as Gee emphasises priestly hypocrisy by suggesting secular enjoyment of the gentleman disguise which Jesuits tended to adopt in England. The Catholic is inevitably opulent even in a disguise creating a “normal” appearance. Thus disguise tells the hypocritical truth about its

³¹⁰ John Gee’s *Foot Out of the Snare 1624*, ed. T. H. B. M. Harmsen (Nijmegen: Cicero P, 1992), p. 127.

³¹¹ A similar logic is employed by critics who would argue that the lack of evidence for Shakespeare’s Catholicism is a likely indication that he was secretly Catholic.

wearer in its very falseness (both its moral corruption and its semiotic deceit).

If we return to 1560s' Canterbury we find that the use of descriptive denominational labels is itself fraught. Mr Cole's remark about drunk-looking papists is taken from a witness statement in a libel case that the Protestant playwright and prebendary of Christ Church Cathedral, John Bale, brought against Richard Okeden, the son of a conservative alderman. Bale had sent a man called Hugh Pilkington to a tailor's to have a friar's costume made for a play. The young Okeden, who was in the shop at the time, evidently objected to the garment being made for theatrical purposes and allegedly called Bale a "knave".

Bale makes theatrical use of a friar's costume in his allegorical history play, *King Johan* (c. 1534, revived post-1538).³¹² Even though this was not necessarily the play for which the Canterbury costume was being prepared, the libel and the drama are mutually illuminating. In *King Johan* Sedicyon announces that before he manipulates Nobylte:

I must change myn apparell
Unto a bysshoppe to maynetayene with my quarell,
To a monke or pryst or to sum holy fryer. (296-8)

The Protestant fear of undetectable papists harbouring treachery alongside hidden religious allegiances is confirmed by the theatrical use of Catholic vestment as disguise (reversing Jesuit

³¹² For a discussion of the dating of *King Johan* see *The Complete Plays of John Bale*, ed. P. Happé, 2 vols, i (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), pp. 7-9; all references to the text of *King Johan* are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

practice of secular disguise).³¹³ Such disguise *shows* treachery to be hidden and Catholic in nature, while simultaneously offering the comfort of legible representation. Bale's use of this device formed part of the early Protestant use of the stage for polemical ends,³¹⁴ but even long after religious controversy had ostensibly been banned from the stage we find a similar anti-Catholic epistemology in non-propagandist plays, as, for example, when Lodovico and Gasparo dress up as Capuchins to facilitate murder in Webster's *White Devil* (1612). In Bale's play *Sedicyon* boasts about the flexibility of his Catholic shape-shifting:

In every estate of the clargye I playe a part:
 Sumtyme I can be a monke in a long syd cowle;
 Sumtyme I can be a none and loke lyke an owle;
 Sumtyme a channon in a syrples fayer and whyght;
 A chapterhowse monke sumtym I apere in syght;
 I am ower Syre Johan, sumtyme with a new shaven
 crowne;
 Sumtym the person and swepe the stretes with a syd
 gowne;
 Sumtyme the bysshoppe with a myter and a cope;
 A graye fryer sumtyme with cutt shoes and a rope;
 Sumtyme I can playe the whyght monke, symtyme the
 fryer,
 The purgatory prist and every mans wyffe desyer. [...]
 Yea, to go farder, sumtyme I am a cardynall,
 Yea, sumtyme a pope, and than am I lord over all,
 Bothe in hevyn and erthe, and also in purgatory,
 And do weare thre crownes whan I am in my glorie.

(194-210)

While the Catholic body lacks meaningful markers of difference, the material signifiers of Catholicism lack meaning in their proliferation. Instead of conveying semiotic density the

³¹³ The extant text makes anachronistic reference to "Jesuytes" at line 450.

³¹⁴ The denominational nature of the theatre in the 1560s is made evident in Pilkington's libel-trial testimony where he claims that Okeden announced that he would avoid Bale's play and "goo to Romney wher ther is good playe"; ll. 28-9, p. 186.

numerousness of the signifiers (the vestments) has one meaning: fraud.³¹⁵ In her study of the representation of the European foreigner in English drama, Emma Smith argues that the recurrence of English characters adopting foreign disguise by the end of the sixteenth century means that “Drawing on, and subverting its own conventions for representing foreigners, the theatre thus develops its own self-consciously staged and anti-essential aesthetics of nationality.”³¹⁶ Confusions between Catholics and Protestants similarly deconstruct denominational difference as non-essential (as, for example, when the proto-Protestant Oldcastle, the Lancashire carrier, and Irish murderer and others switch clothes in “a circus of cross-dressing that emphasizes the ease, rapidity and advantages of changing one’s religious signifiers” in *1 Sir John Oldcastle*).³¹⁷ However, the notion that Catholicism might be located at the level of sartorial deceit is entirely appropriate to a reformist understanding of Catholicism as semiotically aberrant, as essentially “anti-essential”, fraudulent and corrupt.³¹⁸ Thus Johan wants to rid the Church of “dysgysyd

³¹⁵ This might remind us of the nature of the loquacity of the Prioress in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*. Shell tells us that “Protestant criticism of popery often concentrated on its elevation of the unnecessary, claiming that its accretion of objects and rituals had narrowed the arteries from God. Iconographical criticism was loaded, indeed overloaded, with this message, and in anti-Catholic visual narratives many Catholic objects are depicted where one would be sufficient to establish the point”; p. 33. See, for example, *The Pope’s Monarchy* (London, 1585), where Philip Stubbes provides lengthy itemisations of the rich fabrics used in Catholic vestments, giving examples of bishops wearing “14. sundry sortes of garments upo[n] their backes at once”; sig. E1r.

³¹⁶ E. Smith, “Sifting Strangers”, (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, Trinity 1997), p. 3.

³¹⁷ D. B. Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560-1633* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 143.

³¹⁸ We might compare the attitude to “A common Player” in Overbury’s *Characters*: “Take him at the best, he is but a shifting companion; for hee lives effectually by putting on, and putting off”; as cited in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols, iv (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923), p. 257. In *King Johan Englande* complains that the clergy take her “cattell, howse and land [...] In syde cotys wandryng lyke most dysgysyd players” (62-6).

shavelynge” (429), using an epithet that broadly dismisses vestments as disguise.

Stephen Greenblatt has suggested that the conversion of faith into this bad faith was partly achieved by the translation of clothes once used as holy vestments into theatrical costumes.³¹⁹ Characters like Sedicyon wore vestments as disguise; actors playing such characters wore vestments as costume. However, not all such costumes had an ecclesiastical provenance and the incident at Canterbury indicates that the new fabrication of Catholicism as costume was also thought to be damaging or insulting to traditional belief. The libel case centres on Okeden’s alleged defamation of Bale, but each of the testimonies records Okeden’s understanding of the fabrication (the making material for stage fiction) of a friar’s habit as insulting: one witness recalls him asking “will you make a fryers cote in derision” (Robert Barnes, l. 10, p. 185), while others record that he exclaimed that Bale did “sett furth playes against religious men” (Philip Hall, l. 1, p. 186) and that he “settith furth and inventith plaies to speke against fryers and monckes and other religious people that haue ben in tymes past” (John Poole, ll. 22-3, p. 184).³²⁰ Hugh Pilkington

³¹⁹ S. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), p. 6; see also Stallybrass and Jones, p. 192.

³²⁰ For discussions of the meaning of slander in the early modern period see M. L. Kaplan, *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997); and J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History 3rd Edition* (London: Butterworths, 1990), pp. 495-508. Happé records another instance of Catholic objection to involvement in Bale’s theatrical productions: in 1551 a Catholic reviled a servant for taking part in rehearsal for *Three Laws*; p. 6. Bale’s libel case against Richard Okeden collapsed, but later in the same year Bale initiated proceedings against his father, John, and was successful; Gibson, iii, pp. 945-54.

(Bale's employee) provides the fullest account of the dialogue at the tailor's and it is worth looking at it in some detail:

And [Okeden] said mr Bale doth well to occupie him self *with* such trompery And speaking against fryers, yet the ^[knave] him self was a fryer And knewe ther knavery well ynoughe To whom Pylkyngton answered and said I knowe not him to be such aman Cui okeden yes by godes blode he is as the rest are knaves all the mayny of them to whome one barns said all priestes be

not

knaves, tunc okeden I do not meane priestes I meane mynysters | And said is cole a priest, no saith he *with* an oth: he is a Rayling knave [for] And this deponent asking him whie he said so Okeden answered and said I may as well rayle upon him as he to rayle upon his betters And further sayd what arre they anny better

then

tinckers souters tylers and dronkyn knaves[.] (ll. 29-38, l. 1, pp. 186-7)³²¹

In Pilkington's account this understanding of costume as typically defamatory provides motive for Okeden's libel of Bale: "I may as well rayle upon him as he to rayle upon his betters". Yet it is this equivalency that unseats the very difference that Bale tries to ridicule and that Okeden attempts to defend. Okeden says of Bale "the ^[knave] him self was a fryer And knewe ther knavery well ynoughe". Bale is a knave because he is anti-fraternal *and* because he was once a friar. Responding to the demurring of others present Okeden tries to disentangle himself from his semiotic knot by sorting through the new sectarian indeterminacy of old signs,

³²¹ For the purposes of this discussion I am going to concentrate mainly on Hugh Pilkington's testimony of Okeden's behaviour. This, of course, may not be an accurate report of the events and there are clear discrepancies between the four testimonies (most importantly, only Pilkington recalls the libel). Leslie P. Fairfield suggests that prior to the trial Okeden's father and another alderman intimidated one of the witnesses into amnesia; *John Bale* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1976), p. 147. But all such accounts are subjective and the disjunctions between the testimonies further emphasise the sectarian tensions inherent in Pilkington's account.

trying to re-establish difference between friars, priests and ministers: “I do not meane priestes I meane mynysters”. But the confusion is deep-rooted. When he says sarcastically that Bale “doth well to occupie him self *with* such trumpery” he at once asserts that Bale’s making of the habit for fiction is “Deceit, fraud, imposture, trickery”³²² and also that the habit for which he shows such furious respect is “‘Something of less value than it seems’ [...] worthless stuff, trash, rubbish”, and in a specifically religious sense is “idle or superstitious”.³²³ It was not just the angry young Catholic who had difficulties in maintaining a philosophical difference in his denominational reading of signs. Philip Stubbes defended the need for sumptuary “decorum” declaring:

I put no religion in going, or not going in the like simple attire of our parents *Adam* and *Eua* (as the Sorbonicall Papists doe, placing all their religion in heathen garmentes and Romish ragges) so that we obserue a meane, and exceed not in pride.³²⁴

Like “trompery” the word “ragges” captures the way in which an idolatrous over-valuation of signifiers paradoxically voids them of significance. However, attempting to assert that clothes should make manifest a God-given order while also denying sartorial

³²² *OED*, s.v. “trumpery”, 1.

³²³ *OED*, s.v. “trumpery”, 2. Shakespeare uses the anti-Catholic significance of the word in *The Winter’s Tale* where Autolycus dismisses the goods he peddles as “trumpery” (4.4.594), mocking his customers as superstitious gulls: “They throng who should buy first, as if my trinkets had been hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer” (4.4.597-9). (I discuss the awareness of Catholic interpretation as superstition in *The Winter’s Tale* in Chapter 6.) Such resonance perhaps lends force to Prospero’s contempt when he uses “glistening apparel” (4.1.193.1) to distract Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban from their plot: “The trumpery in my house, go bring it hither, / For stale to catch these thieves” (4.1.186-7). Caliban recognises his master’s use of “trash” (4.1.224).

³²⁴ Stubbes, “Anatomy”, pp. 92, 76. Stubbes elsewhere uses a similar line of argument when justifying the non-idolatrous importance of the much-maligned prescribed clerical dress.

signifiers any divine meaning creates a rhetorical awkwardness that reveals logical contradiction. As Adrian Streete shows, this tension was part of a broader Protestant difficulty: despite the “iconoclastic impulse to distance *res* from *verba*” reformers felt uncomfortable with the absolute claim “that the divine could not have a visible locus on earth.”³²⁵ Even when they argued conceptual difference reformers could not always maintain a complete theoretical distinction from Catholic tradition. But if the early modern “present” is not straightforwardly “Protestant”, neither is the medieval past straightforwardly “Catholic”.

Okeden’s rhetoric is also muddled by tradition. His anger is predicated on a recognition that in a post-Reformation world (in which the presence of a “real” visually-marked friar in England became an increasingly distant memory), there is a potential for “friars” to stand metonymically for Catholicism. But anti-fraternal rhetoric also pre-dates the Reformation and is afterwards not exclusive to those of the reformed faith. In using anti-fraternal discourse to denounce anti-fraternalism Okeden’s confused rage highlights the way in which signifiers exist in denominational flux. While the emphatically anti-fraternal Bale may have felt his conversion from friar to Protestant minister to symbolise a binary difference, this case warns us that denominational labels come

³²⁵ A. Streete, “Reforming Signs”, *Literature and History*, 3rd ser., 12, (2003), 1-18 (14). Streete also notes “the iconoclastic impulses of the Reformation were fuelled by a desire to rid worship of an over-reliance on Catholic forms of representation such as crucifixes, statues and stained glass. This point notwithstanding, in relation to Eucharistic doctrine, English Protestants, influenced by Martin Bucer, John Calvin and Theodore Beza, actually reversed the terms of their own main argument by seeing signs as *representations* of the object in question where Catholics saw signs as the *embodiment* of the object”; 2.

unstuck when we least expect it. Even when signs are highly legible and interpretations are given sectarian expression, the past haunts meaning in disconcerting ways. Okeden makes it clear that costume matters and I will now move forward some forty-five years to consider how Shakespeare negotiates and enlists the contradictions of “invested” meaning.

Fetishistic Representation

The fabrication of staged Catholic difference can be thought of in similar terms to the production of “female” difference on male actors’ bodies. Jones and Stallybrass describe this practice as a use of prosthetics, theorising it in terms of the “fetish”.³²⁶ The fetish represents an item given metonymic power: a wig signifies a woman; a friar’s habit, a Catholic cleric.³²⁷ In describing the fetishistic characterisations of the blazon in Petrarchan love poetry Gary Waller tells us that fetishistic representation involves a partitioning: a breaking up and breaking down of the identity, a process that renders that identity less threatening.³²⁸ The resulting representation is not “true to life, but true to what he [the male poet] can bear”.³²⁹ Freud writes of the fetishist: “the subject’s interest comes to a halt half-way, as it were; it is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as a

³²⁶ Jones and Stallybrass, pp. 207-19.

³²⁷ Of course, on the early modern open stage all representation was constructed via metonymy. However, the model of the fetish usefully highlights psychological and ideological implications of particularly charged acts of metonymy.

³²⁸ G. Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century: 2nd Edition* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 86-89.

³²⁹ Waller, p. 89.

fetish.”³³⁰ While reformers denigrated Catholics for an over-reliance on signifiers, early modern representations of Catholics (within a reformed discourse) are themselves fetishistic. Crucifixes, rosaries, the habits of friars and so on come to stand for an entire theology of which they form only a small part. Even linguistically, “the mere mention of relics, saints, masses or Purgatory in [...] ballads seems to have been sufficient to conjure up ridiculous associations and an atmosphere of derision”.³³¹ These representations focus on points of Catholic/Protestant difference in order to construct a Catholic identity. Where Freud’s fetishist “comes to a halt half-way”, *before* he discovers the traumatic genital difference between himself and the female, the anti-Catholic halts *at* the point of difference, before s/he has to encounter the traumatic similarity between him/herself and the Catholic.³³² This is evident in the fetishistic sleight of hand whereby Catholics were referred to as “Romans” and “papists”.³³³ Appropriating the power of categorisation, the anti-Catholic uses terms which over-value the importance of one aspect of the Catholic subject’s faith: his/her relationship with the Pope, based in

³³⁰ S. Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols, xxi (trans. J. Strachey, London: Hogarth P and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74), p. 155.

³³¹ T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), p. 88.

³³² Alison Shell points out that “devotional writing, in particular, demonstrates how very little *real* difference there was between Catholic and Protestant spirituality, since it is often hard to tell the denominational allegiances of the authors of devotional tracts where they are not demonstrable from outside evidence”; p. 16. Discussing Catholic devotional verse, Brian Cummings likewise argues that “Having originated in a need to counter Reformation forms of spirituality, this catholic literature in turn filled a gap among Protestants: Southwell’s books of tears were widely imitated by English protestant poets [...] In this way, the literary relationship between Calvinism and catholicism is much more complex than meets the eye”; *The Literary Culture of the Reformation* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p. 333.

³³³ For a Catholic objection to the use of such terminology see the gloss of Acts 11:26 in the Rheims *New Testament* (1633), pp. 295-6. See also discussion in T. H. Clancy, “Papist-Protestant-Puritan”, *Recusant History*, 13 (1975-6), 227-253.

Rome. Of course, these names pinpoint a very real aspect of why Catholics were thought to be threatening (Catholics' divided, foreign allegiances), but they also replace other disturbing implications of the term "Catholic" (universal). Reformers certainly did not acknowledge the Roman Catholic faith as "universal", and (officially at least) claimed the designation "Catholic" for themselves. Hence Elizabeth's Regnal Style included the description "defender of the true, ancient, and Catholic faith".³³⁴

On the stage then the use of a costume such as a nun's habit enacts a double metonymy: fabricating the boy actor's body as female and Catholic. It codes difference so legibly that some actors have found it difficult to convey a complexity of characterisation from underneath the sartorial stereotype; the representation can be reduced to the prosthetic. For example, Juliet Stevenson (who played Isabella in Adrian Noble's 1983 production of *Measure for Measure*) says that to have used a nun's habit as a costume would have risked the appearance of "fancy dress".³³⁵ Indeed, extant stage directions indicate that in early modern drama nuns often performed "small or supernumerary roles": Catholic objects that create historical verisimilitude or anti-Catholic comedy.³³⁶

³³⁴ "Announcing the Regnal Style of Elizabeth I" (1559), in Hughes and Larkin, ii, p. 103. Clancy notes that "There had always been an official insistence that the Church of England deserved the name 'Catholic'". In the sixteenth century puritans sometimes claimed the title, but in the seventeenth century it was usually "Anglicans" that wanted to be known as such. However, "'Catholic' remained, despite the insistence of the theologians, a bookish and contentious term when applied to adherents of the Established Church throughout the seventeenth century"; 237-8.

³³⁵ C. Rutter, *Clamorous Voices* (London: Women's Press, 1988), p. 42.

³³⁶ A. C. Dessen and L. Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), pp. 151-2.

Critics have often assumed that Isabella would have been costumed as a nun,³³⁷ but a number of directors (including William Poel in 1908 (RSC), Keith Hack in 1974 (RSC) and Adrian Noble in 1983 (RSC)) have dressed Isabella in secular costume that often drew attention to the actor's body: in 1983 Juliet Stevenson wore a dress of sumptuous silk (RSC; Adrian Noble); Judi Dench wore a much commented-on low-cut gown in a 1962 production (RSC; John Blatchley); and in 2003 Emma Fielding met Angelo wearing a red coat that both covered the body and announced its presence (RSC; Sean Holmes). The text itself is ambiguous. The folio stage direction featuring Isabella's first appearance reads: "*Enter Isabell and Francisca a Nun*" (1.4.0.1). The specification that Francisca is a nun perhaps suggests that Isabella should not look like one. Costume-expert Jean MacIntyre asserts that since (as the dialogue tells us) Isabella is a novice she should not wear a nun's habit, claiming that early modern novices did not wear full religious dress.³³⁸ However, this point is not entirely certain: the Council of Trent stipulated that novices had to be "clothed" for at least a year prior to their profession (though the special clothing ceremony did not necessarily coincide with the novice's entrance to the convent).³³⁹ Furthermore, another early modern play clearly

³³⁷ See, for example, A. Kirsch, *Shakespeare and the Experience of Love* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981) p. 72; M. C. McFeely, "'This day my sister should the cloister enter'", in *Subjects on the World's Stage*, ed. D. G. Allen and R. A. White (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1995), pp. 200-216 (p. 206); K. McLuskie, "The Patriarchal Bard", in *Political Shakespeare 2nd Edition*, ed. J. Dollimore and A. Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995), pp. 88-108 (p. 96); and R. N. Watson, "False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends", *SQ*, 41 (1990), 411-32 (417).

³³⁸ J. MacIntyre, *Costumes and Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatres* (Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 1992), pp. 275-7; 340 n. 16.

³³⁹ M. Laven, *Virgins of Venice* (London: Viking, 2002), p. 27.

costumes a novice in a nun's habit. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594) when Margaret makes her way to the convent to become a nun she is already "in nun's apparel" (14.0). Attention is drawn to her religious dress as she sighs "Adieu to dainty robes; this base attire / Better befits an humble mind to God" (14.31-2), and when she snatches at the alternative of marriage to the man who has tested her love she punningly declares "Off goes the habit of a maiden's heart" (14.89).³⁴⁰ In this instance the nun's costume is used for dramatic effect rather than theological or cultural accuracy. But then that is the point of costume. In making Isabella a novice Shakespeare consciously changes his source material: none of Isabella's earlier counterparts in the "monstrous ransom" tradition share her religious way of life. The use of a nun's costume keeps this literary invention at the forefront of the audience's minds (although the dialogue, including the apparent pun on biological/religious sister at 2.4.18 and 3.1.156 marking Isabella's conflict of loyalties, also achieves this linguistically).

As we saw in Chapter 1, nuns had a double-edged significance in the post-Reformation period: they represented chaste piety, but also hypocritical Catholic lechery.³⁴¹ This is the paradox Marlowe comically exploits in his portrayal of Hero as "Venus's nun".³⁴² Jean MacIntyre contends that such contemporary

³⁴⁰ R. Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. J. A. Lavin (London: Benn, 1969).

³⁴¹ Thus one writer claims "It is no great miracle for a whore to become a Nunne; nor for a Nunne to become a whore"; T. Robinson, *The Anatomy of the English Nunnery at Lisbon in Portugall* (London, 1622), sig. [B4r] (marginal note).

³⁴² C. Marlowe, *Hero and Leander* (l. 45), in *Complete Plays and Poems*, ed. E. D. Pendry (London: Everyman, 1976).

ambivalence means it is unlikely that seventeenth-century Isabellas would have been costumed in nuns' habits. She argues that the bawdy connotations of the religious costume together with the sexual double-meanings of Isabella's language would make the character knowingly hypocritical, inappropriately making her attitude to Claudio seem "not only cruel but also insincere".³⁴³ But the very fact that Shakespeare writes double-meaning into Isabella's dialogue indicates that he plays with, rather than avoids, the resonance attached to the nun's habit. Angelo, the Duke, Lucio and Claudio all read Isabella's appearance in sexual terms, so it seems appropriate that the early modern audience should see her image as both piously and sexually coded. Highly symbolic dress can seem "too restrictive" in the modern theatre,³⁴⁴ but the peculiar historical context of early modern theatre means that a dual-functioning stereotype could have exerted a highly evocative and dramatic paradoxical pressure on the audience. The nun's costume turns Isabella into a "type" in a way that does not flatten out her character but instead complicates it. Rebecca Sullivan tells us that a nun's habit "is the primary mediation of her carefully constructed identity to the world."³⁴⁵ One of the few autonomous decisions we see Isabella take is her decision to refuse to have sex with Angelo, a decision related to her identity as a novice. A visual representation of "her carefully constructed identity" stands in

³⁴³ MacIntyre, p. 276.

³⁴⁴ Juliet Stevenson in Rutter, p. 42.

³⁴⁵ R. Sullivan, "Breaking Habits", in *Consuming Fashion*, ed. A. Brydon and S. Niessen (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp. 109-28 (p. 109).

constant, poignant juxtaposition with the action of the play where she is repeatedly directed by others (including Francisca, Lucio, the Duke, Friar Thomas and Mariana).

However, even if Isabella is not costumed in a nun's habit, she expresses her Catholic selfhood in material terms. When Angelo asks, hypothetically, what she would do if she could save her brother by laying down the "treasures" (2.4.96) of her body to a man able to save him, she develops the image and translates its meaning:

The impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame. (2.4.101-4)

Demonstrating a ready rhetorical skill Isabella transforms Angelo's masculine poetic trope (whereby the female body is both desirable and possessible) into a Catholic celebration of the virginal body. Following a traditional hagiographical manoeuvre she translates the torturer's fiction of power over the would-be saint's body ("The impression of keen whips") into a triumphant display of Christian fidelity and endurance ("rubies"). The language of modern sexual fetish provides a means by which Isabella is able to embody paradoxically a prosthetic identity (asserting a self that can choose and shape its own identity). In using the verb "wear" Isabella identifies herself as active (she becomes the grammatical subject rather than the tortured object) and passive (she is adorned). In drawing attention to imagined marks on her skin that are both

penetrating wounds and lapidary ornament, she shows an indifference to and a celebration of physical pain, locating her subjectivity in and beyond her body.³⁴⁶ Hers is (like the theatrical More's before his execution) an intra-subjectivity: she is essentially shaped by a torturer to whom she claims indifference.³⁴⁷

Such self-assertion is ignored by Angelo, or perhaps rather, it intensifies his desire to violate her. When he addresses Isabella he focuses on her gendered rather than her spiritual difference, reducing her fetishistically to the sum of her sexual parts:

Be that you are,
That is, a woman; if you be more, you're none.
If you be one, as you are well expressed
By all external warrants, show it now
By putting on the destined livery. (2.4.135-9)

Appropriately for someone "Dressed in a little brief authority" (2.2.120),³⁴⁸ Angelo also, describes Isabella's identity in essential and non-essential terms: she is to be what she already is ("Be that you are"); she is only potentially what her body proves her to be ("If you be one, as you are well expressed / By all external warrants"); what her body already reveals she must show ("show it now") with clothing that is both detachable and pre-ordained

³⁴⁶ We might relate Isabella's description to the semiotic power of the tattoo: "To tattoo is precisely to 'decorate' the surface, to produce the skin *as* surface, to apprehend the contours of the body as that which vacillates between the psychic and the material"; J. Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (London: Reaktion, 2001), p. 83.

³⁴⁷ Compare also the violent intra-subjectivity of Isabella's bitter acknowledgment of the frailty of women: "Ay, as the glasses where they view themselves, / Which are as easy broke as they make forms" (2.4.126-7). Women both vainly look in mirrors and are the mirrors themselves, self-destructively producing the images men would project: "we are as soft as our complexions are, / And credulous to false prints" (2.4.130-31). See discussion of this passage in J. Slights and M. M. Holmes, "Isabella's Order", *Studies in Philology*, 95 (1998), 263-92 (283).

³⁴⁸ Similarly, the Duke has "dressed him with our love" (1.1.20); and comments that Angelo may "In all his dressings, caracts, titles, forms, / Be an arch-villain" (5.1.57-8).

("putting on the destined livery").³⁴⁹ While such contradictions might index Angelo's subjective guilt ("O place, O form, / How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit, / Wrench awe from fools and tie the wiser souls / To thy false seeming!"; 2.4.12-15), they also make clear the threat that Isabella might, for all practical purposes, be constituted by a sexual interpretation of her body that is mere fabrication. The apparent pun on "none"/nun reduces to nothingness her claimed identity.

Unlike More (a Catholic without the Catholic signifiers), and unlike the Duke and *All's Well's* Helen (who have Catholic appearances without necessarily "being" Catholic), Isabella is that rare character: one who articulates her selfhood in Catholic terms, desiring to construct her identity as totally Catholic, as a nun.³⁵⁰ Anna Kamaralli points out "Isabella may not invent the direction of the plot, but at each turning point in the play its direction hangs on her yes or no."³⁵¹ In characterising a novice (i.e. a person at a liminal moment of religious identification) and subjecting that novice to a dilemma that strikes at the very tenets of Catholic sorority, Shakespeare generates drama out of the shaping, maintaining and fragmenting of Catholic subjectivity.

But if Catholicism structures Isabella's expression of selfhood, it also determines the inevitability of the (wilful)

³⁴⁹ Jones and Stallybrass tell us "Livery was a form of incorporation, a material mnemonic that inscribed obligations and indebtedness upon the body"; p. 20. See also pp. 269-77.

³⁵⁰ Compare also Friar Lawrence, who also has a Catholic identity, but without the suggestions of "selfhood" that we find in Isabella's characterisation.

³⁵¹ A. Kamaralli, "Writing about Motive: Isabella, the Duke and Moral Authority", *SS*, 58, (2005), 48-59 (49).

misinterpretation of that self. It is entirely typical for the precise Angelo to expect the would-be nun to be sexually willing. Isabella's own language in the dialogue cited above ("strip"; "longing") and from the moment she enters the scene ("I am come to know your pleasure"; 2.4.31) would seem to acknowledge the anti-Catholic stereotype of the lustful female papist, while at the same time pointedly rejecting it.³⁵² Metaphorically decking herself in "rubies" Isabella takes on the glittering allure of Catholic icons decorated with precious materials. The "sick jewel" motif found throughout Renaissance drama suggests that such sensual appeal dangerously concealed and created moral depravity.³⁵³ For example, in Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1607) the eponymous femme fatale contaminates her followers with a pox that is manifested as "carbuncles and rich stones" (4.1.65):³⁵⁴ a lexicon that conflates desire with disease, material wealth with the venereal fruits of the sexual corruption enticed by such a display.³⁵⁵ However, Isabella is metaphorically self-stripping rather than apocalyptically exposed,

³⁵² As much as unwontedly revealing a repressed sexuality such language (as in the rhetoric of female hagiography) evidences a passionate, consciously sexual religion; see Slights and Holmes, 285; and Kamaralli, 51. In his tenth-century translation of Latin hagiography, Ælfric reproduces the already long-established tradition of the use of sexual rhetoric to express passionately chaste devotion to Christ. Thus the soon-to-be-martyred Agnes rejects the sexual advances and extravagant treasures of Sempronius's son, saying "Ic hæbbe oðerne lufiend [...] seðe me bead bæteran frætegunga" (I have another lover [...] who hath offered me better adornments); *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 4 vols, i (London: OUP for EETS, 1881-1900), (ll. 27-9, pp. 170-73, translation Skeat's). It is too simplistic to assume that such discourse should always be explained in terms of repression. Queer theory has shown that we need to adopt a more fluid understanding of sexuality than conventionally heterosexual attitudes would allow; positively chosen virginity also complicates traditional (or rather modern) ideas of sexuality. For a discussion of the relationship between *Measure for Measure* and hagiographical tradition see J. R. Lupton, *Afterlives of Saints* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996), pp. 110-40.

³⁵³ Shell, p. 34.

³⁵⁴ T. Dekker, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. Bowers, 4 vols, ii (Cambridge: CUP, 1953-1961).

³⁵⁵ S. Scott, "The Empress of Babylon's 'Carbuncles and Rich Stones'", *Early Theatre*, 7 (2004), 67-95.

and the plot of *Measure for Measure* is predicated on this novice's unconventional refusal of sex. Indeed, even Angelo's sexual response to Isabella reworks anti-Catholic tradition. He remarks that the devil breaks with the polemically-exposed practice of seduction via *seeming* goodness:

O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint
 With saints dost bait thy hook! [...]
 Never could the strumpet
 With all her double vigour, art and nature,
 Once stir my temper, but this virtuous maid
 Subdues me quite. (2.2.183-9)

Angelo is turned on by Isabella's essential virtue; when he later asks her to "Be that you are" he wants her to be the papist strumpet who will submit to his desires and also the virtuous maid who inspires them through refusal.

Angelo at least (and here Shakespeare also brings complexity to the anti-puritan stereotype of the hypocritical precisian), is guiltily aware that his insistence that Isabella is inevitably sexually available is at odds with the fact that he is aroused by a certainty that she is not. However, there is a critical tendency to read Isabella's rejection of Angelo's sex-bribe as evidence of pathological sexual repression.³⁵⁶ Thus in her introduction to the play in the widely-used Riverside edition, Anne Barton claims: "Beneath the habit of the nun there is a narrow-minded but passionate girl afflicted with an irrational terror of sex which she

³⁵⁶ See, for example, B. J. Baines, "Assaying the Power of Chastity in *Measure for Measure*", *SEL*, 30 (1990), 283-301; A. B. Dawson, *Indirections* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1978), pp. 109-28; L. Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), pp. 190-1; Kirsch (as cited above); G. W. Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: OUP, 1930), p. 92; V. Thomas, *The Moral Universe of Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 177; and Watson (as cited above).

has never admitted to herself.”³⁵⁷ Such readings imply that women should always desire sex, even when the situation is abusive.

Catholic identity is but a material fabrication, a self-deceit.

Isabella is psychologically disturbed because she is not the woman that Angelo has to bend grammar and morality to figure.³⁵⁸

Kamaralli argues that these critical responses are shaped by an inability to comprehend the “disruptive theatrical figure” of “a heroine with no interest in romance” and are “an attempt to limit a woman’s sphere of action to her relationships, and leave the men to work on life’s larger issues.”³⁵⁹ In addition, I suggest that the misreadings of Catholic identity that Shakespeare explores in his post-Reformation play are translated into modern critical discourse. Even a critic who claims that *Measure for Measure* “suggest[s] the enduring power of the medieval notion of monastic sanctuary” talks of Isabella’s assumption of “the veil” as a “disguise against men”.³⁶⁰ This notion of Catholic vestments as “disguise” might reverse the early modern contention that the habit concealed lust, but it likewise disregards any meaningful Catholic semiotics in sartorial identification, even though Isabella rhetorically exposes (rather than conceals) her embodied identity to Angelo’s gaze. It is as if it is not just the actor who employs Catholic costume, but the

³⁵⁷ W. Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare 2nd Edition*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, p. 580.

³⁵⁸ It is important to acknowledge that Isabella faces a moral dilemma, but we should be careful not to obfuscate its terms: should she endure something that is closer to rape than consensual sex in order to save her brother’s life, perhaps (as she believes) imperilling both hers and her brother’s souls? Isabella’s Catholic identity sharpens the quandary of the “monstrous ransom”: it is both imperative that the novice refuse sex, but also, for a Protestant audience suspicious of Catholic hypocrisy and valuing chastity by different rules, a surprise and an imperfect moral choice.

³⁵⁹ Kamaralli, 48, 49.

³⁶⁰ McFeely, pp. 202, 206.

character Isabella depends on a Catholic identity that is merely prosthetic. This is the nun as “none”.

At the play’s conclusion it is the Duke who refuses to read meaningful significance into Isabella’s desire to be a nun, repeatedly proposing marriage (5.1.495-6; 5.1.537-40). While there is the potential to stage the Duke’s love-suit as another misreading, the text is variously ambiguous. Isabella’s silence might signify her subjection in a system that refuses to permit the self-identification she has spent the play battling to maintain, but it is also appropriate to a nun of the order of St Clare and thus it could indicate her continued self-assertion. The costuming possibilities mean that the scene could look like a bawdy anti-Catholic sketch of a romance between a friar and a nun, or a reformation of inappropriate Catholic celibacy, or a traditional comic pairing of characters. Shakespeare structures the scene in a manner that permits us to make Isabella in the image that most pleases us; but the play we have just watched should make us sensitive to the implications of such fabrication.

Catholic Disguise

By contrast with Isabella the Duke fabricates his body in order to encourage misreading. In the very first scene of the play he states his troubled attitude to the public reception of his self-image:

I love the people,
But do not like to stage me to their eyes.
Though it do well, I do not relish well

Their loud applause and aves vehement,
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
That does affect it. (1.1.68-73)

It is as if being viewed risks destroying the integrity of the self. His solution is to adopt disguise, that is to stage himself to be seen without being seen.³⁶¹ However, disguise does not so much protect the self as double it, thus problematising notions of its wholeness. Lloyd Davis tells us that disguise “reproduces the dialectic between essentialist and non-essentialist selfhood.”³⁶² On the one hand the self is “the authentic and determinant origin of disguise”, but on the other, the revealed identity “would seem to fall short of a personal telos and appear instead to be marked by its concealment of and difference from the identity it ‘transcends.’”³⁶³ If the Duke seems more intimidatingly Duke-like when he emerges from beneath his friar’s disguise at the conclusion, it is notable that his authoritative knowledge that structures the “happy ending” was won not because he concealed the tiresome trappings of being a Duke, but because he usurped the sacramental privileges of *being* a friar: “Love her, Angelo; / I have confessed her, and I know her virtue” (5.1.529-30). Indeed he refers to his disguise in order to guarantee his integrity, using his friar’s habit as a kind of material promise or contract by telling the Provost “My mind promises with my habit no loss shall touch her by my company” (3.1.180-81). But when he is later surprised that “neither my coat, integrity, nor

³⁶¹ In a theoretical discussion of disguise Lloyd Davis explains “For the disguiser’s plan to work, his or her show must be seen and yet ignored”; *Guise and Disguise* (Toronto and London: U of Toronto P, 1993), p. 5.

³⁶² Davis, p. 10.

³⁶³ Davis, pp. 10, 6-7.

persuasion" (4.2.186-7) are enough to convince the Provost to do his will, he is forced to supplement the one identity with "the hand and seal of the Duke" (4.2.189); he needs both personae. The particulars of Lucio's defamation of "the Duke" may be false rumour, but his cynical condemnation of this fake friar is apt: "*Cucullus non facit monachum*. Honest in nothing but in his clothes" (5.1.264-5).

The way the Duke uses his costume keeps his character located in sartorial surfaces, at the level of prosthetic. Like More (another character who encourages misreadings) the Duke voices no lengthy soliloquies that explain his inner motivations.³⁶⁴ But where More's comic misdirections provocatively suggested depths of inaccessible subjectivity, the Duke uses disguise to deflect all questions of his own interiority as he pries into that of others. Thus he takes on (or perhaps puts on) the confessor's role of examining consciences: he teaches Julietta how to "arraign your conscience / And try your penitence" (2.3.21-2) and a similar assumed authority underlies conversations with Claudio, Isabella and Mariana. He even seems to fall for his own disguise: while he ostensibly professes the importance of Barnardine's pre-execution sacramental "shrift" (4.2.203), both before and after his failed attempt at bringing Barnardine to penitence he seems to think that

³⁶⁴ Roger Allam (who played the Duke in Nicholas Hynter's 1987 production of *Measure for Measure*) notes this point when discussing the difficulties that come with playing the role; "The Duke in *Measure for Measure*", in *Players of Shakespeare 3*, ed. R. Jackson and R. Smallwood (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 31-41 (p. 31).

he should be the one to “Persuade this rude wretch willingly to die” (4.3.78).³⁶⁵

“Habit” refers to apparel put *on* the body; the bearing, demeanour, deportment, or behaviour *of* the body; and the mental qualities *within* the body. It signifies behavioural patterns as well as sartorial identification.³⁶⁶ It is appropriate, then, that when the Duke puts on the friar’s habit he also takes on the conventional practices associated with it; he is in fact shaped by the very disguise that he thinks he controls. Concerned throughout with deflecting slander, the Duke acts out the kind of behaviour Okeden had associated with anti-Catholic “rayling” representations of friars. We have seen how on the post-Reformation stage the friar’s costume could signify a generally nefarious nature (as when Faustus tells Mephostophilis to “return an old Franciscan friar, / That holy shape becomes a devil best”; 1.3.25-6),³⁶⁷ but more specifically friars were often staged as hypocritically sexed and/or Machiavellian political schemers. My point is not that all staged friars were represented in these ways, but that the Duke’s disguised character is associated with such familiar stage practice. In *Romeo and Juliet* Friar Lawrence inhabits and redirects these stereotypes; the stakes are raised in the Duke(’s) plot. Where Friar

³⁶⁵ Ultimately, however, he gets to forgive Barnardine’s sins in only a legal capacity as Duke (5.1.485-8); spiritual authority is handed over to the real Friar (5.1.488-9).

³⁶⁶ *OED*, s.v. “habit”. In discussing his role as the Duke in Adrian Noble’s 1983 production Daniel Massey remarks on the psychological change that accompanied costume change: “as I stepped out of the formal black breeches, frock-coat, buckle shoes and powdered wig into the simple monk habit, I really did feel an instant sense of physical and emotional freedom”; “The Duke in *Measure for Measure*”, in *Players of Shakespeare 2*, ed. R. Jackson and R. Smallwood (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), pp. 13-31 (p. 18).

³⁶⁷ C. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, in Pendry.

Lawrence arranges marriage between two people who love one another, the Friar-Duke arranges sex between a desperately-loving woman and a duped man who has already rejected her (marriage follows as a necessary retrospective legitimisation). Where Friar Lawrence meddles in civic affairs between important citizens, the Friar-Duke plots against the city's acting ruler (though against an official he himself appointed). The interpretation of the confessional space as a site of treason was dramatised from early in the post-Reformation era. Thus *King Johan* presents a confessional scene in which Sedicyon directs Nobylte: "whyll I have yow here underneth *benedicite*, / In the Popes be halfe I must move other thynges to ye [...] to do the best ye canne / To [King Johan's] subduying" (1166-72). One year after *Measure for Measure* was staged at court the details about the Gunpowder Plotters' alleged confessional communications with Father Garnett would have seemed to confirm such suspicions. The Duke's choice of disguise enables him to plot the structure of comic reconciliation within his city but it also carries a ready-made criticism of his methods.

Ironically, in avoiding "stag[ing]" himself to his people's "eyes" the Duke has made himself more theatrical, becoming a disguised performer. But he nearly fluffs his first line in costume by betraying more knowledge than his part allows: "Hail to you, Provost - so I think you are" (2.3.1). This is no slick performance. His plot-writing skills also have their limitations. The conclusion to

the play may mark his technical success but this denouement is the result of Plan B; the Duke's rhyming summation of events in act 4 (answering the chorus-like rhyme that set up his plot at 3.1.515-36) indicates his anticipation of a much earlier conclusion:

This is his pardon, purchased by such sin
For which the pardoner himself is in.
Hence hath offence his quick celerity,
When it is borne in high authority.
When vice makes mercy, mercy's so extended
That for the fault's love is the offender friended.

(4.2.108-13)

The bed-trick fails in its immediate purpose of securing a pardon for Claudio and furthermore, the subsequent attempt to substitute Barnardine for Claudio is also unsuccessful because Barnardine refuses his part in the Duke's plot. And in the scene before the conclusion Isabella expresses disquiet at the notion and nature of the production:

To speak so indirectly I am loath.
I would say the truth, but to accuse him so,
That is your part. Yet I am advised to do it,
He says, to veil full purpose. (4.6.1-4)³⁶⁸

Though he controls the basic structure of the conclusion, the Duke's stage-management is clumsy. Needing to leave the stage to change costume he cannot devise a motivated exit: "I for a while / Will leave you" (5.1.258-9).³⁶⁹ When he is required to tie up the loose ends of the plot he struggles with the timing of his proposal to Isabella: "Give me your hand and say you will be mine, / He is my brother too – but fitter time for that" (5.1.495-6). In some ways

³⁶⁸ However, Kamaralli argues that as the play develops Isabella learns to be more concerned with being than seeming; 53-4.

³⁶⁹ Roger Allam says that when he played the Duke he "used briefly to pause, panic-stricken, before the line, trying to think of a good reason, and then just rush off. It got a nice laugh"; p. 37.

this inelegant performance fosters a sense of character otherwise rather limited by disguise. He does not even reveal his identity on his own terms: he is exposed as Duke because Lucio strips him of his friar's costume. The dis-covering of the Duke prompts a "discovery" of other characters (particularly Angelo and Lucio). But these other characters seem to wrest back the innerness that the Duke has prised open as false friar:

Angelo never indicates that he prefers the Duke's
mercy, and
frankly life with Mariana, to the death he had requested. Lucio
with announces he prefers capital punishment to wedded life
"serious." Kate Keepdown, but it is unclear whether he is
their Claudio and Julietta are accorded no lines to celebrate
for Angelo's unexpected reunion. Isabella, so eloquent in her plea
respond life, fails to acknowledge Claudio's restoration or to
to the Duke's proposal.³⁷⁰

With most of the characters retreating into taciturnity (with the exception of Lucio), the Duke's climactic discovery feels like a re-covering.³⁷¹ Implicitly, he is shown of others what he knew of himself at the beginning of the play: that people do not enjoy having themselves staged. It is the silence of these different characters that makes it so difficult for critics to know what to say about the end of *Measure for Measure* and contributes to the overall sense of "problem". When the Duke is at his most readable,

³⁷⁰ Maus, *Inwardness*, p. 180.

³⁷¹ Maus tells us: "characters' inwardness, apparently so entirely divulged to his (and our) omniscient, managing vision, recedes almost instantly into unknowability in the midst of what is structured as a scene of revelation and pardon"; *Inwardness*, p. 180.

when the sign of the friar's habit is openly explained to the other characters as a disguise, there is still no clear moral gloss on this use of the habit. The Catholic legibility of both the Duke's costume and Isabella's identity (if not costume) adds epistemological complexity to their characterisation instead of circumscribing it along sectarian lines. This complexity is extended in *All's Well that Ends Well* where the blurring of the division between disguise and sincerity further interrogates the (mis)reading of the subject.

Seeming and Being

The first words Helen utters in *All's Well that Ends Well* share *Measure for Measure's* concern with the potential difference between seeming and being. Silent for the first fifty-three lines of the scene during which time the Countess and Lafeu comment on her weeping appearance, Helen finally joins the conversation when the Countess begins to warn her of the dangers of being viewed:

Countess Go to, no more, lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than to have –

Helen I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too.

(1.1.52-4)

The Countess suggests that to express extreme grief can give the impression of mere performance; Helen separates performance (affect) from sincere feeling while also indicating that the two are linked. Her words raise the question of whether the display of emotion of inner meaning in some way invalidates it. Is performance necessarily fraudulence? In a play written three or

four years earlier than *All's Well* Hamlet angrily interrogates this idea:

Seems, madam? nay, it is, I know not "seems."
 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, [good] mother,
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,
 Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
 Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
 Together with all forms, moods, [shapes] of grief,
 That can [denote] me truly. These indeed seem,
 For they are actions that a man might play,
 But I have that within which passes show,
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (1.2.76-

86)

In seizing on his mother's neutral use of "seems" as if she harboured the suspicion that the Countess warns about, Hamlet betrays his fear that performing in the sense of carrying out, or executing, cannot be distinguished from performing in the sense of "actions that a man might play". The mourning garments he wears and the signs of sadness he displays (also understood as sartorial in their exteriority: "the trappings and the suits of woe") index his grief but also potentially undermine the authenticity of that grief. He defends the integrity of his self: "I have that within which passes show", but nevertheless he feels compelled to announce this "self" possession, that is, to "show" it. Where Hamlet goes on to explore the seeming, being and doing of grief, and rejects romance, Helen displaces her grief and tackles such themes within a romance plot.

However, Helen's "affect" turns out to be a kind of deceit after all. Once left alone she reveals that she cries out of hopeless love for Bertram rather than grief for her father:

I think not on my father,
And these great tears grace his remembrance more
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
I have forgot him. My imagination
Carries no favour in't but Bertram's. (1.1.81-5)

But her discussion is grammatically ambiguous both in tense (does "shed" refer to the tears she cries now for Bertram, or those cried in the past for her father?) and in the use of pronouns (does "his" refer to the same person as the first "him"?). Together with the abruptness with which she rejects the demands of memory this may imply a continuing grief in which Bertram substitutes for her father. Indeed the means by which she first pursues Bertram allows her to re-member her father: she uses the prescriptions which he bade her "store up as a triple eye, / Safer than mine own two" (2.1.106-7) when she cures the King.³⁷² (We might compare this with the way Viola dresses like the brother she thinks she has lost in *Twelfth Night*, although Helen maintains a gendered difference as "Doctor She"; 2.1.77). My point is not to insist that Helen's romantic pursuit of Bertram is an unequivocal

³⁷² The youth of *All's Well* are not allowed to forget the older generation or their dead parents. For example, Bertram is repeatedly pressured to match his somatic reproduction of his father's appearance with behavioural similarity: "Be thou blessed, Bertram, and succeed thy father / In manners as in shape" (1.1.61-2); "Youth, thou bear'st thy father's face [...] Thy father's moral parts / Mayst thou inherit too!" (1.2.19-22). Critics have read Bertram's flight from Helen as an attempt to escape the family that has dominion over him. See R. P. Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development and the Problem Comedies* (Berkeley and London: U of California P, 1981), pp. 35-45; and J. Adelman, "Bed Tricks: On Marriage as the End of Comedy in *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*", in *Shakespeare's Personality*, ed. N. N. Holland et al. (Berkeley and London: U of California P, 1989), pp. 151-74 (pp. 155-7).

displacement of a grief for her father that she cannot acknowledge,³⁷³ but rather that even when Helen provides the audience with a full explanation of how the way she appears relates to how she feels, Shakespeare creates a sense that there is more that “passes show”. Performance is either or both sincere enactment and mere acting of deeds or emotions; truth and deceit slip out of their binary relationship.

In the very first scene and throughout the play characters pass comment on Helen, interpreting her appearance, performance, motivation and virtue.³⁷⁴ The Countess learns of Helen’s love for Bertram because the Steward has overheard Helen talking to herself, as if he were an audience listening to her soliloquy: “*Alone she was, and did communicate to herself, her own words to her own ears*” (1.3.107-9, my emphasis). Placing an almost tautological stress on the privacy he has invaded, the Steward indicates the need to look beyond Helen’s public persona. Elsewhere she is represented (and repeatedly represents herself) in textual terms. When trying to convince the King to let her attempt his cure she ventures “A strumpet’s boldness, a divulgèd shame; / Traduced by odious ballads” (2.1.169-70), but after the successful cure she is instead related to celebratory broadside ballads: “*A Showing of a Heavenly Effect in an Earthly Actor*” (2.3.23-4). Crucial moments in the development of her story take the form of

³⁷³ For a psychoanalytical reading that makes this argument see L. M. Simpson, “The Failure to Mourn in *All’s Well that Ends Well*”, *SSt*, 22 (1994), 172-88.

³⁷⁴ Harriet Walter (who played Helen in Trevor Nunn’s 1981 production) remarks “In the play it is clearly the case that Helena constantly wins people over: the Countess, the King, the Widow in Florence”; Rutter, p. 81.

rhyiming couplets that provide a fairy-tale-like linguistic structure: when she convinces the King to let her try to heal him (2.1.128-208); when she gives a riddling explanation of the bed-trick (3.7.44-7); and when the King, thinking her dead, decides Helen must have been but a minor character, merely to be forgotten (5.3.61-6, 69-70). These textual figurations encourage us to try to read Helen; but rather than providing her any unequivocal meaning make her open to interpretation.

Even when we are given assistance in interpreting Helen's textuality in the early scenes of the play, we are reminded that interpretation is inevitably shaky. Our access to her plans and emotions through soliloquies gives us knowledge about her motivations but also provokes further questions and uncertainty. Helen's on-stage audience faces a similar task. The Countess confidently articulates a reading of Helen's body as revealing love for Bertram: she notes that Helen "start[s]" (1.3.142) and cries (1.3.150-2) at the word "mother", and that she is "pale" (1.3.169). She claims that Helen's body tells tales on her:

thy cheeks
 Confess it t'one to th'other, and thine eyes
 See it so grossly shown in thy behaviours
 That in their kind they speak it. (1.3.176-9)

Nevertheless, the Countess needs Helen to validate this reading: she asks her to "Speak" (1.3.181) and, with an adverb registering suspicious uncertainty, "tell me truly" (1.3.185). Having been

forced to reveal her love for Bertram Helen retreats behind

rhyming textual complication:

O then give pity
 To her whose state is such that cannot choose
 But lend and give where she is sure to lose;
 That seeks not to find that her search implies,
 But riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies. (1.3.213-17)

Through the simile of the riddle Helen ostensibly reveals herself (a riddle has an answer) and also resists self-exposure (the answer is not provided). The paradoxes at once articulate her emotional turmoil (she cannot pursue what her heart looks for; she endures a living death) and equivocally conceal planned action (she cannot hope for what she will nevertheless actively pursue). But at this point in the play ambiguity is cleared up by the Duchess's sharp interrogation: "Had you not lately an intent - speak truly - / To go to Paris?" (1.3.218-19); "Wherefore? Tell true" (1.3.219); "This was your motive for Paris, was it? Speak" (1.3.231). These questions insist that Helen's motivations are both important and not easily accessible.

So before Helen puts on her pilgrim's habit we have been taught to think about the nature of what Helen "performs". The Catholic resonance of the habit further emphasises and problematises the signifying structure of her characterisation. We learn about Helen's pilgrimage in an obscured manner that is, as Susan Snyder points out, a "deafening silence, all the more noticeable because the earlier acts have been so firmly centered in

Helena's subjectivity."³⁷⁵ In the soliloquy at the end of 3.2 Helen announces that she plans to leave so that Bertram may return home and avoid the dangers of war, but she makes no reference to pilgrimage. We learn about the spiritual nature of the journey in 3.4:

Steward (reads the letter)

"I am Saint Jacques' pilgrim, thither gone.
Ambitious love hath so in me offended
That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,
With sainted vow my faults to have amended.
Write, write, that from the bloody course of war
My dearest master, your dear son, may hie.
Bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far
His name with zealous fervour sanctify.
His taken labours bid him me forgive;
I, his despiteful Juno, sent him forth
From courtly friends, with camping foes to live,
Where death and danger dogs the heels of worth.
He is too good and fair for death, and me,
Whom I myself embrace to set him free." (3.4.4-17)

Now that Helen is absent the Countess can only study a literal text (we hear the contents of the letter because she wants the Steward to "Read it again"; 3.4.3). Helen's voice, displaced through the Steward's, is doubly textual: both the tangible stage prop of a letter and also a sonnet. Not surprising then that her use of a pilgrim's costume should feel fictional. It is another signifier that advertises its polysemous legibility. And it is not just Helen's text (the letter) but the wider text of *All's Well* itself that obfuscates her intentions and motivations concerning the pilgrimage. Details of the plot complicate our ability to read Helen's wearing of the habit.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ S. Snyder, *Shakespeare: A Wayward Journey* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2002), pp. 108-9.

³⁷⁶ The text does not describe Helen's costume when she arrives in Florence having left the Countess a letter declaring herself to be "Saint Jacques' pilgrim" (3.4.4), but as the Widow immediately identifies her as a "pilgrim" (3.5.30) her clothes are clearly distinctive. For example, a "*hatte, staffe and Pilgrimes gowne*" (32) is described in *The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*, ed. W. W. Greg (London: OUP

When she first meets the Widow in Florence she claims that she is on her way “*To Saint Jacques le Grand*” (3.5.34, my emphasis), yet when the First Lord gives news of her ostensible death he reports that he has his (false) information from the “rector” of the shrine (4.3.58), lending credence to the belief that she had “accomplished” her pilgrimage (4.3.50). Is she on her way to a pilgrimage? – does she ever complete a pilgrimage? – did she ever intend to go on a pilgrimage? Perhaps the contradictions are a compositional confusion or perhaps the Lord has been entirely deceived, but the play has elsewhere taught us to care about and question Helen’s motivations and intentions and it here remains notably silent. The problem of whether Helen wears a pilgrim’s costume as a disguise is raised because Shakespeare disguises her motivations.³⁷⁷ In this he differs from his source, “Giletta of Narbonne”, where William Painter makes it clear that Giletta uses the appearance of a pilgrimage to track her beloved: “arriving by fortune at a poor widow’s house, she contented herself with the state of a poor pilgrim, desirous to hear news of her lord”.³⁷⁸ As in *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare raises questions about the misreadings (un)willingly provoked by Catholic habits, but he refuses to answer them.

for the Malone Society, 1912). In *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* Cordella (as I will explore later) articulates her willingness to use a “Palmer’s staffe” (698) and “Bonnet” (700); (London: OUP for the Malone Society, 1907); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

³⁷⁷ Rowe expanded the folio stage direction “Enter Hellen” (3.5.29.1) to include the description “disguised like a pilgrim”; recent editors have tended to prefer more neutral terms like “dressed” (Oxford) and “habited” (Riverside).

³⁷⁸ “Giletta of Narbonne”, as reprinted in W. Shakespeare, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, ed. S. Snyder (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 225-232 (p. 228).

The First Lord refers to Helen's pilgrimage as a "pretence" (4.3.48), a word that, like "perform", conflates the acting out of a deed with acting, but emphasising the possibility of fraudulence.³⁷⁹ The connotations of the pilgrim's habit itself underline this tension. Just as we find it troubling to imagine authors employing different confessional personae in their works, the wearing of religious dress to conceal non-religious action seems more intensely deceitful than simply wearing alternative professional dress (betraying an awareness of the essential significance attached to such clothes, even by those who would deny sartorial signifiers such power).³⁸⁰ Perhaps this is why even Harriet Walter's sympathetic portrayal of Helen provoked one reviewer's dislike for the "martyr-bitch".³⁸¹ Alternatively, the spiritual and romantic devotion can be seen to complement one another and in a review of Gregory Doran's 2003 production Kate Kellaway recognised this as sartorial continuity: "In her love for Bertram, she is as constant as religion and, in this production, Claudie Blakley never entirely loses her nunnish look."³⁸² The context of the post-Reformation extends the range of such ambivalence.

Not only do we not know if the pilgrimage is sincere or feigned, but we are also given ideologically mixed messages about

³⁷⁹ Snyder (2002) also notes the ambiguity of this word; p. 110.

³⁸⁰ The pilgrim's habit allowed wearers to "copy religious functionaries who displayed their special status through their dress"; S. Coleman and J. Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), p. 110. As disguise the habit only briefly conceals her identity (when she first meets the Widow, Diana and Mariana when she learns of news of Bertram without revealing herself as his wife), but rather, if we choose to read it negatively, it falsifies her motivations.

³⁸¹ As quoted in Rutter, p. 73.

³⁸² *The Observer*, 14 December 2003.

how to read the habit itself. Where the Countess had once questioned Helen's motives, the news of the pilgrimage prompts a more traditional mode of character analysis in which she assesses Helen's virtue, contrasting it with Bertram's bad behaviour:

What angel shall
 Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive
 Unless her prayers, whom heaven delights to hear
 And loves to grant, reprieve him from the wrath
 Of greatest justice. (3.4.25-9)

This is praise couched in Catholic terms: the pilgrim Helen has intercessory power. The clash of generic codes makes it difficult to know how to assess the action: is Helen, as the sonnet form might suggest, a pilgrim in the Petrarchan, romantic sense; or is she an "angel" to Bertram's Everyman in a medieval morality play; or somehow both at once; or something different in addition?

Her pilgrimage is almost onomastically inevitable since her saintly namesake was famous for her ultimately successful search for the True Cross. In the long term this discovery helped foster the relic industry so important to the Catholic world's pilgrimage network. Quoting St Ambrose, the writer of the "Homilie agaynst perill of Idolatry" tried to use the example of St Helen as a way of distinguishing idolatrous practice:

Helene founde the crosse and the tytle on it. She
 worshipped
 the king, and not the wood surely (for that is an
 ethnyshe
 errour, and the vanitie of the wycked) but she
 worshypped
 hym that hanged on the crosse, and whose name was
 written

in the title, and so forth.³⁸³

Yet making St Helen a point of difference between idolatrous and non-idolatrous behaviour also admits to her position on an ideological boundary. And again this ambivalence is realised and extended in the characterisation of the Shakespearean Helen. In the first scene she bemoans Bertram's departure saying "But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy / Must sanctify his relics" (1.1.99-100). Her pilgrimage embodies this Catholic respect for "relics" and performs a romantic appropriation of such concepts that knowingly admits to idolatry.³⁸⁴

The "wandering" (a word etymologically linked to error) of pilgrimages was outlawed in post-Reformation England, thought of as one of those old errors "tending to idolatry and superstition".³⁸⁵ Yet even Protestants who abhorred the papist practice seemed to feel comfortable utilising "pilgrimage" in spiritual and romantic metaphors (compare the love-poetry anthology *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599) with devotional works like William Webster's *The plaine mans pilgrimage* (1613) and Leonard Wright's *The Pilgrimage to paradise* (1591)). In drama a pilgrim's habit might mark a valid expression of historicised spirituality or simply operate as a benign pretence appropriate to and conventional in

³⁸³ *Certaine Sermons appoynted by the Quenes Maiesty* (London, 1563), sig. Dd(iiii)v-[Dd5r].

³⁸⁴ When first determining to actively pursue Bertram she exclaims "Who ever strove / To show her merit that did miss her love?" (1.1.228-9). This suggestion that she can earn the love of Bertram chimes with the Catholic understanding of good works as helping one access redemption. Even before she wears the habit, her pursuit of Bertram is allusively associated with "meritorious" pilgrimage.

³⁸⁵ "Announcing Injunctions for Religion" (1559), in Hughes and Larkin, ii, pp. 117-32. A minority of English Protestants continued to follow European pilgrimage routes, motivated by either anthropological or spiritual interest; Fleming, pp 107-9.

fiction. Thus in *King Leir* the “good” King of Gallia adopts a pilgrim’s disguise without picking up nefarious behaviour and Cordella’s virtue is articulated via a willingness to “hold thy Palmers staffe within my hand, / And thinke it is the Scepter of a Queene” (698-9). The Catholic signifier apparently operates without papist connotations even in a drama that “implicitly and subtextually celebrates the reformational and Calvinistic values of grace, the absolute sovereignty of God’s will, and the certainty of redemption for the elect”.³⁸⁶ But an understanding of the pilgrimage as papist was also widely available. In his emblem book *Minerva Britanna* (1612), Henry Peacham illustrated the “Hypocrite” with a picture of a pilgrim, replete with habit, staff, wide-brimmed bonnet, shell and rosary beads, explaining:

The Hypocrite, that doth pretend in show,
A feigned Zeale of Sanctitie within,
Eschew betime, nor haue with such to doe,
Whose hoodes are but the harbour of their sinne,
And humblest habits, but a false disguise,
To cloke their hate, or hidden villanies.³⁸⁷

The use of this sectarian emblem to illustrate a broader point about the internal/external dichotomy of hypocrisy, functions on the idea that Catholic sartorial signifiers are always already false, as if putting on a Catholic habit is inevitably a put on.³⁸⁸

Helen dramatises the pilgrimage metaphor in a context that makes available its different conflicted meanings. As Susan Snyder

³⁸⁶ S. J. Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality* (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1998), p. 39.

³⁸⁷ H. Peacham, *Minerva Britanna* (London, 1612), sig. Eeir.

³⁸⁸ As *All’s Well* itself makes clear, it was not just Catholics who were sartorially associated with hypocrisy: “Though honesty be no puritan, yet it will do no hurt: it will wear the surplice of humility over the black gown of a big heart” (1.3.93-5).

points out, in *All's Well* Shakespeare puts fiction in conversation with reality:

unromantic social realities of Early Modern Europe
 jostle against the fairy-tale elements: a remarkably unheroic
 petty war, an ugly exposure of class prejudice in marriage, a
 side glance at the abuses of royal wardship, even
 unexpected invocations of an exchange system based not on moral
 absolutes - inner worth or the pledged word
 commanding loyalty - but on money.³⁸⁹

To this dynamic we should also add the Catholic resonance of the text which gives ideological force to anachronistic complications and which points to both fiction and falsehood. Helen inhabits a world where pilgrims still roam freely: "There's four or five, to Great Saint Jacques bound" (3.5.91) at the Widow's house in Florence (Helen's pilgrimage cannot be dismissed as geographically erratic),³⁹⁰ but it is also a world that acknowledges schism. With misogynistic humour the Clown erases the distinction between Catholics (and their Friday fish-eating) and puritans (and their meat-eating rejection of "superstition"), but he maintains a generational difference between the two denominations, or perhaps, a denominational difference between the two generations:

young Chairbonne the puritan and old Poisson
 the papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in
 religion, their heads are both one: they may jowl
 horns together like any deer i'th' herd. (1.3.52-5)

³⁸⁹ Snyder (1993), pp. 5-6.

³⁹⁰ Even today there are pilgrimage routes from Roussillon to Compostela. See Russell Fraser's introduction to his edition of the play for an exploration of a "train of associations, linking Rossillion, Saint Jacques, Charlemagne and Marseilles"; W. Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well* (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), p. 6.

Such distinctions, in broad terms, more closely describe post-Reformation England than Catholic France.³⁹¹ Thus the locus of *All's Well* is a space in which Catholicism operates in the present tense, and also as a function of nostalgia for the past.³⁹²

Lafeu and Paroles discuss Helen's fairy-tale-like success at healing the King in terms of modern doctrinal disagreement not found in "Giletta of Narbonne":

Lafeu They say miracles are past, and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

Paroles Why, 'tis the rarest argument of wonder that hath shot out in our latter times [...]

Lafeu I may truly say it is a novelty to the world.

(2.3.1-20)³⁹³

While Helen's "miracle" would have been credible as such in the Catholic past, the Protestants of the emphatically modern "latter times" "say miracles are past" (that they ceased after New Testament times) and thus her action is theologically controversial. Shakespeare refuses to relegate the Catholic undertones to the past, but rather gives voice to an interpretation of the cure as a

³⁹¹ This is the generational difference that is referred to in *Lusty Juventus*: Good Council teaches Juventus lessons not taught him by his elders, explaining "your elders wer blind [...] saint Peter sayeth, vaine is the conuersations, / Which ye receiue by your elders tradicions"; R. Wever, *Lusty Juventus*, ed. J. M. Nosworthy (Oxford: OUP for the Malone Society, 1971), 238-40. Of course, this distinction did not always hold good and one report of the early 1580s made reference to "old popish beldames and yong perking papists"; cited in E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992), p. 583.

³⁹² Helen's self-effacing and self-aggrandising representation of herself as an instrument of the divine gives providential validity to her own obvious efforts to make things happen. For example, she tells the Widow "Doubt not but heaven / Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower" (4.4.18-19), conflating a heavenly narrative with the perhaps contradictorily material means behind it.

³⁹³ As we shall see in Chapter 6, Lafeu's insistence on the place of the irrational is more fully explored in *The Winter's Tale*.

“novelty”, a word which compounds the sense of a *news* story and a heresy.³⁹⁴ In Helen Catholic and papist connotations are compounded: she is meritorious and devious, miraculous and cunning.³⁹⁵

The pilgrim’s costume then, signifies disguise and devotion, romantic fidelity and scheming obsession.³⁹⁶ And the more legible Helen makes herself (by becoming text, by adopting emphatically significant dress), the more difficult she is to read.³⁹⁷ This is, perhaps, not surprising given that she shares her name with that shifty subject of so many texts, Helen of Troy. Desirable and damnable, the classical Helen’s allusive presence in the play adds further ambivalence to a character who in some ways inverts her namesake’s myth: Bertram is repulsed rather than enticed and Helen is a pursuer rather than a passive subject of raptus. But the mythical Helen’s reputation for sexual looseness provides a subtextual commentary on the Shakespearean Helen’s sexual assertiveness.³⁹⁸ Indeed, if the Catholic habit invests a wearer with

³⁹⁴ *OED*, s.v. “heresy”.

³⁹⁵ Helen herself claims “Inspired merit” (2.1.146) when persuading the King to let her attempt his cure. This term neatly, if paradoxically, conflates a Catholic doctrine of “meritorious works” (whereby one could supplement God-given saving grace with good deeds such as penitential pilgrimages), and a reformed understanding of Redemption as possible only through God’s freely-given grace. Maurice Hunt claims “Shakespeare, in this dark Jacobean comedy, gave Protestants and recusants in his audience a basis upon which they could agree concerning Helena’s expense of merit, yet he also appears to undermine the common ground”; “Helena and the Reformation Problem of Merit in *All’s Well that Ends Well*”, in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, ed. D. Taylor and D. Beauregard (New York: Fordham UP, 2003), pp. 336-58 (p. 358). Cynthia Lewis also discusses Shakespeare’s unresolved allusions to theological controversy in “Derived Honesty and Achieved Goodness”, *Renaissance and Reformation*, 14 (1990), 147-70.

³⁹⁶ In her psychoanalytical reading of the play Janet Adelman also notes the centrality of contradiction to the representation of Helen: “The play asks us nearly from the beginning to see Helena both as a miraculous virgin and as a deeply sexual woman seeking her will”; p. 60.

³⁹⁷ In this she differs from Doll Williamson who imagines an unequivocal publication of the self.

³⁹⁸ L. E. Maguire, *Shakespeare’s Names* (forthcoming, Oxford: OUP, 2007); and Snyder (2002), pp. 106-11.

ambiguity it is the idea of the “female” body beneath it that, for some, problematises aspects of Helen’s behaviour. Helen’s textualised polysemy has been overdetermined by some critics as straightforward fraudulence. Commenting on Helen’s soliloquy-admission that her tears are for Bertram rather than her dead father, Richard Levin warns “Though this candid revelation disposes us in her favor, we must be careful. She may deceive us, as her weeping has deceived others.”³⁹⁹ Levin’s allusion to Brabantio’s patriarchal horror at Desdemona’s independent selection of a husband is telling: Levin reads epistemological depth as deceit because sexual assertiveness renders the female character untrustworthy.⁴⁰⁰ Hence his disapproving incredulity punctuated by revealing exclamation marks: “Helena herself is the medicine!”; “After making him swear he will grant her wishes, Helena asks to choose a husband!”⁴⁰¹ Such readings are as reductive as those that represent Helen as superlatively saintly, but they help pinpoint the challenges posed by the characterisation. Helen takes on various masculine roles: she is sexually proactive, choosing her own husband and bringing him home when he flees; she travels independently; and she provides Diana with a dowry. Harriet Walter points out that in contrast to male virtue (*virtù*) “Female virtue is tested passively. Female virtue is a state of being, not doing: a woman *is* good”. But “Helena demands to be

³⁹⁹ R. A. Levin, “*All’s Well that Ends Well* and ‘All Seems Well’”, *SSr*, 13 (1980), 131-44 (131).

⁴⁰⁰ In following the text’s insistence that we need to “read” Helen, Levin comes to some conclusions that are rather non-theatrical in their “off-stage” complexity: “we may infer that she spoke with Lord E. alone and bribed him”; “Helen [...] is the secret mastermind of the downfall of Parolles”; 138, 139.

⁴⁰¹ Levin, 134, 135.

judged by what she's done, how she's passed male tests, how generously she's used the knowledge she's acquired."⁴⁰² In carrying out such action Helen, unlike other Shakespearean heroines, does not wear a male disguise (even when she arrives as healer she does not conceal her gender but rather uses her sexuality). Her actions are more thoroughly "masculine" than those of such characters (they do not pursue men who remain so consistently resistant, nor do they organise dowries for other women). But, perhaps more importantly, while the representation of the already cross-dressed boy actor as a transvestite character provides a frisson (though this can be overstated), male disguise presents the female usurpation of "masculine" behaviour as temporary, located in a tangible fabrication. The use of an enabling Catholic habit means that the "masculinity" of Helen's actions is neither justified by nor reduced to sartorial explanation.

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⁴⁰² Rutter, pp. 75-6. That Helen demands to be judged thus is problematic not only in terms of gender, but also theology (the problem of merit) and class (hence the dispute between Bertram and the King: "A poor physician's daughter' – thou dislik'st / Of virtue for the name"; 2.3.124-5).

⁴⁰³ In the seventeenth century the pilgrim's costume did offer the female traveller a certain amount of protection in continental Europe: the Spanish Infanta encouraged the English Catholic Mary Ward to protect herself while travelling by donning the pilgrim's garb; M. C. E. Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward (1585-1645)*, 2 vols, i (London: Burns and Oates, 1882-5), p. 484. And though disguise emphasised fictionality within some genres, it was also a real-life necessity not just for the Catholic missionaries mentioned above, but also for intrepid Protestants. For example, Fynes Moryson used disguise to gain access to Catholic sites such as the Jesuit College in Rome; C. M. Howard, *English Travellers of the Renaissance* (London: John Lane, 1914), p. 91. But the staged travel of characters bearing sartorial markers of Catholicism reversed the travel situation in England. A desire to prevent native Catholic movement (especially the training of young men at foreign seminaries) lay behind much of the English legislation regarding travel. Travellers needed a licence to be able to leave the country, and in times of acute anti-Catholic paranoia the terms of such licences became increasingly strict; Howard, pp. 86-7. We have seen how the erroneous "wandering" of pilgrimages was condemned as superstitious Catholic movement; "wandering" was also linked to treasonous activity: see the "wandering" fugitives mentioned in Hughes and Larkin, "Ordering Discovery of Persons Bringing in Seditious Books and Writings" (1570), ii, pp. 347-8; and "Declaring Jesuits and Non-Returning Seminarians Traitors" (1582), ii, pp. 488-91.

However, the fabrication of fictionality gives Helen space to “be” the self she desires to be. When she first reads Bertram’s post-wedding letter she understands it as a straightforward rejection: “This is a dreadful sentence” (3.2.60-61); “’Tis bitter” (3.2.75). She subsequently rereads it as an imposition of tasks (as if part of a fairy-tale) and this ultimately allows Helen to write herself as Bertram’s wife proper.⁴⁰⁴ This is wish-fulfilment, perhaps, but, as is the nature of wishes, it has epistemological depth. After all, this is a play in which a braggart, a character who continually speaks himself as fantasy, can announce “Simply the thing I am / Shall make me live” (4.3.336-7).⁴⁰⁵ In the final scene Helen has herself presented once more as a riddle: “Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick. / So there’s my riddle: one that’s dead is quick” (5.3.302-3). This riddle echoes and answers

⁴⁰⁴ Snyder (2002), p. 145. In the final scene the text gives the actor playing Helen the opportunity to edit Bertram’s letter, since its reiteration is abbreviated by the word “etc.” (5.3.313); Bertram’s gloss on his meaning (“‘But in such a ‘then’, I write a ‘never’”; 3.2.60) is not reprinted. “Etc.” performed a variety of duties in play-texts, ranging from a signal to make an exact repetition of words that have gone before to a sign for the actor to extemporise. For example, in *Henry VIII* “etc.” is used to signal repetition: “*Scribe*. Say, Henry King of England, come into the / court. / *Crier*. Henry King of England, etc. / *King*. Here. / *Scribe*. Say, Katherine Queen of England, come / into the court. / *Crier*. Katherine Queen of England, etc.” (2.4.6-12). But where “etc.” appears four times in George Gascoigne’s *Supposes* it apparently invites improvisation: “I had thoght to haue giuen him these hose when I had worne them a little nearer, but he shall haue a, &c.” (Diiiv); “I may chaunce breake &c.” (Diiir); “What wil you breake? your nose in mine &c.” (Diiir); “And why wouldest thou tell him? I would not for, &c.” ([D7r]); *The pleasauntest workes of George Gascoigne Esquyre* (London, 1587). In *All’s Well* it may be that (like a critic) Helen highlights the bit of the text that is suitable to her purposes (especially since “etc.” does not mark the end of her speech).

⁴⁰⁵ Paroles’ fantastical deceit is related to his concern for the sartorial, which is relentlessly mocked: “If ever thou beest bound in thy scarf and beaten, thou shall find what it is to be proud of thy bondage” (2.3.226-8); “Why dost thou garter up thy arms o’ this fashion? Dost make hose of thy sleeves?” (2.3.250-2); “Pray you, sir, who’s his tailor?” (2.5.16); “The soul of this man is his clothes” (2.5.44-5); “That jackanapes with scarves” (3.5.84); “that had the whole theoric of war in the knot of his scarf” (4.3.144-5); “I will never trust a man again for keeping his sword clean, nor believe he can have everything in him by wearing his apparel neatly” (4.3.147-9); “a snipped-taffeta fellow” (4.5.1-2). He himself expresses his opinions in sartorial terms: “Virginitie like an old courtier wears her cap out of fashion, richly suited but unsuitable, just like the brooch and the toothpick, which wear not now” (1.1.157-60); courtiers “wear themselves in the cape of time” (2.1.51); and Dumaine “was a butcher’s ’prentice in Paris” (4.3.186-7).

the riddle in which she first hinted at her plans in 1.3: the paradoxical extremes are now given emotional force as her earlier metaphorical living-death is dramatised as pregnant resurrection from reported death. Yet her desire is to close the gap between signifier and signified: "'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see, / The name and not the thing" (5.3.307-8). Agreeing to unite word and referent (though with a doubly dualistic "Both, both"; 5.3.308) Bertram takes on the rhyming linguistics of fairy-tale, as prompted by Helen:

Helen This is done.
Will you be mine, now you are doubly won?
Bertram If she, my liege, can make me know this
clearly,
I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly. (5.3.313-16)

His agreement is conditional and instead of answering Helen directly he speaks to the man who had originally forced him to marry Helen against his will. Helen's last speech does not celebrate her new position as wife, but rather agrees to a condition and maintains the possibility of separation which she figures as fatal:

If it appear not plain, and prove untrue,
Deadly divorce step between me and you.
- O my dear mother, do I see you living? (5.3.317-19)

She breaks out of rhyme to exclaim happily the word that had previously caused her so much angst: finally, she can call the Countess "mother". The King's last words are undercut with the same concerns with which the drama began: "All yet seems well, and if it end so meet, / The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet"

(5.3.333-4). His conditional “if” emphasises the problems that lie in the word “seems”. Thus the last rhyme within the play proper articulates an epistemological tension inherent within the way rhyme itself works: things that seem (or sound) the same must necessarily be different.

While Helen may finally become a “name” united to a “thing”, she is likely still cloaked in Catholic sartorial resonance that continues to render ambiguous our understanding of how she “seems”.⁴⁰⁶ On first seeing Helen at her return, the King asks “Is there no exorcist / Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?” (5.3.304-5). The teleological title of the play implicitly poses the question “do the ends justify the means?” and the King’s reference to a beguiling “exorcist” reminds us that this comic reunion might be the production of a papist trickster. The habit makes material the epistemological complexity that renders each subject different and unknowable. Whereas in other plays Catholic habits often carry genre-specific connotations (for example, Machiavellian intent in revenge tragedy), here the different generic meanings interact with one another.

Not long after *All’s Well*, Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, rejecting the benignly fictional pilgrim disguises of the *King Lear* source but utilising details from a text exposing the malevolent fiction of Catholic exorcism. I turn now to consider the

⁴⁰⁶ Since actors changed costume as infrequently as possible it is likely that Helen returns in her pilgrim’s costume. The source specifies that Helen’s counterpart remains “in her pilgrim’s weed” when she goes to confront her husband, and emphasises that “she passed through the people without change of apparel”. The happy ending is expressed sartorially: the husband “apparelled her according to her estate”, thus marking his acceptance and possession of his wife; pp. 231-2.

implications of such an exchange, in order to sound the tragic possibilities of the subject's place in fiction-making.

Chapter 5

Exorcising Polemic: *King Lear*

When Shakespeare took vocabulary from Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603) and used it in *King Lear* (1605-6) he was using a text that both was and was not about Catholics. Harsnett's narrative is concerned with the exorcisms of the 1580s performed by Catholic priests that mostly took place in the household of Edmund Peckham at Denham in Buckinghamshire. On one level the *Declaration* served a very obvious anti-Catholic purpose: it specifically denigrated the Jesuit, William Weston and thus played a part in the Protestant authorities' efforts to increase division within the English Catholic Church, split between the Jesuits and the secular priests during the archpriest controversy (a dispute within the Catholic clergy in England about the government of priests).⁴⁰⁷ Yet despite the pointedly anti-Catholic title of Harsnett's work and the fact that it is populated with Catholic exorcists (who make papist use of relics and holy water, pray to saints and idolise the Eucharist as Christ), Catholicism could also be considered as in some ways anterior to Harsnett's project. Richard Bancroft (Bishop of London and later Archbishop of Canterbury) and Samuel Harsnett (Bancroft's chaplain) had been engaged in a legal and propagandist campaign against the puritan, John Darrell, whose claims to be able to detect and dispossess devils stirred public interest and threatened to

⁴⁰⁷ See F. W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1993), p. 70. For ease of reference, all references to Harsnett's *Declaration* are to Brownlow's edition, printed in this book; page references will be incorporated in the text.

provide an alternative and unorthodox source of authority to the state Protestant Church.⁴⁰⁸ As Frank Brownlow points out, it is Darrell and the more general threat of puritanism that are the implicit targets of Harsnett's *Declaration*:

Harsnett addressed it to the Catholics, but in it he continually speaks to the Protestants who are its real audience. Insofar as Harsnett speaks to Catholics at all, it is only to embarrass and disgust them. On the other hand, he addresses the Protestants as friends, playing on their fears and prejudices, enlisting them on his side. Read thus, by a Protestant audience, the *Declaration* is as much the last word in the Darrell campaign as it is an attack on the Catholic mission to England. In fact Harsnett's approach, presenting Jesuitry and Puritanism as two varieties of the same fanatical threat to sound religion, became the common strategy of Anglican argument until the resurgence of evangelicalism in the later eighteenth century.⁴⁰⁹

In some ways then, the (anti-)Catholic imagery in Harsnett's text exists at the level of the signifier. By the early seventeenth century the negative signification of contemporary "papisty" was inevitable so that in texts like the *Declaration* Catholics are symbolically scapegoated without being the most important target of the text: it is already taken for granted that Catholicism is inherently erroneous.⁴¹⁰ The *Declaration* uses that established

⁴⁰⁸ John Darrell had been legally condemned in 1599 but remained indefatigable in the pamphlet war; Brownlow, p. 70.

⁴⁰⁹ Brownlow, p. 75.

⁴¹⁰ See P. Lake, "Anti-Popery", in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, ed. R. Cust and A. Hughes (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp. 72-106.

collective assumption to make implicitly a point directed elsewhere. In this chapter I will explore other exchanges between what is said and what is unsaid.

In using vocabulary from Harsnett's text in *King Lear* Shakespeare engaged with a highly polemical text, reproducing a good deal of Harsnett's lexicon but not his sectarian (either anti-Catholic or anti-puritan) agenda, or even what would be immediately recognisable as Catholic signifiers (priests, relics, etc.). My aim in this chapter is twofold: to compare the gendered subjectivity of both texts and to consider what Shakespeare's use of Harsnett has to tell us about his attitude to fiction. In order to understand the relationship between Harsnett and Shakespeare it is necessary to look beyond the obviously sectarian in Harsnett and the obvious omission of the sectarian in Shakespeare. Feminist critics have maintained that the structure of *King Lear* scapegoats the female characters and privileges an emotional engagement with the tragedy's eponymous patriarch.⁴¹¹ Much of Lear's misogynistic vocabulary is taken from the *Declaration*, a text that declares the victimisation of female demoniacs by Catholic priests, but which partly elides the female experience of being victim. Reading the misogyny in and of *Lear* in tandem with the attitudes in and of the *Declaration* allows for a more nuanced understanding of the gendered and generic subjectivity in *Lear*, and reveals

⁴¹¹ See for example, J. Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 103-29; and K. McLuskie, "The Patriarchal Bard", in *Political Shakespeare: Second Edition*, ed. J. Dollimore and A. Sinfield (Manchester: MUP, 1984), pp. 88-108.

Shakespeare's broad and tragic reading of polemic. *Lear* is not a tragedy of the old faith and sectarian strife (Shakespeare's pointed disavowal of Harsnett's anti-Catholic ideology) but rather a tragedy of old age and familial disintegration. This chapter considers the translation from polemic to tragedy rather than seeking to reshape the play into the polemical framework that Shakespeare has exploded. So far I have looked at how Shakespeare and other dramatists wrote Catholicism; here I explore the way in which Shakespeare reads another's writing of Catholicism.

It might be said that Shakespeare "exorcises" or drives away the polemical content of Harsnett's discourse. Stephen Greenblatt would go a step further and argue that not just sectarianism but also religion is evacuated in Shakespeare's text: "*King Lear* is haunted by a sense of rituals and beliefs that are no longer efficacious, that have been *emptied out*."⁴¹² However, I think the association between the *Declaration* and *Lear* raises important questions for an understanding of the relationship between fiction and Catholicism, and that we do not have to think about this interaction as a state of reductive symbiosis. In the seventeenth century to exorcise also meant "to call upon" or "to conjure up" and I want to look at the way in which the Harsnettian signifiers in *King Lear* are semiotically full rather than ideologically emptied.⁴¹³ This means paying detailed attention to the *Declaration* as well as to *Lear*. In engaging in an exploratory analysis of themes that the

⁴¹² S. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), p. 119.

⁴¹³ *OED*, s.v. "exorcize, -ise".

Declaration and *Lear* share I hope to demonstrate a method for considering relationships between “source” and “text” that avoids a polarising emphasis on Shakespeare’s confessional meaning and instead looks at what his reading of Harsnett means for his fiction.

Locating Misogyny

The *Declaration* is made up of two parts: Harsnett’s condemnatory narrative of the exorcisms (featuring quotations from the demoniacs) followed by the “Confessions, and Examinations of the parties” themselves (192). Harsnett’s exposé of the rituals as a papist fraud dwells on the idea that the priests preferred to exorcise the female rather than the male demoniacs (see 252, 262), and that those exorcisms were poor masquerades for the sexual abuse of teenage girls. The moral outrage expressed at these instances of adults maltreating dependent children is intensified by the (familiar) anti-Catholic unmasking of lecherous activity beneath the disguise of priestly celibacy. Lear’s misogyny is influenced by Harsnett’s characterisation of the priests’ behaviour at Denham.

Priestly sexuality is aberrant. Not only is the anti-Catholic stereotype of the Catholic priest an oxymoron – abnormally under-sexed (celibate) and perversely over-sexed (lecherous) – in the *Declaration* that lust is shown to be a curious part of a revulsion for the female body. Harsnett explains that when the teenage demoniac Sara Williams first started to menstruate the priests told

the confused young woman that the phenomenon had been caused by the devil:⁴¹⁴

Heere I had concluded this part of the Pageant, but that
Sara nips me by the eare, and tells me that I have
 forgotten
 a special point of relique-service, and points me to her
 reade
 deposition, which when I had turned my booke and
 point
 over, I pointed at her againe, and willed her to pen that
 her selfe; and therefore thus she tels her owne tale.
At one time (saith she) *when it began to be with me*
 after
the manner of women, the Priests did pretend that the
 devill
did rest in the most secret part of my body,
 whereuppon
they devised to apply the reliques unto that place.
 Good God,
 what doe we heare? Or is it but a dreame? Or have we
 eares
 to heare such impious unnatural villanie? (297)

As well as lending his account a first person authority, Harsnett's figuration of Sara's importunacy and physical insistence on the telling of the crime against her provides a means by which he can distance himself from the priests' "unnatural" behaviour. Their revulsion at female biological functions is compounded with a lust to handle the female body.⁴¹⁵ This is the general theme in the descriptions of priests who eagerly touch the different parts of the girls' bodies, but also expect to find the devil there. Harsnett gleefully seizes upon the absurdity of this attitude and his

⁴¹⁴ There is some pathos in Sara's testimony where she explains her first menstruation as "according to the manner of women (as since she hath perceaved)" (350).

⁴¹⁵ In her testimony Sara explains that "they would cause a maid that served the Lord *Vaux* to apply the reliques unto the place" (350). Harsnett's omission of this detail in the *Declaration* itself indicates that he sought to implicate the priests directly in sexual misconduct. However, elsewhere in both the *Declaration* and in her testimony Sara is revealed to have been disturbed by the way in which the priests' handling of "all parts of her body" felt like molestation.

sarcastically metaphorical language anticipates and determines that his readers will be contemptuous of such misogyny: “For shee, poore wench, had all hell in her belly” (243).

Using vocabulary from the *Declaration*, Lear sounds like an angrier version of one of Harsnett’s priests when he says of the lower half of the female body: “there’s hell, there’s darkness, there is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption!” (4.6.123-5). What is important to our understanding of the misogyny of Lear (and indeed *Lear*) is not that it comes from a nameable source to which we can shift Shakespeare’s politically incorrect sins, but rather that it comes from a contemporary text that assumes that such misogyny is reprehensible.⁴¹⁶

Lear’s cruel cursing of Goneril triangulates with the different source material:

Into her womb convey sterility,
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honour her. (1.4.270-3)

These words entirely reverse a moment in another source, *King Leir* (1605) where the old king attempts to placate a tense atmosphere by suggesting that Gonerill “breeds yong bones” (844),⁴¹⁷ a remark which his daughter wilfully interprets as a sexual insult. Shakespeare turns attempted appeasement into angry

⁴¹⁶ Kenneth Muir makes brief reference to the way in which Harsnett’s text may be used to exonerate Shakespeare from Lear’s misogyny as expressed in his rant in act 4. He says, this diatribe “has been thought by some critics to reflect Shakespeare’s own revulsion against sexuality; but it may equally well have been suggested by Harsnett’s account of the way the exorcists pretended that Sara Williams, at a time of menstruation, was possessed with a devil ‘in a peculiar part of the body’”; “Samuel Harsnett and *King Lear*” *RES*, 2 (1951), 11-21 (21).

⁴¹⁷ *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (London: OUP for the Malone Society, 1907).

curse, and pleasure at fertility to a wishfully deterministic insistence on sterility. This change in tone may have been suggested by the reports of the exorcists who (either spitefully or credulously) declared that the devil's passage out of Sara Williams's body had left her infertile. Within the legal register of the deposition it is made clear that the priests were not only cruel but also lacked the Godly authority for their claims "which shee thanketh God proveth to be false, for shee hath had (as shee saith) five children" (357). This happy ending is omitted from Harsnett's report of the claims in the *Declaration* proper: "For they had kept such revel rout thereabouts as they themselves gave out to such as were suters to *Sara* (as you reade in her deposition) that they and the devil (*O fidem Catholicam!*) had taken such order *as marry her who would, she should never have child*" (313); "and you give out, *Marrie her who will, she can never have child*" (323). The use of a different font not only indicates quotation but also highlights these prophecies of infertility as ominous: they read like curses. But Shakespeare reads this as tragic material for the curser as much as the cursed. While Harsnett castigates (and hypocritically exploits the entertainment value of) sexual and sexualised repulsion, Shakespeare uses it to complicate his characterisation, to make sympathy for Lear a difficult necessity.

Lear's struggles to cope with feminine aspects of the universe are made physically manifest when he gasps "O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! / *Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing

sorrow, / Thy element's below" (2.2.246-8). This disease of the "wandering womb" caused its sufferers severe shortages of breath or choking fits which could result in periods of unconsciousness. Since it was thought to be caused by problems of the uterus it was not a disease that could afflict men. However, "the Mother" may have been used as a convenient nickname for a disease in men that was similar in symptoms to the female disease technically (and gender-specifically) referred to as "*hysterica passio*". Thus Chapter 68 of John Partridge's *Treasurie of hidden Secrets* is entitled "*For the Mother that riseth vpon a man*"⁴¹⁸ and while Galen "wanted to restrict the idea of *hysteria* to the diagnosis in female patients, he spoke of comparable mental reactions in men".⁴¹⁹ Common medical opinion held that the disease was caused by sexual frustration leading to a cessation of the menses and the creation of vapours which caused the womb to move from its proper place. Barrough, for example, thought that "yong folke, and such as be prone to leacherie" were most subject to it and Jane Sharpe believed that widows, being denied the regular sex they had previously experienced, were also likely victims.⁴²⁰ Sexual abstinence created similar symptoms in men, according to Galen, who saw their suffering as resulting from "the retention of sperm, especially when normal sexual activity of the male was temporarily

⁴¹⁸ J. Partridge, *The Treasurie of hidden Secrets* (London, 1600), sig. [E3r]. (First published in 1573 this text went through numerous editions and revisions; this topic is a later addition.)

⁴¹⁹ R. E. Siegal, *Galen's System of Physiology and Medicine* (Basel: Karger, 1968), p. 319.

⁴²⁰ As quoted in A. Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 78, 77.

interrupted".⁴²¹ As a widower Lear fits into this category.⁴²² Even within his own body then, there is a female element which is typically sexually rapacious and corrupting. His fit of the Mother marks one of the play's many problematic voids: the disease itself is, as Joanna Levin points out, "constituted by lack" since the "Mother" was the ironic name given to a disease where the womb was not performing its maternal function.⁴²³ In Lear this lack is multiplied since he lacks the womb that would cause *hysterica passio*.

Shakespeare's use of the inappropriately gendered term *hysterica passio* for a male sufferer is also found in the *Declaration*, where one of the male demoniacs' claims to suffer from the Mother is a source of humour for Harsnett:

Ma: *Maynie* had a spice of the *Hysterica passio*, as seems, from his youth; hee himselfe termes it the Moother (as you may see in his confession) and saith that hee was much troubled with it in Fraunce, and that it was one of the causes that mooved him to leave his
 holy
 order whereinto he was initiated, and to returne into England. For this, and for leaving the order of
Bonhommes,
 see here an evident signe that *Maynie* had a devil[.]
 (223)

Harsnett mocks the priests' supernatural interpretation of an illness, and also mocks their victim by facetiously substituting the medical term for Richard Mainy's hesitant use of the colloquial

⁴²¹ Siegal, p. 319.

⁴²² Joanna Levin makes the point that "the hysteric was disorderly because she had not yet realized her inherently sexual nature and generative function. Her perversity doubled: she was both too sexual and not sexual enough"; "Lady Macbeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria", *ELH*, 69 (2002), 21-55 (34). Although this was not a similarity remarked on by contemporaries, in this respect the hysteric parallels the celibate and lecherous Catholic priest.

⁴²³ Levin, 34.

“Mother” in his confession.⁴²⁴ Misogyny may be an attitude to be criticised in priests, but Harsnett himself ridicules as effeminate those gulled by papists: a womb is sarcastically attributed to Mainy, a man who complains about something that “a thousand poore girles in England had worse” (223). In anti-Catholic discourse priestly theological perversion is often supplemented by the suggestion of their effeminacy (John Baxter, for example, talks of “maiden fathers, and gelded bishops”),⁴²⁵ that is, a gender disorderliness rendered all the more shameful because of the general sense (in such texts) of women as morally weaker. Early in the *Declaration* Harsnett remarks that Catholicism is “the onely religion to catch fooles, children, and women” (219) and his mocking of Mainy is part of a sense that only the weak are victimised by Catholics. However, what serves for derision in the *Declaration* marks an increasingly tragic tone in *Lear*. Lear’s vulnerability engages rather than distances us, as we watch an old man struggling for breath.

“The Mother” appears in the *Declaration* as the Protestant, rational antidote for the Catholic claims of supernatural activity.

Following Reginald Scot, Harsnett explains that those perceived to

⁴²⁴ Mainy defensively elaborates “Whether I doe rightly terme it the *Mother* or no, I know not; but it is wel knowne to the Physicians in London that be alive and were then of any name, that my eldest brother *Thomas Mainy* had the same disease, and that he died of it; and Ma: *Edmond Peckham* (as I have bene credibly enformed) was likewise troubled with it” (401) and remarks that the technical name one of Mainy’s doctors gives to the disease is “*Vertiginem capitis*” (401).

⁴²⁵ J. Baxter, *A toile for two-legged foxes* (London, 1600), sig. H3v. In *Twelfth Night* Sebastian tells the confused Olivia that had she married Cesario as she had thought instead of himself “You would have been contracted to a maid, / Nor are you therein, by my life, deceiv’d, / You are betroth’d both to a maid and man” (5.1.261-3). Thus “maid” is applied to a male as well as a female virgin. However, Sebastian’s wordplay depends on the feminine meaning of “maid” (its sense in his first use of the word) so that he can both legitimise his marriage as heterosexual and retain the frisson of his similarity to his sister’s transvestite appearance.

be witches often actually suffer from “the *Mother, Epilepsie, or Cramp*” (308) and that Mainy and Anne Smith’s “devils” were simply forms of an illness. As its full title explains, the first book-length study of the disease was motivated by the desire of its writer, Edward Jorden, to show how “witches” were often victims of this illness rather than supernatural evil-doers: *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother. Written vppon occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possession of an euill spirit, or some such like supernaturall power. Wherin is declared that diuers strange actions and passions of the body of man, which in the common opinion, are imputed to the Diuell, haue their true naturall causes, and do accompanie this disease.*⁴²⁶ Since the Mother was thought to be caused by a lack of sexual intercourse, Jorden and others thought that marriage was a suitable cure. Levin tells us “The desiring Mother could either ‘breed diseases’ or children. These alternatives naturalized the benefit of marriage, turned unwed female sexuality into a pathological condition, and guaranteed the woman’s physical dependency on a male.”⁴²⁷ The testimony of the demoniac Anne

⁴²⁶ E. Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603). Like Harsnett’s *Declaration* this work implicitly attacked puritans who were over-zealous in their detection of supernatural agents in the world, in this case, witches rather than devils. While Jorden is not writing with a Catholic target in mind, he holds the spectre of papistry up as a discouraging description of supernatural interpretations of the disease: “which might proue an occasion [to...] make vs to vse holy prayer as vngroundedly as the Papists do their prophane trickes; who are readie to drawe forth their wooden dagger, if they do but see a maid or woman suffering one of these fits of the Mother, coniuering and exorcising them as if they were possessed with euill spirits”; sig. [A3r]. The use of “wooden dagger”, presumably as a euphemism for crucifix, pinpoints a (fraudulent) theatricality in Catholic ritual. The term is literally theatrical in the *Declaration*: “It was a prety part in the old Church-playes when the nimble Vice would skip up nimbly like a Jacke an Apes into the devils necke, and ride the devil a course, and belabour him with his woodden dagger til he made him roare, wherat the people would laugh to see the devil so vice-haunted” (291).

⁴²⁷ Levin, 33.

Smith makes it clear that the exorcisms were not efficacious since her illness persisted even after “she was out of the priests['] hands” and the fits stopped when “being married she had children” (386).⁴²⁸ If cures of the Mother insist on the woman’s physical dependency on the male, Lear’s fit exposes men’s physical vulnerability to women and to the feminine even within the male body. Or at least, this seems to be Lear’s own understanding of his suffering.

The characterisation of Gloucester, in particular the scene of his blinding, also reiterates and simultaneously confounds some of the oppositions established in the *Declaration*. Harsnett makes much of the way in which the priests bound the demoniacs to chairs, frequently euphemising the exorcisms as “chair-work” and thus making this image central to his propagandist depiction. As we have seen, anti-Catholic discourse maintained that Catholics were dangerous because they ensnared “fooles, children, and women” (219), and here was a physical actualisation of that threat: a nightmarish and repeated scene of compelled subjugation to the violent rituals of Catholic priests.⁴²⁹ In *The Devil’s Charter* (1607) Barnabe Barnes dramatises the use of a chair-trap for anti-Catholic effect. Lucretia Borgia (infamous daughter to the nefarious Pope Alexander) plots to kill her husband and frame him for his own

⁴²⁸ Given that this information comes at the beginning of a new paragraph (opened with a phrase “She further saith”, perhaps registering a pause in her narrative) it seems possible that this detail follows a direct question intended to highlight the inefficacy of Catholic practice.

⁴²⁹ Elaine Scarry explains the use of furniture in the ritual of torture: “torture (even if unconsciously) self-consciously and explicitly announces its own nature as an undoing of civilization, acts out the uncreating of the created contents of consciousness”; *The Body in Pain* (New York: OUP, 1985), pp. 38-45. The exorcists remake the domestic furnishings at Denham as part of a supernatural narrative.

death with a signed suicide note, making use of a literal “curious snare” (596)⁴³⁰, the physical elements of which are emphasised by careful stage directions:

Enter Lucretia alone in her night gowne untired, bringing in a chaire, which she planteth upon the Stage. (575-7)

She graspeth him in his chaire. (676)

She stoppeth his mouth, pulleth out his dagger and offereth to gagge him. (680-1)

Costumed in a nightgown and manipulating her husband into a prone seated position Lucretia here carries connotations of the fatal feminine allure of the Catholic Church. However, her Catholicly-inflected evil implodes since this painted seductress is eventually murdered by poisonous cosmetics sent to her by her own father.⁴³¹

In the *Declaration* male-sexuality motivates and renders abusive the binding of demoniacs in chairs.⁴³² The enticing female body is constrained and utterly exposed to the priests’ morally and physically uninhibited hands. Harsnett points out that the exorcisms he describes were illicit according to the Catholic Church’s own teaching of the practice, since Mengus wrote that “*Si mulier sit quae exorcizatur, sit valde senex: We must not exorcize a*

⁴³⁰ B. Barnes, *The Devil’s Charter*, ed. J. C. Pogue (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

⁴³¹ With less obvious sectarian resonance the use of furniture as a trap also features in *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1619) where Evadne is able to tie the King to a bed because he misreads the murderous binding as kinky.

⁴³² Milton’s *Comus* (1637) likewise emphasises the threat of a male sexual predator to a young woman through the use of a chair-trap. Here the incivility of a male aggressor using force against a physically weaker female is worse because of the double trickery of a *magic* chair-trap.

woman except she be old" (220). In his list of ironic justifications for the Denham exorcisms on young girls Harsnett suggests:

there be certain actions, motions, distorsions,
dislocations,
devils writhings, tumbings, and turbulent passions fitting a
part (to make it kindly expressed) not to be performed
but by suppleness of sinewes, pliability of joynts, and
nimbleness of all parts, which an old body is as unapt
and unwieldie unto, as an old dog to a daunce. It would (I
feare mee) pose all the cunning Exorcists that are this day to be
found, to teach an old corkie woman to writhe, tumble, curvet
[frisk], and fetch her Morice gamboles as *Martha Brossier* did.
(221)

While he distances the Denham demoniacs from this bawdy account through his reference to the famous French fraud Martha Brossier, in more general ways the female is co-opted into the sexual culpability of the perverse exorcism through the idea of her bodily suitability. Harsnett's use of gerunds elides the distinction between pained wincing and sexual gestures as well as highlighting the frisson inherent in the representation of a constrained but agitated body. Caroline Spurgeon points out that in *King Lear* an "image [is], kept constantly before us, chiefly by means of the verbs used, but also in metaphor, of a human body in anguished movement, tugged, wrenched, beaten, pierced, stung, scourged, dislocated, flayed, gashed, scalded, tortured and finally broken on the rack."⁴³³ Shakespeare would seem to strip Harsnett's

⁴³³ C. F. E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery* (Cambridge: CUP, 1935), p. 339.

ambiguous lexicon of bawdiness while at the same time maintaining the theme of sexual nausea. Harsnett's picture is soured by the "unapt" substitution of the "old corkie woman" for the young female demoniac. Shakespeare stages this idea but changes the gender of the "corkie" victim when Gloucester is bound to a chair by Regan and Cornwall, in a visual image that is intensified by the audible references to binding ("Bind fast his corky arms" (3.7.29); "To this chair bind him" (3.7.34); "I am tied to the stake" (3.7.53); "hold the chair" (3.7.66)).⁴³⁴ What is a cynical joke in the *Declaration* becomes an unforgettable scene of torture in *Lear*, and the act of blinding dramatises the meaning of Harsnett's often merely metaphoric lexicon of agony. Like the Catholic priests, Gloucester is spoken to as a "traitor" (though Gloucester's treachery is sympathetic; see 3.7.32; 3.7.37; 3.7.44; 3.7.86 folio; 3.7.88) and like them he betrays a paradoxical attitude to women and sex: he is at once gleeful in his recollection of his youthful adultery and nauseous at the body of the woman with whom he "conceived" ("Do you smell a fault?"; 1.1.15). Michael Hattaway even goes so far as to suggest that Edgar accuses his

⁴³⁴ Peter L. Rudnytsky uses this shared "corkiness" to support his assertion that there is a "feminine identification" inherent in Gloucester's blinding (which results in "bleeding rings" where once there were "stones"); "'The Darke and Vicious Place'", *Modern Philology*, 96 (1999), 291-311 (295 n. 13). R. A. Foakes points out that "The preparations for torture are staged to make the scene more horrific"; *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 146. The chair emphasises the domestic context of the scene and that Regan and Cornwall abuse their host: "Civilization itself in its language and its literature records the path that torture in its unconscious miming of the deconstruction of civilization follows in reverse: the protective, healing, expansive acts implicit in 'host' and 'hostel' and 'hospitable' and 'hospital' all converge back in 'hospes,' which in turn moves back to the root 'hos' meaning house, shelter, or refuge; but once back at 'hos,' its generosity can be undone by an alternative movement forward into 'hostis,' the source of 'hostility' and 'hostage' and 'host' – not the host that willfully abandons the ground of his power in acts of reciprocity and equality but the 'host' deprived of all ground, the host of the eucharist, the sacrificial victim"; Scarry, pp. 44-5.

father of devilish lechery when he importunately interrupts a conversation between Gloucester and Lear with Harsnettian ravings about the “foul fiend” and “The prince of darkness” (3.4.127, 139).⁴³⁵ Amy Wolf argues that Shakespeare’s removal of Harsnett’s humour and the playwright’s intensification of cruelty “is not simple borrowing or adaptation, but a definite reworking and implicit criticism of Harsnett’s language and imagery.”⁴³⁶ In addition Shakespeare’s sympathetic characterisations confound the categories of victim/sinner which are understood to be confessionally determined in the *Declaration*. Shakespeare’s text does not deny the priests’ real guilt; in fact the Gloucester scene is not about creating a recognisable allusion to a contemporary text. Rather it is significant that the tragic complexity of *King Lear* seems to have arisen in part from a rejection of a sectarian text’s confessional binarising of victim and sinner, sympathy and censure.

Female Geography

However, this tragic complexity is granted to the play’s male characters; the emotional paradigm of *King Lear* privileges a patriarchal sensibility. We can forgive Lear and Gloucester, but

⁴³⁵ “Is Edgar speaking about being possessed himself, or implying that his father is possessed by devils? Or, that his father is a devil who ‘possesses’ women? The ambiguity comes from a wonderful piece of stagecraft by Shakespeare. Gloucester is speaking about Lear’s children, Goneril and Regan, who have thrust the old King out. He does not respond to Edgar. We could read this as a kind of chorus. [...] Modo or Modu was associated with sexuality in Harsnett. This devil had possessed a chambermaid called Sara Williams [...] Edgar is accusing his philandering father of being ‘the prince of darkness’”;

M. Hattaway, “Possessing Edgar”, in *Shakespeare Performed*, ed. G. Ioppolo (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2000), pp. 198-215 (pp. 207-8).

⁴³⁶ A. Wolf, “Shakespeare and Harsnett”, *SEL*, 38 (1998), 251-64 (256).

Goneril and Regan die off stage, the victims of their own murderous lust. I will look at how political imperatives influence the attitudes to gender in Harsnett's *Declaration* and the locus of *King Lear*. In particular, I will explore each text's publication of a female somatic terrain.

In the *Declaration* Harsnett repeatedly sexualises the exorcisms of the female demoniacs by exposing not just priestly immorality but also the female body to public view. In particular, Sara Williams's body is turned into a visual terrain as the somatic space that the priests run their hands along is itemised and displayed to Harsnett's readers:

*Sometime (she saith) they lodged the devill in her toe,
sometime in her legge, sometime in her knee.*
Sometime,
&c. (252)

*Sara saith you began with your fiery hands at her foot,
and so up all along her leg, to her knee, her thigh, and
so along all parts of her body (261)*

to bring the same holy hands piping hote from the
Altar to the chayre where *Sara* sate at Masse, to seize
with the same hands upon her toe, slip them up along
her

legge, her knee, her thigh, and so along all parts of her
body till you came neere her neck[.] (261)

Harsnett does not explicitly accuse the priests of molestation but prefers to engage his readers through implication. The readers join with Harsnett in his condemnation of the priests but also share the priests' lustful gaze. In order for Harsnett to cast the exorcisms of the female demoniacs as sexual it is necessary for the readers, like the priests, to know (epistemologically, and in a

metaphoric sense, carnally) the female body to be erotic. Harsnett simultaneously discovers abuse and entertainment. His cataloguing of various physical parts operates in the manner of the literary figure of the blazon. Patricia Parker points out that the blazon involves an interaction of the static and the kinetic:

The blazon [...] had both a static sense - the heraldic shield which stood as a sign of a particular family, name, and property, or the division of the woman's body into its parts - and a more active or kinetic one: the 'proclamation' or 'publishing' by such description to an audience. We need, however, immediately to notice that static and more active here interpenetrate right from the beginning, both in the idea of a narrative 'description' of a still object and in the sense that the narrated object, treated as 'picture' (as in the limit of *ut pictura poesis*), might be said to 'publish' or 'proclaim.'⁴³⁷

This tension is intensified by the lewd animation of the priests' hands across the immobilised body of a young girl, tied to a chair. Both the gradual revelation of the body via a narrative and the stasis imposed on it by the pictorial effect render the female body the passive subject of the reader's gaze. This is dramatised with difference when Gloucester is tied to a chair (made immobile) and has his eyes gouged out (a gruesome realisation of figurative partitioning). He is demonstrably subject to the tortures of Cornwall and Regan, but this scene increases the audience's sense

⁴³⁷ P. Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 127.

of his humanity; the demoniacs' individual experiences are diffused in the exchanges between the entertainment value of the text and the declaration of a theological crime.

The first "display" and division of a feminised space in *King Lear* occurs when Lear partitions his kingdom, expressed by a map. The display is highlighted in the dialogue through references to visual aspects of the land that themselves are possible references to the cartographic display of the land ("shadowy forests" (1.1.64); "wide-skirted meads" (1.1.65)).⁴³⁸ It has been argued that display is an inherently feminising process,⁴³⁹ but in this particular instance the attendant act of partitioning depends on a different kind of female display.⁴⁴⁰ Lear famously expects his daughters to perform in public their love for him in order that his sons-in-law should gain land.⁴⁴¹ In the *Declaration* the female body is exposed while the emotional state and epistemology of the woman herself is far less important. Lear seems to assume that this is how the world works: women are to perform and exhibit themselves in accordance with masculine desires, but they are not to be granted any real political

⁴³⁸ For a debate about the size of the map see J. Gillies, "The Scene of Cartography in *King Lear*" in *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, ed. A. Gordon and B. Klein (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), pp. 109-137. Gillies also tells us that that Lear's map can be thought of as a fetish because it is invested with more than its own geography, "geographic values dissolve into bodily values, torrid zones into the comfort zone"; p. 123.

⁴³⁹ For a description of the way in which "publication" is a feminising process see Parker, pp. 126-54.

⁴⁴⁰ Dan Brayton points out: "At the moment when land becomes reduced to a visual fetish, the map, the female body becomes the site of negotiation over property rights"; "Angling in the Lake of Darkness", *ELH*, 70 (2003), 399-426 (402).

⁴⁴¹ While Lear says "Give me the map" (1.1.36, my emphasis; "Give me" appears only in the folio) his question "Which of you shall we say doth love us most" (1.1.51) makes use of the royal plural pronoun. Arthur F. Kinney suggests that the love test is about "love of the land. What he asks his daughters to proclaim is not the love of his personal body but his royal one." This makes the responses of Goneril and Regan entirely appropriate: they "underscore their commitment to the throne as a commitment to their land"; *Shakespeare's Webs* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 125. However, we should note that Lear is then reluctant to cede any power over the land to his daughters.

agency. The tragedy unfolds when women insist on more than self-display. The daughters who accepted the terms of Lear's economy of public love go on to insist on the reality of their prize: authority over the land (arguably wanting to establish a more stable rule than Lear has created through his imperfect abdication, though of course, they degenerate into cruelty).

At the beginning of the play Lear displays and divides a kingdom, but by the fourth act he can only respond to a rupture he perceives in women:

Down from the waist they are
centaurs, though women all above. But to the girdle do
the gods inherit, beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell,
there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit, burning,
scalding, stench, consumption! (4.6.121-5)

Lear does not itemise the parts of the female body as in a blazon, but he memorably partitions and topographises it as a supernatural terrain ("hell", "sulphurous pit"). This overdetermines the female body as a general threat, and denies tragic individuality to women since the paradigms of female identity are binarised into either Goneril's and Regan's hellishness or Cordelia's idealised perfection.

These associations are found in the *Declaration* but are different in nature. After one of his repeated descriptions of the priests running their hands along Sara's body Harsnett exclaims:

Fie holy Fathers fie, is this the trailed sent you so
greedily pursue with full crie and open mouth? Is this the game
you

quest on hunt called gayning of soules? Is this the haunt you
 so in Italy, Spain, and England? Is this the foile you sent
 fault, hotely that neither Sea nor Land will make you at a
 [...] but that you call upon it still over hill and dale, through
 Colledges, Cloysters, Palaces, houses, yea, even into
 hell it selfe; and thence start the devil, and hunt him a
 conny- fresh, and lodge him with *Sara Williams* in such muses,
 pursuite beries, and holes as the poore devil but for your hote
 would never have come in? (252)

Following on from one of the many “blazons” of Sara’s body the female somatic space and geographical terrain are here rendered equivalent. Where Lear detects and exposes the hellish nature of the female body, Harsnett claims that Catholic priests force the devil into Sara (they “lodge him with *Sara Williams*” where he would otherwise “never have come”). Harsnett suggests that the priests’ claims that Sara is possessed by the devil are false but that their handling of her body is a form of possession by Catholic devils. The female body is part of the topography of the Jesuit “hunt” (an idea to which I will return) for “soules” that encompasses dangerous foreign countries (“Italy, Spain”), the sites which were believed to train traitors or “seed-men” (“Colledges, Cloysters, Palaces, houses”) and the ultimate source of Catholic nefariousness, “hell”.⁴⁴² Sara gives a human face to England’s vulnerability, she makes the protection of the nation seem urgent

⁴⁴² Gordon Williams shows that “hell” was used as a euphemism for vagina, citing Lear’s rant (“there’s hell, there’s darkness”, 4.6.123-4) and Sonnets 129 and 144 as examples; *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols, ii (New Jersey: Athlone, 1994), p. 660.

(and unlike Doll Williamson she is a passive victim). Yet it is also her femininity that weakens England since her body is shown to be a space which renders English national (and theological) boundaries vulnerable. The alleged abuse done to Sara is overshadowed by the abuse done to England itself: her body is a piece of landscape (featuring a proliferation of “muses, conny-berries, and holes”) as much as it is an individual, human physique.

Harsnett’s catalogue “Colledges, Cloysters, Palaces, houses” moves from the institutional to the domestic. The fear that Jesuits received orders in foreign “Palaces” to wreak havoc in English palaces was coupled with an awareness that they were able to survive in recusant “houses”. Treason had a domestic base. Accordingly Harsnett frequently euphemises the vagina in domestic terms (the “privy parts”, a “gate”, and “the devils port-gate” (312) where the priests are said to “lodge” the devil), so that by implication national vulnerability is gendered female.⁴⁴³ The priests’ domestic wanderings are intrusions of “privy parts”. However, this intrusion is possible because of the nature of the female body (gates exclude people and let them in). In particular, the notion of a “devils port-gate in *Sara*” compounds domestic and national intrusion. As much as Harsnett would lay the blame of a misogyny that reads the female anatomy in this way on Catholic priests, his anti-Catholic urgency is served by a sense that women’s

⁴⁴³ Williams provides definitions for and further examples of the euphemisms found in the *Declaration* (though it is not cited directly). For example, both “gate” and “port” are defined as euphemisms for vagina; ii, pp. 585, 1073. Harsnett thus takes part in a general tendency to topographise and domesticate female physiology; he does so with an emphatic cataloguing of such terms.

bodies are vulnerable and thus need stringent Protestant protection: that the devil's port-gate is indeed "in" Sara.

Similarly, when Harsnett suggests that the priests lingered in their exorcisms he uses a metaphor that inscribes the female body into a national narrative: despite "this dislodging, coursing, and pinching; the devil was still in their Parkes" (262). The status of a piece of land as a park legally defined sport as licit (hunting) or illicit (poaching).⁴⁴⁴ That the female body is a place for sport is not in question, this metaphor rather distinguishes who is not allowed access to the "Parkes". The possessive construction "their Parkes" is simultaneously passive: Sara and Fid (Friswood Williams, sister to Sara and another demoniac) are possessed by the ideological weight of the euphemism rather than in possession.⁴⁴⁵ This image stresses the priests' behaviour as illicit not so much because individual women have been violated but because liberties have been taken with subjects possessed by monarchical authority.⁴⁴⁶ This period saw a shift in rape law so that abduction (rape as theft of male property) was understood as a different crime from sexual defilement (rape as sexual violence against a woman) where previously these had been prosecuted as the same crime.⁴⁴⁷

However, Harsnett's language implicitly re-invokes the sense of

⁴⁴⁴ R. B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1993), p. 77.

⁴⁴⁵ By contrast, Shakespeare's Venus attempts to seduce Adonis by taking control of a metaphor of a deer park, determining the terms by which she and Adonis are to be understood and using a rhetoric that figuratively encompasses him: "I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer" (231); "I have hemm'd thee here" (229); "Within the circuit" (230); "Within this limit" (235).

⁴⁴⁶ Lear treats his country like a large park. But as John Gillies points out, Lear is criticised "for squandering the kingdom, rather than for treating it as his personal property"; p. 114.

⁴⁴⁷ See E. Detmer-Goebel, "The Need for Lavinia's Voice", *SSt*, 29 (2001), 75-92 (77-8); J. Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-3; and M. Chaytor, "Husband(ry)", *Gender and History*, 7 (1995), 378-407 (396).

property and theft in his depiction of sexual abuse. Polemic looks to and fosters national rather than individual concerns.

Hunting the Subject

The park imagery is just part of a pervasive metaphor of hunting in the *Declaration* and the rhetoric of hunting structures subjects in both this text and in *Lear*. Exploring this rhetoric allows us to see the ways in which polemic and tragedy appropriates subjects for different ends. “Venery” refers simultaneously to the practice or pursuit of sexual desire and to the sport of hunting.⁴⁴⁸ Harsnett uses such tropes (already associated with romantic pursuit in Plato and in Petrarchan discourses)⁴⁴⁹ as a way of describing the exorcists in terms that conflate sex with violence.⁴⁵⁰ Attendant on the metaphor are a highly organised set of principles and complex technical vocabulary that enfold the exorcists into another rule-governed structure that they will be shown to transgress.⁴⁵¹ This imagery provided the sectarian organisation in numerous other anti-Catholic texts: *The hunting of Antichrist* by Leonard Wright (1589); *The hunting of the Romish foxe* (1683); *A toile for two-legged foxes* by J. Baxter (1600); and *Foot out of the Snare* by John Gee (1624). Often such texts functioned on the associative logic of

⁴⁴⁸ See Jean Howard’s exploration of the meaning of “venery” in “Sex and Social Conflict”, in *Erotic Politics*, ed. S. Zimmerman (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 170-90.

⁴⁴⁹ See D. C. Allen, “On *Venus and Adonis*”, in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies*, ed. H. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1959), pp. 100-111.

⁴⁵⁰ In *King Lear* violent pursuit is conceptualised as a hunt when Edgar describes himself as having “Escaped the hunt” (2.2.174).

⁴⁵¹ Edward Berry says that the complicated distinctions within the hunting lexicon meant that it was also a “verbal sport [...] in which the mastery of words implied both power over nature and society”; *Shakespeare and the Hunt* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 11.

bigotry and were anchored only in the need to denigrate

Catholicism. In *A Toile for Two-Legged Foxes* we learn that:

it is an infallible *maxima*, that yong cubs in time will
proue old
Foxes, and old Foxes if time serue, will proue cruell
Tygres.

But is it true, can the Foxe strip himselfe out of
the lambs
skin, and play the Lion in his kinde? ca[n] subiects
hands acquaint themselues with tempering Italian
physicke, and English brests
giue harbor vnto Spanish hearts? Yea it is too true.⁴⁵²

The frantic movement of the hunt is intensified by Catholic shape-shifting across metaphors and nationalities. While the enumeration of metaphoric items in such texts bespeaks the need to anatomise the slippery Catholic, the imagery is itself fluid in its confessional resonance. Catholics were thought of as both the hunters and the hunted, sometimes even within the same text, so that while John Gee escapes from the Catholic “snare” and from being turned into “game”, he also offers advice on “How to kenne or smell a Priest”⁴⁵³ and John Baxter hunts the Catholic “fox” but also makes reference to the Catholic Church as a “bloudhound”.⁴⁵⁴ (Of course in the natural world foxes, wolves and tigers all prey on other animals as well as being potential prey themselves.)⁴⁵⁵ In real life politically marginalized Catholics found themselves the easy victims of

⁴⁵² J. Baxter, *A toile for two-legged foxes* (London, 1600), sigs. C3r-v.

⁴⁵³ *John Gee's Foot Out of the Snare* (1624), ed. T. H. B. M. Harmsen (Nijmegen: Cicero P, 1992), pp. 138, 127, 143.

⁴⁵⁴ Baxter, sig. [B5r].

⁴⁵⁵ Not surprisingly the imagery that defames Catholics either turns Protestants into innocent prey or celebrates their physical prowess as hunters: “Shortly after began to rowse our noble and valiant Lion of England, Henrie the eight of famous memorie: who taking his borespeare in hand, vncoopling his trustie kenell of English houndes, our godly and learned prelates well taught to choose and hunt their game, so coursed that venomous Dragon, pearsed his bodie, razed his holdes, and defaced his dennes: and inforced him with vncurable wounds to retire to the sinke from whence hee came”; L. Wright, *The Hunting of Antichrist* (London, 1589), sig. C3r-v.

poachers who raided their game reserves, but others also vented their frustration and signified their confessional bravado by becoming poachers themselves.⁴⁵⁶ In both linguistic and social terms the violent pursuit of hunting provided a representational idiom for the relations between Catholics and Protestants, for subjects understood as naturally and culturally at war.

Although in *Lear* the specific concept of “the hunt” occurs only in more localised instances (to which I will return) a predatory relation between subjects is similarly underlined by means of animal references, often lifted from Harsnett.⁴⁵⁷ Goneril and Regan are frequently characterised as vicious animals at their most brutal moments:

She'll flay thy wolvisch visage (1.4.300)

struck me with her tongue
Most serpent-like (2.2.349-50)

In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs (3.7.57)

Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?
A father, and a gracious aged man
Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate, you have madded.
(4.2.41-4 quarto)

By associating two different things that are (momentarily) the same, metaphor keeps us aware of difference and these animal metaphors take their force from the very alterity that should exist between humans and beasts. Faced with the tyrannical power of

⁴⁵⁶ Manning, p. 221.

⁴⁵⁷ For example, Muir shows how the numerous references to dogs in *Lear* seem to have been suggested by Harsnett's text; 20.

Goneril and Regan the characters who oppose them deploy these insults as a means of verbalising their moral superiority (the dominion the later Christian world would grant to humans over animals).⁴⁵⁸ Regan uses similar (if less morally effective) language against Gloucester before his blinding: calling him an “Ingrateful fox” (3.7.28) registers her contempt for him as vermin and labels him as politically crafty. But in a fantasy of seclusion with his idealised daughter Lear imagines himself and Cordelia as inhabiting a somewhat ignominious metaphor: “He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven, / And fire us hence like foxes” (5.3.22-3).⁴⁵⁹ Of course Lear here thinks of this as a possibility only in supernatural circumstances; but it is a mere human, Edmund, who ensures that Lear does in fact fall prey to a tragic denouement.

The utter deterioration of Lear’s monarchical status is underlined by this association with a fox rather than the traditional kingly symbolism of the hunter.⁴⁶⁰ Edward Berry tells us that in early modern England actual hunting was “deeply intertwined in conceptions of the royal prerogative itself”.⁴⁶¹ He explains:

Hunting was restricted not only by the forest law but by the innumerable game laws that were enacted throughout

⁴⁵⁸ Lynn White points out that Christianity taught that “although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply a part of nature: he is made in God’s image”; “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. C. Glotfelty and H. Fromm (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996), pp. 3-14 (p. 9). Keith Thomas argues that White overstates the role Christianity has played in environmental damage but agrees that Tudor and Stuart preachers spoke with a “breath-taking anthropocentric spirit”; *Man and the Natural World* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), p. 18.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Harsnett: “to bite and sting the devil and to fire him out of his hold, as men smoke out a Foxe out of his burrow” (278).

⁴⁶⁰ Manning speculates that Tudor and Stuart monarchs utilised the rituals of the hunt as royal political theatre, as a warning to traitors who would be similarly hunted down and disembowelled; p. 54.

⁴⁶¹ E. Berry, p. 5.

the period. Whereas the forest law privileged the monarch over all others, even his greatest peers, the game laws aligned the monarch with the privileged elite whose property and interests they were designed to protect. [...] Throughout the entire period hunting served as a considerable source of social tension, involving in various ways the complex and sometimes conflicting hierarchies of wealth, rank, and ownership of land.⁴⁶²

Hunting metaphors thus inscribe a set of rules that had particularly strong connotations of the vexed boundaries between social legitimacy and illegitimacy. In social terms unlawful hunting was “a symbolic substitute for war”⁴⁶³ and thus the literary imagery of Catholic priests hunting out “tender game”⁴⁶⁴ tacitly acknowledges Catholic “poaching” of English subjects, rightfully the property of the monarch, as a serious security threat. However, the years in which Harsnett and Shakespeare were writing saw the introduction of new game laws which further restricted hunting rights and that had the negative effect of increasing the instances of unlawful hunting.⁴⁶⁵ Hunting raids were punishable as “riots”⁴⁶⁶ and both Harsnett and Shakespeare draw on the way in which the hunting paradigm ambivalently registers licit and illicit action. In 1.3 where Goneril complains about the behaviour of her newly “Unburdened” father (1.1.40) she mentions that he is “hunting”.

⁴⁶² E. Berry, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶³ Manning, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁴ Gee, p. 138.

⁴⁶⁵ See the Game Laws of 1603 and 1605 and Manning’s discussion on pp. 38-9. For a discussion of how Game Laws and enclosure diminished common rights see Manning, pp. 57-82.

⁴⁶⁶ Manning, p. 55.

Lear's right to hunt is problematic since he is divested of "rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state" (1.1.49-50 folio) but retains "The name, and all th'addition to a king" (1.1.137). (But even monarchs who were far from retirement could deliberately exploit the symbolic warfare connected with *unlawful* hunting: in 1572 Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester diverged from the scheduled itinerary of a royal progress and "havocked" a great number of Lord Berkeley's red deer, perhaps as a rather bloody complaint at Berkeley's absence during the progress.)⁴⁶⁷ Peter Brook attended to Goneril's and Regan's complaints that the knights who are Lear's hunting companions cause "riot" and are "riotous" by having the knights overturn and smash furniture in his stage (1962) and film (1971) productions of the play.⁴⁶⁸ It is not just an early smattering of filial sensitivity but also the political awkwardness of the situation that sees the sisters carefully blaming the knights rather than Lear for "riots". Social disorder validates Goneril and Regan's desire to establish their clear-cut authority. In these first two acts Lear sins more than he is sinned against and the brief mention of his hunting and the complaints about his "riotous" knights provide an important political ambivalence.

Riotous hunting takes on an unmistakably sexual flavour in the *Declaration*. In remarks rhetorically addressed to the priests Harsnett claims that female demoniacs were preferred to male ones because:

⁴⁶⁷ Manning, p. 48.

⁴⁶⁸ The claims are made by Goneril at 1.3.7, 1.4.194 and 1.4.235 and by Regan at 2.2.332 folio.

their walke was faire for your course, their game
 pleasing,
 their sute hote, your sent fuller. And therefore no
 mervaile
 though your dogges, being cures, did hunt ryot so
 often after
 this fallow Deare. (262)

The girls are repeatedly exorcised because:

Your game being by hote chase embossed did
 commonly take
 soyle, and there you let him lodge, and hunted him a
 fresh
 upon the old foyle, and counter too, which none but
 Cures
 of an impure sent wil doe. (261)⁴⁶⁹

Smell provides the means by which hounds track their prey.

Harsnett's comments expand the sensory register of his text as he becomes more involved with the sexualised gloss of the exorcisms that his hunting metaphor enables, rather than a narrative of the ritual itself. The "heat" refers to an erotic as well as an athletic activity, while "impure sent" connects unskilful hunting with sexual immorality. Indeed the suggestion that the exorcists "hunt ryot" (a technical term used when dogs follow the scent of an animal other than the one which they were intended to hunt) both emphasises their disorderliness and (given the symbolic weight attached to poaching in this era) again implies that as sexual predators the priests are a political threat.

⁴⁶⁹ This passage contains technical hunting vocabulary: *embossed* refers to the hunted animal, driven to extremity, foaming at the mouth from exhaustion; *soyle* to a pool or stretch of water, used as a refuge by the hunted deer/animal; *foyle* to the track of the hunted animal; and *counter* means "to run to heel", to run along the trail in the opposite direction to that of the animal pursued; see the technical definitions of these words in the *OED*.

That Harsnett should figure sexual attraction in terms of smell bespeaks an ambivalent attitude towards women and sex.⁴⁷⁰ While he castigates the priests for their peculiarly misogynistic concupiscence he manipulates a similar attitude in his reader through his narrative style. While his descriptions function to reveal (or *declare*) obvious sexual meaning they are clothed in imagery that ostensibly conceals such subject matter as unfit for declaration. The “possessed” teenage girls are referred to as being “devil-haunted/hunted”: both spellings are used and the pun deliberately yokes together the various connotations of hunting-pursuit-of-the-devil, hunting-as-violence, hunting-as-sex with supernatural haunting-by-the-devil, haunting-by-the-Catholic-devil and haunting-as-repeated-visit. The (sexually) rhythmic descriptions of the priests’ handling of the children’s bodies are made doubly frantic because it is an oft repeated action (something the priests do again and again, and something Harsnett refers to

⁴⁷⁰ Smell is a rather base sense. As the blinded Gloucester is thrust out of his own home Regan contemptuously comments “let him smell / His way to Dover” (3.7.92-3). In the *Declaration* where, as we have seen, the exorcists are likened to sniffing hounds, Harsnett also gleefully suggests that the priests themselves have a smell, mocking the Catholic claims that the presence of a priest or a priest’s clothes and vestments are able to disturb the possessing devils: “the devil did [know] him by his smel” (273), there is an “odoriferous vertue” (265) to the priests’ clothes. With perhaps unintentional humour Leonard Wright describes the authorities whose work counters the Catholic Church as hunting hounds: “That good smelling dog Tertullian [...] That sweete mouthed hound Chrisostome, feeling a hote sent of his game [...] That famous finder S. Augustine [...] The good shepherds dog Saint Gregorie [...] That [...] hound Saint Barnard [...] That trustie and diligent searcher Ireneus”; (as cited above, note 49), sigs. B3v-[B4r]. However indecorous these images are, they are predicated on a notion of stinking Catholic prey. John Baxter tells us that “the Foxe hath a foule smell. Wherin the two-legged and foure-legged Foxes agree as cubs of one kind: Mens liues & religions are commonly alike, neither can their conuersation haue a sweet smell, whose religion hath a lothsome taste”; sig. [C6v]. That dog imagery was not necessarily derogatory is evident in the medieval frescoes in the Spanish Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence which belonged to Dominican Friars. One fresco shows “the faithful, represented as a flock of sheep, guarded by black-and-white dogs, *domini canes*, symbolizing an early play upon the word *Dominicani*”; M. A. Devlin, “An English Knight of the Garter in the Spanish Chapel in Florence”, *Speculum*, 4 (1929), 270-81 (271).

again and again). Far from exorcising the girls, the devil is described as being “hunted up into her [Sara’s] body” (249) by the priests. Chapter 13 is devoted not to “the fearefull act of expelling” but to “their various powerfull vertues of rouzing, chasing, and chafing the devill” (253). We are repeatedly told that the priests thought of exorcism as a “sport”, a term which in the seventeenth century could refer to a diversion not organised by rules, and that might be rather cruel. The hunting analogy is used to show that the priests themselves stage exorcisms as a form of proselytizing entertainment:

They that delight in hunting, being men of quality and
 sort,
 when they would entertaine their friends with that
 pleasing
 sport, doe use to have an Hare-finder, who setting the
 Hare
 before, doth bring them speedily to their game. The
 company
 was many times great, and the strangers of note, that
 resorted to see and wonder at this coursing of the
 devill; and it
 was accordingly provided by the Hunt-maisters of the
 game that
 they had a devil ready lodged against any solmne
 hunting day,
 that the spectators might not be delayed with
 tediousnes before
 they came to their pastime. Thus all being seated, and
 standing
 at gaze for the game, the next office was to stirre and
 rouze the
 devill that the people might behold how he would
 bestirre
 himselfe. (253)

Thus not only the priests, but the Catholic (or denominationally tolerant) audience at Denham who “see and wonder”, and “gaze”

and “behold” the exorcisms are implicated in a visual economy that exploits the young demoniacs.

However, Harsnett was himself a keen huntsman.⁴⁷¹ His choice of metaphor is designed to entertain the reader as much as it reveals the priests’ inappropriate sporting. The priests are frequently referred to as “coursing” the devil and while there may be an additional jibe in the association of Catholic men with what King James considered to be a less “manly” form of hunting,⁴⁷² this particular sport was primarily a visual form of entertainment (the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the specialist use of “coursing” as “The sport of chasing hares or other game with greyhounds, by sight”). Unlike James, George Gascoigne valued coursing as “noble [...] Especially the course at the Hare whiche is a sporte continually in sight, and made without any great trauaile”.⁴⁷³ In describing this passive recreation he claims:

It is a gallant sport to see how the Hare will turne and winde to saue hyr selfe out of the dogges mouth. So that sometimes euen when you thinke that your Greyhounde doth (as it were) gape to take hyr, she will turne and cast the[m] a good way behind hyr: & so saueth hir self by turnyng, wrenching, & winding, vntil she reach some couert & so saue hyr life. In coursing at the Hare it is not material which dogge killeth hyr[.]⁴⁷⁴

Voyeuristically excited by the movements of a hare desperate to survive (“turne and winde”, “turnyng, wrenching, & winding”)

⁴⁷¹ Sir Gawen Harvey of Marks bequeathed his kennel of beagles to Harsnett. See W. Addison, *Epping Forest* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1945), p. 62; and Brownlow p. 253 n. 1.

⁴⁷² James praises *par force* hunting and expresses contempt for coursing in *Basilicon Doron* (1599). See E. Berry p. 47.

⁴⁷³ G. Gascoigne, *The Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting* (London, 1575), sig. [Q4v].

⁴⁷⁴ Gascoigne, sig. Qiiijv.

Gascoigne is less interested in the climax of the hunt (commenting on the animal's death only as a means to explain what wins the bet). While similar vocabulary situates the demoniacs as sympathetic victims, it also involves the reader in a voyeuristic relation with incidents that Harsnett ostensibly conceptualises as abuse. As Georgia Brown tells us of the apparently very different genre of the epyllion, pleasure is generated at precisely those moments when the narrator and the reader look at something that is taboo: "full of scenes of illicit viewing, of spying and of secret visual pleasures" the epyllia offer the "tantalizing pleasures of voyeurism, as what should be kept secret is exposed to view".⁴⁷⁵ The "illicit pleasure" in the *Declaration* is not simply the exposure of a Catholic secret (by this date taboo was all too familiarly associated with papism) but the attendant exposure of the female body. Harsnett compounds anti-Catholic bawdy (where traditionally over-sexed friars are contemptible but harmless) with an apocalyptic rhetoric (where the Catholic anti-Christ is at the root of all evil and danger) in order to hook his readers with the very attitudes towards women that he expects them to condemn in Catholics. In his preface to his work Harsnett justifies his

⁴⁷⁵ G. Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 169, 171. In investigating the exorcisms and writing the *Declaration* Harsnett worked with and for Richard Bancroft. As Bishop of London Bancroft had (along with John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury) in 1599 issued an order for the Stationers' Company to "round up, burn, and ban from future printing" a number of named texts. The list was made up of satires and epyllia that Lynda E. Boose suggests represented a "new kind of subgenre [...] which combined the salaciously erotic with the violent, misogynistic excoriations of the Juvenalian satiric speaker [...] an English pornography that brought together prurient lust and revulsionary loathing"; "The 1599 Bishops' Ban, Elizabethan Pornography, and the Sexualization of the Jacobean Stage", in *Enclosure Acts*, ed. R. Burt and J. M. Archer (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), pp. 185-200 (pp. 185, 196-7). Harsnett's text is not dissimilar in tone to the works Bancroft had sought to destroy; the difference is the orthodox ends to which this literary energy was directed.

irreverent tone, trusting that “*I may be excused to jest at their jesting that have made a jest of God and of his blessed Saints in heaven*” (199). Harsnett’s excuse that he jests only at Catholics again elides the presence of women whose bodies provide the sites for a bawdy/abusive script, even though the work pretends to give voice to their suffering.⁴⁷⁶ In over-determining his anti-Catholic rhetoric in order to make a puritan position untenable (John Darrell could hardly continue to promote dispossession once it had been so unequivocally associated with the papist practices he hated) Harsnett multiplies the subjectification of the female demoniacs. Their victimhood is more important as an affront to Protestant propriety than as a personal trauma. Like the text’s Catholics it is their symbolic rather than their epistemological status that is deemed important.

Lear articulates an awareness of the hypocrisy that Harsnett finds in priests, but which also generates the narrative force of the *Declaration*: “Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back, / Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind / For which thou whipp’st her” (4.6.157-9). As Devon Hodges points out:

Opposites again converge; the whipping of a whore reveals
the corrupt desires of the whipper. Lear’s disgust at the beadle

⁴⁷⁶ Anti-Catholic discourse was of course often more outrightly misogynist, gendering the threat of the Roman faith as female in the familiar “Whore of Babylon” character. Similarly, the classic and classical figure of female corruption, Helen of Troy was appropriated for polemical description of Catholic evil. For example, John Bridges claims that the mass “is of some called well [...] *Helene* that was the cause of all the Cities, and so many peoples destruction”; *A Defence of the Government Established in the Church of Englande for Ecclesiasticall Matters* (London, 1587), p. 649. See also Michael Keefer’s discussion in “Fairer than the evening air”, in *Fantasies of Troy*, ed. A. Shepard and S. D. Powell (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), pp. 39-62.

degraded and his victim leaves him with no way out of the
 refusal sphere of the body because both erotic union and the
 of it are signs of corrupt sexuality.⁴⁷⁷

For the most part Shakespeare removes the bawdy elements of Harsnett's anatomisation of priestly abuse. Leo Salinger remarks that "At one level, Shakespeare's reaction [to Harsnett] is very unusual for him, in that he cuts out the comic - sadistically comic - vigour from his source."⁴⁷⁸ However, there is a brief moment, at the beginning of the play, of coy bawdiness, where lustfulness is tinged typically with repulsion. When insensitively joking about the act of adultery that resulted in the conception of his illegitimate son Edmund, Gloucester puns on Kent's inability to "conceive" (1.1.11) his meaning:

Sir, this young fellow's mother could;
 whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had, indeed,
 sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her
 bed. Do you smell a fault? (1.1.12-15)

In addition to the misogynistic pun on "fault" as both wrongdoing and female genitalia, "fault" is also a hunting term which refers to a break in the line of scent; a loss of scent; a check caused by the failure of scent; or overrunning or losing the scent.⁴⁷⁹ Thus to "smell a fault" was to smell nothing, to smell an aberration. The additional connotation intensifies the misogyny in a familiar equation of the vagina with "nothing". The paradoxical notion of

⁴⁷⁷ D. L. Hodges, *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985), p. 84.

⁴⁷⁸ L. Salinger, "King Lear, Montaigne and Harsnett", *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, 8 (1983), 124-66 (160).

⁴⁷⁹ Harsnett also uses the term in a description of the Catholic priests' relentless hunt cited above: "Is this the foile you sent so hotely that neither Sea nor Land will make you at a fault" (252).

smelling an absence of smell initiates a major theme in the play of exploring the dimensions of “nothing”. And it is the different “nothings” and “faults” in both texts to which I should now like to turn.

Revealing Nothing

The infinity of “nothing” has provoked a suitably vast body of critical “notings”, only a small part of which I intend to engage with here. Scarry tells us that pain “unmakes” the sufferer;⁴⁸⁰ in the *Declaration* and *Lear* the generic exploitation of pain is gendered in its “making” and “unmaking” of subjects. In both texts women are important symbolically since the violence done to them creates a sense of (in a general sense) tragedy that is epistemologically displaced: that is, the sufferings of the female demoniacs are important in terms of what they mean for a national body and Cordelia’s articulated “nothing”, theatrical absence and final nothingness as a corpse provides the structure of a tragedy that focuses on the subjectivity of the patriarch. Alexander Leggatt points out that *Lear* attempts to “annihilate” Cordelia in the first scene but that it is this attack which “means that he is the one who breaks apart.”⁴⁸¹ In looking at *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *Sir Thomas More* I have argued that Catholicism has textual resonance as a felt absence. Catholicism is again absent from *King Lear* but in this instance its omission is not part of the immediate meaning of the

⁴⁸⁰ Scarry, pp. 27-157.

⁴⁸¹ A. Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), p. 145.

text. Rather, in comparing the different kinds of voids and absences in the polemic and the tragedy, we can learn about the generic structuring of subjectivity.

Harsnett does not employ the slang term “nothing” for the vagina, but he often refers to that part (or rather refuses to) in a number of textual gaps or nothings. He implies rather than specifies that the priests molested Sara Williams’ vagina, as we see if we revisit some of his “blazons”:

Sara Williams had a little paine in her side (and in an other place beside) (223)

Sometime (she saith) *they lodged the devil in her toe, sometime in her legge, sometime in her knee. Sometime, &c.* Let the devil and his holy charmers make up the rest (252)

Sara saith you began with your fiery hands at her foot, and so up all along her leg, to her knee, her thigh, and so along all parts of her body (261)

upon her toe, slip them up along her legge, her knee, her thigh, and so along all parts of her body till you came neere her neck, and by the way with the same holy hands to handle, pinch, and gripe where the devil in his blacke modesty did forbear (261)

did toe-burne, shin-burne, knee-burne her, and so forth (262)

and with your burning hands catched *Sara* by the foot, and so fired the devill along till you made him slip out where no man must name (262)

to have chosen such a strange part in *Sara* for his
 passage out
 as I dare not name: and yet devils, comedians, and their
 reporters
 may have licence in all Courts to call all things by their
 name.
 And indeede here lyes the wonder of all, considering
 that that namelesse part, the devils port-gate in *Sara*[.]
 (312)⁴⁸²

Harsnett directs the reader's gaze across Sara's body before omitting the most intimate detail to which he has been apparently leading.⁴⁸³ As much as these gaps display Harsnett's Protestant modesty they also stimulate desire. In her discussion of epyllia, Georgia Brown remarks that "the process of arousal and denial heightens desire and erotic enjoyment. Lack is not purely negative, but can be generative."⁴⁸⁴ By an inverted metonymy the majority of Sara's body refers to her sexual organ in a manner that makes her body seem to be a mere preamble to a genital exposition, but one that is textually and biologically "lacking".

However, while Harsnett coyly structures "nothings" into his narrative, in *King Lear* Shakespeare exposes the dimensions of numerous kinds of *nothing*. It is a linguistic statement: at the beginning of the play Cordelia literally declares, "Nothing" (1.1.87; 1.1.89 folio) rather than merely saying nothing, but by the close her

⁴⁸² The notion of shameful concealment is etymologically present in the word "pudendum", "that of which one ought to be ashamed". The "namelesse part" is properly "ignominious", it has no name.

⁴⁸³ Shakespeare uses a similar technique in *Henry V* where the Hostess describes her discovery of Falstaff's death: "So 'a bade me lay more clothes on his feet. I put my hand into the bed and felt them, and they were as cold as any stone; then I felt to his knees, and so up'ard and up'ard, and all was as cold as any stone" (2.3.23-6). "Stone" was slang for "testicle" and thus the Hostess moves up to a part of the body that she repeatedly names. The description is humorous precisely because the "unmentionable" body part both is and is not referred to; the bawdiness exists in the tension.

⁴⁸⁴ Brown, p. 141.

corpse can say nothing.⁴⁸⁵ Torture leaves obvious nothingness in Gloucester's body, Edgar describes the spaces where his eyes were as "his bleeding rings, / Their precious stones new lost" (5.3.188-9) in terms that allude to the genital meaning of nothingness ("rings" substituted for "stones").⁴⁸⁶ Indeed female genitalia are spoken of as fearful nothingness, a "dark and vicious place" (5.3.170), a "sulphurous pit" (4.6.124) that is not a benign absence of "something", but rather a corrupting void. Goneril is described as "naught" (2.2.323), a presence of wickedness that is at the same time an absence. Even when used as an ostensibly innocent declaration of irrelevance, as when Edmund tells his father that his forged letter is "Nothing" (1.2.32), the word is charged with dramatic irony, it fuels Gloucester's suspicions that the letter is "something" while it signals to the audience Edmund's nefarious plotting. Critical of Lear's reaction to Cordelia's "nothing", the Fool repeatedly puns on the word until he finally tells Lear that he is "nothing" (1.4.185), signifying the King's loss of status and foretelling his loss of identity. Nothingness is related to exposure in both the *Declaration* and in *King Lear*, but where Harsnett's textual gaps ostensibly protect his readers from the full horror of abuse while simultaneously structuring that abuse as a site of rich titillation, abuse in Shakespeare's tragedy takes the form of a

⁴⁸⁵ E. W. Tayler, "King Lear and Negation", *ELR*, 20 (1990), 17-39 (23, 38).

⁴⁸⁶ The genital meaning of "ring" is present in the bawdy pun of the last lines of *The Merchant of Venice*: "Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing / So sore, as keeping safe Nerissa's ring" (5.1.306-7).

series of delineated voids that force the audience to consider the horror of absence.

Harsnett concludes his “emblazoned” reports of priestly molestation/exorcism with an aural nothing: “you made her crie *oh*” (261).⁴⁸⁷ David Willbern explains how meaningful the figure “O” is:

[It is] the aural aspect of the shape of nothing [...it] looks like ‘O’ (zero) and sounds like ‘O’ (oh), the basic ejaculation that predicts speech, the infant’s Word. [...] It is an infinitely meaningful phoneme, in which are rooted our most basic words about speech. The Latin *os* (mouth) and *orare* (to speak) are sources for many of our words about speech and the mouth (“orator,” “orality”). “Orifice” means literally to make a mouth. To say “O” we make the shape with our own mouths. “O” – the sign of nothing, the sound of nothing – underlies speech itself. Its design underlies writing as well. “The circle is found at the origin of almost all the alphabets or ideograms.” *Ab ovo*, zero.⁴⁸⁸

On one level the “oh” in the *Declaration* registers a child’s cry of pain at physical and psychological abuse, but it simultaneously carries a paradoxical connotation of sexual gratification that bawdily emphasises Catholic lasciviousness.⁴⁸⁹ This visual and

⁴⁸⁷ For repeated references to Sara crying “oh” see 262, 263, 323. Harsnett co-opts Sara’s voice by exposing the way in which the priests had done the same thing: “And then you to crie *O*, that oh is the devil” (261). Sara’s “Oh” also links to a tone that is at once sarcastic and self-righteous in its exclamations: “*O the catholique faith, o the faith catholique* [...] I doubt not but you will helpe their *plaudite* with an *O* too: *O diabolicam fraudem! O fraudem diabolicam! O diros actors! O ineptos spectators!*” (261).

⁴⁸⁸ D. Willbern, “Shakespeare’s Nothing”, in *Representing Shakespeare*, ed. M. M. Schwartz and C. Kahn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980), pp. 244-63 (pp. 249-50).

⁴⁸⁹ When attempting to understand the nature of the exorcisms it is important to keep in mind an awareness of Harsnett’s propagandist bias and also contemporary practice. The exorcisms were irregular in that while it was usual for people to support or restrain demoniacs it was not common practice to bind them, neither were fumigations regularly used; D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits* (London:

aural “nothing” (“*Oh*”) is situated in a narrative nothing, the absent climax that Harsnett has worked up to with a description in painstaking detail of the different parts of Sara’s body.

But Sara’s experiences as victim disappear into this hole. In the quarto text of *Lear* this sound is split from the victim and voiced by the viewer of the victim, as Lear confronts his daughter’s annihilation as corpse. It is now Lear who articulates and multiplies Cordelia’s nothing, “O, o, o, o” (5.3.308 quarto): nothing has come of nothing. In the *Declaration* the narrative of the female victims is reiterated in various forms, permitting them a discourse that strangely elides their personal tragedies. By contrast, Cordelia is literally absent for most of the play and returns only to be fatally silenced. The structure of this patriarchal tragedy may focus our attentions and sympathies on Lear so that we feel Cordelia’s death as his loss and our loss, but Lear dies from grief at the unmaking of Cordelia, in an example of tragic understanding.

On one level the structure of the denouement would seem to confirm the validity of Lear’s earlier misogynistic gendering of corrupting voids as female: the daughters he called “wolvish” before we saw much evidence of the fact do indeed come to

Scolar, 1981), p. 46. However, some of the aspects of the exorcisms which strike a modern reader as bizarre were perhaps less so in the context of early modern medical practices. Treatment of the womb was performed via the vulva, which could include fumigations as well as medicines, injections and pessaries. See G. K. Paster, *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), p. 178; P. Crawford, “Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Past and Present*, 91 (1989), 47-73 (54); Eccles, p. 19; and Partridge, sig. E2v. Even the use of relics (i.e. parts of corpses) had (non-denominational) popular equivalents: Karin S. Coddon tells us that “well into the seventeenth century [...] various parts and fluids of the corpse were commonly assumed to have medicinal value”; “For Show or Useless Property”, in *Revenge Tragedy*, ed. S. Simkin (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 121-41 (p. 123). Clearly though, the demoniacs were considerably and understandably distressed by their experiences.

perpetrate acts of cruelty that ensure a tragic end.⁴⁹⁰ Lear attributes what he perceives to be his daughters' actual or potential lack of proper filial respect to illegitimacy, that is, to a socially irregular sex act from which he was excluded but of which the mother was wholly culpable.⁴⁹¹ Thus Goneril is a "Degenerate bastard" (1.4.245) for wanting to reduce his knightly retinue and Regan's welcome receives the response "If thou shouldst not be glad, / I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, / Sepulchring an adultress" (2.2.319-21).⁴⁹² But if such comments seem to be supported by the way in which Regan and Goneril descend into a sexually motivated and murderous feud, then it is worth remembering that the character first known to be an adulterer is male. When Gloucester is appalled by the characterisation of Edgar that Edmund delineates, the quarto version features the exclamation "I never got him" (2.1.78 quarto). Like Lear he attributes his son's moral degeneration to the sexual looseness of an absent mother; however, if adultery produces nefarious children the line ironically highlights that blame rests with Gloucester for the bastard son he *did* "get". At times Lear also acknowledges his role in the sexualised corruption around him ("But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter, / Or rather a disease that's in my flesh, / Which I must needs call mine" (2.2.410-12); "Judicious

⁴⁹⁰ See McLuskie's classic argument about the patriarchal structure of this play, cited above.

⁴⁹¹ For a discussion of these themes in Shakespeare see C. McEachern, "Fathering Herself", *SQ*, 39 (1988), 269-90; and S. Orgel, "Propero's Wife", *Representations*, 8 (1984), 1-13.

⁴⁹² The use of the tomb to symbolise wifely fidelity is discussed in Chapter 6.

punishment, 'twas this flesh begot / Those pelican daughters” (3.4.73-4)).

Perhaps we should take this notion of Lear creating corruption seriously. At the beginning of the play this monarch utters words that must be obeyed; Shakespeare also allows Lear’s bigoted ravings to structure the tragedy. In this respect he is analogous to early modern exorcists. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, early modern anti-Catholicism made the term “exorcist” double-jointed in its meaning: it referred to one who sent demons away and one whose juggling tricks brought them into being. Thus Harsnett’s Catholic exorcists are shown to pretend to dispossess demoniacs while actually introducing hell into children’s bodies; while Harsnett’s own Protestant dispossession (he shows the devils the Catholics talk about to be mere pretence) simultaneously brings into being new devils, since he tells us that the Catholic priests are devils. Lear’s attempt to exorcise the world of what he sees to be a female hellishness actually brings that threat into being. After all, the misogynistic binaries that structure the characterisation of the female characters at the end of the play (where Cordelia is an idealised fantasy who speaks “soft, / Gentle and low”; 5.3. 270-71)” and Goneril and Regan are caricatures destroyed by murderous lust) are markedly different from the subtleties that governed the opening act (where Cordelia is righteously indignant but emotionally unsympathetic to her

father; and subsequently Goneril and Regan are at once emotionally cruel and also politically sensible).

Performing Sincerity

While *King Lear* ends with the staging of women who have been permanently silenced through death (there is a poignant reminder of the play's opening act as Lear desperately hopes for a word from Cordelia's lips), the *Declaration* ends with a polyphonic selection of the testimonies of the demoniacs themselves. Harsnett's individual analysis apparently gives way to a multiplicity of voices telling their own story. Garthine Walker regards rape testimonies as the means by which the victim, in however circumscribed a manner, "resisted annihilation",⁴⁹³ and in a related way we might read the testimonies of Sara and Fid Williams and the others as their resistance of total victimisation. In rape testimonies individual agency is asserted because the victim volunteers information, but in the instances of the Denham demoniacs the Protestant authorities sought out people they already intended to understand as victims of Catholic trickery.⁴⁹⁴ The particular questions asked of the demoniacs silently structure their testimonies and the Protestant legal context means that those interrogated can only speak if they put their

⁴⁹³ G. Walker, "Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England", *Gender and History*, 10 (1998), 1-25 (19).

⁴⁹⁴ However, even in rape testimony women might speak out of a sense of duty rather than as an assertion of personal agency. Detmer-Goebel reads *Titus Andronicus* as making manifest "the culture's anxiety over men's increased dependence on women's voices" once rape was understood as a physical crime against a woman rather than an abduction: "While the play registers the problem of the rape remaining hidden, it constructs the problem as limiting the agency of male relatives rather than that of the victim"; 76, 87.

Catholic sympathies behind them. Walker notes that “Modern studies of speech analysis certainly reveal that far greater attention is given to the attribution of blame and responsibility in the courtroom than when the same incidents are described elsewhere.”⁴⁹⁵ Since the former demoniacs made their testimonies in an obviously legal context, blame was always already directed at the Catholic exorcists. The testimonies are prefaced by the lengthy *Declaration* that made clear the proper Protestant interpretation. Thus these testimonies can be understood to be part of the *Declaration’s* overall performance.

However, Harsnett would seem to disclaim performance and label it Catholic. Greenblatt explains Harsnett’s sectarian use of theatrical vocabulary: “Performance kills belief; or rather acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural.”⁴⁹⁶ Kenneth Muir counts “some 230 words derived from the theatre” in Harsnett’s book.⁴⁹⁷ This level of theatrical saturation bespeaks Harsnett’s technical and sensitive understanding of dramaturgy: he refers to the practicalities of dramatic production (for example, the priests are not simply “Actors” but “cue-fellowes”; 201, 218; and they “*come fresh from the Popes tyring house*”; 197); he is familiar with theatrical history including medieval and classical drama; he reproduces dramatic structure (Chapter 22 is titled “Of the admirable finall act of

⁴⁹⁵ G. Walker, 4.

⁴⁹⁶ Greenblatt, p. 109.

⁴⁹⁷ Muir, 12.

expelling the devils, and of their forms in theyr departing"; 194, 311) and he demonstrates generic understanding ("The end of a Comedie is *plaudite* to the Authour and Actors, the one for his invention, the other for his good action; of a Tragaedie the end is moving of affection and passion in the spectators. Our *Daemono-poiia*, or devil-fiction, is *Tragico-comaedia*, a mixture of both, as *Amphitryo* in *Plautus* is; and did by the good invention and cariage obtaine both these ends"; 319). In using such language Harsnett not only discloses the theatrical performance of the exorcisms but he delights in it, much as he simultaneously condemns Catholic lechery and engages his reader through titillation. Furthermore, he not only "entertains" (with) performance but his narrative persona is itself something of a performance. John Darrell bitterly described Harsnett as a "Masker comminge thus to play his part on the stage" (though of course Darrell himself probably also performed a textual persona).⁴⁹⁸ In the case of the *Declaration* Harsnett's performance involved an intentional obfuscation of certain details concerning the exorcism and an assertion of religious views to which he did not adhere.⁴⁹⁹ Harsnett's performance is pragmatic, constructed by a sense of what would win over his reader for a greater Protestant "good". Harsnett's

⁴⁹⁸ J. Darrell, *A Detection of that Sinful Shamful, Lying, and Ridiculous Discours, of Samuel Harshnet* (?English secret press, 1600), sig. A3r/p. 5 [both pagination and signatures are disordered and repeated in this text; this quotation is to be found on the recto side of the seventh page of the pamphlet].

⁴⁹⁹ Brownlow tells us "quite apart from the effect of Harsnett's rhetorical and stylistic treatment of the evidence, at least three kinds of falsification seem to have operated in his and Bancroft's collection and use of it: (1) a knowing use of falsehoods, possibly allied to tampering with the witnesses' statements; (2) suppression or avoidance of undesirable evidence; and (3) a persistent use of leading questions and suggestions in the inquiry itself"; p. 76. For a discussion of the conflict between views expressed in the *Declaration* and Harsnett's personal views see pp. 98-105.

performance and the Catholic “performance” inherent in the exorcism differ in nature. The exorcisms “brought into the open thoughts and feelings normally kept secret”⁵⁰⁰ while Harsnett’s rhetoric rehearses familiar and socially accepted anti-Catholic discourse. The text thus features performances that are predicated on what could not be said and what “should” be said.

The plot of *King Lear* follows the consequences of Cordelia refusing to perform her love for her father in public. As Laurie Maguire tells us, “Cordelia’s pointed refusal to cooperate is justifiable philosophically: love cannot be reduced to games or measurements or tests or proofs. But her behavior is not justifiable emotionally.”⁵⁰¹ Thus while her “Nothing” expresses an awareness of the fraudulence inherent in speech that has to be structured by external authority, it does not automatically follow that it is better to say nothing at all, but rather we are aware that there is a potential for emotional validity in such a performance, even if Goneril and Regan’s performances are emotionally insincere.

Performance does not, as new historicism often insists, inevitably involve fraudulence. Greenblatt notes that “Shakespeare appropriates for Edgar a documented fraud” and claims therefore that “the scene at Dover is a disenchanting analysis of both religious and theatrical illusions.”⁵⁰² This would seem to suggest that at a

⁵⁰⁰ Brownlow, p. 33.

⁵⁰¹ L. E. Maguire, *Studying Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 200.

⁵⁰² Greenblatt, pp. 117, 118. Greenblatt’s analysis of the relationship between Harsnett and Shakespeare expands the traditional lexical concerns of source study to include a sense of ideological dialogue and though he emphasises the “evacuation” of ritual and performance in both texts, he usefully acknowledges the way in which “the play recuperates and intensifies our need for these ceremonies, even though we do not believe in them, and performs them, carefully marked out for us as

moment when professional drama was in its infancy and when playwrights experimented in stretching their writing in new and varied genres, Shakespeare was as cynical as a post-structuralist in his attitude to the possibilities of fiction. Perhaps he was (after all, the self-conscious drama of Beaumont and Fletcher which became popular within a few years of *Lear* would seem to suggest such a perspective), but I am not sure that the Dover Cliff scene necessarily registers this disillusionment. When we first watch the scene (4.6) for the first 32 lines the audience, like Gloucester, interpret the stage as Dover Cliff; when Edgar tells us “Why I do trifle thus with his despair / Is done to cure it” (4.6.33-4) he glosses one of the few acts of familial love in a tragedy of “cracked” bonds (1.2.109). This is not a moment when “fraud” is exposed, but rather is an explanation of the use of fiction to attempt healing. Edgar does not try to alleviate his father’s despair but to provide a situation in which he can fully experience and work through it: it is tragedy in miniature. Since he openly explains both that he is performing a trick and the moral motivation behind that trick, the effect is rather different from Helen’s problematic performances. As we shall see, fiction is more dramatically curative in *The Winter’s Tale* (in romance rather than tragedy) but at the very least we can see that Shakespeare, unlike Harsnett, allows his audience to understand performance as at least possibly emotionally genuine.

frauds, for our continued consumption”; p. 128.

For both Kent and Edgar (driven into disguise) performance becomes a matter of survival. As Francis Barker points out these performed identities enable them to remain true to themselves in a way that their “real” identities would not allow.⁵⁰³ Critics including Frank Brownlow, Stephen Greenblatt and Peter Milward have suggested (with varying degrees of conviction) that the way that Edgar is forced to adopt his Poor Tom identity may comment on the way in which in early modern England Catholic identity was forced into disguise, that differing degrees of performance were necessary.⁵⁰⁴ (Though as we have seen, the literal disguise priests adopted tended to be that of a gentleman rather than a beggar.) This might suggest a sympathetic understanding of the events at Denham as a contingent performance of repressed theology. As Brownlow remarks, “since it is Harsnett’s whole thesis to say that the priests were in effect the devils, then to make a wandering, possessed beggar into a figure of the hunted priest would be a neat reversal of Harsnett’s attack.”⁵⁰⁵ However, Shakespeare’s translation of the performance found in the *Declaration* is of broader significance than a potential allegory of the Catholic situation. Rather what is evident is the way that in reading a polemical text Shakespeare looks beyond the overdetermined sectarian meaning to a more general human condition that resides there. This is not to suggest that Shakespeare was above

⁵⁰³ See F. Barker, *The Culture of Violence* (Manchester: MUP, 1993), pp. 3-31.

⁵⁰⁴ P. Milward, *Shakespeare’s Religious Background* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1973), p. 54; Greenblatt, p. 121; and Brownlow, pp. 119-20.

⁵⁰⁵ Brownlow, pp. 119-20.

theological debate, but rather that theology should not be separated from ontology.

Catholic Semiology in *King Lear*

Indeed “Catholicism” would seem to be very distant from the world of *King Lear*. Harsnett’s text represents a particular variety of Catholic, or rather anti-Catholic semiotics: it is concerned with post-Reformation Catholicism, that is, not a communal “Catholic” (in all senses of the word) inheritance from the past, but rather contemporary papistry, always already representing the machinations of an alienated few (the threatening nature of which adds urgency to the present tense). The second-hand nature of the Shakespearean devils’ names posits a specific dialogue with Harsnett and contemporary controversy.⁵⁰⁶ Nevertheless, these names are not Catholic in and of themselves, and it is important to consider how they might have sounded to Jacobean audiences, the majority of whom would not have been familiar with the *Declaration*.

King Lear starts like a fairy-tale, with a king setting a task for his three daughters. As we have seen from texts like *The Trial of Chivalry*, on the early-modern stage a fairy-tale atmosphere is often created or supplemented by the use of Catholic signs which suggest fictive and temporal distance. The frequent appearance of

⁵⁰⁶ The devils’ names appear in both the quarto and folio texts: “Flibbertigibbet” (3.4.112), “Smulkin” (3.4.136), “Modo” (3.4.139), “Mahu” (3.4.140). The quarto text also mentions “Obidicut” (4.1.62), “Hobbididence” (4.1.63), “Mahu” (4.1.63), “Modo” (4.1.64) and “Flibbertigibbet” (4.1.64).

generic pilgrims and hermits in fiction may seem to suggest an unorthodox nostalgia for a Catholic past, but it is precisely the ideologically circumscribed nature of nostalgia that renders it both literarily and politically appropriate: “nostalgia, in its reiteration that things aren’t what they used to be, presupposes that the past can never come again.”⁵⁰⁷ As we saw in the last chapter, such signs appear in the earlier (and some would say “Calvinistic”)⁵⁰⁸ play *King Leir*, where pilgrims’ costumes are used for disguise.⁵⁰⁹

Even when dramatic Catholic imagery was most obviously Catholic in intention as well as in aesthetics it seems that its vitality was somewhat anaesthetised. In the early-seventeenth century, the recusant players, the Simpsons, and their host, Sir John Yorke of Gowlthwaite Hall incurred the wrath of Yorke’s anti-Catholic neighbour, Proctor, with a production of *Saint Christopher*. This very Catholic play was replete with such incidents as devils being frightened away by crucifixes and, in the Gowlthwaite performance, featured an interlude depicting a local Protestant minister being carried off by the devil. However, while the court records reveal that the players themselves were very reluctant to describe the Catholic content of their play it seems that other witnesses found the Catholicism unremarkable and even the virulently anti-Catholic Proctor is instead concerned with the

⁵⁰⁷ K. Eggert, “Nostalgia and the Not Yet Late Queen”, *ELH*, 61 (1994), 523-550 (537).

⁵⁰⁸ See S. J. Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality* (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1998), pp. 35-60.

⁵⁰⁹ William Elton also notes that “the God of Leir is on occasion also the anthropomorphized Hebraic deity and bears his name [...] It may not be extreme [...] to infer that the old *Leir* looks back, in a sense, to the medieval, while the new *Lear* is relatively modern”; *King Lear and the Gods* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1966), p. 63.

libellous interlude (it was for this that the players were prosecuted). Phebe Jensen points out that this:

suggests that representing saints and Catholic practices may be more upsetting to modern scholars who have internalized a model of Protestant iconoclasm than it was to most Jacobean Protestants. [...] since a saint's play that climaxes with a hermit administering penance to a Catholic saint fails to raise the hackles even of an anti-Papist such as Proctor, perhaps such apparently obvious markers of Romanist sympathies had become as unremarkable in the early seventeenth century as the tombs, ruined abbeys, cathedrals and parish churches that still indexed a religious past. These Catholic artefacts were readable as part of England's cultural heritage - not necessarily, or at least not always, as dangerous indications of the contemporary Papist threat.⁵¹⁰

Even in a recusant house the dramatisation of Catholic symbols can be understood as a "nostalgic rather than [a] vital cultural expression".⁵¹¹

Shakespeare strips from his fairy-tale plot the nostalgic contextualisations found in the *Leir* story, as if these literary coordinates were not appropriate to his tragedy.⁵¹² However, he does use words and themes from a text that was concerned with "vital" Catholicism and labelled it as a threat. I do not want to

⁵¹⁰ P. Jensen, "Recusancy, Festivity and Community", in *Region, Religion and Patronage*, ed. R. Dutton et al. (Manchester: MUP, 2003), pp. 101-20 (p. 110).

⁵¹¹ Jensen, p. 112.

⁵¹² This fits in with the way the play leaves us unmoored because it "consistently denies us the patterns it deliberately encourages us to expect". Maguire tells us: "The narrative pattern of fairytales is invariable: the good character is undervalued; ignored or banished; passes a test or tests; marries the hero/heroine; and they all live happily ever after". The fairy-tale promise of the first act of *King Lear* is pointedly frustrated; Maguire, pp. 185, 184.

suggest that these signs had a greater political riskiness than the kind Jensen talks about. Apparently, *Lear* did not bring Shakespeare any political difficulties (though it found its way into the Simpsons' repertoire). What I want to acknowledge is these signs' important difference from nostalgic Catholic imagery. While "pilgrims" function as signs from a shared Catholic inheritance, the names of the Denham devils issue from contemporary papistry (practiced in a private house), even Harsnett's "declaration" of them reached only a limited readership. Shakespeare has removed familiar Catholic signs from his text and added signs that are founded on a tension between declaration and concealment. Yet oddly they have a ring of fictional familiarity and "pastness". Before considering their implications with regard to *Lear*, I want to understand both the Catholic and the anti-Catholic structuring of this dynamic.

In her examination Sara Williams indicates that (under pressure from the priests) she called recently exorcised devils by names: "Hobberdidaunce" and "Maho". These were names suggested by characters in a "merry tale" told to her by her mistress (343) and "a booke" read to her by her uncle (343-4). An even greater number of the names take their provenance from children's graffiti:

as Lustie Dick, Killico, Hob, Cornercap, Puffe, Purre, Frateretto, Fliberdigibet, Haberdicut, Cocobatto, Maho, Kellicocam, Wilkin, Smolkin, Nur, Lustie Jolly Jenkin, Portericho, Pudding of Thame, Pourdieu, Bonjour, Motubizanto, Bernon, Delicate, this examine sayth

wals that there were very strange names written upon the
 which at Sir *George Peckhams* house under the hangings,
 perceaving they said were names of spirits. And addeth that she
 her, and stil that when they said it was the devil that spake in
 give it that they would needes have her from time to time to
 name or some name, she to content them did alwayes devise one
 times to other, and verily thinketh that shee came neere some-
 because some of the names which were written upon the wall,
 then in her she had often heard them, and saith that they runne
 head. (344)

Writing on walls was a common early modern practice in both private homes and public buildings like churches.⁵¹³ In particular, “Archaeological evidence [...] shows that the writing on the interior walls of the Elizabethan house included classical *sententiae*, biblical verse and commentary, prayers, heraldic mottoes, injunctions to fear God and obey the Prince, exhortations to charity and righteous living, and reminders of mortality.”⁵¹⁴ Thus the names of the devils appeared on surfaces that typically displayed authoritative wisdom and commonly understood truths. Both publicised on the wall and hidden “under the hangings”, the names physically occupied a position on the boundary between disclosure and concealment. When the priests are credulous at Sara’s attribution of the comical sounding names to the devils they

⁵¹³ See J. Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (London: Reaktion, 2001), pp. 29-72.

⁵¹⁴ Fleming, p. 62.

unconsciously perform an act of critical commentary. Reading these names as the names of devils gives the graffiti a mysterious authority. Perhaps this is linked to the material situation of the names. Juliet Fleming tells us:

[is...] The appearance of the mysterious writing on the wall
 a master parable in narratives of the uncanny. Among
 the phenomena that produce intense feelings of being
 in the presence of the uncanny - "that class of the
 terrifying
 which leads back to something long known to us, once
 very familiar", as Freud puts it in his famous essay -
 are
 coincidences or repetition effects, which "force upon us
 the idea
 of something fateful and inescapable".⁵¹⁵

Regardless of whether or not the names written under the hanging were put there by children playing a game, the exorcists' eager acceptance that these are the names of the devils with whom they wrestle affords the graffiti an a priori truth which, by a circular logic, confirms the existence of the exorcised devils.

Harsnett, however, ridicules the names. When he sarcastically offers various interpretations of the meaning of the names he emphasises that these onomastics are new-fangled and part of a dissimulation that is Catholic in character: he suggests that the devils copied the Jesuits "who to dissemble themselves have alwaies three or foure odde conceited names in their budget" (239); that the fumigations left the devils "so giddy-headed that they gave themselves giddy names" (240); or that the devils and the exorcists agreed to use "uncouth non-significant names which

⁵¹⁵ Fleming, p. 69.

goe currant amongst themselves, as the Gipsies are of gibridge which none but themselves can spell without a paire of spectacles” (240). Harsnett’s last suggestion intensifies his expression of contempt for the names as inanity, insinuating that they are a Catholic-devil shibboleth that is aberrant in a lack of meaning. Greenblatt agrees that the names “carry with them a faint but ineradicable odor of spuriousness.”⁵¹⁶ Indeed, like the names suggested to Sara by the “merry tale” and her uncle’s “booke”, the graffiti-names are comical or folkloric in character, but rather than upset the priests’ credulous reaction to them or their insistence that others should likewise accept their validity this quality held a different kind of truth for these Catholics. But what suggests spuriousness to a modern literary critic or dissimulated “gibridge” to an unsympathetic Protestant minister is afforded a validity predicated on a different scale of values in the hidden Catholic community. Two different attitudes to fiction that were not necessarily organised along sectarian lines (fiction as productive of a transcendent truth; fiction as reductively untruthful)⁵¹⁷ are here worked out as sectarian difference. Instead of having a biblical onomastic heritage these devils’ names come from a more local literary and oral landscape, collectively familiar to the inhabitants

⁵¹⁶ Greenblatt, p. 117.

⁵¹⁷ Think, for example, of the different attitudes of Philip Sidney and Stephen Gosson. Alex Davies argues that mockingly “Quixotic” representations on the seventeenth-century stage “even if they seem to refer to the past, are jokes about literary credulity, not historical commentary”; *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p. 127. I would agree that it is important to be aware that attitudes to fiction have sometimes been confused with attitudes to history (and, more specifically, to a pre-Reformation past), however, we need also to attend to the interactions between these views that have provoked the confusion.

of Denham (and the audiences of London). While dramatists may have utilised Catholic signs nostalgically to structure a fictive distance, here Catholic priests appropriated names which sounded fictional to give the exorcisms a meaning that could be collectively understood as a folkloric “truth”. The names have an unspecific familiarity that makes them “uncanny” and potentially terrifying.

In *King Lear* Shakespeare associates these devilish names with fiction by using them in Edgar’s performance of Poor Tom:

Five fiends have
 been in Poor Tom at once, of lust, as Obidicut;
 Hobbididence, prince of darkness; Mahu, of stealing;
 Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and
 mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and
 waiting-women. (4.1.61-66 quarto)

However, inasmuch as this reproduces Harsnett’s interpretation of possession and exorcism as dissimulation (fiction as immoral), there is also a potential for an “uncanny” appreciation of the names that parallels the Catholic understanding of them and affords fiction a validity.⁵¹⁸ Brownlow suggests that Shakespeare seems to be “translating the girls’ possessions out of the metaphorical theater of Harsnett’s diatribe into the real tragic theater, [and] restores to them the potentiality of generating significance, which Harsnett had tried to negate.”⁵¹⁹ On stage the “performance” of Poor Tom’s terror melds with Edgar’s desperation so that the devils have a meaning that can be either supernatural or psychological. But it is the very “odde conceited” (239) nature of these names

⁵¹⁸ Hattaway makes a similar point but without fully analysing the sectarian attitudes.

⁵¹⁹ Brownlow, p. 122.

which helps revitalise meaning. The interesting temporal and empirical crux in the reference to “chambermaids and waiting-women” who have “*since*” been possessed by Poor Tom’s devils points to the real-life experiences of Sara, Fid and Anne. The folkloric sound of the names marks an uncanny return of the generally familiar, while the self-conscious referencing of the source points to a time in the future of the ancient Britain story, but strangely concurrent with Poor Tom’s “performance”. The names confound chronology and the boundaries between fact and fiction.

Just as Edgar’s performance at Dover Cliff places a value on experiencing fiction, Shakespeare’s fictional appropriation of devils’ names from a “factual” account of their fraudulence re-values them. Fictionalising these polemical semiotics is not (or at least is not unequivocally) an exorcism in the sense of evacuation, but rather is also a way of bringing forth the vitality that Harsnett sought to undermine. While there is no obvious or limiting sectarian message to *Lear* it is significant that Shakespeare should remove the nostalgic Catholic semiotics of the *Leir* play and make use of the contemporary Catholic semiotics found in the *Declaration*, as if the dynamic of declared/concealed papistry was particularly appropriate to tragic structure. I will now move on to *The Winter’s Tale*, a romance in which we return to nostalgia. In fact, in this play nostalgia itself makes a return in a manner that

insists on its paradoxical vitality and which uses Catholic resonance to insist more radically on the importance of fiction.

Chapter 6

Knowing Fiction: *The Winter's Tale*

The Winter's Tale (1609) is the story of the reformation of a bad reader. In the speech that concludes the play Leontes admits and begs forgiveness for his critical culpability in generating an intermittently tragic plot through the poor interpretation of the relationship between his wife and his best friend: "Both your pardons / That e'er I put between your holy looks / My ill suspicion" (5.3.147-9). This is a play where bodies are continually placed under scrutiny and characters narrate off-stage events in order to provide a gloss on what they have witnessed. But if the play opens with a suspicious reader it concludes with an ideologically suspect sign. As has been noted by a number of critics, the staging of Hermione's "statue" carries idolatrous potential and Perdita for one is conscious that her attentions to the effigy might be read as "superstition" (5.3.43). Both suspicion and superstition are concerned with imperfect knowledge, and by paying attention to the status of character and audience knowledge in *The Winter's Tale* I think we can learn to be better readers of its fiction.

As its title makes clear *The Winter's Tale* is a knowingly fictional text. However, it denies its "understanders" (as Jonson termed groundlings) the superior knowledge of dramatic irony so crucial to other plays in the contemporary repertory and other texts making use of similar fictional material. Famously, Howard Felperin first pointed out that uncertainty undercuts the assumptions upon which the play's happy ending is founded, that we cannot be absolutely sure that Hermione is as chaste as the

oracle claims.⁵²⁰ In fact, there are numerous uncertainties in this play and we would do well to focus on what *The Winter's Tale* does not allow us to know. So far I have considered numerous "gaps" in different plays: the absence of historical material to match the political onomastics of *Love's Labour's Lost*; the censorship of the eponymous More as he silences his ideologically importunate wife; and the delineated voids that characterise the tragedy of *King Lear*. But it is the gaps in the audience's knowledge that I think are crucial to an understanding of the fiction of *The Winter's Tale*. Too often critics elide the awkwardness of the explanation (or rather lack of it) for Hermione's return from the "grave" (3.2.234), and fail to account for the ways in which the weirdness of this plot device has verbal, structural and ideological echoes.

So I begin with a desire to speak with the undead. I wish to register and emphasise the ontological ambivalence of Hermione's status in the last scene and the way that rationality and irrationality interact throughout the rest of the play. The conceptual ambiguity fostered in *The Winter's Tale* is related to the nature of the semiotic presence of Catholicism in the text. This play contains no unambiguously Catholic elements (there are no friars or nuns here) but we are presented with rituals, materials, and attitudes whose orthodoxy was under dispute because of the Catholic residue that haunted them. Characters repeatedly articulate an awareness that a Catholic reading of signs makes for

⁵²⁰ H. Felperin, *The Uses of the Canon* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990), pp. 35-55.

bad semiotic practice (that it is “superstition”) making the audience aware of the semantic and ideological transgressions that help form the dramaturgy. The characters’ reformist guilt is anachronistic in their classical world so that Catholic resonance is already ideologically condemned before it has existed. But the Catholic semiotics are not “dead”, “evacuated” (in New Historicist terms) of all truth value, but rather bear an emotional, literary and indeed literal vitality; they are undead.

In the mid 1590s, in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Shakespeare postponed a comedic conclusion to sectarian tensions through a shift to romance and a new “trial”, to more fiction. At the same time as *Love’s Labour’s Lost* was revived for court (1610-11) *The Winter’s Tale* was first staged, featuring a different kind of revival. In this play Shakespeare seems to probe the possibilities of fiction in romantic space, in part through articulating the ideological awkwardness that attends some of its generic features. The revival of Hermione questions logic and a reformed ordering of the world into representation/real life, corpse/living being. I suggest that it is *through* rather than in spite of the logical and ideological aberrance of this revival that *The Winter’s Tale* makes great claims for the transcendent value of fiction. In this chapter I analyse those aspects of the dramaturgy that we use to orient ourselves in the fictional world, in order to show how *The Winter’s Tale* is fantastical to a bizarre degree, and thus to get a sense ultimately of why its conclusion feels fantastic. I explore (through a comparison

with contemporary texts) the way characters themselves read what's going on in their world; the fraught temporal structure of the story; the way the play confuses our familiar means of reading representational codes; and its odd narrative logic. Because I wish to stress the importance of the polysemy of the play's paradoxically "undead" signs I will necessarily double back to focus repeatedly on 5.3. Like Leontes, critics tend to overdetermine the suspicious and find sectarian meaning in signs that have theological valence. This would seem to be inappropriate to a tragicomic play that uses paradox not so much to cancel out oppositional meanings but rather to point to something beyond a reductive binary. Ultimately, I want to consider the role the suspiciously superstitious plays in helping us to transcend inevitable denigrations of what is felt to be other.

"All's true that is mistrusted": how characters interpret their play

At the start of the play Leontes is tortured by what he does not know. He realises sceptically that while he has to read signs in order to make meaning his interpretations do not yield certain knowledge. He thinks his wife's appearance both deceptively conceals and inadvertently reveals evidence of her infidelity. Trying to convince his lords of this reading of Hermione he exhorts them to "Look on her, mark her well" (2.1.65) but then warns them that they see only "her without-door form" (2.1.69). Because

certain knowledge is always hidden Leontes assumes that it has something to hide. Emending the folk wisdom that taught that spiders mixed with food or drink rendered those substances poisonous, he claims:

There may be in the cup
A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
Is not infected; but if one present
Th'abhorred ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides
With violent hefts. (2.1.39-45)

Knowledge, in Leontes' understanding, is literally poisonous. Connotations take the force of unequivocal meanings so that he is incredulous at and infuriated by Camillo's alternative interpretative error whereby he refuses to admit any frisson in Hermione's interaction with Polixenes. Leontes expostulates "Is whispering nothing?" (1.2.281), asking the same question of numerous other signs in an eight-line list before concluding:

Why then the world and all that's in't is nothing,
The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia nothing,
My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings
If this be nothing. (1.2.290-93)

While this rage may underline Leontes' tyrannical insistence on the validity of his reading to the exclusion of "everything" else, it also, not entirely irrationally, warns the audience that to deny the existence of troubling connotations can lead to a semiotic void. This is a text that asks the audience to acknowledge awkward semantics.

Appropriately, Leontes accuses Hermione with a pun that figures adultery as a form of misreading: “You have *mistook*, my lady, / Polixenes for Leontes” (2.1.81-2, my emphasis). The play is populated with bad readers. Antigonus misinterprets his encounter with his dream of Hermione’s ghost as a message from Apollo that Perdita is “indeed the issue / Of King Polixenes” (3.3.42-3); while the Shepherd is also mistaken in his interpretative boast about the infant Perdita: “though I am not bookish, yet I can read waiting-gentlewoman in the scape. This has been some stair-work, some trunk-work, some behind-door work; they were warmer that got this than the poor thing is here” (3.3.70-74). Leontes seems to provide a gloss on such misreadings when an act prior to what he calls Hermione’s “just and open trial” (2.3.204) he belies his gestures towards fairness by declaring “All’s true that is mistrusted” (2.1.48). The double logic of this statement resonates throughout the play. Most obviously it indicates Leontes’ wilful conflation of doubt with certainty as he also unwittingly expounds his misreading (he mistrusts Hermione but she is true). But the statement also applies to the thematic level of the drama, whereby what is ideologically mistrusted, what is superstitious, has a truth value in the play since it is implicated in the plot’s progression to a happy ending.

Antigonus knows better than to trust ghostly apparitions (he has “heard, but not believed” reports of “spirits o’th’dead”; 3.3.15) but he determines “superstitiously” to “be squared” by his vision

and follow the ghost's instructions (3.3.39-40). And it is a good thing for the plot that he does: the encounter with Hermione's ghost provides Perdita with a name and situates her in a setting where she can meet Florizel and form a marriage alliance that will reconcile Leontes and Polixenes, Sicily and Bohemia. But the emphatic ideological faultiness of Antigonus' reading supplements his erroneous interpretation of authorial intention that Apollo sent him the vision as a message concerned with Hermione's infidelity. We should note that Antigonus describes the ghost as both a classical vision (a dream sent by Apollo) and a Catholic remnant (a ghost witnessed superstitiously). Furthermore, the ghost seems to precipitate for Antigonus a fate that Alison Shell characterises as a "sorrow of predestination", since this tragicomedy follows a Calvinist structure whereby some are saved and some lost, seemingly at random.⁵²¹ Ultimately eaten by a bear, Antigonus's fortunes (or lack of them) in 3.3 are structured by strands of competing paradigms: Catholicism, Calvinism, classicism and nature. The hybridity of the play extends beyond the level of genre.⁵²²

Such a mixture might be understood to alienate the action of the play from the real world, to advertise its fictionality. The audience can keep at an ironic distance from such goings-on and

⁵²¹ A. Shell, "Shakespeare and the Sorrows of Predestination" (unpublished conference paper, Bermuda, SAA, 2005).

⁵²² When thinking about the hybridity of this play we might also consider the material circumstances of its staged context. B. J. Sokol suggests that "it was no accident that [Shakespeare] represented versions of the popular Southwark trades of effigy-making, the exhibition of bears, and theatrical representation side by side in *The Winter's Tale*"; *Art and Illusion in The Winter's Tale* (Manchester: MUP, 1994), p. 58.

know the play as “mere” fiction. Indeed it might seem that Antigonus’s credulity is confirmed as risible through his potentially farcical end: “*Exit pursued by a bear*” (3.3.57). Yet when we compare this scene with the earlier dramatic analogue in *Mucedorus* where the arrival of a bear prompts Segasto’s humorously unchivalrous abandoning of his distressed damsel, Amadine, we can see that Shakespeare has here reversed Comedie’s brag prior to the bear scene in *Mucedorus*: “From tragick stufte” to make “a pleasant comedie”.⁵²³ The bear in *Mucedorus* facilitates a fantastical, Sidnean plot in which the disguised prince Mucedorus gets to prove his valiance by decapitating the bear (offstage) and saving Amadine. Shakespeare’s bear may show proper fictional respect in leaving the royal Perdita unharmed but Antigonus’s grisly death (and the deaths at sea of the “poor souls” (3.3.87) that the Clown witnesses at the same time) is an all too real affirmation of natural mortality. Antigonus’s superstition thus exists in a world that is not just comic *and* tragic, but also fictional *and* real. This makes it more difficult to dismiss as ideological fiction the role superstitious interpretation plays in the dramaturgy.⁵²⁴

Indeed it is crucial that Leontes’ redemption and recognition of Hermione’s chastity is not predicated on logic or any special

⁵²³ *Mucedorus* (London, 1598; facs. edn., Amersham: Old English Drama, 1913), sig. [A3r].

⁵²⁴ We might also compare the function of Autolycus in the play. Stephen Orgel remarks “The liar and thief holds the key to Perdita’s identity and unwittingly provides Leontes and Polixenes with the crucial fact transforming the shepherdess to a princess, as it also elevates shepherd and clown to the gentry, Mercury, liar and thief, is also the Olympian messenger, the bringer of good news and good fortune, the god of information”; W. Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), pp. 52-3.

access to certain knowledge. Stephen Orgel points out that it is not the unambiguous message of the oracle that corrects Leontes' vision, but rather a reading of the death of Mamillius (that significantly ignores the proffered physiological explanation) as a divine punishment for the misjudgement of his wife: "The process is no different from that by which he had convinced himself of Hermione's guilt. Being released from one's delusions and restored to one's senses has nothing to do with a return to rationality."⁵²⁵

Timely Issue: trying to find temporal and genealogical order

The temporal organisation of *The Winter's Tale* is both ordered and disordered, and speaks to the way characters attempt to know the universe. The revived Hermione tells Perdita that "the oracle / Gave hope thou wast in being" and that she "preserved" herself "to see the issue" (5.3.126-8). Repeated throughout the play, the word "issue" is used another six times with the sense of consequence or outcome⁵²⁶ and a further seven times to refer to an heir (there is also a use of "issueless" in the same sense).⁵²⁷ Issue as consequence bespeaks a logical understanding of a temporal process whereby the past explains the present (and fiction as a motivated narrative). Filial issue, especially royal filial issue, expresses time in terms of genealogical order. Hermione yokes

⁵²⁵ Orgel (1996), p. 32.

⁵²⁶ See 1.2.185-8, 1.2.255-9, 2.2.44, 2.3.151-2, 3.1.22, and 5.2.8.

⁵²⁷ See 2.1.148-50, 2.3.93, 2.3.191-2, 3.3.42-43, 4.2.26-8, 5.1.26-8, 5.1.46-7, and 5.1.173.

these meanings together with a pun that organises narrative satisfaction in terms of dynastic realisation, a doubled sense of order. Leontes' jealousy expresses the fear that Hermione has adulterously disorganised patrilineal order. He obsesses about the meaning of Mamillius's appearance: "- what, hast smutched thy nose? / They say it is a copy out of mine" (1.2.120-21); "yet they say we are / Almost as like as eggs - women say so, / That will say anything" (1.2.128-30); "yet were it true / To say this boy were like me" (1.2.133-4). He sceptically understands the somatically legible relationship between himself and his son as mere interpretation, as what people "say" but what cannot be known as certain. The inscrutable maternal figure that creates this dynastic memory system is also the sexual site of its potential rupture.

But as much as Leontes ostensibly needs to think of his son as his "reproduction" there is a sense in which it is this same somatic similarity that disturbs him.⁵²⁸ He explains away what Hermione notices as his "distraction" (1.2.148) as the shock at finding himself doubled in his son: "Looking on the lines / Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched" (1.2.152-4). In concealing his jealousy Leontes (perhaps consciously) articulates another deep anxiety: the unrolling or reversing of time in his nostalgic recognition of himself in his son is also a process that is frightening or horrifying (he "recoil[s]"). The existence of his son seems to imply for Leontes an

⁵²⁸ For a similar argument see S. Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (1987, R/P Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 193-221.

equivalence of past, present and future: Mamillius now looks like Leontes did in the past (“How like, methought, I then was to this kernel, / This squash, this gentleman”; 1.2.158-9) and will in the future look like Leontes now (“Thou want’st a rough pash, and the shoots that I have / To be full like me”; 1.2.127-8).⁵²⁹ The genealogical double fractures as it multiples since children come to substitute for their parents. In act 5 this nearly comes to an incestuous realisation when Paulina, nervous of Leontes’ appreciation of Perdita’s beauty, has to remind him of his old love for Hermione. In claiming that “I thought of her / Even in these looks I made” (5.1.226-7) the play at once asserts and avoids the incestuous passion that brings tragedy in the source *Pandosto*. Yet in terms of substitution the parent dramaturgically trumps the child in this play since Hermione usurps Perdita’s place as the focus of the denouement. As much as the play works to resolve proper “issue” (establishing that patriarchal order has not been disordered) it also explores “grammatical tension”.⁵³⁰ Polixenes looks back fondly to a time when he and Leontes were “as twinned lambs” (1.2.66):

⁵²⁹ Cavell (2003) tells us that Leontes seems to want “revenge on Time and its ‘It will be,’ not because of its threat of mutability, bringing change to present happiness, but for something like the reverse reason, that its change perpetuates the nightmare of the present, its changes, its issuing, the very fact of more time”; p. 211.

⁵³⁰ This is true even at a structural level. Discussing 4.1.4-9 Michael D. Bristol comments “The chorus openly admits here that the passage of time is not only without duration in the ordinary meaning of that concept but also without content. Sixteen years are missing, and for all intents and purposes they are empty. The temporal deficit or ‘untried’ growth is the actual content or *fullness* of time in that sixteen-year hiatus. The brute fact of change is dramatically foregrounded, but ideas of growth or of lived experience or of any sequence of developmental steps or incremental stages are repressed”; “In Search of the Bear”, *SQ*, 42 (1991), 145-67 (146). We might also compare the Old Shepherd’s first words: “I would there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty” (3.3.58-9).

Two lads that thought there was no more behind
 But such a day tomorrow as today,
 And to be boy eternal. (1.2.62-4)

Polixenes' fantasy of an eternal present (where the future tense sounds like a residue of the past, "behind") collapses number and tense, as the "Two lads" become one "boy eternal". Hermione is amused by the clear implication that Leontes and Polixenes "first sinned" with women (1.2.83). Carnal knowledge of women is associated with an epistemological knowledge, an understanding that simultaneity and unity do not describe the world. One way early modern society managed the uncertainty provided by temporal progression and the separate existence of individuals was through a patriarchal order that celebrates generational continuity. But the celebration of order entails the possibility of *disorder*; the women who make patrilineal order dynastically possible also threaten to undo it with sexual infidelity.

However, Leontes' initial distrust of the female body shifts to faith in that memorial text. The play's final scene contains a symbol that celebrates the legitimacy of issue. The construction of 5.3 offers pointed visual and verbal parallels with the tombs that audiences prayed beside every Sunday. Like other early modern monuments, Hermione's statue is located in a "chapel" (5.3.86) and is apparently framed by a "curtain" (5.3.59)⁵³¹ It provokes a wonder that causes a statuary stillness in Perdita whom Leontes describes as "Standing like stone with thee [the statue]" (5.3.42),

⁵³¹ N. Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 159; E. Mercer, *English Art, 1553-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962), p. 251.

so that Perdita becomes part of the monumental tableau just as early modern tombs frequently depicted living children on the tombs of dead parents, and like those effigial children, she kneels. When Perdita then expresses a desire to kiss the statue's hand Paulina exclaims "O, patience - / The statue is but newly fixed" (5.3.46-7). "Patience" operates verbally as an instruction but also nominally as an epithet that links Perdita to the representations of Patience frequently found on contemporary tombs.⁵³² This monumental image foregrounds the kinds of order that contemporary funerary art celebrated in reaction to death's upheaval: the presence of children emphasises the vitality of the state, while the theme of wifely obedience underscores a sense of legitimate lineage that preserves continuity from the ancestral past to the living present.⁵³³

The symbolic capital of tombs was frequently made use of in early modern theatre.⁵³⁴ As I mentioned in Chapter 2, *The Trial of Chivalry* also features a character who pretends to be his own effigy. In this instance the device helps secure for Ferdinand (the heir of Navarre) the love of Katharina (the daughter of the King of France) that had been inappropriately directed at Pembroke.

Katharina imitates the kneeling Ferdinand saying:

⁵³² Julia Lupton also discusses this visual-aural image; *Afterlives of the Saints* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996), p. 214. For metaphors of women as monumental Patience see *Pericles* (5.1.137-9) and *Twelfth Night* (2.4.110-18); see also *Measure for Measure* (5.1.231-4) for an example of effigial endurance. *The Winter's Tale* also dramatises another icon found on funeral monuments when Time appears as a chorus. For the funerary depiction of Time see B. Kemp, *English Church Monuments* (London: Batsford, 1980), pp. 71, 176.

⁵³³ For a discussion of these themes see Llewellyn (2000), pp. 272-362.

⁵³⁴ Michael Neill notes "it is interesting to discover no fewer than three tombs among the relatively short list of stage properties in Henslowe's famous inventory"; *Issues of Death* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1997), p. 47 n. 99.

So to accompany thy shaddow here,
 Ile turne my body to a shaddow too;
 And kneeling thus, confront thy silent lookes,
 With my sad looks: this is the Instrument.
 Now Ferdinand, behold thy Katharine comes[.] (H2r)

Her enactment of the pose of the chaste, devoted wife on the family tomb is transformed into marriage as Ferdinand translates her suicidal passion into bridal passion: within a mere seven lines Katharina is “A constant wife” (H2r). Both marriage and martial endeavour are essential to the achievement of “this dayes peace” ([K2r]) that concludes the play. Katharina has learnt her “proper” place in the play’s pattern (like *The Trial of Chivalry*’s other princess, Bellamira, she must love a prince) and a monumentally celebrated familial ideology.

By contrast the Duchess of Malfi refuses to be circumscribed by the monumental discourse that her brothers would seek to enforce. Ferdinand, in particular, harbours a carnal fascination for his sister that insists on her sexual abstemiousness. Frank Whigham suggests that the Jacobean stage’s repeated representations of an incestuous elite was a means of figuring and condemning the elite’s increasingly privatized mode of existence as “inturned, sterile, greedy, and irresponsible”⁵³⁵ and that *The Duchess of Malfi* juxtaposes the “pathologically endogamous” Ferdinand with the “inordinately exogamous” Duchess (who reproduces with a man outside of her family and rank).⁵³⁶ The

⁵³⁵ F. Whigham, “Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*”, in *Incest and the Literary Imagination*, ed. E. Barnes (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2002), pp. 59-93 (p. 64).

⁵³⁶ Whigham, p. 73.

Duchess uses a monumental lexicon to describe the values of her brother that she wishes to escape. In a wooing scene saturated with images of death⁵³⁷ the Duchess tells Antonio:

This is flesh and blood, sir,
'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man[.]

(1.1.445-7)

And she later asks of her brother:

Why should only I
Of all the other princes of the world
Be cased up like a holy relic? (3.2.136-8)

The Duchess of Malfi entered the King's Men's repertory about two to three years after *The Winter's Tale* and inverts many aspects of the romance. The confusion of Hermione's living body with a statue becomes in *The Duchess of Malfi* a misreading of effigies as dead bodies. While Leontes invokes "eating" as a natural process that justifies as vital (in multiple senses) the fantastical nature of the art he encounters and participates in ("If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating"; 5.3.110-11), Webster's play is suffused with images that equate eating with cannibalism (so that the Duchess instructs her executioner "Go tell my brothers when I am laid out, / They then may feed in quiet"; 4.2.226-7)⁵³⁸. The wax figures assist Ferdinand in his wish to have the Duchess "plagued

⁵³⁷ Antonio is called to the Duchess under the premise of writing her will, conversation repeatedly returns to the Duchess's dead husband, and Antonio figures marriage in terms of the afterlife: "I take't as those that deny purgatory: / It locally contains or heaven or hell; / There's no third place in't" (1.1.385-7); and the Duchess urges Antonio "Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh / To fear more than to love me" (1.1.443-4); J. Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. B. Gibbons (London: A. & C. Black: 2001); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

⁵³⁸ Since eating can be used to conceptualise incest these images may also relate to the incest themes in both plays. For example, in *Pericles* the riddle with the solution "incest" includes the conundrum "I am no viper, yet I feed / On mother's flesh which did me breed" (1.1.64-5); A. J. Lewis, "I feed on mother's flesh'", *Essays in Literature*, 15 (1998), 147-63.

in art" (4.1.108) perhaps realising some of the cruelty implicit in the deceit practised on Leontes in the sixteen years of the plot we do not see. But where Ferdinand hopes to bring the Duchess "to despair" (4.1.113) Paulina's art brings redemption; Hermione comes alive, the corpses of the Duchess's children replace their effigies.⁵³⁹

Obviously, Hermione and the Duchess transform their monumental representations in generically opposite ways. The Duchess is emplotted by monumental discourse: she is tortured by Bosola (who claims to be "a tomb-maker"; 4.2.140) with wax effigies that she is told are the corpses of her husband and children (and also look like a "piece" of funerary art; 4.1.55). Finally, she is killed on her "knees" (4.2.224), so that her murder is a literalisation of the discourse she had striven to escape. But as Michael Neill points out, the Duchess transforms the kneeling "image of domestic piety into a martyr's gesture of heroic *singularity*" (my emphasis).⁵⁴⁰ In *The Winter's Tale* the monumental image answers in the affirmative Leontes' questioning of the legitimacy of his children and emphasises the denouement's legitimisation of the love between Florizel and Perdita as mutually royal. The tragedy shows such a discourse to be mortally ossified and is exceeded by the Duchess's exogamous morality. The doubled

⁵³⁹ While Mamillius remains lost at the end of *The Winter's Tale*, *The Duchess of Malfi's* concession to a future hope lies with the Duchess's one surviving son.

⁵⁴⁰ Neill (1997), p. 344.

horror of the “*artificial*” children (4.1.54.1) and the “*strangled*” children (4.2.247.1) renders questions of legitimacy redundant.

However, funeral monuments themselves were not unproblematically “legitimate”. The genealogical continuity they expressed was complicated by an ideological discontinuity, and perhaps more troublingly, a sometimes inappropriate continuity with a pre-Reformation past. In the “Homilie agaynst perill of Idolatry”, we are told that:

the origine of Images, & worshyppyng of them, as it is
recorded in the. 8. Chapter of the booke of wysdome,
began
of a blynde loue of a fonde father, framynge for his
comfort an Image
of his sonne beyng dead, and so at the last men fell to
the worshipping
of the Image of hym, whom they dyd knowe to be
dead.⁵⁴¹

We might therefore logically expect early modern Protestants to be especially wary of funeral monuments that featured effigies of the dead, but instead these popular tombs seem to serve as a properly Protestant alternative to the idolatrous religious images of the Catholic past.⁵⁴² As with many “Protestant” signs, funeral monuments are defined by their difference to Catholic signs even as they perform a similar function. Monuments of the early modern period were often designed to look like monuments of the medieval past, but their likeness was confounded by marks of corrective difference.⁵⁴³ Perdita articulates the tensions that underpin the

⁵⁴¹ *Certaine Sermons appoynted by the Quenes Maiesty* (London, 1563), sigs. li(iii)v-li(iiii)r.

⁵⁴² For the idea of funeral monuments as a substitute for devotional art see Llewellyn (2000), pp. 340, 353.

⁵⁴³ For example, on the Vernon tombs at Tong in the West Midlands the recumbent effigy of Sir Edward Stanley (d. 1632) duplicates the posture of the nearby effigy of his ancestor Sir Richard

reformed symbolism of funeral monuments when she requests “And do not say ’tis superstition, that / I kneel and then implore her blessing” (5.3.43-4). Kneeling for parental blessing was an ideologically sound demonstration of filial respect in the post-Reformation period, yet it also provided a visual pun with behaviour that Perdita acknowledges as “superstitious”. Kneeling at communion was a contentious issue;⁵⁴⁴ when performed before images it was the defining marker of idolatry.⁵⁴⁵ As far as Perdita and first-time audiences of the play are aware, at 5.3.44 Perdita kneels to a statue, not a parent. Julia Lupton contends that when, after Hermione’s animation, Perdita kneels a second time, following Paulina’s instruction to “kneel / And pray your mother’s blessing” (5.3.119-20), “The filial piety of the second bowing corrects and covers over the superstition of the first while continuing to borrow its iconographic charge.”⁵⁴⁶ But if the repetition “remedies” the first action then that previous action is also confirmed as in need of remedy in spite of Perdita’s

Vernon (d. 1451), but the later tomb chest substitutes allegorical figures for the rows of alternating saints and angels visible on the Catholic tomb; M. Howard and N. Llewellyn, “Painting and Imagery”, in *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain: Vol. 3 Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. B. Ford (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp. 223-59 (pp. 238-40).

⁵⁴⁴ L. A. Ferrell, “Kneeling and the Body Politic”, in *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688*, ed. D. B. Hamilton and R. Strier (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 70-92; and E. Rhatigan, “Knees and Elephants”, *John Donne Journal*, 23 (2004), 185-213.

⁵⁴⁵ William Perkins defines idolatry as, among other things, an act of kneeling; he claims that the Roman Catholic Church “makes the Saints in heauen Idols. For it teacheth men to kneele downe to them” and that the Roman Catholic Church which “giues vnto them [saints and angels] religious worship or adoration; that is, the bending of the knee, or the prostrating of the bodie”; *A Warning against the Idolatrie of the last times* (Cambridge, 1601), sigs. [C6r], D2v. The “Homilie agaynst perill of Idolatry” lists scriptural passages that warn against spiritually dangerous kneeling, and exclaims “Do not all stories Ecclesiasticall declare, that our holy martirs, rather then they woulde bowe and kneele, or offer vp one crumbe of incense before an Image or Idoll, haue suffred a thousand kindes of most horrible and dreadful death?”; sigs. [Cc7r-v], Hh(i)r. This homily capitalises on the senses of physicality and disposition of the words “prone” and “bent” to illustrate humanity’s susceptibility to and performance of idolatry; sigs. [Bb8v], Cc(i)v, [Hh6v], Ii(iii)v, Ii(iiii)r, Ii(iiii)v, [Ii6v].

⁵⁴⁶ Lupton, p. 214.

protestations.⁵⁴⁷ To be sure, “the standard pose signifying Piety on the post-Reformation tomb was the effigial figure kneeling in prayer.”⁵⁴⁸ But while medieval tombs commonly featured rows of kneeling bedesmen interceding for the soul of the tomb’s subject, post-Reformation kneeling represents the piety of the subject while alive, and reproduces that example in the rows of kneeling children around the tombs. Unlike contemporary tomb subjects and her dramatic analogue in feigned monumentalism, *The Trial of Chivalry*’s Ferdinand (who chooses kneeling as the most obvious posture even though this position is uncomfortable enough to require a cushion; Hv), Hermione does not kneel. The staged image in *The Winter’s Tale* (Perdita kneeling to an erect Hermione) bears a striking resemblance to intercessory kneeling avoided on post-Reformation funeral monuments.⁵⁴⁹ Shakespeare ensures the audience is aware of this by having Perdita articulate consciousness of the Catholic residue that attaches to her action.

Nigel Llewellyn tells us that throughout the early modern period “both patrons and tomb-makers had to deal with periodic bouts of nervousness about monuments.”⁵⁵⁰ Indeed, as Margaret

⁵⁴⁷ An earlier reference of Paulina’s to kneeling sounds distinctly unreformed. On announcing Hermione’s “death” to Leontes she declares: “A thousand knees, / Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting, / Upon a barren mountain, and still winter / In storm perpetual could not move the gods / To look that way thou wert” (3.2.208-12). Excluding Leontes from the possibility of heavenly forgiveness, Paulina nevertheless describes a conventional understanding of such redemption in Catholic penitential terms (replete with kneeling) that would earn forgiveness. By the fifth act Cleomenes says that in his “saint-like sorrow” Leontes has “paid down / More penitence than done trespass” (5.1.2-4), and thus uses the same mercantile vocabulary that reformers used to castigate Catholic belief in the efficacy of works to insist that Leontes has earned his forgiveness.

⁵⁴⁸ Llewellyn (2000), p. 349.

⁵⁴⁹ Lupton says “Perdita becomes herself a statue transfixed before and by the statue, kneeling like a donor in an Italian painting of the Virgin”; p. 214.

⁵⁵⁰ Llewellyn (2000), p. 7.

Aston points out “State portraiture – which included funeral effigies and monumental sculpture – hovered on the borderline of religious imagery”,⁵⁵¹ leaving them vulnerable to controversy. Monuments fell victim to iconoclastic destruction between the years 1547-53, the early years of Elizabeth’s reign and then in the later 1640s.⁵⁵² As late as 1596 English soldiers in France had to be reminded not to desecrate monuments under the colour of Protestant righteousness.⁵⁵³ The wave of iconoclastic violence that had attended the enthusiastic response to Elizabeth’s accession to the throne saw the destruction of not just religious but also monumental images in churches. The damage was so severe that Elizabeth issued a proclamation in 1560 insisting on the preservation of secular monuments, and thus officially enshrining their orthodox status while also acknowledging that there were some who regarded them as akin to idolatrous art. *The Winter’s Tale* does not first appear at one of these moments of iconoclastic activity, but the minority view never entirely disappeared and Shakespeare registers a tension that could have been glossed over.

It is a tension also found in *The Duchess of Malfi*. The Duchess resists the ideology not just of a contemporary, Machiavellian, Catholic Italy, but also the endogamous values Webster associates with the monumental ruins that suggest “a peculiarly English post-Reformation context.”⁵⁵⁴ These are values,

⁵⁵¹ M. Aston, “Gods, Saints, and Reformers”, in *Albion’s Classicism*, ed. L. Gent (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), pp. 181-220 (p. 203).

⁵⁵² Howard and Llewellyn, p. 238.

⁵⁵³ Llewellyn (2000), p. 271.

⁵⁵⁴ Neill, p. 347.

it seems, that should be relegated to the past. However, not only does *The Winter's Tale* not consign monumentalism to a redundant past, but it reorganises the temporal terms on which monuments function. A statue (at least one that is not in ruins) concretizes a memory of a person from the past (perhaps in relation with a series of people from the past) for people living in the present, and looks to endure into the future. It operates in all grammatical tenses even as it is static.⁵⁵⁵ In particular, the transi-tomb (which represented the deceased as a corpse) ambivalently acknowledged both the endurance of social memory and the decay of physical presence. *The Winter's Tale* addresses time differently. Where the transi-tomb admits to the present and future reality of the decaying corpse in a manner that marks the subject as passed/past, the statue of the “wrinkled” Hermione is, as James A. Knapp points out, a “tantalizing presentation of an inaccessible present”;⁵⁵⁶ the past is lively. Even prior to the ontological confusion inherent in the moment of animation Hermione’s statue concretizes an aberrant memory of a projected future for a life that has ostensibly ended. *The Winter's Tale* remembers the past as living in an astonishingly (and ultimately a-stonish-ly) literal manner. The wonder in 5.3 is primarily human and personal, but ideologically marked anachronisms adumbrate this wonder. The Reformation helps to organise time, to provide ideological co-ordinates that mark the

⁵⁵⁵ Levinas writes “In the instant of a statue, in its eternally suspended future, the tragic, simultaneity of necessity and liberty, can come to pass”; as quoted in J. A. Knapp, “Visual and Ethical Truth in *The Winter's Tale*”, *SQ*, 55 (2004), 253-78 (269).

⁵⁵⁶ Knapp, 275.

past as past because Catholic rather than Protestant. Such anachronisms are fairly commonplace on the early modern stage (though more critical attention could be paid to them), and in this instance the anachronism is doubled: the post-Reformation sensibility is out of place in the classical world, but that Protestant sensibility is itself reorganised as denouement relies on an anachronistic logic that allows a woman to come back from the dead.

Matter “Twice Defined”: working out what is being represented

Hermione’s “statue” represents not just an impossible compound of tenses but also the interaction of different artistic registers, and more troublingly, of different kinds of matter. We are told that the statue has been fashioned by “Giulio Romano” (5.2.95), whose name perpetuates the play’s dynamic between the fantastic and the “real”, since as well as referring to a historical person, the name also suggests fiction and *romance*. Prior to the additional confusions attendant on the animation the statue is both native and continental: it links to a native tradition of funeral monuments in England, but the retrospectively otiose reference to the artist who fashioned it also onomastically insists on the influence of Rome.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁷ David Kaula notes that in addition to the “Roman” resonance of the name, “His first name would also give him ‘papal’ associations, linking him both with Julius Caesar, whom the Reformers saw as the progenitor of the popes (see Junius’ marginal note to Rev. 7:18 in the Geneva-Tomson Bible), and with one of the more notorious Renaissance popes, Julius II”; “Autolycus’ Trumpery”, *SEL*, 16 (1976), 287-303 (303 n. 36). Lupton says “As emblemized by his name, Vasari’s Giulio Romano is a pointedly *Roman* artist, a painter of antiquities and an iconographer and servant of the Roman Church, the Catholic patron of classical rebirth”; p. 212.

This Italian allusion emphasises the tensions that problematise interpretations of the statue. In early modern England “Rome, ecclesiastical snare as well as an artistic magnet, was an all too roomy metaphorical city”.⁵⁵⁸ English ambivalence towards Rome could usually be sorted into cultural admiration and theological disapprobation, but at times these attitudes conflicted. Thus even the secular art manual *Trattato dell’Arte* (1585) was subject to denominationally inflected editing when translated from Italian into English in 1598. Unsurprisingly, Richard Haydock omits Paolo Lomazzo’s contentions that “dal principio ed origine della Chiesa Santa cominciò l’uso dell’adorazione delle sacre immagini” (the founding principle and origin of the Holy Church began in the use of the worship of religious images) and that when iconoclasm was attempted God validated the use of images “con infiniti e stupendi miracoli” (with countless and wonderful miracles).⁵⁵⁹ But Haydock also excludes the important claims to which Lomazzo’s preamble had been leading, that “Commuovono le immagini al timor di Dio, che é principio della sapienza” (images move one to the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom).⁵⁶⁰ The Protestant translator is apparently uncomfortable with the notion that images could generate any redemptive spiritual change.⁵⁶¹ His wariness

⁵⁵⁸ Aston, p. 182.

⁵⁵⁹ P. Lomazzo, *Trattato dell’Arte della Pittura ed Architettura*, 3 vols, i (1585, R/P Roma, 1844), pp. 6, 7 (all translations mine).

⁵⁶⁰ Lomazzo, pp. 6-8.

⁵⁶¹ R. Haydock, *A Tracte Containing the Artes of curious Paintinge Caruinge & Buildinge* (Oxford, 1598). This would seem to be a significantly illicit argument since Haydock leaves much of the work’s Catholic credentials intact, including positive references to the “nobility” of popes. See, for example, sigs. [B6r], Cciiijr.

does not signal absolute difference between English and Italian attitudes to art (funeral monuments were thought to perform an exemplary function); rather it is evident that the understanding of the effects of viewing was ideologically fraught and it is this murkiness of vision that Shakespeare invokes when he has Paulina use verbs like Lomazzo's "*commuovere*" to describe the effect of Hermione's "image" upon Leontes: "wrought" (5.3.58), "transported" (5.3.69), "stirred" (5.3.74). Leontes himself declares the sight to be "piercing to my soul" (5.3.34). But perhaps even Haydock would have found it difficult to assess the viewers' response to the "statue" whereby both Leontes and Perdita want to kiss the statue and Perdita also looks "like stone" (5.3.42) and then kneels to it. Haydock uses "*Papistes*" (diverging somewhat from his Catholic source) as a descriptive example of visual signs of "CREDVLITY":

[the outward signs] they vse in the presence of the body
of *Christ*,
the Saints, reliques, Crucifix &c. where they fasten
their
eies vppon these thinges wherevnto they pray, with
divers
gesticulations full of humility and devotion: sometimes
touching them with their fingers; sometimes kissing
them; and
sometimes reverently bowing vnto them. Besides, vpon
the
confidence they haue in the speech of such men, they
stande
amazed in their presence, not mooving a iot.⁵⁶²

So on the one hand Leontes and Perdita both act like typical credulous papists cringing before an image, but then their actions

⁵⁶² Haydock, sigs. Ffjv-Ffijr.

also less damningly signify wonder, which, Haydock translates, “makes a man attentiuē, stil, and immooueable like a stone”.⁵⁶³

When mentioned, paint was frequently castigated in reformist polemic. Paulina twice tells her guests that the statue has been painted:

Perdita [...] Lady,
Dear Queen, that ended when I but began,
Give me that hand of yours to kiss.
Paulina O, patience –
The statue is but newly fixed; the colour’s
Not dry (5.3.44-8)

and

Leontes [...] Let no man mock me,
For I will kiss her.
Paulina Good my lord, forbear.
The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
You’ll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own
With oily painting. (5.3.79-83)

Cawdry describes the mass by comparing it to a “harlot” who “dooth paint her selfe to all lasciuiousnesse” and the application of “paint” to the female body was often understood as a deceptive, sexual enticement; Paulina’s concern to save both the statue and Leontes from “mar” and “stain” carries moral as well as literal meaning.⁵⁶⁴ Her pronouns blur the paint on the neuter statue (“it”) with face-paint on a woman (“her lip”) and indeed face-painting and “artistic” paint were related in the early modern period. For example, Haydock inserted a new section entitled “OF THE PAINTING OF *Woemen*” that condemned the use of “*fomentations*,

⁵⁶³ Haydock, sig. [Ff5r].

⁵⁶⁴ R. Cawdry, *A treasure or store-house of similies* (1600; facs. edn., Amsterdam: Da Capo, 1971), p. 501.

waters, ointments, plaisters" and "materiall colours" on the skin into his translation of *Tratatto dell'Arte*.⁵⁶⁵ Condemnations of female face-painting often insisted that the practice was a physical falsification of the body's truthful testimony of its age:

I wed, at least I ween, I wed a lasse,
 Young, fresh, and faire: but in a yeere and lesse,
 Or two at most, my louely, liuely bride,
 Is turn'd a hagge, a fury by my side,
 With hollow yello teeth, or none perhaps,
 With stinking breath, swart cheeks, & hanging chaps,
 With wrinkled neck, and stooping, as she goes,
 With driueling mouth, and with a sniueling nose.⁵⁶⁶

This is the kind of somatic deceit that Bosola mocks when he tells the Old Lady "To behold thee not painted inclines somewhat near a miracle. These in thy face, here, were deep ruts and foul sloughs the last progress" (2.1.23-5). Similarly, Perdita distrusts both art in general and paint in particular. Unimpressed with "carnations and streaked gillyvors" (4.4.82) because she has heard it said "There is an art which in their piedness shares / With great creating nature" (4.4.87-8), Perdita refuses to be swayed by Polixenes' defence of them, and sharing the play's concern with legitimate issue, says:

I'll not put
 The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
 No more than, were I painted, I would wish
 This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
 Desire to breed by me. (4.4.99-103)

Perdita objects to "piedness", to the way in which paint brings about a duality that is duplicitous. (But ironically this is but one point of view in a play that relentlessly doubles: her sibling double,

⁵⁶⁵ Haydock, sig. Llilijr.

⁵⁶⁶ Joshua Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas' discussion of Jezebel, as quoted in T. Tuke, *A Treatise Against Paint[i]ng and Tincturing of Men and Women* (London, 1616), sig. B3r.

Mamillius (possibly played by the same actor) had earlier seemed rather to enjoy the effects made “with a pen” on ladies’ faces;

2.1.11.)⁵⁶⁷

So when Shakespeare emphasises the painted nature of Hermione’s statue and has Perdita worry about the superstitious meaning attached to her kneeling, he draws on themes found in theological polemic. It was reasoned in Thomas Tuke’s *A Treatise Against Paint[i]ng and Tincturing of Men and Women* (1616) that, “A painted face is not much vnlike an Idoll; it is not that, it would be taken for: and they, that make it, are like vnto it, and so are all they that doe delight therein, and worship it”,⁵⁶⁸ and that if a “Painted woman” was “a *Widdow*, shee’s but a *connterfet relique*; ’twere too grosse superstition but to kisse or touch her.”⁵⁶⁹ The idol-strumpet simile is reversible: in Tuke the painted woman is like the Catholic idol and in “The Homily Against Peril of Idolatry” the idol is like a strumpet, the axiomatic deceptiveness of either part serving tautologically to enforce that of the other. Lust, paint, women and idols shared strong connotative links. Funeral monuments were also painted, enabling Everard Guilpin to liken painted faces with the way in which “old swart bones, / Are grac’d with painted toombs, and plated stones”.⁵⁷⁰ Years later than

⁵⁶⁷ Autolycus is an important figure in this schema. He tells us “My father named me Autolycus, who, being as I am littered under Mercury, was likewise a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles” (4.3.24-6). The Ovidian Autolycus is a twin and the phrasing “who being as I am” also makes Autolycus curiously both himself and his own father; see S. Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1997), pp. 118-19.

⁵⁶⁸ Tuke, sig. Cv.

⁵⁶⁹ Tuke, sig. [K3v].

⁵⁷⁰ E. Guilpin, *Skialetheia* (London, 1598; facs. edn., London: OUP for the Shakespeare Association, 1931), sig. [C6r].

Shakespeare's play, John Fletcher used the same network of words found in *The Winter's Tale* to emphasise the illicit nature of Lisander's desire to kiss his friend's wife, Caliste:

May I not *kisse* ye now in *superstition*?
 For you appeare a thing that I would *kneele* to:
 Let me erre that way. *Kisses her.* (3.3.59-61, my emphasis)⁵⁷¹

Kissing, kneeling and superstition equate to adulterous idolatry/idolatrous adultery (we should again remember that the verb "to err" also had theological implications as made manifest by Spenser's errant Redcrosse Knight who ends up in Error's Den). However, while Leontes' amorous reaction to Hermione's statue may smack of idolatrous perversion we should also note the statue's function in keeping Leontes on the sexual straight and narrow in contrast to his source counterpart Pandosto, who strays into tragic incest with his daughter. Paulina takes Leontes to see the statue, reminding him that his wife had been "peerless" (5.3.14), furthering her emphasis of Hermione's greater sexual "worth" (5.1.225) than Perdita in 5.1. And the paint on the statue (even before we learn that it might not have been paint) functions in a manner contrary to what is polemically castigated. Where the whore of Babylon conventionally concealed wrinkles with paint, in *The Winter's Tale* it is the work of the Romish artist that produces them: "So much more our carver's excellence, / Which lets go by some sixteen years, and makes her / As she lived now" (5.3.30-2).

⁵⁷¹ J. Fletcher, *The Lover's Progress*, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. F. Bowers, 10 vols, x (Cambridge: CUP, 1966-96).

Even as they attempt to dissuade women from painting over their wrinkles, writers like Tuke assume that aging skin is ugly, something that women would inevitably seek to conceal. More logical in his cynicism, Bosola's contemplation of the painted face of an Old Woman prompts his exclamation: "I do wonder you do not loathe yourselves" (2.1.43-4), and the conviction that "continually we bear about us / A rotten and dead body" (2.1.57-8). For Bosola time is a process of putrefaction and wrinkles mark this corruption. But where life is a living death or living corpse for Bosola, in *The Winter's Tale* death turns out to be a living body. Hermione's "painted" wrinkles are a celebration of a passage of time even as that passage has been syncopated in the drama.

The policing of boundaries between life and death were crucial to a Protestant iconoclastic agenda. As Susan Zimmerman points out:

The mantra repeated most often throughout ["The Homily Against Peril of Idolatry"] - "dead as stocks and stones", or as "blocks and stocks" - initially identifies insentient materiality as "dead", so that the chief danger of anthropomorphic images made from "stocks and stones" is, as Tyndale argued, their pretence at vitality, or sentience [...] In complete opposition to the idol, the "incomprehensible majesty" of the Protestant God is immaterial, disembodied and invisible[.]⁵⁷²

⁵⁷² S. Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), pp. 52-6.

The appearance of life through dead materials and the application of dead materials to a living woman's face created a semiotic disorder intolerable to Protestant orthodoxy. Tuke describes the figure of the painted lady in riddling language that defers apprehension of a "creature" he wants to defame, even as it exposes her flaws:

She is a creature, that had need to be *twice defined*; for she is not that she seemes. And though shee bee the *creature* of God, as she is a *woman*, yet is she her owne *creatrisse*, as a *picture*. Indeed a plaine woman is but halfe a painted woman, who is both a substantiue and an adiectiue, and yet not of the neuter gender: but a feminine as well consorting with a masculi[n]e, as *Iuie* with an Ash.⁵⁷³

The lady's semiotic integrity is fractured by the superfluous paint which introduces doubleness and paradox to her being. Just as the painted woman is "her owne *creatrisse*, as a *picture*" we also come to be told that the statue is actually a signified (or "substantiue") posing as a signifier ("adiectiue"), the character Hermione pretending to be a statue. "Twice defined" in the denouement as statue and then Hermione, the painted icon-woman reverses the rhetoric of iconoclastic discourse by exposing a living, chaste woman rather than a mortified strumpet. *The Winter's Tale* thus actualises and extends the semiotic confusion polemicists associated with paint; dead and living matter are mixed and reversed. Critics have tended to read this scene as favouring one denominational paradigm.⁵⁷⁴ However, *The Winter's Tale*

⁵⁷³ Tuke, sig. Kr.

⁵⁷⁴ Noting the references to "eating" (5.3.111) and "greediness" (5.2.100), Phebe Jensen claims "In the context of such direct Catholic and Eucharistic overtones, the apparent transformation of marble into

celebrates the doubleness, the “consorting” of seemingly opposed meanings that horrifies polemicists like Tuke. As the animated statue/Hermione descends, Paulina warns Leontes “Do not shun her / Until you see her die again, for then / You kill her double” (5.3.105-7). The word “double” here has an uncannily double meaning: Leontes might kill Hermione a second time (this in itself repeating the impossibility of “die again”, of a person dying twice); or, Leontes might kill Hermione’s double.⁵⁷⁵

Most, but not all, critics assume that the double status of the statue/Hermione is resolved by details that allow us to piece together a rational story of Hermione’s sixteen-year hidden survival (and for some that the potentially controversial resonance of the painted statue is reformed).⁵⁷⁶ Hermione tells Perdita:

For thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved
Myself to see the issue. (5.3.125-8)

flesh seems to confirm both the efficacy of praying to statues and the Catholic doctrine of Real Presence”; “Singing Psalms to Horn-pipes”, *SQ*, 55 (2004), 279-306 (303). However, Julia Lupton understands the Eucharistic images rather differently, arguing “The play’s rationalizing deflation of its carefully staged mystery definitively undercuts the Catholic iconography the scene so powerfully evokes, enacting the movement from the Church to its Reform [...] The statue scene, then, stages the visual conditions of Catholic image worship, but only as canceled, with equal emphasis on both the act of staging and the fact of cancellation”; p. 216. However, Lupton also valuably articulates the fluidity of Christianity as it is represented in the play.

⁵⁷⁵ However, we should note that according to the *OED* the sense of “A counterpart; an image or exact copy (of a thing or person)” was not in use until the eighteenth century. However, it was, perhaps, incipient in the idea of double as a “duplicate, copy, transcript (of a writing)”, as we find in Florio’s definition: “Doppia, a doubling, a foulding, a double, a copie”; *A Worlde of Wordes* (London, 1598), p. 112. The word “double” was also used with reference to people in such definitions as: “Gemellus, a, um, Ovid. *Double: a twinne*”; T. Thomas, *Dictionarium linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* (London, 1587), sig. Bbiiir; and “Gemelier: m.ere:f. *Double, or twinne-like*”; R. Cotgrave, *A dictionarie of the French and English tongues* (London, 1611), sig. Ssiiiiv.

⁵⁷⁶ Discussions of the importance of “a double-reading, one in which Hermione is both dead and alive, and the statue scene is both mythic animation and theatrical performance” include S. F. Crider, “Weeping in the Upper World”, *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 32 (1999), 153-72 (154); L. Barkan, “Living Sculptures”, *ELH*, 48 (1981), 639-67; C. Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 85-127; and S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (New York: OUP, 1979), pp. 481-2.

Most obviously this suggests that Hermione, after hearing about the oracle, kept herself alive presumably at “that removed house” to which we know Paulina has been making regular visits (5.2.104-5). This is to read “preserved” in the same sense as Hermione uses when she asks Perdita “Where hast thou been preserved”; 5.3.124). But “preservation” had the alternative sense: “To keep (organic bodies) from decomposition, by chemical treatment, freezing, etc.”⁵⁷⁷ In his definition of “Alabaster” John Bullokar used the term with reference to monuments: “A kinde of marble white and very cleare, which by reason of the naturall coldness therof doth preserue things long from corruption; and therefore they vsed to make boxes of it to keepe sweete oinments, and toombes to bury Princes and great Personages in.”⁵⁷⁸ And Haydock, relating his interest in art to his work “as a Physician”, metaphorically discusses the way in which art is “*a kind of preservatiue against Death and Mortality: by a perpetuall preserving of their shapes, whose substances Physicke could not prolong, no not for a season.*”⁵⁷⁹ Hermione is re-introduced to the play, is revived, from a statuary form that memorialises and preserves. Her

⁵⁷⁷ *OED* s.v. “preserve”, 3.b. The earliest citation the *OED* provides for this sense dates from 1613, but the definition falls under the broader meaning of sense 3 (“To keep from physical or chemical change”) and the related sense 3.a (“To prepare (fruit, meat, etc.) by boiling with sugar, salting, or pickling, so as to prevent its decomposition or fermentation”) dates from 1579. However, at least one other early modern text links the *preservation* of the body with idolatry. In discussing the idolatry of “Indians” (in his translation of José de Acosta) Edward Grimston says that “they came to the height of Idolatry by the same meanes the Scripture maketh mention of: [...] they had a care to keepe the bodies of their Kings and Noblemen whole, from any scent or corruption above two hundred yeares”, that is, “a wonderfull care [...] to *preserve* the bodies which they honoured after death”; *The naturall and morall historie of the East and West Indies* (London, 1604), pp. 344-6 (my emphasis). (Like the “Homilie agaynst perill of Idolatry” Grimston cites “the booke of Wisedome” as recording the origin of idolatry as attention to dead bodies and images of the dead.)

⁵⁷⁸ J. Bullokar, *An English Expositor* (London, 1616), sigs. B4r-v.

⁵⁷⁹ Haydock, sig. ¶iijr.

wrinkles would seem to offer organic proof of her continued survival rather than a return from death or sculptural animation, but this very aspect of her physicality was what was earlier offered as proof of Romano's artistic genius with inorganic matter. It is not my contention that we should substitute a fantastical reading for a rationalised one, but rather that we should pay attention to an ambivalence that is so recurrent in the text as to seem deliberate.

When Paulina announces Hermione's "death" she declares:

I say she's dead - I'll swear't. If word nor oath
Prevail not, go and see; if you can bring
Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,
Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you
As I would do the gods. (3.2.201-5)

Her defensive emphasis on the truth of her statement rather than on lament for the fact has the effect of creating the possibility of doubt where there was no reason to suspect fraudulence. In 5.3 Hermione does indeed have "tincture" and "lustre", then "breath"; the very proclamation of her death contains within it the representational (if not literal) manner of her return from it. At the end of 3.2 Leontes is taken to see the corpses of his wife and son, providing for the audience, in Orgel's terms, "our guarantee that the two deaths are real".⁵⁸⁰ For Orgel the inconsistency between this "guarantee" and the marvellous conclusion simply registers the flexibility of Shakespeare's fictional world that "continually adjusts its reality according to the demands of its developing argument."⁵⁸¹ But the characters themselves do not all adjust so easily to this new

⁵⁸⁰ Orgel (1996), p. 36.

⁵⁸¹ Orgel (1996), p. 36.

“reality”. Polixenes asks for it to be made “manifest where she has lived, / Or how stol’n from the dead” (5.3.114-5), imagining both a fraudulent death and a resurrection from death as possibilities. In a speech that concludes the play Leontes tells Paulina “Thou hast found mine [my spouse] - / But how is to be questioned, for I saw her, / As I thought, dead, and have in vain said many / A prayer upon her grave” (5.3.138-41). Hermione has been “found” not “kept” and there are questions postponed to beyond the audience’s reach that are not resolved but articulated. If such uncertainty may be explained in the verisimilar terms of the characters’ shock it is notable that Paulina is deliberately equivocal. Prior to Perdita’s arrival she tells Leontes he must not take a wife “Unless another / As like Hermione as is her picture / Affront his eye” (5.1.73-5). As in her later warning to Leontes not to kill Hermione(’s) “double” (5.3.107) this dialogue hints at a representational rather than an organic survival.⁵⁸² Furthermore, she is ambiguous in response to Polixenes’ query about whether Hermione has survived or been resurrected: “That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives” (5.3.115-117). Focussing on what “appears” rather than what has happened, Paulina skirts the issue. The conclusion is not simply, as Orgel suggests, a different reality state but rather a concatenation of different kinds of realities and fictions.

⁵⁸² A similar suggestion is present in the Third Gentleman’s appreciation of the reunion scene: “Who was most marble there changed colour” (5.2.88).

We can extend the peculiar doubleness explored using an actor's body in the role of Hermione to other roles in the King's Men's repertory. Tiffany Stern tells us that:

Actors working from cued parts, who were also typecast because of their heavy acting-schedule, seem often to have had an across-play acting personality. That is to say, they performed more-or-less the same role from play to play; they tended not to see each play as an individual whole, but rather to treat their own stretch of text as one long, continuous, consistent acting part.⁵⁸³

The troubled nature of the distinctions between living body/corpse/icon inhere not just in the role of Hermione but also that of the Lady in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, which was in the King's Men's repertory at the same time as *The Winter's Tale*.⁵⁸⁴ While we cannot be certain that the same boy played both these roles, it is helpful to follow Marvin Carlson's advice and pay attention to the "ghosts" of other performances that haunt productions: "a kind of performance intertextuality, based not on literary, but on performative echoes".⁵⁸⁵

The Second Maiden's Tragedy is another play that is concerned with superstitious viewing. Govianus is instructed by the Ghost of his betrothed Lady to thwart the idolatrous and necrophiliac intentions of the Tyrant who has stolen her corpse

⁵⁸³ T. Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 2000), p. 15.

⁵⁸⁴ The duality present in the title *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* seems to have resulted from the Master of the Revels, George Buc, having recently licensed *A Maid's Tragedy*.

⁵⁸⁵ M. Carlson, "Invisible Presences – Performance Intertextuality", *Theatre Research International*, 19 (1994), 111-17 (114).

from its tomb. Thus the plotting is equivalent to a Protestant reordering of papist confusion: in this play the doubling of the Lady as Ghost and corpse posits a division between spirit and body that *The Winter's Tale* blurs. However, the effect of the play is not contained by this organisation. Susan Zimmerman suggests that the connotations of the play escape its dramatists, "that the ideological confusions [...] foreclosed the possibility of doctrinal orthodoxy despite the play's ostensible condemnation of idolatry."⁵⁸⁶ But I think that the "ideological confusions" might not be accidental. The character charged with the task of averting idolatrous disaster is far from ideal. In the opening scene Govianus lacks faith in the Lady's fidelity, assuming that she desires "advancement" (1.1.64)⁵⁸⁷ and will readily submit to the Tyrant's insistent courtship; when in act 3 the Lady determines to avoid being raped by the Tyrant and keep herself chaste in death for Govianus, he fails to meet her request to kill her because, somewhat comically, he faints mid sword-thrust. The Tyrant's death by poisoned-paint as he kisses the Lady's corpse would seem to actualise the play's condemnation of his idolatry, but his kiss also doubles one bestowed by Govianus, who earlier tells the corpse "I will kiss thee / After death's marble lip" (3.1.250-51). In fact, as Zimmerman notes, the two characters are kept in an ideologically awkward pattern of doubling, so that in the scene

⁵⁸⁶ Zimmerman (2005), p. 105.

⁵⁸⁷ *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, ed. A. Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1978); all references are to this edition, incorporated in the text.

after the Tyrant has apostrophised and broken into the tomb, Govianus “salute[s]” (4.4.4) and enters it; and even after the apparent iconoclastic closure of the Tyrant’s death Govianus, like the Tyrant before him, decorates the Lady’s corpse and is aware of the Ghost’s “mistrust” (5.2.206) of his determination to return it to the tomb.

At the very moments when the play might seem to be moving towards a reformation of papist error ideological binarism is prevented by residually Catholic imagery. For example, if we had wanted to read Govianus’s approach to the Lady’s tomb as a reverent inversion of the Tyrant’s violent breaking and entry rather than a doubling, this “reformation” is confounded by his expression of grief via metaphoric rosary beads: “in my grief’s devotion / At every rest mine eye lets fall a bead / To keep the number perfect” (4.4.11-13). At the very moment when Helvetius (whose name Anne Lancashire notes as alluding to Protestantism)⁵⁸⁸ is converted from his pimping ways, he understands the wound that shocked him to his moral sense as also reducing the time he would need to spend in purgatory: “Smart on, soul; / Thou’t feel the less hereafter!” (2.1.156-7). Most significantly the neat Protestant division of the Lady into material corpse and “*Spirit*” is itself undone by the doubling that paradoxically attends bifurcation. The first words the Ghost utters at the tomb “I am not here” (4.4.40) admit to a doubling of the “I”: the “I” who speaks here and the “I”

⁵⁸⁸ Lancashire, p. 87 n. 5.

who is elsewhere. Indeed to associate the “I” with the corpse is to partake in the “overvaluation of her corpse [that] evokes the Catholic fixation with materiality so inimical to reformists”.⁵⁸⁹ The dramatists make this point visibly and physically evident as not just the corpse but also the Lady’s Ghost is decorated with a “*crucifix*” (4.4.42.4; 5.2.13.3).

In doubling some of the issues found in *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* also seems to literalise their negative ideological inflection: we are shown a corpse rather than a statue, decorated with poison rather than paint.⁵⁹⁰ However, ideological slippage functions rather differently in the tragedy. The political consensus that the characters of *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* celebrate at the tragedy’s close (Govianus rightfully takes his throne) depends on their being blind to the lack of difference between Govianus and his double the Tyrant; the audience, however, may remain at an ironic distance. By contrast, at the end of *The Winter’s Tale*, Leontes’ faults, at least, are often mentioned. In this and in many other aspects, the audience might be said to share the same knowledge as most of the characters on stage, and this is important to the impact of the play.

⁵⁸⁹ Zimmerman (2005), p. 100.

⁵⁹⁰ In its subplot *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* also actualises the adultery between a Wife and her husband’s best friend that Leontes suspects makes up the plot of his life. Furthermore, where reanimation marks an emotional climax in *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* features multiple reanimations or false deaths that are shocking and potentially humorous: Govianus shoots at Helviutus who falls to the ground, only to be told “Up [...] I missed thee purposely” (2.1.113-14); as Govianus runs to stab the Lady he falls down dead (as both the Lady and the audience thinks) only to start up after she has killed herself (3.3.148-64); Anselmus apparently dies at 5.1.143 but is awoken “e’en from death” (5.1.167) at the news of his Wife’s infidelity, breathing long enough to condemn her corpse as a “whore” (5.1.170).

Irony and the “Living Corse”: knowing more than/the same as the characters

However, the knowledge the audience shares with the characters (excluding Hermione and Paulina) in *The Winter's Tale* is significantly limited. If we reverse the Chorus's request and skip back “sixteen years” (4.1.6) previous to the staging of Hermione's undead statue, we find Shakespeare's company dramatising another “living corse” (5.2.29) in *Romeo and Juliet*. The audience know far more about Juliet's circumstances than they do about Hermione's. As we saw in Chapter 1, the denouement of the earlier play literalises both Catholic and anti-Catholic rhetoric as the onomastic “pilgrim” Romeo thinks he finds his idol Juliet dead in the Capulet tomb; the audience meanwhile are painfully aware that Juliet is alive. Like Hermione at 5.3.61-70, Juliet looks like a corpse who bears tantalising signs of life. Both Juliet and Hermione turn out to be alive but the audience's experience is reversed: we know that Juliet is alive but she dies by the end of the play; we think that Hermione is dead but she is alive by the end of the play.⁵⁹¹ Our omniscience is crucial to the dramatic irony that emphasises the tragedy in *Romeo and Juliet*. The scene is frustrating because of our overwhelming sense of our knowledge and Romeo's ignorance. But in *The Winter's Tale* our false

⁵⁹¹ Of course Shakespeare wrote other plays in which women returned from a reported death (see, for example, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *All's Well that Ends Well*), but the audience is in on the surprise. In *Pericles* Thaisa's revival is more of a marvel to the audience, though they have believed in her death for a shorter length of time and they work through the wonder of her revivification with a doctor who details the process. For a reading of the theological tension in *Pericles* see C. Bicks, “Backsliding at Ephesus”, in *Pericles*, ed. D. Skeeel (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 205-227.

knowledge of Hermione's death is further confounded by our potential confusion when faced with the statue (ostensibly created by Giulio Romano, whose name happens to be haunted homophonically by the tragic lovers). When first confronted with the "statue", viewers new to the play might be unclear as to how they are "supposed" to decode the body of the actor playing Hermione: is one "meant to think" this is an actor playing a statue, or an actor playing a character playing a statue?⁵⁹² At the most basic representational level the distinctions between life and death (so frustratingly evident in *Romeo and Juliet*) are blurred.

In this respect *The Winter's Tale* is also importantly different to *The Trial of Chivalry*, in which, as we saw in Chapter 2, a character pretends to be his own funeral monument. As mentioned earlier, Paulina evades Polixenes' request for narrative clarity remarking "That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives" (5.3.115-117). Indeed other "old tales" or rather old-fashioned tales like *The Trial of Chivalry*, would seem to maintain a humorous detachment from the fantastical mechanisms of their plots. This play advertises the symmetry of its plotting (convenient for royal succession) through

⁵⁹² In a parenthetical aside Barkan suggests that this was a likely confusion for the audience of the "original performance"; 663. However, I think this confusion pertains to all viewers who are unfamiliar with the twist of 5.3. This is also an issue in *The Duchess of Malfi* when the Duchess is shown representations of her "dead" family: "At first sight the audience, like the Duchess, is 'fooled' because Ferdinand has not yet identified the motionless figures as 'artificial': thus whereas in the fiction the Duchess understands these figures to be dead, the viewer would presumably understand them as representations of the dead. If the actors on Webster's stage were pretending to be wax impressions of themselves (and this seems highly likely), the usual double perspective would be in place (actor 'playing', living actor playing dead). But once Ferdinand announces that these are not 'true substantial bodies' (4.1.115), the spectator's perception is jolted by yet another layer of artifice: what is made to look dead might be, in Bosola's oxymoronic image, 'feign'd statues' (4.2.351)"; Zimmerman (2005), p. 149.

parallel family situations, doubled lines and patterned entrances and exits, and is thus somewhat self-conscious about its fictional status.⁵⁹³ The audience are privy to Ferdinand's dramatic preparations to act the effigy, involving method acting and the deployment of props:

Pem. Soft, there's a cushe[n]: nay, you must be bare,
And hold your hands vp, as the maner is.
Fer. What if I held a booke, as if I prayed?
Pem. 'Twere best of all; and now I think vpon't,
Here is a booke: so, keepe your countenance,
You must imagine now you are transform'd.
Yonder she comes, in any case stir not. (Hv)

What is surprising and obfuscated in *The Winter's Tale* is prepared for in full detail in *The Trial of Chivalry*. The audience of the earlier play experience no confusion about representational meaning. Instead the audience's ideological superiority to Katharina (whose iconophilia borders on the idolatrous) is augmented by their omniscience. Katharina is also denied the space to express much wonder at Ferdinand's survival: a mere eight lines after the revelation of the ruse Pembroke insists that he and Ferdinand need to go and fight. The scene thus revolves through grief and revivification, marital and martial activity, at a near-farcical pace. But when watching *The Winter's Tale* we share the characters' wonder because we share their uncertainty. A. D. Nuttall points out that meta-fictional remarks such as Paulina's bring realism to the fantastical plot: "We may shrink from believing in the restoration of Hermione, but we cannot but believe those

⁵⁹³ The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher that shared repertory space with *The Winter's Tale* similarly provide their audiences with an ironic, knowing detachment from convenient denouements.

who express our incredulity before we are able to do so for ourselves.”⁵⁹⁴

Shakespeare would seem to be constructing wonder out of material that was more frequently used in deflationary terms. The animation of a statue has obvious associations with the Pygmalion myth, a tale which was ripe for ironic exploitation.⁵⁹⁵ For example, when George Pettie retells the Pygmalion myth as a Petrarchan fable set in modern Italy, he offers a long list of explanations for his Pigmalion’s perverse agalmatophilia, including the possibility of papist idolatry:

Or whether his Religion were to loue Images, I know
not: neither is it any more to be maruailed at in him,
then
in an infinite number that liue at this day, which loue
Images
right well, and verily perswade themselues that Images
haue
power to pray for them, and helpe them to heauen.⁵⁹⁶

This ideological error undercuts the moment of animation itself.

We are told that Venus:

seeing how idolatrously he was addicted to his Image,
[...]

⁵⁹⁴ A. D. Nuttall, “William Shakespeare: *The Winter’s Tale*”, *SEL*, 26 (1966), 58. See also his comments on the meta-fictional in “*The Winter’s Tale: Ovid Transformed*”, in *Shakespeare’s Ovid*, ed. A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 135-49 (146-7); though as will become clear I differ from Nuttall in some crucial aspects of my argument.

⁵⁹⁵ In *The Trial of Chivalry* Katharina also makes reference to “the Image of Pigmalion” (H2r).

⁵⁹⁶ G. Pettie, *A Petite Palace* (London, 1613), sig. Y2r-v. (This text was first published in 1576.) The association of the Pygmalion myth, Petrarchanism, paint and papism was not infrequently made in the early modern period. For example, John Marston makes a comparison between his Pigmalion and Catholic practice in his epyllion: “Looke how the peeuish Papists crouch, and kneele / To some dum Idoll with their offering, / As if a senceles carued stone could feele / The ardor of his bootles chattering, / So fond he was, and earnest in his sute / To his remorsles Image, dum and mute”; *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalions Image* (London, 1598), stanza 14, sig. Br. And in his satirical complaint against painted faces Guilpin remarks, “Then how is man turnd all *Pygmalion*, / That knowing these pictures, yet we doate vpon / The painted statues, or what fooles are we / So grosly to commit idolatry?”; sig. [C6v]. Haydock also associates face painting with the Pygmalion story, warning his readers that painted faces turn women into “Pigmalions creatures”; sig. Llilijv.

miracles put life into it, & made it a perfect Woman. The like
 when wee haue had many wrought within this few yeares,
 their Images haue bin made to bow their heads, to hould out
 hands, to weep, to speak. &c.⁵⁹⁷

The mocking of papist credulity is juxtaposed with the most fantastic moment of the plot, where the reader's suspension of disbelief is most critical. In making ideological and literary fiction equivalent in this way Pettie offers the reader textual enjoyment by fostering a sense that author and reader collude in "knowing better".

However, in *The Winter's Tale* we are not allowed to know fully the explanation behind Hermione's return. Directing the animation Paulina articulates a bizarre potential back-story:

I'll fill your grave up. Stir - nay, come away,
 Bequeath to Death your numbness, for from him
 Dear life redeems you. (5.3.101-3)

As A. D. Nuttall has observed Paulina enjoys drumming up the entertainment value in this scene and her claims of bringing Hermione back from the dead sound a bit like circus hype.⁵⁹⁸ But it is important to note that when we first hear Paulina we do not know the rational explanation behind her illusionism. In fact, once the logical story of Hermione's preservation has been provided the denouement does not offer complete explication but rather emphasises the play's internal inconsistency. Leontes points out that "I saw her, / As I thought, dead" (5.3.139-40). This fantastical

⁵⁹⁷ Pettie, sig. Y2v.

⁵⁹⁸ Nuttall (1966), 54; and (2000), p. 143.

awkwardness haunts the dialogue. Preparing her guests to see the statue Paulina claims that “her dead likeness I do well believe / Excels whatever yet you looked upon” (5.3.15-16). Referring to both a perfect likeness and likeness to a corpse the phrase “dead likeness” highlights the marvel of the accuracy of representation as well as the peculiarity of its resemblance to a corpse that has wrinkled rather than rotted.⁵⁹⁹ Indeed at various points the text dwells not just on a Lazarus-style resurrection from death to life, but on images of life in a corpse. Both Leontes and Paulina conceive of the animated corpse of a wronged wife. Leontes declares:

One worse [than Hermione],
And better used, would make her sainted spirit
Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,
Where we offenders now appear, soul-vexed,
And begin, ‘Why to me?’ (5.1.56-60)

And imagining supernatural fury at re-marriage Paulina warns:

Were I the ghost that walked, I’d bid you mark
Her eye, and tell me for what dull part in’t
You chose her; then I’d shriek, that even your ears
Should rift to hear me, and the words that followed
Should be, ‘Remember mine.’ (5.1.63-7)

Earlier in the same scene Paulina remarks on the freakish nature of such images and provides an anticipatory critical commentary on the nature of the play’s conclusion:

Is’t not the tenor of [Apollo’s] oracle,
That King Leontes shall not have an heir
Till his lost child be found? Which that it shall
Is all as monstrous to our human reason
As my Antigonus to break his grave

⁵⁹⁹ In glossing “dead” Orgel notes “The word also meant perfect, exact (*OED* 31); compare the modern ‘dead ringer’.”

And come again to me, who, on my life,
Did perish with the infant. (5.1.38-44)

Yet the lost child herself finds romance in the notion of an animated corpse: she wishes to strew Florizel's body with flowers "Not like a corpse; or if, not to be buried, / But quick, and in mine arms" (4.4.131-2). Even in the Shepherd's colloquial idiom we find a bizarrely articulate corpse: "If thou'lt see a thing to talk on when thou art dead and rotten, come hither" (3.3.77-8).

Just as the "statue" carries with it the tensions of denominational dispute, these images of life inhering in corpses have sectarian implications. The organic process of the putrefaction of a corpse paradoxically attests to a continuance of a form of life in the dead body. Susan Zimmerman tells us:

Paradigmatically, the corpse occupied a problematically liminal space. The horror of its putrefaction, a punishment for original sin, underscored the corrupt and compromised status of the post-lapsarian body; but the destination of the reconstituted corpse in the eternally changeless subject simultaneously rendered putrefaction as a transformative process, integral to redemption. Indeed, the function of putrefaction as transformation - that is, the generation of change *through* fragmentation - seemed to collapse distinctions of any kind between states of being, an issue of serious concern to Catholic theologians for centuries.⁶⁰⁰

Protestants, however, were uneasy with the implication that the material body without its soul could perform any kind of

⁶⁰⁰ Zimmerman (2005), p. 27.

transformative function. As we have seen with reference to the materiality of idols, their anxiety “resulted in an effort to reformulate materiality as definitively *dead*”.⁶⁰¹ “‘Killing’ the corpse [also became] a major desideratum of English religious reformists.”⁶⁰² While there may not be much putrescence in *The Winter’s Tale*, the play brings the corpse back to life and admits an unreformed acceptance of liminality. The rational reading of the living Hermione pretending to be a statue is founded on a (Protestant) division between life and death, organic and inorganic, signifier and signified, it is entangled with a fantastical reading predicated on the (Catholic and classical) confusion of those epistemological distinctions.⁶⁰³ On the one hand some characters are irretrievably lost, but on the other the play fudges the axiomatic knowledge of the binary distinction between life and death. In a genre that Jonson ridicules as “mouldy” Shakespeare makes what is past (the genre, the wrinkled skin, the dead body, superstition) startlingly lively.

Plotting the Undead: the difference between narrative explanation and obfuscation

A peculiarly lively female corpse also features in *Cymbeline* (1610), a play in the King’s Men’s repertory at around the same time as *The Winter’s Tale*, which insists on somatic legibility *and* the

⁶⁰¹ S. Zimmerman, “Animating Matter”, *Renaissance Drama*, 31 (2002), 215-243 (217).

⁶⁰² Zimmerman (2005), p. 9.

⁶⁰³ I use my parentheses deliberately: the sectarian dynamics contribute importantly but “adjectivally” to an effect that transcends those disputes.

propensity of characters to misconstrue what they read.⁶⁰⁴ The audience know more about the working of the narrative than they do when they watch *The Winter's Tale*. We know that Cornelius has duped the Queen by substituting for poison a potion in which he believes (apparently not having seen *Romeo and Juliet*) "there is / No danger in what show of death it makes / More than the locking up the spirits a time, / To be more fresh, reviving" (1.5.39-42). Undeterred by the further confusions that the Queen gives the substance to Pisanio as a "restorative" in the hope that it will eventually poison Innogen, the attentive viewer or reader knows that Innogen does not die when she swallows Pisanio's drug. Yet the text, in both stage direction and dialogue, registers a similar uncanniness to that found in *The Winter's Tale*. When we are first confronted with Innogen's dead-seeming body the stage direction in the Folio reads "*Enter Arviragus, with Imogen dead, bearing her in his Armes*" (4.2.196).⁶⁰⁵ Both reader and viewer experience the moment as revealing Innogen's death rather than as a feigned death.⁶⁰⁶ The audience's "misreading" may be swiftly corrected but

⁶⁰⁴ Belarius repeatedly remarks on how Arviragus' and Guiderius' royalty is physically manifest though they themselves are unaware of their origins, so that we are told, for example, "princely blood flows in [Guiderius'] cheek" (3.3.93). Ultimately it is the somatic "mark of wonder" of a mole on Guiderius' neck that confirms the revelation of their true status (5.4.366). However, misreadings are endemic in the text. Innogen famously misinterprets Cloten's corpse as Posthumus's: "I know the shape of's leg; this is his hand, / His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh, / The brawns of Hercules" (4.2.310-12), and then compounds her error by incorrectly detecting a plot enacted by "damned Pisanio" (4.2.318, 319). Of course Giacomo, following a violative reading, turns the details of Innogen's body into a story of her infidelity that Posthumus readily believes.

⁶⁰⁵ The Riverside edition emends this stage direction: "*Enter ARVIRAGUS with IMOGEN [as] dead, bearing her in his arms*". The Folio stage direction at the head of the last scene of *The Winter's Tale* reveals parenthetically that Hermione is standing "*like*" a statue (5.3.0.2), creating a differentiating experience of the play for newcomers who read the play and those that view it.

⁶⁰⁶ Harriet Walter, who played the role in Bill Alexander's production at *The Other Place* in Stratford in 1987, tells us "it is not only the cave-dwellers who believe Imogen's death, but even the audience on occasion are convinced of it [...] I often heard a gasp or even a vocalized 'Oh, no' at the point when I swallowed the drug"; "Imogen in *Cymbeline*", in *Players of Shakespeare* 3, ed. R. Jackson and R.

in the play's final scene Innogen herself asserts "I was dead" (5.4.259), emphasising the trauma of her experience. Belarius is incredulous at the sight of Innogen: "Is not this boy revived from death?" (5.4.119) but Guiderius registers his astonishment in terms of an epistemological conundrum: Innogen is "The same dead thing alive" (5.4.123) and he contends "But we see him dead" (5.4.126). Leaving the past tense unspoken ("But we see him *who we had thought* dead") gives space in the utterance to the bizarre. Such declarations might seem to place the irrational at the centre of the denouement more insistently than in *The Winter's Tale*. In the later play it seems possible that Hermione has risen from death (Leontes is unlike Guiderius in his tentativeness and use of the past tense when he utters the previously discussed words, "I saw her, / As I thought, dead"; 5.3.139-40),⁶⁰⁷ and the living corpse is present in puns and daydreams rather than interpretations of the staged reality. However, in *Cymbeline* the audience is in possession of the single (if lengthy) explanation that will clear Guiderius's confusion, whereas in *The Winter's Tale* the exposition of which of the alternative possible plots it was that enabled the unlooked-for denouement is postponed to after the play's end.⁶⁰⁸ Guiderius's articulation of epistemological paradox underlines and celebrates the dramatist's skill in knotting the strands of his plot together so

Smallwood (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 201-19 (p. 214).

⁶⁰⁷ The Oxford edition keeps Guiderius' present tense found in the Folio; Riverside prosaically emends Guiderius's confusion to the more rational past tense.

⁶⁰⁸ Ros King points out "there are some thirty denouements [at the end of *Cymbeline*] except that they are not revelations to the audience, who know all but one of them already"; *Cymbeline* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 1.

tightly. Wonder is a product of and is reserved for the plot. It is narrative that saves in *Cymbeline*: only by getting together and telling their stories can the characters avert the tragedy to which their misreadings take them. In *The Winter's Tale* Paulina dismisses the importance of the need for narrative explanation in the denouement ("There's time enough for that"; 5.3.128) and while Leontes may look forward to a time and place "where we may leisurely / Each one demand and answer to his part / Performed in this wide gap of time since first / We were dissevered" (5.3.152-5) the denouement of *The Winter's Tale* features a revelation without an unequivocal explanation, even as the theatrical vocabulary ("part", "Performed") emphasises the fictionality of the scene. Our wonder is reserved for something other than a plot (and the chronological and motivational logic that usually attends it).

The juxtaposition of 5.2 and 5.3 structurally enacts the alternative attitudes to knowledge that are explored in *The Winter's Tale*. In 5.2 the Second Gentleman suggests that the news of Leontes' discovery of an heir "is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (5.2.28-9). In this sense Shakespeare strips this "conclusion" (as it appears to first-time viewers) of the conventional trappings of such an old tale, transforming the emotional reunion of characters into a report about veracity discussed by a frustrated Autolycus and unknown gentlemen interested in the "news" (5.2.27):

That Most true, if ever truth were pregnant by circumstance.
 in which you hear you'll swear you see, there is such unity
 about the the proofs. The mantle of Queen Hermione's; her jewel
 they neck of it; the letters of Antigonus found with it, which
 know to be his character; the majesty of the creature in
 resemblance of the mother; the affection of nobleness
 which nature shows above her breeding; and many
 other evidences proclaim her with all certainty
 to be the King's daughter. (5.2.30-39)

The Third Gentleman enjoys the forensic process (“circumstance”, “proofs”, “evidence”) that confirms the happy ending of a well-plotted tale. But his contention that “That which you hear you’ll swear you see” perhaps seems overly optimistic to an audience who may feel that all this “certainty”, this absolute knowledge that it all ends happily is somehow lacking. He says that those (on and offstage) who missed out on witnessing the reunion “lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of” (5.2.42-3). This assertion does not prevent him from continuing to speak about this “sight” for some fifteen lines (his reports account for sixty-four of the lines in this scene) but his ironic remark registers the way in which the described awe of the reunited characters is not shared by the distanced audience. In the next scene we are confronted with an entirely different kind of “knowledge” in which we “see” a great spectacle but narrative explanation is sparse. It is a conclusion wholly anterior to the expectations formed by our knowledge of the plot.

The return of Hermione provides a conclusion, which, as Leonard Barkan nicely puts it, “knit[s] up strands of the plot which had not appeared to be loose”;⁶⁰⁹ while the reunion we had expected is dismissed in reported speech in the scene previous. The statue scene is oddly appended both to the source material, and the audience’s expectations.⁶¹⁰ Indeed the supplementary feel to the conclusion is attested by the eighteenth-century habit of playing the scene “by itself, as a prelude or coda to another drama.”⁶¹¹ Structural oddness is related to the play’s disregard for the unities of time and place. The King’s Men also staged Jonson’s *The Alchemist* at the same time as *The Winter’s Tale*. As Ian Donaldson has shown, through a plot that rigorously observes the unities Jonson’s play reveals (if also revels in) the fact that fiction is illusion. The locus of the plot, Lovewit’s house, is neatly equivalent to Blackfriars’ playhouse where it is likely that it was first staged, so that the audience’s experience (paying money for illusion at a house in Blackfriars) is coterminous with the gulls they watch on stage.⁶¹² Furthermore, the play’s careful observance of temporal unity means that it embodies:

[a] regular, orderly, faithful view of the operation of
human
affairs, depicting a world amenable to explanation, in
which

⁶⁰⁹ Barkan, 640.

⁶¹⁰ In a sense this conclusion is the structural equivalent to the material embellishment to which polemical reformists like Tuke so objected: “A painted face is a *superfluous face*: it were well, if the world were well rid of all such superfluous creatures”; sig. F3v. Tuke frequently emphasises this theme of superfluity with the use of the word “idle” that punningly hints at the darker consequences of unnecessary additions.

⁶¹¹ Orgel (1996), p. 63.

⁶¹² See I. Donaldson, *Jonson’s Magic Houses* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1997), pp. 82-3.

events move more or less rationally through various stages of crisis and denouncement to a given end; a world aptly realized in the great figure of a clock.⁶¹³

The fiction of *The Winter's Tale* is more absolute than that of *The Alchemist*, since in breaking the unities and time and place (and supplementing this with the geographical oddity of providing Bohemia with a sea-coast) Shakespeare creates a fiction that is in some ways anterior to, rather than alternative to, reality.⁶¹⁴ We have seen how years earlier, in another oddly concluded play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, the outcome of the lords' one-year trial remains unknown because one year is "too long for a play" (5.2.866).⁶¹⁵ *The Winter's Tale* fast-forwards sixteen times this duration and then snatches back a character ostensibly left behind.⁶¹⁶

Fictional Faith

Yet if the structure of *The Winter's Tale* allows for a lively past, the dead past is not forgotten. Warning Leontes against remarriage Paulina imagines the ghost of his wronged wife shrieking "Remember mine" (5.1.67). While the ghost of Old Hamlet

⁶¹³ Donaldson, p. 105.

⁶¹⁴ Palfrey suggests that "*The Tempest* might frame a response to the high-brow scorn of Jonson's preface to *The Alchemist*. It has often been noted how, quite unwontedly, Shakespeare observes in *The Tempest* the unities so beloved of Jonson"; p. 23. In the years after *The Winter's Tale*, then, Shakespeare found a way to assert the fantastic while adhering to some of the constraints of reality conventionally used to rationalise it.

⁶¹⁵ At the time of the revival of *Love's Labour's Lost* the loss emphasised by the title might have seemed particularly resonant since Navarre's real-life namesake was killed by a Catholic in 1610.

⁶¹⁶ Webster, for one, rejects this structurally manifest optimism since in yet another of *The Duchess of Malfi's* inversions of material in *The Winter's Tale* as the eponymous heroine is murdered, proleptically, before the play's climax (a climax in which instead of finding redemption, Bosola kills the very "man I would have saved"; 5.4.53).

solipsistically demands “remember me” (1.5.91), spurring a revenge tragedy that generates incidental losses that it takes a Tom Stoppard to “remember”, this hypothetical ghost in *The Winter’s Tale* registers her own lost status as well as that of her children. Perdita and Hermione return, but the losses of Antigonus (5.1.42-4; 5.2.58-65; 5.2.73-4; 5.3.132-5), Mamillius (5.1.115-122; 5.1.130-34; 5.1.175-7) and even Antigonus’s fellow travellers (5.2.66-71) are recorded in the final act. The forgiveness celebrated in this play depends on remembering, not forgetting.⁶¹⁷ It has been argued that revenge tragedy speaks to the anxieties of a culture still trying to find reformed ways to remember the dead.⁶¹⁸ As discussed in Chapter 3, such tragedies often take the form of forensic plots in which guilt is addressed and remembrance can eventually be actualised as revenge. *The Winter’s Tale* offers a different mode of remembrance. With a plot that is finally fantastical as well as forensic, it shows that giving space to the absolutely fictional (that is to something that exceeds the internal logic of a plotted narrative) can bring about a forgiveness that is literally vital.

It is important to stress that while *The Winter’s Tale* is, in so many aspects of its dramaturgy, concerned with the fantastic, it is

⁶¹⁷ In *The Tempest* Prospero’s articulated remembrance of Antonio’s crime at the moment he ostensibly pardons him has been read as a problematising of forgiveness. For example, Stephen Orgel detects political canniness; “Prospero’s Wife”, *Representations*, 8 (1984), 1-13 (11-12). Compare also the way Lear asks Cordelia to “forget and forgive” as if the two words were synonymous or mutually dependent (4.7.83-4).

⁶¹⁸ See Neill (1997), especially pp. 216-61. He suggests that “Alternately disabled by their inability to forget, and driven by their violent compulsion to remember, revenge heroes must wrestle to redeem their dead from the shame of being forgotten, even as they struggle to lay these perturbed spirits to rest, and thereby free themselves from the insistent presence of the past”; p. 246.

simultaneously intensely realistic. A. D. Nuttall has shown how it breaks Aristotle's rule that in art "a probable impossibility is to be preferred to an improbable possibility",⁶¹⁹ that is, that the events in a work of fiction must always seem likely even if they are impossible. As noted before, the characters themselves articulate the unlikelihood of Hermione's sixteen-year "preservation" thus allowing the play to address the question "I see that it is very unlikely that this would happen, but, if it did, what would it *really* be like?"⁶²⁰ In focussing on the way the play is able to speak realistically of the unlikely (or "improbable possibility") Nuttall assumes that the play does not feature "impossibility".⁶²¹ However, the paradox of the animated statue (which is alive/dead, organic/inorganic) is present at the very level of plot. We are confronted with an improbable possibility and an improbable *impossibility*. As we have seen, Hermione's statue provokes a fundamental confusion in the audience about how they are meant to interpret the actor's body. It is at this point that Paulina tells Leontes "It is required / You do awake your faith" (5.3.94-5). Knapp tells us that Leontes' decision "to affirm the unknown constitutes a risk that is the guarantor of an ethics freed from the restrictions of prescriptive thought (prescriptions, for example, of

⁶¹⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1461b, as quoted in Nuttall (1966), p. 57.

⁶²⁰ Nuttall (1966), p. 57.

⁶²¹ Commenting on Paulina's describing of the animation of the statue as resurrection from death as "the mumbo jumbo of a fairground" Nuttall says that it would be "disastrous" to give credence to a version of the plot in which Hermione really died: "The marvellous dramatic irony of Paulina's lines (the conjuror transcended by his trick) would be reduced to sub-dramatic vulgarity"; (1966), p. 55. However, it is surely important that at the moment Paulina utters those words the audience do not know how to interpret them, there is *no* irony.

conventional epistemology or institutional religion)."⁶²² The audience are asked to make a similar leap of faith at the very moment that they are trying to work out which conventions govern the representational logic before them. The play's consciousness of Knapp's parenthetical "institutional religion" is important to the ethical decision facing the audience. Walter S. H. Lim who shows that the play interrogates the meaning of faith, suggests that the presence of Catholic residue finally undermines the moral transcendence associated with a positive understanding of faith:

The exercise of Leontes' faith, we recall, takes place at a narrative moment redolent of the superstition embedding Roman Catholic practice and thought. If we, like Leontes, must exercise our faith in relating to the play, and this faith cannot be extricated from superstition, then it may be that the foundation of our sure knowledge is perhaps nothing more than ignorant or fond credulity - the acceptance of events that the play suggests are even more ridiculous than a tale told in winter.⁶²³

But at the end of *The Winter's Tale* the ridiculous is not ridiculed. Ironic detachment rarely forms a part of the theatrical experience of this play in the way that it might for, say, *The Trial of Chivalry* or other old tales to be "hooted at". Lim is right to associate Catholic credulity with a credulous response to fiction. Superstition is defined as "Unreasoning awe or fear of something known, mysterious, or imaginary" and is thought etymologically to mean

⁶²² Knapp, 254.

⁶²³ W. S. H. Lim, "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*", *SEL*, 41 (2001), 317-34 (331).

“standing over a thing in amazement or awe”: standing around the stage wondering at but not knowing how Hermione has returned, groundlings experience 5.3 superstitiously.⁶²⁴ Making superstition integral to the play’s climactic moment, in Leontes’ leap of faith, is the ideological equivalent of exploding the unities of time and place. For Lim it is the paradox (and here we “stand” two concepts next to one another) between faith as something positive and superstition as something with negative connotations that means that the entangling of the two undercuts the climax. However, these paradoxical attitudes and the paradox that underpins the denouement (the rational and irrational explanations for Hermione’s “preservation”) are importantly related to Leontes’ ability to move beyond a profoundly damaging scepticism.⁶²⁵ Neill tells us that paradox provides a way for sceptics to access the truth:⁶²⁶

opposite [Since] nothing in this world exists absolutely, the
 expressed of every reality is also real and true. Everything is
 in extremes opposed to other extremes, and it is only by
 the paradoxical pairing of opposites that meaningful
 statement is possible ... truth inherently has two
 sides.⁶²⁷

The structure of *The Winter’s Tale* provides Leontes and his audience with paradox at a conceptual level: the play maintains a

⁶²⁴ *OED*, s.v. “superstition”.

⁶²⁵ In the final scene Leontes celebrates what he initially fears: when Perdita kneels before her mother/statue the image is a gendered reversal of Leontes’ earlier enraged incredulity, “Shall I live on to see this bastard kneel / And call me Father?” (2.3.154-5), and in the match between Perdita and Florizel Polixenes’ issue does indeed become his heir.

⁶²⁶ M. Neill, “The Defence of Contraries”, *SEL*, 21 (1981), 319-332 (320).

⁶²⁷ A. Hauser as cited in Neill (1981), 320.

sense of the absolutely fictional on the one hand and the logically explainable on the other. Like faith, paradox is concerned with transcendence; it “is a way of accessing knowledge that is inaccessible to other kinds of epistemological structure.”⁶²⁸ It is through the conceptual paradox that underpins the plot that *The Winter’s Tale* celebrates fictional transcendence, celebrates the way that fiction can remove us from ourselves and show us something entirely other. This is, to use Knapp’s term, the “ethical” movement that enables the reconciliation of the final scene.⁶²⁹ Forgiveness, like the emergence of a living woman from the shape of a statue, is wonderful and in some sense irrational (in contrast to the eye-for-an-eye logic of revenge). Shakespeare shows us that fiction can help train us to make the leaps of faith or ethical decisions necessary to enable us to forgive and to love. Shakespeare uses Catholic semiotics in fiction, then, to stretch the bounds of what that fiction can do. We might, as twenty-first-century critics, expect overt fictionality and the articulation of superstition to bring us to a semiotic impasse in which self-referentiality and ideological aberrance finally short-circuit the broader significance of the play. But *The Winter’s Tale* is a knowing fiction not because it works by a sly irony that insists that

⁶²⁸ G. Brown (commenting on the work of Rosalie Colie), *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004) p. 28.

⁶²⁹ Hermione’s forgiveness of Leontes is humanly limited: it is predicated on Perdita’s return. However, although it is performed in silence I think it is a mistake to dismiss, as critics sometimes do, the moment of spousal forgiveness. Hermione may not say anything to Leontes but the dialogue emphasises (as it does not for the speechless Isabella or Sylvia in the conclusions to their plays) that she is physically demonstrative. We are told “She embraces him” and “She hangs about his neck” (5.3.111, 112). If the silence is awkward it is also realistic and understandable, and stresses the value of forgiveness which does not come easily.

the writer/reader/audience know better, but because it celebrates fiction's ability to negotiate and extend the limits of our knowledge in a meaningful way and helps us to transcend the inevitably negative understanding of the other (Catholic, woman, pagan or whatever). This is how we "awake" our "faith".

Coda

Scrutinising the Shakespeare corpus for lively Catholic signifiers rather than signs of a Catholic life necessitates anatomical analysis of dramaturgical and creative structures. My aim has been to extend our understanding of the semantic depth of the plays, rather than to delimit meaning as a denominational message. Sensitivity to Catholic significance makes a play like *Love's Labour's Lost* look rather different (and slightly less odd), and this should encourage us to look out for (theatrically-available rather than submerged) theological playfulness where we might least expect to find it.

In highlighting Catholic semiotics in different genres I have found Shakespeare returning to certain themes and concepts. For example, the stories of the Abbess, Juliet, Helen and (most profoundly) Hermione, see women who are presumed dead returning to life. The gendered nature of contemporary exposés of

Catholic idolatry of “dead” icons has residual impact on this recurrent narrative feature and might also inform other plays: elsewhere in the canon a friar helps Hero feign death and Thaisa is revived by magical-scientific means to become a “maiden-priest” (5.1.242) for Diana at Ephesus (re-Classified from its Christian status in *The Comedy of Errors*). The explicit discussion of idolatry in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which like *The Winter’s Tale* materialises a woman in icon-form, could be illuminated by a consideration of the interactions between Petrarchan discourses and the language of contemporary controversy.⁶³⁰ Without providing ready-made explanations for these plots, this thesis suggests ways in which we might think about them, and most importantly, that the controversial echoes are *worth* thinking about.

The practical impossibility of producing a comprehensive study of such matters is also related to a critical point crucial to my argument: instead of schematising Catholic significance we need to pay close attention to context. If the “Shakespeare” who emerges from this thesis seems to be (artistically) sympathetic to Catholicism it is worth bearing in mind that plays like the politically anti-papist *King John* might tell a different story. Nevertheless, the dialectical relationship between that play and the Queen’s Men’s

⁶³⁰ See, for example, Proteus asking Sylvia to provide him with her picture and Sylvia’s reply: “I am very loath to be your idol, sir; / But since your falsehood shall become you well / To worship shadows and adore false shapes, / Send to me in the morning, and I’ll send it” (4.2.128-31).

The Troublesome Reign of King John shows that antipathy, as well as sympathy, can be nuanced.

Although I am wary of iconoclastic criticism that destroys an appreciation of individual talent along with bardolatry, I would like to avoid reifying a presumed humanistic difference in Shakespeare's attitude to sectarian issues. I have suggested that Shakespeare frequently (though not always) deconstructs anti-Catholic stereotypes; other early modern dramatists (not least the dramatists of *Sir Thomas More*) also played with the fraught connotations of theological matter. In showing how critically-unobserved Catholic semiotics play an important part in the work of the era's (now) most famous writer, as well as in anonymous texts like *The Trial of Chivalry*, I hope it will be clear that the residue permeates a range of early modern literature. Looking at Catholic residue means looking beyond sectarian significance to the other issues to which it is attached, and there are many provocative ideological interactions yet to be fully explored. It would, for example, be useful to analyse the connections between Renaissance and Reformation, to consider cultural attitudes to ruined pasts and the different influences of Rome(s).

So I end as I began, with an awareness of what remains.

Appendix: The Date of *The Trial of Chivalry*

The purpose of this appendix is not to proffer a particular date for the composition of *The Trial of Chivalry*, but to illuminate the literary and historical contexts of the possible dates of composition and the date of publication. The extant quarto of *The Trial of Chivalry* is dated 1605 and since it was entered in the Stationers' Register in 1604 it is likely that this was the first edition.⁶³¹ The title page claims the play was "lately acted by the right Honourable Earle of Darby his seruants", placing a stress on a recent performance in a way that suggests that the play was not old in 1604-1605. The last recorded London performance for Derby's Men is in 1601, and after playing at Norwich in 1602 and Coventry in 1603 the company disappeared for several years.⁶³²

A number of critics have suggested (with varying degrees of evidence) an earlier date of composition for this play.⁶³³ Indeed Fleay and Greg speculate that *The Trial of Chivalry* should be identified with *Bourbon* mentioned in Henslowe's Diary (noted as an old play performed by the Admiral's and Pembroke's Men in November 1597). The logic for this thesis rests in the fact that "Burbon" is the chief villain of the play which also features a heroic

⁶³¹ I am greatly indebted to Richard Proudfoot for his advice about the relevant dates of *The Trial of Chivalry*.

⁶³² A. Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996), pp. 265-6.

⁶³³ *A Collection of Old English Plays*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 4 vols, iii (1882-1889, R/P New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), p. 263; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols, iv (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923), pp. 50-1; A. M. Clark, *Thomas Heywood* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), pp. 336-7; and F. E. Shelling, *Elizabethan Drama 1558-1642*, 2 vols, i (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908), p. 413.

English character called “Pembrooke”.⁶³⁴ While this identification cannot be proven it does foreground the interesting onomastic implications of this play. Nick de Somogyi argues that “The myth of Agincourt reinvested in by *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (printed 1598), *Sir John Oldcastle* (1599), *The Shoemakers’ Holiday* (1599) and *Henry V* (1599), informs the main plot of *The Trial of Chivalry*.”⁶³⁵ There was clearly a theatrical interest in France in these years since Henslowe makes payments for the three parts of (the now lost) *The Civil Wars of France* in 1598.⁶³⁶ In the same year Henslowe also lent money for costuming the “gwise”, presumably for a revival of Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris*.⁶³⁷ De Somogyi points out that “Shakespeare’s *1Henry IV*, thrice printed in 1598-99, casts a long shadow over *The Trial of Chivalry*” and he lists a number of verbal parallels between the two plays including: “‘Anon sir’ replies Bowyer’s sergeant as he sets the watch: ‘Anon sir!’, exclaims Bowyer, in a marked allusion to the comic mileage spun out by the earlier play (2.5)”.⁶³⁸ We might detect further intertextual resonance between Bowyer and the heroic, lamed Stump in *Larum for London* (printed in 1602 but dated at 1599 in *Annals* and as acquired for the Lord Chamberlain’s company between 1597-1600 in Gurr),⁶³⁹ especially

⁶³⁴ F. G. Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of English Drama, 1559-1642*, 2 vols, ii (London: Reeves and Turner, 1891), pp. 318-19; and *Henslowe’s Diary*, ed. W. W. Greg, 2 vols, ii (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904-8), p. 187.

⁶³⁵ N. de Somogyi, *Shakespeare’s Theatre of War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 25.

⁶³⁶ *Henslowe’s Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes (1961 R/P, Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103.

⁶³⁷ *Henslowe’s Diary*, ed. Foakes, pp. 76, 82. Money was again spent on the Guise’s costume in 1601; pp. 183, 184, 185.

⁶³⁸ De Somogyi, p. 26. For the full list see pp. 26-7.

⁶³⁹ A. Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594-1642* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 283.

since Bowyer is at one point referred to as “Stumps” (C1v). It might also be significant that Katharina, gazing on the (feigned) statue of Ferdinand, makes explicit reference to “the Image of Pigmalion” (H2r) since John Marston’s *The metamorphosis of Pigmaliions image* was printed in 1598.

Certainly it would seem unlikely that *The Trial of Chivalry* could have been written before the *Arcadia* (a text to which it appears to be much indebted) was printed in 1590 (though it was of course privately circulated in manuscript before this date).

Editions of the *Arcadia* also appeared in 1593, 1598, 1599, as well as in 1605, the year in which *The Trial of Chivalry* reached print.

Indeed the fact that *The Trial of Chivalry* was printed in 1605 indicates that the play was thought to have a potential readership at that late date and it is worth contextualising *The Trial* in its year of publication. The interest in Sidnean material is confirmed not just by the editions of the *Arcadia* itself, but also by the fact that another play making use of that text, *Mucedorus*, was first printed in 1598 and again in 1606. By the seventeenth century the French Civil Wars were over. However, French current affairs and recent history remained popular dramatic topics: Chapman’s new *Byron* and *Bussy D’Ambois* plays were written and performed in this period, and Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris* continued to be staged. *Northward Ho* (1605) mocks the contemporary vogue for French gossip. Furthermore, the Navarres of both *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *The Trial of Chivalry* (re-)appear at the same time. In the

winter of 1604-1605 (i.e. when *The Trial* was entered and printed) *Love's Labour's Lost* was performed at Court.⁶⁴⁰ In this context, the seventeenth-century printing of *The Trial* seems less strange. The less famous play's celebration of royal families and the promise of future successions also fit the circumstance of the recent accession of a king with children.

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⁶⁴⁰ W. Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1998), p. 83.

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