UNHUMAN ENCOUNTERS IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

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For Meaghan, who wanted to marry a doctor, but didn't specify what kind.

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This dissertation uses contemporary posthumanist and media theory, early modern educational and literary humanist texts, and the dramatic work of Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Webster, and William Shakespeare to chart the variety of theatrical response to early modern ideas of "humanity" in the wake of humanist education's cultural ascent. As London's early commercial playwrights, trained in humanist schoolrooms, adapted and staged humanism's attitudes about art's ability to "delight and instruct," they relied on ideas formulated about the written word. Historicizing both humanism and posthumanism as methods of relating to media objects, I argue early modern drama takes as its subject the contingent and performative processes by which the humanizing of "the human" is carried out, undermining the humanist notion of texts as objective mediators of moral or ethical truth. Instead, the stage prompts encounters with an array of human-adjacent entities, the *unhumans* of my title: frightening and comic stage devils, simulated racial Others, uncanny echoes, and even the books central to humanist study. The media innovations of the theater thus enriched and complicated early modern thinking about the purported humanizing qualities of the literary arts.

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Introduction:

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Nature's journeymen

In the third act of *Hamlet,* the Danish prince offers an extended and well-known critique of theatrical practice to the players visiting Elsinore, exhorting them to "[s]uit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance – that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature" (3.2..17-18).[1] To act badly not only insults the "modesty of nature," but it thwarts the entire theatrical enterprise, "whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (ll.20-24). Hamlet claims to have heard some players praised despite their performing so badly he "thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abhominably [sic]" (ll.30-34).

In their Arden edition of the play, editors Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor present Hamlet's final word as it is written above – "abhominably" – rather than the modernized "abominably," a spelling that was also available during Shakespeare's time. In the first place, Thompson and Taylor say, Shakespeare "seems to have favored" this spelling, and they note that, including its presence in Hamlet's speech here, "abhominable" and its variants appear eighteen times in the First Folio. Secondly, this spelling highlights a pun Hamlet seems to be

[1] All citations from *Hamlet,* ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden, 2006).

making. Though the word is derived from the Latin *abominari,* "to avert an omen" (*ab*-, away from or contrary to, and *ominor*, to augur), *abhominable*'s medial *h* was justified by a false etymology common in early modernity that traced the word to the phrase *ab homine*, "away from or contrary to man" – an etymology that, despite its inaccuracy, continues to influence how "abominable" is used in English.[2]

This dissertation takes Hamlet's introduction of the *ab-hominable* as not simply an obscure pun but a hermeneutic principle, an insight into the early modern theater's power to produce through performance things that look "human" as well as those which move in a trajectory "away from or contrary to" the human. I aim to investigate what Vin Nardizzi and Jean E. Feerick describe as the "potential for human indistinction" that is "the dark underside of Renaissance celebrations of man's preeminent place within the cosmos[.]"[3] But I aim not only to apply new pressure to the uncertainties of "the human" in its early modern and contemporary dimensions; in my broadest arguments, I venture a new understanding of the relationship between humanity, education, and art in early modern humanism. I believe that the permutations of the theater counterweighted early modern humanist programs, and that the tensions between these modes have yet to be fully reckoned with (although theatrical texts by Shakespeare and his cohort have been enlisted by countless literary humanist projects) in the centuries that followed. By locating "abhominable acts" in early modern drama we can better understand the conditions

[2] Thompson and Taylor, 298n34.

[3] Vin Nardizzi and Jean E. Feerick, "Introduction: Swervings on Human Distinction," in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, eds. Vin Nardizzi and Jean E. Feerick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 2. This observation grows out of a reading of man's precarious and exceptional position as given in Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, wherein "man" is figured as the only part of God's creation capable of "swerving" away from the divinely ordained plan and hence capable of great but also shameful actions. Nardizzi and Feerick describe Hooker's insight as one that acknowledges "humankind's complex embeddedness among creaturely life on the earth, his tendency to be marked by a kind of limping distinction in only *potentially* occupying a step up from his creaturely kin and yet necessarily trailing a few steps behind them" (2-3). The collection itself hosts chapters focusing on human indistinction in the face of animals such as fish and worms and objects such as stones and wooden prostheses; my concerns in this dissertation are less "creaturely" insofar as I focus not only particular, actual things in the world but conceptual schema that troubled – and continue to trouble – human definition.

under which the human has been produced, both socially and as a stage property. Abhominable performance, I venture, pulls into question the boundaries between humanity and its Others, and thus early modern plays also stage again and again what I call the "unhuman encounter."

In my arguments that follow I draw deeply from the tradition of what is often termed posthumanist theory, and I should take a moment to clarify my own position within that field. Posthumanism is a loose umbrella term used to describe a variety theoretical frames, all historically conditioned insofar as they arise in response to different concerns raised by developments in cultural, environmental, and techno-scientific spheres unique to the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. These schools range from New Feminist Materialism to Actor-Network Theory (ANT), to Object-Oriented Philosophy (OOP), to animal studies, to eco-criticism, to Speculative Realism.[4] But even in their diversity, there is some overlap, at least insofar as all of these approaches do their best to uncenter the human as the stable and enduring motor of history and meaning-making, turning attention to materiality, objects, environments, creatures, and numerous other things outside the traditionally "human" scope of existence, things that are hence usually termed "nonhuman." Rather than aligning myself with any one of these methods, I have attempted to utilize their myriad ways of uncentering the human at various points in my readings when they seemed most profitable, since each allows me to register the "nonhuman" or "posthuman" in a different light.

Still, as I am primarily interested in the theater as it functions as a medium of mass communication and technological extension of early modern ideas of "the human," citations in the following chapters most frequently discuss Bruno Latour's ANT, the feminist materialisms of Rosi Braidotti and Karen Barad, and the technology and media theories of N. Katherine

[4] These schools have a great deal of overlap and disagreement among themselves, some even balking at being labeled "posthumanist"; my divisions here are ad hoc and intended only to give a sense of the breadth of material I see as providing tools for thinking beyond traditionally humanist and anthropocentric frames.

Hayles and Eugene Thacker. Conversations also touch on topics ranging from the postwar foundation of cybernetics (Chapter 1), contemporary cognitive science (Chapter 2), the philosophy of artificial intelligence (Chapter 3), and the legacy of pioneering media theorist and trained early modernist Marshall McLuhan (Chapter 4). What might first seem like eclecticism I hope can be read as the response to a question, namely, what are we to do when we forego the givenness and stability of a category of "the human"? Some may choose to focus on objects in themselves (as in the Object-Oriented Philosophy of Graham Harman and Ian Bogost) or the philosophical implications of mathematical and physical laws that defy the human's anthropocentric phenomenological impulses (as in the Speculative Realism of Quentin Meillassoux and Ray Brassier), or any other multitude of things. When we bracket or question the human it seems as if we're saying, as the title of a paper by Timothy Morton puts it, "here comes everything."[5] I cannot bring "everything" into this dissertation, of course, and I would not want to, but I hope that by drawing from a variety of perspectives I can make use of the bevy of tools this philosophical and theoretical turn provides.

All thinkers and theories that interrogate the centrality of the "human" afford avenues for assessing the notoriously slippery history of "humanism" and the various visions of "the human" it has engendered in and since early modernity. However, I am not claiming that what is called "posthumanist theory" today is wholly translatable by early modern dramaturgical, philosophical, or aesthetic concerns. Rather, I agree with Stefan Herbrechter, who defends posthumanist critical approaches to Shakespeare by claiming that when we look to an era before the "humanisms" we currently know existed, we are bound to find consonances with theories

[5] Timothy Morton, "Here Comes Everything: The Promise of Object-Oriented Ontology", *Qui Parle* 19.2 (2011):163-190. As the Joycean title suggests, Morton deals in this article mostly with object-oriented philosophy, though he himself is also involved in eco-critical theorizing; this demonstrates how fuzzy the distinctions between "posthumanist" theories can be when pressed upon.

dedicated to questioning or unsettling those very ideologies, since early modern texts "anticipate the impending disappearance and displacement of their world, and they solicit the reciprocal recognition that our world, likewise, conceals the evolving past of a prospective present."[6] Herbrechter here is following up on the insight of Michel Foucault, who wrote that "Man," as he put it, is a function of the social arrangements of knowledge that can (and certainly will) be erased or revised with time.[7] Yet while Foucault traces through early modernity to the Enlightenment the construction of an autonomous human subject that his antihumanism (and our contemporary posthumanisms) sets out to critique, we do not have to take for granted the human's eventual ascent – the human, it turns out, might never have ascended at all.

In describing what he calls the "nonhuman turn" Richard Grusin distinguishes between a posthumanism that "does not make a claim about teleology or progress in which we begin with the human and see a transformation from the human or posthuman, after or beyond the human" and a philosophical slant that considers how "the human has always coevolved, coexisted, or collaborated with the nonhuman," rendering any concept of "the human" reliant upon the nonhumans which it strategically deploys and excludes.[8] As Cary Wolfe writes, posthumanist theory retroactively reveals the human as "a fundamentally prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically 'not-human' and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is."[9] Thus, I take as axiomatic that in early modernity the conditions of humanity were not as clearly defined as later criticism might have suggested, and it is the argument of this dissertation that in the emergence of the theater we see the process

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[6] Stefan Herbrechter, "Shakespeare Ever After: Posthumanism and Shakespeare" in *Humankinds: The Renaissance and Its Anthropologies*, ed. Andreas Höfele and Stephan Laqué (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) 261.
[7] Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966: repr., New York: Routledge, 2002), 422. Page references are from the 2002 edition.
[8] Richard Grusin, "Introduction" in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) ix-x.
[9] Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) xxv.

of human definition at its most fraught. In fact, the early modern stage is not a stage of pure and unified "humanity" at all: it hosted human creatures as diverse as kings, tyrants, lovers, traitors, and witches, as well as devils, pagan gods, fairies, dogs, bears, corpses, ghosts, echoes, and the numerous technological and dramaturgical devices that brought these beings to life, or at least something very like it.

Enter, then, the "unhuman," the term under which I unite my various theoretical threads. I opt for "unhuman" rather than "nonhuman" or "inhuman" because the latter too often connotes intention and cruelty – and very human intentions and cruelties at that – while the former might suggest too neatly the division between the idea of the human and its other.[10] The *un*human as I explore it provides a negation without such a clear division, suggesting, for example, how what is excluded from a given category (un-) symbiotically attaches to, upholds, and defines by contrast that (-human) category.[11] I will avoid more well-trodden terms like "monstrosity" because, even though that label's early modern currency was useful due to what Mark Thornton Burnett calls "its amorphous, subsuming quality," it also gestures back anxiously to a culture's "inherited standards of 'normality'" by always already marking what it names as other.[12]

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[10] Daniel Cottom has deployed the term for similar reasons in his book *Unhuman Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Like my argument here, he is interested in what he calls the "agency of the unhuman in the invention of humanity" (25), but his project is of far broader range then mine, dealing with everything from medieval saints to the September 11 terrorist attacks. Though I also tend toward conceptual promiscuity my overall focus remains thoroughly early modern, in particular as I am interested in the unhuman as an artifact in the legacy of Renaissance humanism.

[11] My use of the term "unhuman" is also indebted to philosopher Eugene Thacker, who uses it to describe a kind of conceptual horizon that is used to describe "the limits of the human, [and] the unreliable knowledge of such limits" that are in evidence when "the human confront[s] something it can only name as *unhuman*" (*Starry Speculative Corpse* [Washington: Zero Books, 2015], 42). In other words, Thacker's idea of the unhuman is a philosophical tool for naming the point at which thought about "the human" doubles back on itself, encountering a limit in something it can only call "unhuman," and hence defining the human as what it has heretofore considered. See also n14 below on the work of Dylan Trigg.

[12] Mark Thornton Burnett, *Constructing 'Monsters' in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 2, 8. By avoiding the use of monstrosity I do not mean to deny its usefulness, but only to position my argument in such a way as to avoid the binary stability that the terms "human" and "monster" seem to suggest (no matter how amorphous these concepts are in practice). As Georgia Brown has pointed out, colonial expansion and world exploration generally during the early modern period combined with the rise of scientific

Recalling Hamlet's idea of "abhominable" acts, however, suggests a more reciprocal relationship between the norm and the deviation, highlighting through its etymology how that which moves "away from or contrary to man" potentially transforms or distorts the supposedly stable starting position of "humanity." In short, approaching the "unhuman" as a more intermediate term allows us to think through the potential for what is at first recognized as human to become "unhumanized" or vice versa. As Freud proclaimed in "The Uncanny" (1919), "The negative prefix *un*- is the indicator of repression" – and as he demonstrates in the very same essay, the German word *heimlich* (homely, comfortable, familiar) if interrogated far enough, became synonymous with the *unheimlich* (uncanny, secretive, dangerous).[13] Philosopher Dylan Trigg, who also works with an idea of the unhuman, makes a similar connection to Freud's uncanny, noting that the unhuman is "something that comes back to haunt the human without it being fully integrated into humanity."[14] The unhuman, then, does not mark a single exclusionary act but denotes an entire arena of possibility that subtends the conceptualization of "the human."

I use the "unhuman" to oscillate between the familiar and dangerous things, finding the places where they become indistinguishable despite attempts to separate them. To that end I do

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discourses to result in words like "cannibal, savage, and barbarian" occupying specific gradations of the "human" that had earlier fallen clearly within the rubric of "monstrosity" (see Georgia Brown, "Defining Nature through Monstrosity in Othello and Macbeth" in eds., Thomas Hallock, Ivo Kamps, and Karen Raber, *Early Modern Ecostudies: From the Florentine Codex to Shakespeare* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008] 55-75, esp. 62). In line with this point, which indicates that the amorphousness of monstrosity actually became unhelpful in early modernity's humanist projects, I intend to forge a theoretical frame that can account for the subtly shifting natures of discourses and the views of reality and humanity they construct.

[13] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 151. Freud's rather exhaustive dictionary history of the term reveals that the sense of "familiar" present in the German "homely/*heimlich*" can connotatively shift to suggest not simply comfort but secrecy, private business, things best not discussed, etc. Thus, there is a point at which the "homely" becomes so homely it negates itself, and such is one notion I hope to exploit with the unhuman.

[14] Dylan Trigg, *The Thing: A Phenomenology of Horror* (Washington: Zero Books, 2014), 6. Trigg's larger project is an interrogation of phenomenology and its assumption of a unified self; building from this psychoanalytic starting point in Freud and adding a healthy dose of Lacan, Trigg suggests that the ultimate "unhuman" thing is the body itself, which is a kind of alien matter to the mind that, nevertheless, finds itself indebted to and in some ways belated to the thing that hosts it (4).

not put forth a formal definition of the unhuman but rather investigate how different instances of humanity in early modern thought come into being only through encounters and negotiations with what can be most broadly termed the unhuman. As with Freudian repression and the unconscious, these exclusions are present even if only by their absence; and like Freud's uncanny, they threaten to return from their repression under the correct circumstances.[15] In early modern drama, given as it is to "abhominable acts," we can see this process of return when time and again actors are called to perform things they supposedly are not, when characters and by extension the audience are asked to encounter humanity's not-quite-human doubles. Each text I discuss in the following chapters has a slightly different way of staging and responding to these encounters, at times exorcising the unhuman from the stage entirely, but more often allowing it to linger with the audience long after the performance has ended. And it is precisely this tendency to both conjure and sustain unhuman encounters, I argue, that made the theater a prime site for *early modern unhumanism*, my name for a series of dramatic tendencies that spring from the educational and artistic background of early modern English playwrights in the humanist schoolroom. As the eternal student Hamlet indicates, humanist education taught that art was to be an instrument of betterment, but time and again it goes awry, with the mirror held up to nature given to distortions, sometimes showing us something not quite familiar or pleasant at all.

Early modern unhumanism

In questioning the "the human" in early modernity, we can reassess historical components of the term "humanism" that have been largely unaddressed by contemporary posthumanist theories because they tend to deal with "humanism" as a post-Enlightenment worldview, connoting ideas of autonomous, bourgeois human subject in eighteenth and

[15] Freud, 147.

nineteenth centuries. Indeed, rather infamously the substantive term "humanism" did not appear until 1808, and thus it is tendentious to speak of "early modern humanism" or "Renaissance humanism" at all, let alone suggest there was a unified philosophical field; however, the word "humanist" was coined in 1589 to refer to those scholars and instructors specializing in *studia humanitatis* – a curriculum encompassing grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy as they could be derived from classical sources. Hence, while there was a great deal of range among individual humanist scholars and teachers, we might justifiably use "humanism" to refer generally to the dispositions of these scholars in their study of texts and implicit attempts to parse what, following Cicero, they called *humanitas*, often defined as "humanity."[16] Nevertheless, the use of "humanism" in reference to early modernity is also troubled by its much later employment as what Paul Oskar Kristeller deemed, in 1954, "an elusive label of praise," as the terms "humanist" and "humanism" were adopted by a variety of movements and ideologies "in a fashion which defies any definition and seems to have little or nothing left of the basic classicist meaning of Renaissance humanism."[17]

But the Renaissance *studia humanitatis* was never solely about the philological study of classical texts, despite Kristeller's exasperation; even in the sixteenth century, *studia humanitatis* carried the imperative to use texts to access the doctrines or knowledge necessary for understanding "humanity," a term not narrowly defined. In Thomas Cooper's 1565 Latin-English dictionary, *humanitas* is glossed as: "Humanitie: mans nature: gentlenesse: courtesie: gentle

[16] See Mike Pincombe, *Elizabethan Humanism: Literature and Learning in the later Sixteenth Century* (London: Longman, 2001) 6. Also see Ian Green, *Protestantism and Humanism in Early Modern England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009) 10-14. Pincombe says humanism (understood as the curriculum of writings of these human*ists*) is grounded in the writings of Cicero, whose conception of humanity was influenced by a Roman emphasis on courtesy, urbanity, and pleasant interaction with one's peers. Green argues humanism functioned as an essentially educational and politically conservative platform rather than a moral or religious outlook.

[17] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961) 8.

behauiour: ciuilitie: pleasantnesse in maners: doctrine: learning: liberall knowledge" (sig. Mmm6r).[18] Cooper's translation and definition offers a spectrum of possibilities, running roughly between two poles we might call the "natural" to the "cultural." Humanity as a sign of "mans nature" suggests that it is an innate, natural quality of "man," a disposition or attitude, but Cooper does not tell us much about what this disposition *is* – this is the most general definition and seems to align with Cooper's first textual examples from Cicero ("Communis humanitas," or "The state of humaine nature common to vs all") and Pliny ("Humanitas vitae"). From here the definitions (and Cooper's concordant examples, the majority of which are drawn from Cicero) inch into descriptions of specific dispositions ("gentelesse," "courtesie," or "gentle behauior") before explicitly connecting these with sociality and interaction with others ("ciuilitiue" and "pleasantnesse in maners"); from here there is a pivot away from simple sociality, and a turn toward how these systems of interaction are inculcated ("doctrine," "learning"). The final possibility, "liberall knowledge," is covalent with the ideas of doctrine and learning, and at the same has some very curious implications, as Cooper's example ascribed to Cicero shows: "Humanitatis studia, artes ipsae liberales dicuntur," or, "The study of humanity, it is itself said to be the liberal arts" (sig Mmm6v, my translation).

In Cooper, "humanity" is something that is natural and given, a common "state of human nature," and simultaneously the result of an extended process of enculturation that must be endlessly repeated to maintain the bonds of doctrine and civility. In other words, the possible meanings of humanity do not simply split between nature and culture, but oscillate between them. Yet the final inflection of "liberall knowledge" has a peculiarly *reflexive* character, in that it seems to loop back to suggest that one of the possible definitions of "humanity" is itself Cicero's *studia humanitatis* – that, in other words, one way of understanding "humanity" is to

[18] Cooper, Thomas. *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae*. 1565. 2nd ed. London: Henry Denham, 1578.

say that it is *the study of itself*, as either a "nature," a "behavior," or a "doctrine," or perhaps all three. We should thus reevaluate the significance of Cooper's final offer, by way of Cicero, of the apparent tautology at the nexus of "liberall knowledge" and *studia humanitatis*: humanity is both *the subject undertaking* and *the object of* the study of humanity, attempting its own production in its act of self-naming. "Humanist," after all, originally signified an occupation or activity, rather than a philosophical disposition. But because of its reflexivity and revisionary nature, humanity is never something wholly "in" the thing that names it, and hence never entirely self-determined, but mediated: passed onto the subject from somewhere else, through something else, brought to itself from *outside*.[19]

That this "outside," at least in the early modern humanist view, is the classroom is obvious: the educational practices of humanism were intended to produce "new men" who through rigorous practice were trained to interface with a series of canonical ancient texts in such a way to prepare them, in the words of Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, "for a full and active life in the service of [their] community."[20] And yet, as Grafton and Jardine point out, humanism as a practice "offered a model of true culture as something given, absolute, to be mastered, not questioned – and thus fostered in all its initiates a properly docile attitude towards authority."[21] In this alliance with power, humanism (Grafton and Jardine argue) produced not morally superior or more inquisitive students but rather a social elite, united by a series of common readings of common texts, who fit easily into the expanding bureaucracies of early modernity's centralizing states. However, for terms of early modern unhumanism, we have already

[19] My point here is indebted Slavoj Zizek's explication of "the retroactive effect of naming" in his reading of Saul Kripke's theory of linguistic antidescriptivism. See *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989: repr., New York: Verso, 2008) 104.
[20] Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986) 5.
[21] Grafton and Jardine, 24.

established that "humanitas" is neither stable nor given; why then should the culture that produces it be so?

In the traditional Renaissance humanist outlook, students and texts are (to borrow Bruno Latour's term) *hybridized*, brought into conjunction in such a way that the student learns their moral lessons from ancient authors and hence becomes something or someone they were not before.[22] Yet once *humanitas* arises from the reader-text interface (reinforced by the discipline of the schoolmaster and the social environment of the classroom), boundaries are redrawn and the reader now embodies or maintains "humanity" while the values and ideas "discovered" via the text becomes what was already there to begin with, simply awaiting the reader's recovery. Therefore, by knitting the two opposing aspects of Cooper's definition together – learning and culture – the classroom opens the way to the definition's final element: to pursue *studia humanitatis* by way of textual education means to *become more human*. However, this does not only mean that one is learning the "humane" mores for any given society, but points toward a fantasy of being put in touch with a transcendent *humanity-as-such*, a tradition achieved and

[22] A similar point is made by Julian Yates in his book *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). Yates especially notes the way in which the Latin textbook takes an active part in organizing and maintaining social relations (xvii-xviii), and I follow up on the idea of the book as an object in the humanist curriculum in Chapter 4. Meanwhile, within a more historicist theoretical frame in *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Jeff Dolven claims that "for [the late Tudor] generation, books were teachers, and to be read was to be taught" (63). Though Dolven is most interested in humanist reading practices as reflected in the romances, I focus on how dramatists tended to approach the fraught relationship with education and spectatorship for a public audience, which was a viewpoint derived from their humanist learning. In calling students and texts (or spectacles) hybridized, I intend to invoke Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory, in which "hybrids" are his term for the curious "mixtures of nature and culture. By edict of an epistemology Latour calls the Modern Constitution, and which has its beginnings in the early modern scientific revolution, Nature and Culture are constantly mixed yet must be winnowed into separate spheres through a process of ontological "purification" (*We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. Catherine Porter. [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993] 30).

preserved by Roman writers, rediscovered in the Renaissance, and passed on from that time, closing the gap between what is natural and cultural.[23]

But the stage destabilizes the idea of cultural objects holding sound moral lessons, ready-made for discovery, suspended like insects in amber. In humanist theories of reading, there is a production of meaning in a constellation of human (students, teachers) and nonhuman (texts, classrooms) actors that is effectively erased in support of treating texts and the humanist program generally as simple vehicles for timeless, humane values. The stage, however, where the highly mediated process of meaning-making becomes in itself an object of attention, undercuts any educative claims based on notions of transcendent truth.[24] This is performativity's corrosive effects on a generally humanist claim to a representationalist poetics – ie, the claim, *pace* Hamlet, that 'vice' and 'virtue' exist as discrete entities and can be apprehended and 'represented' as object lessons for the benefit of a reader or an audience, rather than knowledge produced in practice. Humanism by turns recognizes and disavows the technical extension and constitution of "the human" over various media events, from the acquisition of language, to literacy, to rhetorical and dramatic performance.[25] The early modern humanist's *humanitas* is

[23] Even if the estimation of the Roman tradition has fallen considerably since the Renaissance, the form of this notion is maintained when, for instance, Grafton and Jardine insist that "the security of the humanities within institutions of higher education … rests on the continuing assumption that they are intrinsically supportive of 'civilization'" (Grafton and Jardine, xvi).

[24] As Karen Barad explains, "[u]nlike representationalism, which positions us above or outside the world we allegedly merely reflect on, a performative account insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being" (*Meeting the Universe Halfway*, [Durham: Duke UP, 2007] 133).

[25] My understanding and use of media theory is most influenced by the work of Marshall McLuhan, who originally described media as "extensions of man" (*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* [1964: repr., Berkley: Gingko Press, 2015]), Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (*Remediation: Understanding New Media* [Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2000.]) and Marcel O'Gorman (*Necromedia* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015]). These authors appear at various points across the following chapters, but I also tend to generally understand "media" through a Latourean lens, where he discusses mediators as "actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, to redeploy it, and also to betray it" (*We Have Never Been Modern* 41). In these sense, the theater as a technological medium even in its most honest attempts to transfer a meaning of the human to its audience can threaten to betray any given idea of the human.

simultaneously what grounds and is betrayed by all these discourses; "humanity" does not exist until the subject has been introduced to, mastered, and internalized these practices and the nonhumans of which they make use. Though I return to the humanism several times in the following chapters – through the writings of Erasmus, Sir Philip Sidney, Charles Hoole, and more indirectly, through Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, among others – my primary concern is how the humanist doctrine of art's personally beneficial and socially salubrious aspect founders on the emergent commercial stage, when playwrights attempt (or critique the attempt) to put into practice the educative aesthetic principles learned in their schooling.[26]

Hence, Hamlet sardonically figures bad theater not simply as a poor imitation of humanity, but as an event that actually turns the actors *away from* humanity in ways that seem to encompass all three senses of Cooper's definition.[27] And despite Hamlet espousing an arguably salutary and humanist theory of dramatic performance, he does so through a much longer

[26] The vexed relationship between the Renaissance humanist tradition and the early modern theater is a running theme in criticism of the period. Robert Weimann has argued that by cross-breeding popular stage traditions with their own humanist learning, playwrights such as Marlowe and Shakespeare developed a "more modern and more practical kind of humanism" than that trumpeted by their schoolmasters, one based not on memorization and repetition of classical texts, but on the actions and interactions of characters embroiled in complex and dynamically represented situations (*Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*. ed. Robert Schwartz. [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1978] 185). More favorable to the schoolroom's humanist legacy is Kent Cartwright, who claims that "the excitement of the Tudor stage derives partly from a humanist dramaturgy that embroils feelings and emotions in the creation of meaning" (*Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century.* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004] 1). Joel Altman, meanwhile, insists that Shakespeare and his contemporaries' training in humanist rhetoric – which required students to assume personae in order to fashion and often perform persuasive speeches in varying and sometimes opposing situations – resulted in a unique method of understanding one's place in the world as, in effect, radically discontinuous and deconstructive. Altman argues rhetorical play-acting and the space of the theater allowed dramatists and spectators to experience "ideas and feelings not always accessible or expressible in the life of a hierarchical Christian society" (*The Tudor Play of Mind* [Berkley: University of California Press, 1978] 6). In his more recent work, building from that of Linda Charnes (*Notorious Identity* 1993), he pursues his argument to its anti-essentialist end, suggesting the overall effect of the drama was to challenge the idea of a stable, autonomous, and transcendent human identity by highlighting "the immanence of the human in the world" (*The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010] 19).

[27] The bad actor does not make use of "liberal knowledge" for self-reflection, but rather appeals only to the "unskillful"; his strutting and bellowing seems to fly in the face of "courtesy" and "civility"; and finally, for Hamlet a bad actor is not only less than Christian, he is not even pagan, and appears to be the product of a lesser nature.

description of the ways in which the theater fails to achieve its goal, suggesting that the theater offers "abhominable" imitations that trouble the consistent reproduction of an idealized humanity. Indeed, Protestant antitheatricalists keenly sensed this problem. In the 1615 pamphlet *This World's Folly*, the writer known only as I.H. describes how playgoers "set open their eares & eies to suck vp [a] variety of abhominations, bewitching their minds with extrauagant thoughts, & benumbing their soules with insensibilitie, where by sin is become so customarie to them, as, That to sin, with them is deem'd no sinne at all" (sig A6r).[28] This description of the stage's pitfalls underscores the fact that not only does the theater *produce* abhominations, it has the capacity over time *to naturalize them*. Regardless of what Hamlet thinks correct, then, it is my basic claim that the early modern commercial theater fostered a reconfiguration of humanism that disclosed quite spectacularly its necessary unhuman encounters.[29]

Abhominable acts

As predictable as it might be to open a discussion of the theater and the legacy of humanism with Shakespeare, and with *Hamlet* at that, the melancholy Dane is not alone in his assessment of the ontological flux triggered by performance. Late in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) the choleric Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy comes face to face with the theatrical "idol" his off-stage counterparts so viciously decried in the spectacle of Lantern Leatherhead's puppet show. Leatherhead offers his "Puppet Dionysius" to dispute Busy, for "I am not well studied in these controversies between the hypocrites and us" (5.5.34-35).[30] Busy first insists the

[28] I.H., *This vvorlds folly Or A warning-peece discharged vpon the wickednesse thereof.* (London: William Jaggard, 1615).
[29] In this sense I follow up on Linda Charnes's claim that "in the Renaissance, drama is the dominant mode in which the provisional, performative, and contingent nature of subjectivity can literally be embodied" (*Notorious Identity* [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993] 9).
[30] All citations from *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000).

puppet "hast no calling," which is to say literally, no "vocation," no "present lawful calling" (ll.51, 55). Busy (much as his name suggests) conflates labor and theology, implying that the puppet-actor lacks both a productive job and the connection to God that calls the Christian soul to action in the world. The puppet replies it is called Dionysius, since that is the part it plays, and furthermore, if it is to be called an idol by one so inspired by the Holy Spirit as Busy, then certainly "*idol is a lawful calling*" (l.59, emphasis original).

Jonson's satire turns on the observation that the Puritan, in attempting to sever the theater and performance from the true run of Christian life, actually *creates* the metaphysical situation he takes as axiomatic: through Busy's divinely inspired declaration of the puppet's idolatrous nature, the puppet is perversely incorporated into the hardline Protestant order of things as the kind of queasy constitutive exclusion that, as I have been arguing, is the defining feature of the unhuman. So it is, then, that the debate between Puritan and puppet escalates to Busy declaring the puppet an "abomination" – Jonson, a classical purist, does not make use of the medial *h* – on the grounds of crossdressing, echoing the common antitheatrical invocation of Deuteronomy 22:5. The puppet turns the tables, declaring that "*You lie, you lie, you lie abominably*" (l.99, emphasis original). Though Jonson avoids the folk etymology, focusing instead on the "abominable" as something generically loathsome, it nonetheless colors this disputation: surely the puppet *is* ab-hominable, in that it is both like and not at all like a human actor (proved when it pulls up its clothing to reveal its lack of genitalia) and Busy lies ab-hominably when he deploys an argument usually intended for human actors against a puppet. That Busy cannot fathom a response to the puppet's sexlessness leads him to, in the words of the puppet and Leatherhead both, "be converted" and become a part of the carnivalesque puppet show's

audience (ll.112-113). "I am changed," Busy admits, "and will become a beholder with you" (ll.114-115).

It is worth noting that this scene, if we are to take its metadramatic cue, is in fact Jonson's puppet Busy arguing with Leatherhead's puppet Dionysius, which (because Leatherhead is himself a facet of Jonson's fiction) is also merely a Jonsonian puppet once removed. And yet what are we to make of Leatherhead's purported ignorance in these matters, offering up his puppet as an interlocutor, and what might we say about Busy's lack of objection to arguing directly with the dangerous idol he has come to tear down? If we assume Leatherhead is simply speaking through his puppet, then we might read this scene as highlighting Busy's own hypocritical ignorance, since he capitulates quite readily to the active and informing presence of an idol he claims has no vocation. But on the other hand, for Leatherhead and Jonson's purposes, the puppet makes a difference: it materializes an unhuman body that manages to crush the Puritan objections to the theater while diverting the objector from the fact that other bodies on stage are certainly not so smooth. Both Busy and the audience watching Jonson's play are thus called to become "beholders" of a strange encounter, as the play leaves open to contemplation a fragile analogy between player and puppet – between human and nonhuman – that draws into question exactly what it is one sees on the early modern stage.[31]

Time and again, I argue, the early modern English theater plays out similar, unhuman encounters: indeed, its key strength as an emergent media technology in this time might very

[31] Dionysius – who might be but is not clearly stated to be only Leatherhead's mouthpiece for ventriloquized opinions – gains both personality and autonomy in Jonson's performance, what Kenneth Gross has called the "uncanny life" that is part and parcel of puppet theater (*Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Indeed, the uncanny character of Dionysius – who speaks to Busy as well as to Leatherhead and Jonson's audiences, seemingly separate from the man who ostensibly controls him, enacts what Victoria Nelson has called the "secularized fantasy" of divine and infernal power stripped by modernity's episteme from the material world, yet relocated into curious (and often humanoid) machines (*The Secret Life of Puppets* [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001] 59-60).

well be the way performance facilitates the simultaneous breakdown and (re)construction of the parameters by which "the human" is recognized. Each of the following chapters tackles the theater's abhominable tendencies by dealing with a different situation in which "the human" seems to go awry across early modern philosophical and educational discourses and dramatic performances. According to Andreas Höfele and Stephan Laqué, early modernity's emergent construction of what we would today call an "anthropological" perspective diversified humanity into various types of distinct "cultures" and "characters" to "invent" the pluralistic notion of humankind.[32] I would add that it is primarily *on the stage* that this (re)invention itself becomes popularly recognized as a potential method of mediating "humanity" as something multitudinous and open to speculation, interrogation, and adoption.[33] It is only appropriate, then, that my investigation of the unhuman (which always appears in the moment the human is produced) should be articulated over several axes by which "humanity" was understood in early modernity. Thus, in the first chapter, I focus on what I call simply the *unhuman*; in the second chapter, the *unliving*; in the third, the *undead*; and in the fourth, the *unread*.

These organizational *topoi* are not intended to be an exhaustive catalog of the ways "the human" was conceived or troubled in early modernity, but rather general guidelines for my thinking in each chapter. I begin with a broad investigation of the unhuman poetics of the stage through a look at the performance of devils; I then move into the more specific question of how "unliving" props (in this case, blackface makeup) could contribute to human definition or exclusion; I then consider how the stage estranges or effaces supposedly "given" and definitive

[32] Andreas Höfele and Stephan Laqué, "Introduction," in *Humankinds The Renaissance and Its Anthropologies*, ed Höfele and Laqué (New York: de Gruyter, 2011) 1-20.
[33] Jean-Christophe Agnew makes a similar claim regarding the theater's emergence alongside the nascent capitalist market, in that both called into question "the nature of social identity, intentionality, accountability, transparency, and reciprocity in commodity transactions" (*Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* [1986: repr., Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993] 10).

features of living humans, like the form of the body and human language, rendering their bearers seemingly undead; finally, I conclude with an extended meditation on the specter of the unread that haunts the humanistic endeavor, from forbidden books to the illiterate student, and how these problems gain particularly vivid life in performance.

Chapter one, "Reassembling the Infernal: The Devil and the (Un)Human in Marlowe and Jonson," begins in the shadow of the Reformation and the anxieties about the moral utility of performance at the advent of London's commercial theater. Orbiting the central idea of the "unhuman" as an outer limit where the "human" simultaneously is negated and invented, I propose the figure of the devil or demon as a particularly apt example of what I call the "constitutive unhuman" in early modernity. The devil is an entity that functioned widely in the early modern imaginary to index various behaviors and qualities that might exclude one from the human run of creation, and I use the popularity of the stage-devil as my starting point for thinking through the abhominable, unhuman tendencies of the theater, reading in parallel Christopher Marlowe's tragedy *Doctor Faustus* (c.1588-92) and Ben Jonson's late city comedy *The Devil Is an Ass* (1616).

Putting early modern humanism in dialogue with the discourse of cybernetics as developed by Norbert Wiener and more recently critiqued by N. Katherine Hayles, this chapter argues that just as cybernetics offered a philosophy of society and control at a moment of rapid postwar technological expansion, humanism was an attempt to put emergent technologies of popular print and secular theater to beneficial social use, though it was not always successful. I consider the well-worn scholarship on Marlowe's tragedy and its fraught history regarding humanist learning and the playwright's attitude toward it. From there, I pivot into an examination of the devil Pug in the avidly humanist Jonson's *The Devil Is an Ass* (1616); by looking

comparatively at the tragic and comic registers of the stage-devil at disparate ends of a theatrical epoch, I trace differing conceptions of the "human" by looking at the ways these writers found dramatic traction in humanity's theological and cosmological limits. While Marlowe delivers performance as a demonically ephemeral and morally spurious enterprise, an endeavor whose dangers are repeatedly threatened or enacted upon Faustus's human body as it is diabolically transformed into airy spirit, Jonson injects his devil character, Pug, into an unfamiliar human body that renders him susceptible to human sensations and a riotously performative London society for which he is totally unprepared.

In chapter two, "Material Phantasms: Unliving Blackness in *Othello*" I follow up on the idea of the body in performance – which Jonson figures as a humanist ground – by examining the long history of blackface performance in popular and commercial English drama. Using the theory of "phantasmal media" of D. Fox Harrell, which combines media theory with contemporary cognitive science, I develop a vocabulary for discussing how blackface shifted over time from a highly theatrical and artificial signal of performance to one of increasing racialization and "authentication" for the nonblack performance of the black Other. In short, we see the transformation of blackface from an unliving, inert material or stage prop into an active participant in the creation of race as an attribute of real persons, both as a dramatic practice and as a way of thinking for an early modern audience.

I consider also humanist drama and its educative goals, tracking the way blackface makeup operates as a temporary marker of ignorance and moral folly in the early didactic university comedy *The Play of Wit and Science* (c. 1530-50) and its adaptations; all this builds toward an extended reading of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603), which combines the various epistemic registers of blackface performance – from religious morality to comic didactic drama –

to terrible effect. Through a canny dramatic strategy that draws attention repeatedly to the makeup on the face of the actor playing Othello, I argue, as well as a plot that by turns challenges and affirms early modern English prejudices regarding color difference, Shakespeare's play thwarts easy divisions between body and performance, instead cognitively blending a multitude of ideas in service of an emergent notion of race. Indeed, Shakespeare's play suggests that even when the prostheses of performance are wiped away – if they are at all – something of their memory remains, irrevocably twining together the living and unliving for performances to come, both inside and outside the theater.

Chapter three, "Playing Undead: *The Duchess of Malfi* and Early Modern Necromedia" looks to the philosophy of artificial intelligence, in particular John Seale's thought experiment of the "Chinese room," to rethink early modern humanist concerns about stylistic and vocal imitation. This chapter also posits poetry and the theater as forms of what Marcel O'Gorman calls "necromedia" – technologies that offer a chance to surpass human finitude, but which therefore serve as constant reminders of that finitude, especially (I argue) in the dramatic tendency to denaturalize the actor's body and speech. Looking at the common humanist educative practice of *imitatio* – where students copied and repeated ancient authors, developing rhetorical skills and a set of useful verbal commonplaces – I consider how humanist concern over whether a student truly internalized or understood the words they spoke troubled the post-Reformation thinking of language and the voice as the index of the soul. The figure of the echo, I argue, becomes a useful way for conceptualizing humanism's own ambivalence about its relationship to language, whose excesses it cordons off from rhetoric in the fields of poetry and drama.

This chapter builds to a reading of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614). Webster's play, with its highly aphoristic, artificial language and climactic scene wherein an echo of the title character is confronted, positions the theater as medium with the uncanny capacity to capture the human voice and figure, throwing them back to the audience in a distorted and not-quite-familiar manner. Whereas the last chapter found the inanimate props of performance taking on lives of their own, here the human itself becomes a kind of dramatic effect, nothing more than a collection of artfully poised elements housing no greater truth. The disembodied echo thus becomes a nonliving entity that mocks speech, held to be one of the primary attributes of the embodied living. Just as Searle's Chinese room posits a seemingly intelligent machine that carries on whole conversations without understanding them, humanism's rhetorical superabundance, transferred to the theater, threatens to devolve into prattle devoid of informing soul or reason, hence resulting in a kind of uncanny, undead speech devoid of "human" presence.

In chapter four, "Intermediate Shakespeare: Unreading and Unreadability in *The Tempest*" I return to Shakespeare to consider his cultural legacy as what Harold Bloom has called the "inventor" of the human, and hence, through a long critical line of which Bloom himself is only a recent descendent, our closest analog to the supposedly universally applicable texts of the early modern humanist classroom. First, however, I look at the work of Marshall McLuhan, a pioneering midcentury media theorist who also, as it happens, was trained as a Renaissance scholar. I begin by discussing McLuhan's egregiously weird use of Shakespearean examples in his landmark 1964 book *Understanding Media*, where Shakespeare's plays and sonnets are cited multiple times as anticipating everything from electric light to digital computer storage to labor automation. Arguing that McLuhan uses Shakespeare less as evidence and proof

of insight and more as a vocabulary through which he communicates the counterintuitive turns new media are taking Western postwar life, I posit the idea of a "Shakespeare-medium" (the use of the cultural institution of Shakespeare as part of a process of meaning-making) and the complementary process of "unreading" (the interpretation of a text by way of the strategic deployment or effacement of further textual, historical, or social context). I do this in order to claim that Shakespeare has proved tenacious through Anglophone literary history because his plays always already take into account their diverse potential for being unread and hence reread, by virtue of their position at a nexus of the distinct early modern media innovations of stage and print.

I borrow N. Katherine Hayles' idea of "intermediation" to suggest Shakespeare's plays evince the mark of their emergence at the intersection of the public commercial theater and the proliferation of vernacular print. Rather than belonging to one or the other, Shakespeare's plays are poised between these media, and to demonstrate the implications of this I read *The Tempest* (1611) with an eye to Caliban's ambiguous textual and stage presence (human or monster?) as symptomatic of Shakespeare's intermediate art. Furthermore, Caliban and Miranda both provide exempla of early modern students who are placed in uncertain relation to the educational discourses Prospero, renowned student of the liberal arts, constructs for them. However, as the play's tortured relationship to Prospero's own enticing books suggest, Shakespeare's approach to this issue is anything but simple, and I conclude by suggest that the play's final insight is that all media – from books to plays and beyond – are destined to end, fail, repeat, grow, and change, along with the visions of the "human" they help construct.

Using contemporary posthumanist theory to crack open "Renaissance humanism" allows us to imagine a time historically when many ideas of autonomous, individuated "humans" had

yet come to be. Furthermore, the early modern commercial theater provided an unprecedented opportunity for playwrights, actors, and playgoers all to imagine what the human looked like in performance, extended through dramatic technicity. Henry S. Turner claims that the novelty of the early modern theater posed "a staggering question: what does it mean to make life, and especially forms of life that depart from a normative category of the 'human' understood to be the measure of all living things?"[34] But unhumanism, as I see it, conceptualizes the human as something that is and has always been performed through an unhuman encounter, and thus demands we pay attention to how various positings of "humanity" produce lacks, excesses, or remainders: unhumans, ab-hominations that lie outside humanity's boundaries while simultaneously upholding them, and yet in the dramatic moments of their encounter, they are still capable of pulling human definition into doubt.

[34] Henry S. Turner, *Shakespeare's Double Helix* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008) 10.

1

Reassembling the Infernal:

The Devil and the (Un)Human in Marlowe and Jonson

Recognizing devils

Near the beginning of Ben Jonson's 1616 comedy *The Devil Is an Ass*, the character Fabian Fitzdottrel, a foolish would-be occultist, laments London's quixotic landscape of fashionable magicians: "Ay, they do now name Bretnor, as before / They talked of Gresham, and of Doctor Forman, / Franklin, and Fiske, and Savory," he says, naming in quick succession a prognosticator, an almanac maker, an astrologer and professed doctor of physic, an apothecary, an astrologer-physician, and a reputed sorcerer (1.2.1-3).[1] Fitzdottrel's complaint is that though London harbors plenty of men supposedly versed in occult arts, "there's not one of these that ever could / Yet show a man the Devil in true sort" (ll.4-5). Fitzdottrel longs to summon a demon, ostensibly so it can lead him to hidden treasure. Yet despite the number of magicians he has apparently consulted, no satisfactory demon has been produced. Fitzdottrel observes that the London sorcerers cannot seem to show him the devil "out of picture" (l.13), and for the next 45 lines (as Jonson's stage directions put it) he "*expresses a longing to see the Devil*" (sd.34, italics original). Though he does not know it, Fitzdottrel's invocation is heard: a minor devil named Pug has just been dispatched to earth and, inhabiting the body of a recently executed cutpurse, is on

[1] All citations are from Ben Jonson, *The Devil Is an Ass*, ed. Peter Happé. (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994). Fitzdottel's references are clarified in Happé's glosses, n.1-3.

his way. The only problem is that even when Pug tells his summoner that he is a devil, Fitzdottrel doesn't believe him because he is not "the Devil in the true sort" – specifically, as Fitzdottrel says, "Your shoe's not cloven, sir, you are whole hoofed" (l.30).

Fitzdottrel's inability to recognize the devil he has called forth, if we cast back some twenty years into the history of the English commercial stage, might read as a parody of the most influential demonic entrance in the period's theater: Christopher Marlowe's rendition of the summoning of Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*. There, Faustus recites an incantation from a grimoire, resulting in the devil's first entrance. Whatever Faustus sees, he does not like it: "I charge thee to return and change thy shape. / Thou are too ugly to attend on me. / Go, and return an old Franciscan friar; / That holy shape becomes a devil best" (A-1.3.24-27).[2] Published in quarto in 1616, the same year Jonson's play was performed, the B-text of *Faustus* specifies that Mephistopheles first takes to the stage as a "dragon" (B-1.3.23). Faustus's reaction is the same, and in both texts Mephistopheles reappears within a few lines in the form of a friar. Jonson's send-up works by dropping the spectacle of Mephistopheles' first attempted entrance: rather than the human form serving as a secondary figure, Pug has no choice but to take what his master Satan calls "a body ready-made," for the chief devil cannot "create" one for him (1.1.135-36). Because Pug cannot first enter in the horrible form of a dragon or some traditional demon with cloven hooves (like the pictures Fitzdottrel has seen), Pug is not recognized as a devil.

[2] All citations from *Doctor Faustus, A- and B-Texts*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993). In this chapter I generally rely on the A-text, given the current scholarly view that it is the closest we have to Marlowe's authorial copy, including the low-comic scenes written by an anonymous collaborator. The B-text, with additions from Samuel Rowley and William Bird, is consulted only occasionally on points where its additions or specifications of stage action allow for illustrative contrast with or extension of themes I see present in the earlier text. For more on the fraught history of the *Faustus* text see Bevington and Rasmussen, "Introduction" 64-77, and David Riggs, "Marlowe's life" 33-34 in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

Faustus encounters a demon, but one far too terrible: he must translate it into another form to render it bearable. Fitzdottrel, however, cannot see before him the devil that proclaims its presence. What both scenes suggest, despite the differences of time and genre, is that it's difficult to approach devils directly. These scenes point to the central problem that will occupy the first portion of this chapter: how do we recognize, and subsequently, what do we do with devils? Between Faustus and Fitzdottrel we can apprehend two diabolic genres: in the realm of tragedy, a horror almost too terrible to be viewed, a sight that begs for misrecognition, and in the realm of comedy, a display of foolishness that relies on a third-party observer to recognize the devil that the character on stage cannot.

Using these two plays and their respective modes of diabolical misrecognition as bookends, this chapter will consider how early modern theater made use of devils to contribute to their audiences' understanding of what it means to be human. It is my contention that the establishment of the commercial theater in London provided a venue of for such thinking, a potential that borders on the "cybernetic," in the sense of the term theorized in the mid-20th century. I will expand on this strategic anachronism later in this chapter, but for the time being I defer to mathematician Norbert Wiener's definition of *cybernetics*, coined just before World War II, as the study of "the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal[.]"[3] In regarding the theater as a site of – and a challenge to – early modern habits and technologies of communication and control, I mean to raise questions regarding the constitution of humanity in line with those posed by thinkers like N. Katherine Hayles, who more recently notes the history of cybernetics as "emerging from networks at once materially real, socially regulated, and discursively constructed," and by always pointing to the nonhuman

[3] Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (1961, repr., Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985), 11

systems in which the human is implicated, Hayles suggests that "we have always been posthuman."[4] Diabolic performance on the early modern English stage (similarly materially real, socially regulated, and discursively constructed, as the novel technology of a permanent, secular theater gained traction in London's culture) gives life to strange or alternative possibilities for humanity by putting on display qualities and states of being that "humanity" supposedly excludes, which I term the *unhuman*.

Furthermore, I aim to reactivate the work that devils did in early modern social life, building off the historicist work accomplished by scholars in the past three decades. Stuart Clark, writing in the wake of New Historicism, takes issue with the tendency of earlier criticism to simply ignore or discount early modern discussion of demons, and points to the influence of theories of linguistic constructionism to suggest a reinvigorated study of demonism by affording surviving accounts a reality insofar as human language, not beholden to any direct relationship with reality, in fact is "reality-apportioning." By taking early modern speakers at their word, Clark sees devils as indicating the ways early modern subjects successfully made meaning within their language games, and hence produced social reality. This makes scholarship, as Clark admits, an "essentially interpretive inquiry" devoted to uncovering "the social, political, economic, biological, [or] psychic" aspects of the individuals and the cultures that enacted and perpetuated demonic beliefs.[5]

I am deeply indebted to the work of Clark and scholars who follow his example, but I wonder if, in making the devil a vehicle for some other thing, another cultural element, we deny

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[4] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 291. Hayles here is echoing claims made by Bruno Latour, whom I bring into the conversation later in this chapter.

[5] Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 6. Clark earlier observes that scholars of prior generations tended to assume that early modern accounts of demonism and witchcraft are "radically incorrect about what could happen in the real world," and hence, not worth writing about, merely showing the early modernity's cruft of pre-Enlightenment superstition (4).

it some of the reality we set out to recuperate, making it simply a vector for retroactive ideology critique rather than the *actual* entity it was historically thought to be. That is to say, by reducing the devil to a playful signifier, an imaginary body dedicated simultaneously to giving form to and obscuring through an otherworldly guise what are 'really' after all human social ills, do we ignore the very pressing *non*humanity devils and their ilk represent? As Kristen Poole more recently supposes, we are faced with the question of how to "write a history of experiencing the devil without sterilizing or rationalizing the demonic" through our post-Enlightenment worldview.[6] Just as we can never fully recover the conditions of belief from the past, we cannot really banish from our modern eye the mote of the devil which, lodged firmly in the historical record, must either be translated, or left by the wayside altogether. Indeed, by embodying a contested space that is both social and ontological, the devil is precisely the sort of persistent hybrid monster that Bruno Latour says proves 'we have never been modern.'[7] The devil refuses to disappear and hence must be made to *mean* something, to *do* something; if we are to take it at its word when it proclaims its presence, it must nevertheless be reformed into another shape to better attend on us.

My hunch is that this interpretive lability is a key element of the figure of the devil as such, and it is precisely this lability that allows the devil in early modern England to function as

[6] Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011) 25.

[7] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) 10. Latour institutes in this book his idea of the "Modern Constitution," which divides the world into separate spheres of "nature" and "culture," which officially cannot interact, but in practice are connected by various "hybrid" objects and creatures that embody elements from both camps. Latour also argues modernity functions on a notion of purely linear time with a past that can "be definitively broken with," despite the fact that "the past remains, … and even returns," materially and psychically in the form of hybrids. As I explain later in this chapter, devils operate precisely in such a fashion: even if reduced to pure social, rhetorical figures that embody undesirable attributes, they are never emptied of their implicit but "archaic" ontological claims about what does and does not constitute "humanity."

what I am calling the "constitutive unhuman."[8] I borrow my sense of the term "unhuman" from philosopher Eugene Thacker, who writes of "the limits of the human, [and] the unreliable knowledge of such limits" that are in evidence when "the human confront[s] something it can only name as *unhuman*."[9] If we choose not to discount devils entirely, we must also be wary of making them purely significant insofar as they reveal what are ultimately "human" problems and concerns – because, historically, devils were decidedly *not* human. Marlowe and Jonson are illustrative of this double-bind: it is Mephistopheles' unhuman first form that proves too terrible to view, while Pug's presence in a human body renders his announcement of his own demonism ineffective. What I mean, then, when I follow Thacker to say the devil historically functions as a "constitutive unhuman," is that it operates as a way to make ontological and metaphysical claims about the human being is *not*. The devil thus forms a constitutive limit to thinking about the human, often embodying those qualities understood to threaten the stability of the "human being" as such, qualities which could be but were not necessarily mapped along sociological axes of race, class, or gender.[10]

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[8] Definitionally, "unhuman" might at first seem to be an archaic synonym for inhuman or cruel, though rather advantageously for my purposes it also connotes the "superhuman" – the OED attests its usage in both senses most recently in the 19th century, and includes the use in the 17th century as a verb to "make" unhuman. See "unˈhuman, adj.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/Entry/214280?rskey=JT1P4n&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed May 22, 2016).

[9] Eugene Thacker, *Starry Speculative Corpse* (Washington: Zero Books, 2015) 82. Thacker's idea of the unhuman receives a more extended and specific treatment in a slightly different light in a book coauthored with Alexander Galloway on contemporary networks, describing the "unhuman swarm" of information technologies (and technologies more generally) that are fundamentally not human and yet, nevertheless, sustain and inform contemporary ideas of human subjectivity and agency (*The Exploit: A Theory of Networks* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). This conceptualization of the human as something which is composed of or arises from myriad nonhuman systems – rather than an entity that exists on its own, fully formed – is deeply important for my argument in this chapter about the complicity of humans and devils and my overall point about the importance of the theater as technology which extends and calls into doubt early modern ideas about "the human."

[10] Describing what he calls the "anthropological interpretation of the demon," Thacker elsewhere critiques the tendency to read demons "as a metaphor for the human … an anthropological motif through which we human beings project, externalize, and represent the darker side of the human to ourselves." What is lost in such accounts, Thacker says, is the inherently nonhuman nature of demons, and hence the fact that "the antagonism so

I am not arguing devils were not imbued with traits associated with particular sorts of human beings, as much scholarship has borne out.[11] This is all to say that, rather, in order to understand the constitutive unhumanity of devils, we must also understand their foundationally antitypical relationship to humans and the human community. The catch is that we also must try not to assume the preordained stability or "givenness" of humanity outside a co-creative relationship with the diabolic. As Rosi Braidotti writes, a "universalized format of humanity" is

> neither an ideal nor an objective statistical average or middle ground. It rather spells out a systematized standard of recognizability – of Sameness – by which all others can be assessed, regulated, and allotted to a designated social location. The human is a normative convention, which does not make it inherently negative, just highly regulatory and hence instrumental to practices of exclusion and discrimination.[12]

Rather than read devils merely as ciphers for social ills – which takes for granted a notion of common humanity that "really" underlies the rhetorical obfuscations and prejudices of a

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central to the demon is … an antagonism beyond human comprehension – not natural but supernatural, not merely physical but metaphysical." Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet* (Washington: Zero Books, 2013) 26.

[11] Stuart Clark's larger project, for instance, focuses on the use of demons as discursive formations to express broader notions about social reality, arguing early modern Europeans understood the devil and his kingdom as "a compendium of the paradoxes of misrule; a hierarchy governed from the lowest point of excellence, a society in which dishonor was a badge of status, and a speculum imitable only by the politically vicious" (Clark 87). Indeed, such contrariety seems a given if we are to argue that devils allowed early moderns to make claims about what and was not "human" – but the reality is more complex. As Nathan Johnstone has argued, the language of early modern demonism – rather than being one of pure inversion or negativity – also allowed for the "identification of diabolic agency within religious, social, and political commonplaces" (*The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006 [17]). Clark himself admits such binary thinking was unsustainable: "once the two reformations were under way the very enthusiasm with which writers of different religious persuasions gave authenticating roles to devils betrayed the instability of the logic involved" (147). John Parker has similarly argued that the notion of devils and their social inversions, originally serving to shore up Christendom by providing it with a metaphysical Other that mapped onto rival religions, was riven during the Reformation into distinct strains whereby Protestants saw the Pope of Rome as the Antichrist, Satan's emissary on earth, while Catholics imagined much the same of their Reformer adversaries (*The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe,* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007). Hence, it is no surprise the "inverted" society that devils represent by synecdoche often has particular touchpoints with an earthly society. John D. Cox, for example, notes that the early modern period saw a shift in representational alignment between devils at first with the seats of earthly power (the crown, the aristocracy, and the ecclesiastical elite) to the association of devils with commoners (*The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350-1642*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004 [18]). Meanwhile, Lyndal Roper finds in witchcraft lore a demoniacal expression of anxieties about potential disruptions of patriarchal sexual roles, along with a class consciousness increasingly focused on a deeply gendered notion of bodily decorum (*Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* New York: Routledge, 2004 [6]).

[12] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Malden: Polity, 2013) 26.

particular time or culture – I propose we read them as *actors* in the fraught contest to delimit what does and does not constitute humanity. Unhuman devils, that is, are mediators whose hybridity unsettles the ostensibly clean, symmetrical relationships between human and nonhuman.[13] They are, in Bruno Latour's terms, "actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, to redeploy it, and also to betray it."[14]

Any attempt to demarcate devils as purely nonhuman runs aground on the uncanny similarities humans and devils possess. Meanwhile, to argue devils are no more than aspects of humanity, refracted through a glass darkly, ignores Thacker's point about the deep and genuinely unhuman malice demons embody. Another way of thinking about this: Latour claims that "social aggregates are not the object of an *ostensive* definition," that is to say, things "that can be pointed at by the index finger," but rather "only of a *performative* definition. They are made by the various ways and manners in which they are said to exist."[15] Thus, the human/devil binary consists of two "social aggregates" that only come into focus in particular performative moments when someone (or some institution) makes a claim about what is and is not human, what is and is not diabolic. This is why devils are so hard to recognize: they tend to look a little different each time they are conjured.

Latour elsewhere explains that his method, called Actor-Network Theory (ANT), does not see either nature or culture as stable entities but as "assemblages" – not unchanging and predetermined realms but rather an effect of "a very peculiar movement of re-association and

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[13] Latour, WHNB, 13. It is modernity's tendency, Latour argues, to "mask[] the conjoined birth" of nature and culture, erasing or reducing the mediators that bring the realms into coexistence (13). This is evident enough in the modern critical tendencies to reduce demonism to a signifier of pure ideological discord. Yet even in premodern or early modern terms, as we will see, the devil functioned as a troubling mediator between human and nonhuman realms, embodying the opposite of Christian humanity that is nonetheless contiguous with the Christian community. See also Latour, *Reassembling the Social*: *An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Trans. Catherine Porter. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 38-40.

[14] Latour, WHNB, 81.

[15] Latour, *Reassembling*, 34.

reassembling" among the human and nonhuman actors of history.[16] It is from Latour's book, *Reassembling the Social*, that I draw the title of this chapter, for I argue that in early modern England, and on the commercial stage in particular, we can observe precisely such a reassemblage of the infernal elements of the Christian cosmology in service of new but as-yet-unsteady ideas (the plural is important) of what it means to be human. As older systems of social and metaphysical thought that undergirded thinking on the human were upended by religious and economic change, we find in the public theaters devils who participate in the messy work of redefining humanity. My goal, then, is to follow their movements as they chart for us the reassembling of the infernal.

Devils and the theater

Devils were a common sight on the early English stage – John D. Cox records around thirty extant plays with devil characters between 1575, when James Burbage's Theater was established, and 1640.[17] But despite their ubiquity, stage-devils, by some accounts, still had the capacity to surprise: an oft-repeated anecdote, included by the Puritan lawyer William Prynne in his massive compilation of antitheatrical polemic *Histriomastix* (1632), recounts how there once appeared

> the visible apparition of the Devill on the Stage at the Belsavage Play-house, in Queene Elizabeths dayes, (to the great amazement both of the Actors and Spectators) whiles they were there prophanely playing the History of *Faustus* (the truth of which I have heard from many now alive, who well remember it,) there being some distracted with that fearefull sight[.][18]

[16] Latour, *Reassembling*, 7

[17] Cox, Appendix, 209-11. This is to say nothing of the scattered plays where characters disguise themselves as devils, or the various revivals of popular plays like *Faustus* or the anonymous *Merry Devil of Edmonton*.

[18] William Prynne, *Histrio-mastix*, (London: by E[dward] A[llde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes] and W[illiam] I[ones], 1633) sig. Ggg3r. E. K. Chambers collects several instances of this anecdote, including Prynne's, in *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 3:423–24.

The "prophane" performance of the Faustus legend has the unintended side-effect of conjuring a real devil, and driving at least some portion of the audience mad. Despite the supposed "playing" in the Belsavage, the devil's appearance and the audience's subsequent madness proves, as Ellen MacKay puts it in an overview of the fragmentary and often catastrophic history of the early English stage, that "incredulity is a poor safeguard against theatrical assault."[19] In punishing the spectators by summoning an actual devil during a staged imitation of conjuring, the anecdote offers a keen sense of the theater's danger: how is one to know whether the demon on the stage is real or not until it is too late?

Critical responses to *Faustus* and Prynne's particularly charged nugget of theater history have tended to focus on how the act of *summoning* a demon, when feigned in a play, may prove insufficiently distinct from the genuine article.[20] But I wish to reset the terms, for at the bottom of this issue is a question of why devils would flock to the theater, and why humans flock along with them. The answer, I think, lies in the way Protestant polemicists like Prynne and his forebears approached the issue of the theater as given to them by Christian history, particularly through St. Augustine. In *The City of God* Augustine argues that humans and demons are

[19] Ellen MacKay, *Persecution, Plague, and Fire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 14.

[20] Andrew Sofer looks at the issue through the lens of J.L. Austin's speech-act theory, arguing that the play "probes the uncertain boundary between hollow performance and magical performativity." The attempt to keep one sort of speech-act separate from another always potentially falls through, as the Belsavage anecdote illustrates; fantasy and reality have a tendency to blur together (Andrew Sofer, "How to Do Things with Demons: Conjuring Performatives in *Doctor Faustus*" *Theatre Journal* 61.1 [2009] 20). Meanwhile, Genevieve Guenther sees at stake in *Faustus*'s conjuring a more specifically religious concern, since Reformers on the one hand argued magical speech was totally ineffective, and yet explained any apparently efficacious magical event as the result of diabolic intervention: "Satan himself staged conjurations as theatrical spectacles, which he used instrumentally to snare people into damnation" (Genevieve Guenther, "Why Devils Came When Faustus Called Them" *Modern Philology* 109.1 [August 2011] 47-48.) Rather than the issue being whether or not a speech-act has efficacy, the Reformers are more concerned with what sort of agency is being exercised: summoning a devil is a play staged by Satan, with the aim being to convince the magician his actions serve his own interests. As Guenther points out, a theatrical understanding of conjuring throws a decidedly *anti*theatrical cast on Mephistopheles' repeated success in turning Faustus away from salvation by presenting him with pageants and spectacles (48) But the Belsavage anecdote suggests that, as Sofer contends, the differences between the world on- and off-stage could be fuzzy at best. In the case of efficacious speech-acts, the devil is incidentally summoned by the theater, but summoned nonetheless; while from the Reformed point of view, Satan himself is the master playwright who cues the devil to appear.

constitutionally similar, given over to the "passions of the mind," and thus both are "delighted with the obscenities of the theater, and the fictions of the poets[.]"[21] Augustine intends to provide an ontological description of demons – they are like humans in that they have rational souls, but unlike them in that they have wholly spiritual, immortal bodies – and he relies on the theater and poetry to link two separate orders of being, explicitly arguing that devils occupy a "middle place" in the Christian hierarchy of being, between humanity and God.[22] Theater and poetry provide for Augustine an "obscene" and vain mental stimulation that turns the mind from the proper contemplation of God by exciting the rational soul that, incidentally, devils share – in other words, there is something not-quite-human about what Augustine calls the "human passions."[23] From here, Augustine parallels the theater with magical practice and idolatry: just as the legendary magician Hermes Trismegistus called demonic spirits into statues, deceiving people (and himself) into worshiping devils, so do idolaters generally place too much faith in material objects, or products of human labor.[24] In this account, devils can simultaneously be the causes and victims of idolatry, both performing the false miracles that enthrall the unwary while also being drawn themselves to such empty but exciting performances. The dynamic is evident earlier in Augustine's allegation that Roman stage plays, in particular, were instituted by devils that masqueraded as gods for their personal amusement and glorification. By allowing their profligate and shameful nature to be represented in the theater, Augustine believed, the Roman

[21] Augustine, *City of God,* trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 2000), 259.
[22] Augustine, 259
[23] Augustine, 259. For more on the fundamental constitutional similarity between humans and demons in the early modern imagination, see Bronwyn Johnston, "Who the Devils is in Charge? Mastery and the Faustian Pact on the Early Modern Stage" in *Magical Transformations on the Early Modern English Stage*, Lisa Hopkins and Helen Ostovich, eds (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 31-45. In particular Johnston looks to how the pseudo-equality between humans and devils meant that human magicians could often outwit their summoned spirits, and in contrast to the more famous Faustian bargain, many plays of the period, such as Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and the anonymous but immensely popular *Merry Devil of Edmonton* demonstrate precisely such a relationship.
[24] Augustine, 265-271.

pantheon "prove[d] that they are detestable devils" rather than truly divine.[25] Thus, the theater is rendered both the product of devils' particular moral frailties and a carrier for those same frailties in humans, since the audience conforms to the stage's the moral exempla, as authorized by false gods.[26] The overall effect of the theater, in Augustine's view, is to make humans more like devils.

Augustine's logic posits a connection between human and demonic impulses. On the one hand, devils operate through the theater, using it to make humans more like them, but on the other, humanity's predisposition to sin and sensuality – traits shared by devils – are what renders them susceptible to the theatrical trick in the first place. As Augustine writes, on the wonder inspired by the theater and idolatry both, there is nothing "more wretched than mankind tyrannized over by the work of his own hands, since man, by worshipping the works of his own hands, may more easily cease to be man, than the works of his hands can, through his worship of them, become gods."[27] Both idolatry and the theater are examples of human action that, in drawing people from the correct worship of God, become conduits for demonic agency, revealing the complicity of the human and the diabolic. Augustine imagines the theater as a hellish breeding ground because it is a place where human and demonic interests intersect: devils love the theater because it is there that their terrible stories are told, and humans enjoy the theater because it allows them to participate in the terrible stories of devils.

Despite the ascent of Christianity, the early modern English theater was still colored by its pagan past, even as humanist classicism maintained Greek and especially Latin culture as a standard of social excellence. After the Reformation and the abolition of miracle and mystery plays, the theater no longer had a claim to representing any sort of divinity, eliminating one

[25] Augustine, 51.
[26] Augustine, 47.
[27] Augustine, 271.

particular pratfall of the Roman stage. But Stephen Gosson's antitheatrical tract *The School of Abuse* (1579) comes early in the life of the secular, commercial stage, and provides a rearticulation of Augustinian themes for the new dramatic scene, including the role of the devil in the playhouse. As Gosson says, "The Carpenter rayseth not his frame without tooles, nor the Deuill his woork without instrumentes: were not Players the meane, to make these assemblyes, such multitudes wold hardly be drawne in so narowe roome."[28] Players become the Devil's "instruments," by which he draws together the audience in order to accomplish the work of sin. And the most dangerous part, Gosson believes, is not only is the audience ignorant, *so are the players*:

> They seeke not to hurte, but desire too please: they haue purged their Comedyes of wanton speaches, yet the Corne whiche they sell, is full of Cockle: and the drinke that they drawe, ouercharged with dregges. There is more in them then we perceiue, the Deuill standes at our elbowe when we see not, speaks, when we heare him not, strikes when wee feele not, and woundeth sore when he raseth no skinne, nor rentes the fleshe. In those thinges, that we least mistrust, the greatest daunger dooth often lurke.[29]

Gosson argues that whatever moral lessons the theater offers, they are offset by its dregs and chaff, the entailments of the theatrical environment. These remainders are the disagreeable but seemingly insubstantial "abuses" of the theater, things which "cannot be showen, because they passe the degrees of the instrument, reach of the Plummet, sight of the minde, and for trial are neuer brought to the touchstone."[30] These confoundingly light abuses – unseeable, unweighable, untestable – are the deceptively safe fictiveness of the stage's actions, which "strike[] when we feele not, and woundeth sore" without harming the "skinne" or "fleshe." A language of imaginary harm like that carried out by and on stage-players becomes a real but invisible harm wrought upon spectators; indeed, it is because spectators do not truly "mistrust" the stage that the

[28] Stephen Gosson, *The schoole of abuse* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1579) , sig. C3v-C4r.
[29] Gosson, sig. C4r
[30] Gosson, sig. C5r

theatrical enterprise is compromised, inducing playgoers to approach their lessons without the appropriate moral seriousness. Hence, in complement to Prynne's anecdote, Gosson alleges the devil does appear in the theater – he's just invisible, imperceptible, "stand[ing] at our elbowe." In Gosson's view, the theater is *inherently* diabolic, as an institution it is an "instrument" of Satan, and no good can come of it – and whether or not we're able to see them, devils certainly reside there.[31]

Humanism, magic, and cybernetics

The morally corrosive tendencies of theater hinge on the idea that, whatever positive example might be gleaned there, its ontological falseness in performance would not be enough to distinguish it from the snare of a similarly evacuated representation of vice.[32] In thus

[31] Following Gosson's example, English antitheatricalism tends to operate on the premise of the theater's compromised – and hence diabolic – instrumentality. John Rainolds's *Th'Overthrow of Stage-plays* (1599) cites Augustine to claim that "the Paynim Romans" were only "bound to haue stage-playes by their superstition in honour of their Deified *deuils*," but nevertheless eventually "destroyed Theaters … as vnprofitable, & likely to breede publike corruption of maners" (John Rainolds, *Th'overthrow of stage-playes*, Middleburg: Richard Schilders [sig. D2r-v]). To Rainolds's thinking, there would be no reason for theaters at all without their diabolic origin, and so even without the supposed authorization of the gods, the Roman theater proved hazardous to the soul. The pamphleteer Philip Stubbes in *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), in response to the claim that contemporary plays contained instructive moral exemplars, sarcastically responds that, "so there are: if you will learne fa[l]shood, if you will learn cosenage: if you will learn to deceiue: if you will learn to play the Hipocrit: to cogge, lye and falsifie: … if you will learn to playe the vice, to swear, teare, and blaspleme, both Heauen and Earth," and so on, with the eventual price of admittance to the playhouse being damnation (Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses*, London: Richard Jones, 1583 [sig. LVv]). The writer known only as I.H. in *This World's Folly* (1615) likewise takes issue with what the stage represents, and how such representations affect the audience. He describes how playgoers "set open their cares & eies to suck vp [a] variety of abhominations, bewitching their minds with extrauagant thoughts, & benumbing their soules with insensibilitie, where by sin is become so customarie to them, as, That to sin, with them is deem'd no sinne at all[.]" (I.H., *This world's folly,* London: Willian Jaggard [sig A6]). See also Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1985), a landmark study that traces the antitheatrical argument and its permutations across several centuries.

[32] As Michael O'Connell has written, such a tension is at the heart of early modern Christianity, a tension "in the relation of image and word" that stems from an understanding of the incarnation that suggested "God, in taking on a human form, became subject to representation as an image." It is this tension, O'Connell continues, that lay at the heart of the iconoclasm of the Reformation, which turned religious thinking from the physical and visible to the textual" (*The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm & Theater in Early Modern England* [New York: Oxford UP, 2000] 10). In an earlier study Huston Diehl's sense of the theater and the Reformation in London is more favorable, as she argues for "the formation of a uniquely Protestant theater in early modern England," on the grounds that images and performances were not distrusted as such, but rather, the ends to which these images and performances were

hoodwinking the audience, the theater becomes what Kristen Poole dubs "a metamorphic environment," a location of a piece with early modern epistemologies that subscribed to theories of spontaneous generation, alchemy, and the reality of Heaven, Hell, and their denizens. The polemicists understand the theater as a dangerous place of "process and movement rather than static ontological conditions" and the phenomena glimpsed and described there erode distinctions "between the psychological and the physical, or between physical and spiritual, or between the metaphorical and literal[.]"[33] The rhetorical valences of theatrical diabolism exhibit such a breakdown of the spiritual and the physical, the metaphorical and the literal, the performatively absent and materially present. The spiritual devils who founded the theater become the metaphorical devils who dance across its stage, turning the audience into real representations (re-presentations) of the devilry they witness.

To deal with this imbroglio moving forward, we must not take for granted some unitary prior reality, or elements of reality, and their "unreal" representations, but account for the coexistence of various elements that constitute the tangled web of reality as such. Devils and stage plays are all, as Latour might say, "beings of fiction" that participate in "the ontological unsettling caused by works of art."[34] It is precisely due to this "ontological unsettling" that antitheatricalists object to the theater's power to make the unreal real – or vice versa. "Inevitably," Bruno Latour writes, "we risk falling back on the idea that there is, on one side,

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put is what determined their worth (*Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997] 5). Protestant sentiments toward images and spectacle – whether hostile or amenable – are not actually exclusive when, as Diehl suggests, it's a matter of ends rather than means. But the problem, as I understand it, is that the ends of the public stage, no matter how often playwrights try to bring their audience to a subtler understanding of their feigned shows, are always far hazier than either side would like them to be.

[33] Poole, 54-55. This claim is part of Poole's larger argument regarding what she calls the "Ovidian physics" or Marlowe's diabolic stage, "the lived experience of a poetic mode that itself interpolates cosmology" (56). I return to Poole and her argument in more depth in my reading of *Faustus* later in this chapter.

[34] Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013), 246.

that which exists, and, on the other, 'representations' of that which exists."[35] Augustine's intellectual roots in Platonism cause him to bring this logic to bear on the theater. Thinking in terms of original and imitation, Augustine finds on the stage simulations, not even of God but of false gods, which are in fact simulations of devils. The English antitheatricalists follow his lead, finding on the stage simulations of virtue that, in their falsity, prove hard to distinguish from vice. In any case, they think, the audience's consequent imitations bespeak a palpable devilry.

England's antitheatricalists, in reassuming Augustine's critique as polemical Protestants, reproduce his wariness of muddled reality and representation. However, through the tale of Hermes Trismegistus and his speaking statues, Augustine also linked the theater and idolatry with magic. But aside from isolated instances like Prynne's Belsavage anecdote, magic fades into the background in discussions surrounding the early modern theater.[36]

Nevertheless, early modern magic – in its more positive forms – observed an instrumentalist logic regarding the operations of the world and the potential of the human within it shared by early modern humanism and its arguments for art's salutary effects. I am not saying humanism and magic were totally interchangeable, but rather I want to note an overlap in terms

[35] Latour, *Inquiry*, 234

[36] Outside the matter of the stage, English Protestant Reformers were eager to conflate the ceremonies of the jettisoned Church with magic, under the banner of what Puritan theologian William Perkins described as the "worship [of] false Gods" or reverence to "the true God with a false worshippe" (William Perkins, *A golden chaine, or the description of theologie containing the order of the causes of saluation and damnation, according to Gods woord*, [London: Edward Alde], sig. F6v). Elaborating on the second commandment's injunction against idolatry, Perkins decries everything from the worship of images of God, to participation in the Mass, to relics and church statuary, to the cult of the Saints, before arriving at the issue of "Worshipping of deuils," the primary form of such practice being "Magicke, which is a mischieuous arte, accomplishing wonders by Satans assistance" (Perkins, *A golden chaine,* sig. G3v). As Perkins says, demonic consultations are like the "Processions, plaies, and such feastes, as are consecrated to the memorial and honour of Idoles," and so the demonic contract which underlies any magical practice likewise diverts honor and attention away from God and toward the devil (Perkins, *A golden chaine,* sig. F8r). As Keith Thomas has pointed out, this sort of Protestant vigor was a symptom of the Reformers' sense that the medieval Church blurred magical and religious practices (Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* [London: Oxford UP, 1971]) In particular Thomas claims that at the end of the early modern period "we can draw a distinction between religion and magic which would not have been possible at the beginning" (640) After the Reformation, both Catholic sacramental magic and other, less specifically religious types of conjuring are linked to the same well of innately demonic power. But questions of to what extent magic – or certain kinds of magic – involved devils had been just as hotly contested even prior to the Reformation that so influences Perkins's rhetoric.

of their conceptualization of a human agency that, whether it is mediated by nonhuman spirits or assailed by the fancies inspired by a poem, could nevertheless be geared toward the betterment (or debasement) of the self. As Frances Yates established five decades ago, key Italian humanists such as Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola articulated a form of beneficial magic through their recovery and study of Hermetic and Neoplatonic texts. Operating from the humanist assumption that pre-Christian texts might nevertheless function as aids to a fulfilling spiritual and moral life, Ficino and Pico, among others, found in Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish sources on magic to be not religious but secular, philosophical authorities, all part of a "genealogy of ancient wisdom."[37] The humanist study of ancient texts resulted in a new magic that had to be, in Yates's terms, "reformed and learned," severing any "connection with the old ignorant, evil, or black magic."[38] In other words, to recuperate older magical thought to their Christian beliefs, the Italian humanists and their followers had to enact its reformation and devise a way to separate their own magical leanings from their pagan forebears.

When it came time to distinguish reformed Christian magic from pagan devilry, the solution appeared, Paola Zambelli says, in a distinction between white and black magic that "lay principally in the definition of intelligences and celestial powers," the entities at the top of the magical world order described by magician-scholars like Cornelius Agrippa.[39] These entities, broadly understood, were the mediating agents of magic that sprung from Ficino's recovery of

[37] Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 18. Indeed, Ficino calls the Egyptian magus Hermes Trismegistus "the first author of theology," the head of a pagan lineage that culminated in the writings of "Divine Plato." The context is Ficino's introduction to *Pimander*, his translation of one of the chapters of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, quoted in Yates, 14. Similarly, Erasmus wrote that the tools of any craftsmen – "saws, axes, adzes, bores" – were akin to "the practice of writing" and "the speaking of Latin," in that they were simultaneously integral to Christian civilization and learning while being nevertheless of a pagan origin. See Erasmus, "The antibarbarians" trans. Robert Parker (100-101) in *English Humanism: Wyatt to Cowley*, ed. Joanna Martindale (Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1985).

[38] Yates, 17

[39] Paola Zambelli, *White magic, Black magic in the European Renaissance* (Boston: BRILL, 2007) 8. For more on the troubles many Renaissance magicians faced in distinguishing demonic from natural (or a Christianized, 'spritual') magic see D.P. Walker, *Spiritual & Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (1958).

the Hermetic texts.[40] Keith Thomas explains that Christianized use of these texts "taught that by mystical regeneration it was possible for man to regain domination over nature which he had lost at the Fall."[41] Pre-Christian magic was thus thought to tend toward the demonic, but a magic reconciled to Christianity would be part and parcel of the project of human salvation.

Agrippa explains that "Intelligences" are spirits are akin to "Angels" and not "Devils," entities that are "knowing, understanding and wise."[42] Thus, when magic is used correctly (by Agrippa's thinking) it is not terribly different from any other spiritual pursuit, insofar as its aim is to put the human into clear communication with the world, the elements that constitute it, and by extension their creator. Agrippa imagines a world in which the human being is potentially totally efficacious; magicians "not only better understand themselves and God but also [can] access some of the forces that He embedded in the world to govern it."[43] It is precisely in the potential for magic to function, in Agrippa's terms, as a God-given method to "govern" the world and its processes that I sense a presentiment of modern cybernetics. Coined by Norbert Wiener and Arturo Rosenblueth after World War II, the neologism of "cybernetics" was intended to cover the study of emergent fields of automated and technologized communication that these

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[40] As Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim describes the world in *De Occulta Philosophia* (1533), all of creation is divided into "Elementary, Celestiall, and Intellectuall" spheres of influence, each with its own version of an operative magical power. He explains we can work to understand the "Elementary world, through the help of Physick, and Naturall Philosophy in the various mixtions of Naturall things," while the "Celestiall world" operates by astrological "rayes, and the influences thereof, according to the rules of Astrologers, and the doctrines of Mathematicians." Finally, the "Intellectual" world is populated by the "divirse Intelligences" which are contacted through "the sacred ceremonies of Religions." Each realm is subject to its own "vertues" and governing principles; magic is the discovery and use of these principles within that realm or, in the case of a 'higher' realm, exploited so as to affect the lower (ie, the 'vertues' of the celestial world can be used to understand the elementary world in certain helpful ways, such as through astrology). See *Three books of occult philosophy*, trans. J.F., 1-2 (London: R.W., 1651). Though the authors of the plays I later deal with were writing before this first English translation of Agrippa, the original Latin circulated widely for some decades before.

[41] Thomas, *Religion*, 224.

[42] Agrippa, Cc3v.

[43] Allison B. Kavey, "Building Blocks: Imagination, Knowledge, and Passion in Agrippa von Nettesheim's *De Occulta Philosophia Libri Tres*." *World-Building and the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Allison B. Kavey. (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010) 37.

thinkers and their cohort felt would be pivotal in postwar society. As Wiener put it, cybernetics is fundamentally a "theory of the message among men [sic], machines, and in society as a sequence of events in time which, though it itself has a certain contingency, strives to hold back nature's tendency toward disorder by adjusting its parts to various purposive ends."[44]

Therefore, cybernetics – though its modern connotation is highly technological – etymologically derives from the Greek word for *steersman* (κυβερνήτης, *kubernḗtēs*) and whose Latin cognate *gubernator* gives us the English word "governor."[45] The first wave of cybernetics, as Donna Haraway notes, "rests on a theory of language and control" and turns to communication as it is technologically mediated to determine "the rates, directions, and probabilities of flow of a quantity called information," resulting in a picture of a "world [that] is subdivided by boundaries differentially permeable to information."[46] Like Agrippa's idea of magic, which posits a divinely designed method of "governorship" embedded in the world and receptive to instrumental use given the proper study of various hierarchical elements and intelligences, cybernetics suggests a world that is independent of the human and in some sense deeply nonhuman, but on the other hand, susceptible to human control and operationalized human development.[47] However, among the various mediators of the world, Agrippa also admits to the existence of evil spirits, a variety of "devils" that range from "false gods" and those "who

[44] Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings* (London: Free Association Books, 1989) 27.
[45] Wiener, *Cybernetics* 11**.**
[46] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 164.
[47] Cary Wolfe grounds his approach to the field of "posthumanism" at this juncture when he turns to the second wave of cybernetic theorists, in particular the complexity theories of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. Whereas the observer's implication in the system observed is a particular problem for the first wave of cybernetics (see the quote from Wiener in note 76), the second wave focuses on the oddity of what Wolfe calls this "openness from closure" — "the very thing that separates us from the world connects us to the world, and self-referential, autopoietic closure, far from indicating a kind of solipsistic neo-Kantian idealism, actually is generative of openness to the environment" (*What Is Posthumanism?* [Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010] xxi). Thus posthumanism, for Wolfe, is an extension of humanist inquiry in that it is primarily interested in relations between humans, their environment, and the apparatuses by which they interact with or intervene in that environment.

Imitate miracles, and serve wicked conjurers and witches."[48] Whereas Wiener conceives of cybernetics as essentially conservative – it is an attempt to "hold back nature's tendency to disorder" by shoring up society in the face of increasing entropy – Agrippa's thinking on magic is both spiritually restorative (it can guide a sinful humanity closer to God) and destructive (the magician may steer his pursuits in the wrong direction, away from God and toward devils).

Another possible conjunction (or disjunction) of human and demonic action was especially important regarding ideas about the magical manipulation of the human imagination, which was paralleled in early modern humanism regarding the moral effects of poetry and art on their audience. Agrippa writes that "Passions sometimes alter the body by way of imitation, by reason of the vertue which the likeness of the thing hath to change it, which power the vehement imagination moves[.]"[49] This is understood as a natural process, and the strength of the imagination can undoubtedly result in bodily effects: Agrippa gives mundane examples such as one's mouth feeling sour at the mere mention of sour foods, or yawning after seeing someone else yawn.[50] Several decades later, the Jesuit Martin Del Rio in *Disquisitiones Magicae* (1600) appealed to Aquinas and others to similarly maintain that "the imagination has power over the body of the imaginer with respect to all those things that have a natural affinity with the imagination," meaning mostly the arousal of certain sensations or emotions based on the recollection of their causes.[51] However, Del Rio is adamant that the imagination's effects are normally intransitive: "Mental images have the power of building up a representation to a certain

[48] Agrippa, Cc7r-v.
[49] Agrippa, 142.
[50] This is shortly followed by a story of a king of Italy who thought too much on bulls and overnight grew a set of horns. As Agrippa explains, "[f]or a vehement cogitation, whilest it vehemently moves the species, pictures out the figure of the thing thought on, which they represent in the blood, and the blood impresseth from it self on the members that are nourished by it, as upon those of the same body," and, he adds, "so upon those of others" (143).
[51] Del Rio, *Investigations into Magic*, trans. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 2000) 38.

extent, but one person's soul is not naturally in alignment with anyone else's soul or body."[52] Nevertheless, under certain circumstances the power exerted by one's imagination on oneself, or the power exerted on one's imagination by another, can be augmented, and the human mind can thus be "snatched into ecstasy" only "because of a pact … made with an evil spirit."[53] An evil spirit can adversely affect people's minds not because it has power over the body *per se*, but because it "affects the eyes or dupes the other senses by casting a vain image in their path."[54] In other words, devils can put on a false show to manipulate their spectators' sensory response.

Similar theories regarding the powers and pitfalls of the imagination are crucial to early modern humanist defenses of poetic enterprises. Generally speaking, the humanist arguments in favor of poesy bank on the power of certain types of art-objects – usually texts of sufficient cultural stature – to incite people to correct moral action.[55] In England, Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defense of Poesy*, composed and circulated in manuscript in the 1570s but published in 1595, reacts to an intellectual tradition that disparages poesy for its seeming triviality in comparison to other arts and sciences.[56] For Sidney, though, the poet's distinction is that "lifted up with the vigor of his own invention" he creates "another nature" where things are "either better then

[52] Del Rio 41.
[53] Del Rio 43.
[54] Del Rio 78.
[55] For instance, in the fourteenth century Petrarch wrote in his impassioned defense of his classical scholarship in "Of His Own Ignorance," he explains that while the scholastic educator "teaches what virtue is … his lesson lacks the words that sting and set afire and urge toward love of virtue and hatred of vice or, at any rate, does not have enough of such power. He who looks for that will find it in our Latin writers." The reader is expected to find the most piquant and hence instructive examples of virtue and vice "in" Cicero, Seneca, or Horace, an aesthetic experience that "stings" and "sets fire" to the imagination and results in bodily action. Petrarch, "Of His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others" trans. Hans Nachod, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Cassirer, Kristeller, and Randall (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) 103.
[56] A.C. Hamilton has also argued that the *Defense* is a response to the critiques of human endeavor – including poesy – offered by Agrippa in his later excoriating treatise *De Vanitate*, which disavows not only Agrippa's earlier faith in magic but also the efficacy of any art, science, or human endeavor. See A.C. Hamilton, "Sidney and Agrippa," *The Review of English Studies* 7.26 (1956). 151-57.

Nature bringeth forth or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature[.]"[57] Sidney's poet surpasses even Agrippa's ideal magus, who seeks out and is thus beholden to what rules the natural world provides; the poet becomes instead the architect and guide to another, fully malleable "Nature." This serves a moral purpose, allowing one to represent ethical points in an idealized fashion: "poetry ever sets Virtue so out in her best colors, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamored of her."[58] Ben Jonson, meanwhile, articulated his poetic goals in terms borrowed from Horace, whose poem *Ars poetica* he translated in 1604 and revised sometime after 1610.[59] There Horace says that "Poets would either profit, or delight / Or mixing sweet, and fit, teach life the right" (478-479).[60] Jonson took from Horace the idea of poetry – and, transitively, the theater in which Jonson also worked – as primarily moral and educational tools, ones that conveyed the "profit" or ethical instruction via the "delight" of private reading or theatrical performance. In this case, the literal or imaginative spectacle's pleasing examples of rewarded morality and punished vice are enough to incite the

[57] Philip Sidney, "The Defense of Poesy" in *The Renaissance in England*, eds. H.E. Rollins and H. Baker, (Boston: Heath, 1954) 607.

[58] Sidney, 607. Yet the qualification Sidney next provides is of utmost importance. While "with the force of a divine breath," the poet can "bringeth things forth surpassing [Nature's] doings," these imaginings also provide "no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it." In this formulation, Sidney suggests that poetry can affect the imagination, but not in any way that brings the subject truly closer to the thing imagined. Contrary to Agrippa's notion of an imagination that in its strongest instances transforms bodies, Sidney insists that the excitation of the imagination is purely individual and cognitive. In this view, poetry is a tool designed to fail: it can bring us to imagine something better than what we have, but it cannot make it tangible.

[59] See John Mulryan, "Jonson's classicism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001).

[60] Ben Jonson, "Horace, of the Art of Poetry." In a more prose translation of Horace, Edward Henry Blackeney (1940) renders this as "The poet's aim is either to profit or to please, or to blend in one the delightful and the useful, that your hearers may catch quickly what is said and faithfully retain it." See *Literary Criticism: From Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H, Gilbert 1940 (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1962). Similarly, the Prologue to Jonson's *Volpone* (1606) explains the "true scope" of his plays: "In all his poems hath been this measure, / To mix profit with your pleasure." (Pro.7-8). See *Volpone* in *Ben Jonson's Plays & Masques,* ed. Richard Harp (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2001).

spectator-reader's desire to "live" correctly.[61] Sidney wants to imagine a better world, while Jonson wants to make the world – or at least the people in it – better.

As I argued for a connection between early modern magic and cybernetics, then, I also wish to suggest a link between cybernetics and early modern humanism's fantasies of moral cultivation and human self-governance. Humanism is a theory of "steersmanship" that arose in the wake of the technological, communicative upheaval of the printing press and the establishment of secular, commercial theaters.[62] But whereas postwar cybernetics turned to emergent computer technologies and electrical devices, humanism concerned itself with theorizing and managing the ways people interacted with the new wealth of printed material and

[61] Jonson, in his commonplace book *Discoveries*, says ideally people "will acknowledge the virtues of [the poet's] studies," especially "[h]ow he doth reign in men's affections; how invade, and break in upon them; and makes their minds like the thing he writes" (*Timber, or: Discoveries* in *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt [1975: repri. London: Penguin, 1996] 974-75; 979-98). Jonson slips out of his usual instructional mode, opting instead to describe the poet as a force of invading and molding affect. That an effective poet is morally sound is assumed. Likewise, in *An Apology for Actors* (1612), Thomas Heywood repeated the defense of poesy as a tool for moral instruction, but explicitly within the context of the stage and with even fewer qualifications, noting that so "bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action that it hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt. What coward to see his contryman valiant would not bee ashamed of his owne cowardise? What English Prince should hee behold the true portrature of that [f]amous King Edward the third, … and would not bee suddenly Inflam'd with so royall a spectacle, being made apt and fit for the like atchieuement." (Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, [London: Nicholas Okes, 1612] sig. B4r). Like Jonson, Heywood maintains that the viewing of actions onstage influences the character of the spectator. The emotions stirred up in the playgoer goad him on to heroic and virtuous action, making him like the heroic figures on the stage. Furthermore, Heywood's "bewitching," while explicable as a figurative flourish, has a potentially literal connotation if we remember the magical literature of the period. To be clear, Heywood and Jonson do not make any claims about the ability to materially transfigure the body, but they do conceive of a method whereby a body's dispositions and actions are influenced by the emotions or passions stirred up on the stage and in poetry. Just as Heywood imagines a play-goer "inflamed" with the acting of virtuous spectacle, and just as Jonson supposes a reader-spectator whose cogitations are literally reformed by the poet, Agrippa outlines how the mind can affect not only one's own body, but the minds and bodies of others.

[62] Steven Mullaney's *The Place of the Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988) remains a hallmark in establishing the fraught legal circumstances under which playhouses operated outside of the City of London in the early modern period, and the suspicion with which the civil apparatus regarded them, their proprietors, and their patrons, though he also gestures toward the incorporation of the theater into a more civil atmosphere with the appearance of private theaters. In terms of the "information overload" heralded by the spread of the printing press, Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday's edited collection *The Renaissance Computer* (New York: Routledge, 2000) does much, as the title suggests, to think about the proliferation of print from a scholarly moment at the turn of the millennium when the book could no longer be taken "for granted as the natural medium for storing and transmitting knowledge" (2). The obverse insight is that the sudden abundance of books in early modernity amounted to a precursor media event. From a cybernetic perspective, page and stage are united in early modernity insofar as both revise and replace earlier modes of information transmission.

secular entertainment available in the early modern period. Yet practitioners of these new media were not always so confident in their ability to steer their interlocutors to better ends. As I turn to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* I want to suggest that Renaissance magic – (re)birthed from the same humanist recovery of classical texts as early modern poetry and dramaturgy – functions as a popular vocabulary for drama to scrutinize its own cybernetic potential, or lack thereof. After taking *Faustus* as the first sustained response to the problems occasioned by the commercial theater in the face of religious, magical, and humanist concerns about the ends and effects of art and performance, I will then shift focus to Ben Jonson's *The Devil Is an Ass*, which I understand as a pointed response to Marlowe, recapitulating the tradition of devil-theater *Faustus* inaugurates while specifically aiming to circumvent or resolve the problems Marlowe outlines.

Arising from the tradition of the late morality play, as David Bevington notes, *Doctor Faustus* signals a shift from its religious lineage by producing a secular subject, elaborating on traditional structures and themes, while infusing its material with a healthy dose of Marlowe's "Renaissance learning."[63] Though much attention has already been paid to the issue of Renaissance and humanist knowledge as Marlowe presents it in the play, I suggest that Marlowe capitalizes on the co-productive tensions between human and devil I have already outlined, as well as the tensions between theater and magic. As Bevington and Rasmussen put it, Faustus is a "bad humanist" who "subverts the very intellectual process by which he ought to be questing after knowledge and truth."[64] And furthermore, I argue, by highlighting the stage's diabolic and metamorphic tendencies, Marlowe presents the theater as site of "bad humanism" – as a place where humanist principles and impulses stray from the ends projected in the schoolroom,

[63] David Bevington, *Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962) 261.
[64] Bevington and Rasmussen, "Introduction" in *Doctor Faustus*, 17.

producing more "bad humanists" who are, by consequence, perhaps not entirely human.

Bad humanism: *Doctor Faustus* and the ends of the human

There is a critical preoccupation with how Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* vocalizes concerns over an emergent individualist humanism in the Renaissance, and there is considerable contention among critics regarding whether Marlowe himself thought this to be a good development.[65] What interests me, however, is not Marlowe's favor or disfavor toward humanism or Renaissance learning specifically, but how *Doctor Faustus* theatrically exploits an inherent ambiguity in the processes and goals of humanist education. As Dorothy H. Brown describes it, one of humanism's general philosophical premises was "the possibility of a dignified existence within a universe of constancy and order" achieved and maintained through the proper education, not "as a solitary pursuit exclusively for self-gratification but … to be of benefit to society."[66] Humanism's educational program is posited as one way of overcoming negative tendencies in human nature. Erasmus writes that "there is no wild animal so fierce and savage that it cannot be controlled by the persistent attention of a trainer," and thus we should not believe "that any human spirit is so hopelessly crude that it will not respond to painstaking education[.]"[67] As the animal trainer analogy indicates, humanist education is seen as part of a process of overcoming an oppositional nature, through rigorous work and attention producing the

[65] See Harry Levin, *The Overreacher* (1954); Irving Ribner, "Marlowe's 'Tragicke Glasse'" in Richard Hosley, ed, *Essays on Shakspeare and Elizabethan Drama* (1963); Max Bluestone, "*Libido Speculandi*: Doctrine and Dramaturgy in Contemporary Interpretations of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus"* in Norman Rabkin, ed, *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama* (1969); Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* (1984), esp. Chapter 6: "Doctor Faustus: Subversion Through Transgression." Of course this barely begins to scratch the surface of the subject, though after Dollimore's seminal work most critics have been less concerned with recuperating the play to the moralistic or humanistic structure and instead looking at it as essentially interrogative and ambiguous.

[66] Dorothy H. Brown, *Christian Humanism in the Late English Morality Plays* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 1.

[67] Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, trans. Neil M. Chesire and Michael J. Heath, ed. Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 11.

humanist and hence, a certain vision of the human. Like Agrippa's magician, the humanist exists in a world designed by a benevolent creator and he (always he) can, through effort and learning, live better and more humanely. A properly civilized and socialized human being, though part of God's stable design for the world, must also be a result of human effort. But if this is true, where should human effort end?

The ambiguity Marlowe recognizes, and which *Doctor Faustus* exploits, is this very tension between the "human" as a naturally occurring feature of a divinely ordered world, and the fact that it must be constructed through a cybernetic intervention of myriad forces and institutions upon the subject. The metamorphic devils the Puritans located in the theater, Marlowe finds lingering in the obscure byways of the humanist curriculum, where some other type of human is produced. The problem, as Marlowe's play presents it, is that the seemingly opposed trajectories of "good" and "bad" humanism can look confusingly similar in practice. The question that sets Faustus on his path is a simple one, and one that might be called (with only small irony) preemptively posthumanist, or perhaps more particularly, *post*-humanist: what is one left to learn when the humanist curriculum is seemingly exhausted?[68]

In the circuit he runs in his first scene – reading excerpts from Aristotle, Galen, Justinian, and Jerome's Bible – Faustus finds deficient the scopes of logic, medicine, law, and religion.

[68] My reading of *Faustus* plays with these terms, using the hyphen to indicate when I wish to emphasize Marlowe's posteriority to the rise of a humanist system of education in England, as well as the conundrum Faustus himself faces when he encounters the material, discursive, and ideological limits of that educational program. At the same time, for these insights I am deeply indebted to contemporary "posthumanist" scholarship that arises in response to different concerns raised by developments in cultural, environmental, and techno-scientific spheres unique to the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In particular, I am indebted to N. Katherine Hayles, who relies on theories of distributed cognition to conceptualize the human as essentially prosthetic, beginning with "the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate" marking the "posthuman" with the subsequent "extension or replacement" of the bodily prosthesis with technological interfaces and artifacts (*How We Became Posthuman*, 3). The prosthesis that catches my interest in the case of *Faustus* is the environment of the theater and the medium of performance, which Marlowe figures as metonymic with magic and hence proves inimical to Faustus's "self" even as it extends or replaces that self. I am also, however, attuned to the work of Bruno Latour and, in a more politically critical valence, Rosi Braidotti's sense of the posthuman as a fundamental recognition of the "nature-culture continuum" (*The Posthuman*, 3)

With these under his command, Faustus turns to magic, his newest source of "profit and delight" as well as of "power, of honor, [and] omnipotence" (1.1.55-56). In echoing Horace's commonplace, Faustus presents himself as a humanist that has outstripped his studies and is ready to move on to something different. Of course, a number of scholars have pointed out that Faustus's invocation of learned authorities is by turns specious and simply inaccurate, suggesting his learning is not half as advanced as he might claim – they allege he is, indeed, a bad humanist, insofar as a bad humanist is a poor student.[69] As Joseph McCullen writes, "the more [Faustus] inveighs against traditional studies, the more he betrays the limitation of his understanding."[70] However, the Prologue tells us that Faustus, by the time we see him, has "profit[ed] in divinity" and the "fruitful plot of scholarism graced," but that he is also "swoll'n with cunning of a self-conceit" (Pro.15-20). Being "glutted" with "learning's golden gifts," he turns to "necromancy," which "he prefers before his chiefest bliss" (ll.24-27). The implication here is not, in fact, that Faustus hasn't learned enough, but that he has learned *too much*; his self-conceit is a result of his education rather than a flaw in it. Magic thus comes to represent the outermost limit of learning, an inversion that occurs not when the humanist curriculum fails but rather when it is *too successful*, approaching a point of destabilization: what is left to learn after one has learned everything in the curriculum? Faustus degrades and devalues his knowledge, including his yet-to-be-attained "chiefest bliss," because he balks at its incompleteness; he knows that there is more he does not yet know.[71] David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen note Faustus's

[69] See A.N. Okerlund, "The Intellectual Folly of Dr. Faustus," *Studies in Philology* 74:3 (1977): 258-278; also Phoebe S. Spinrad, "The Dilettante's Lie in *Doctor Faustus*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 24:3 (1982): 243-254.
[70] Joseph T. McCullen, "Dr. Faustus and Renaissance Learning" 7, in *The Modern Language Review* 51.1 (1956): 6-16.
[71] Jonathan Dollimore notes that this overweening pride on Faustus's part is symptomatic of Faustus's class background, a peasant who rose to the ranks of high learning and hence whose existence already seems somewhat unstable, with "no teleological integration of identity, self-consciousness and purpose" (113). See *Radical Tragedy* (1984: repr., New York: Palgave Macmillan, 2004).

"anthropocentric daring" – his belief that he can expand his knowledge and bend the forces of the world to his will – is derived from the most optimistic strains of Renaissance humanism.[72] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's "Oration on the Dignity of Man" for instance, has God announce to Man:

> We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine.[73]

There is a choice here, though in the larger treatise Pico concerns himself with aspiration toward the divine, reachable through "the benefits and values of the liberal arts,"[74] and implicitly disparages the terrible application of the will that would cause one to "degenerate." Yet ultimately, degeneration *is still possible*, and it is what Faustus apparently elects – if we keep in mind, however, that his degeneration is in fact the result of his aspiration toward a "higher" form of life, *after* the liberal arts have been mastered. Paradoxically, what some critics see as a cynical fall to magic is hence also a consequence of core humanist ideals. Faustus is a posthumanist, then, insofar as he encounters a limit to humanism, and it is his humanistic impulses that bring him there.

"A sound magician is a mighty god," Faustus says (1.1.64), recalling both Sidney's parallel of the poet and the divine creator and Agrippa's more ecstatic claims. But Faustus's reach beyond the normal arena of human knowledge is also cast, from the perspective of Christian historiography, as a regression. Thomas Elyot writes in *The Book of the Governor* (1531) that humanist education is successful when the student, "inflamed by frequent reading of

[72] Bevington and Rasmussen, "Introduction" 11.
[73] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," trans. Elizabeth Livermore Forbes in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, 225.
[74] Mirandola, 233.

noble poets, daily more and more desireth to have experience in those things that they so vehemently commend in them that they write of."[75] And indeed, this is another humanist dictum Faustus sees through to its unexpected conclusion, telling Mephistopheles he does not fear damnation because he "confounds hell in Elysium," imagining "his ghost" to be "with the old philosophers" (1.3.60-62). This is yet more testimony to the unusual ambiguity of Faustus's bad humanism: though he denounced both Aristotle and Galen in his opening speech, he also fancies himself their peer. In a perverse literalization of the orthodox Augustinian charge that the Ancients worshipped demons, Faustus commits himself to their example.[76]

In Marlowe's play humanism emerges as a confused enterprise, a cybernetic project of self-governance that fails to account for what Wiener noted as "the coupling between the observed phenomenon and the observer[.]"[77] While Faustus conceives of his magical daring as a total supersession of prior learning, he cannot account for his own necessary implication in the system he hopes to overcome. So what are we to make of Faustus's faith in his own "ghost"? Such a blind spot has been noted also in cybernetics, particularly in what N. Katherine Hayles calls the "the erasure of embodiment" in cybernetic theory and the post-Enlightenment ideas of "liberal humanism."[78] Hayles takes particular issue with the theories of roboticist Hans Moravec regarding the potential to transfer the human mind into a robotic body. As Hayles points out, drawing from research in cognitive science, the features and structures of the human body influence how the mind functions on a fundamental level; the mind is not pure data that can be

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[75] Thomas Elyot, *The governor*, in *English Humanism: Wyatt to Cowley*, ed. Joanna Martindale (Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1985) 84.

[76] Lisa Hopkins writes that "For Faustus, the classical world is both the ultimate prize and the direct cause of destruction, and his attraction to it provides a powerful emblem for the opposing tug between the twin forces of Christian and classical which configured the Renaissance" (*Christopher Marlowe: Renaissance Dramatist,* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008] 87).

[77] Wiener, *Cybernetics*, 163. For more information on how cybernetics subsequent to Wiener has dealt with this problem, see note 46.

[78] Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 4.

extracted and run, without consequence, in another, artificial system. Rather, in many respects the mind is an effect of the system that is the human body. In Hayles's words, "how could anyone think that consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with embodiment?"[79] By taking personality and agency to be totally autonomous and independent of the physical bodies their minds inhabit, Hayles argues, Moravec and similar "transhumanists" risk falling into a Faustian nightmare, "regard[ing] their bodies as fashion accessories rather than the ground of being, … seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality[.]"[80] Marlowe's damnable tragedy follows a similar logic, and *avant la lettre* provides a drama committed to puzzling over the tangled ontologies that ensue when one assumes one's humanity surpasses the medium that sustains it.

For this is Faustus's oversight: he fails to apprehend the significance of his position within humanist study because he takes humanity for granted; he is, in the words of Jonathan Dollimore, "constituted by the very limiting structure which he transgresses and his transgression is both despite and because of that fact."[81] Part of Faustus's self-conceit and "bad humanism" is his failure to recognize how institutions of logic, medicine, law, and religion, rather than being incidental subjects for intellectual inquiry and inert products of a preexisting human constitution, are in fact discourses that actively inform and sustain an early modern conception of "the human." They stabilize the assemblage of early modern humanity, and in forsaking these more orthodox foundations of learning, Faustus hopes to extend himself, unchanged, into the realm of magical power. We might say that the tragedy of Marlowe's play writ broadly is that early modern humanism is doomed to self-deconstruct: its most astonishing success appears

[79] Hayles, *Posthuman,* 1.
[80] Hayles, *Posthuman,* 5
[81] Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 110.

indistinguishable from its basic failure, since Faustus's humanist studies and imitative impulses are what drive him from the schoolroom and into magic's ontological free-fall.

In Faustus's pact with Mephistopheles, the first condition is that "Faustus may be a spirit in form and substance," and at the end of twenty-four years, Satan may take him, "body and soul, flesh, blood, or goods" to Hell (2.1.97, 110-112). Worth noting here is how the contract muddles Faustus's being. While Augustine imagined devils to be distinct from humans precisely because they had spiritual bodies, Faustus's first demand is that he be allowed to give up his material body, hence becoming like the airy, shapeshifting Mephistopheles. Despite this, Faustus must still promise to give over his body, his "flesh" and "blood" in twenty-four years, suggesting that until such time as the contract expires, Faustus exists somewhere between a physical, embodied human and demonic spirit. Even before the contract is signed there have been indications Faustus is becoming 'like' Mephistopheles, at least in terms of his cognitive constitution. As Mephistopheles famously explains during his first summoning, no matter where he is, he can never escape Hell for one "who saw the face of God / And tasted the eternal joys of heaven" is "tormented with ten thousand hells / In being deprived of everlasting bliss" (1.3.79-84). The suggestion that Hell is not only a place but a state of mind[82] is reflected in the next act, when Faustus first doubts his project: thinking himself irrevocably damned, he asks, "What boots it then to think of God or heaven? / Away with such vain fancies and despair!" (2.1.3-4). God's curious negativity, as either a perpetually delayed "chiefest bliss" or an infuriatingly painful absence, exacerbates the passions of the mind which Augustine held to be a touchpoint between

[82] D.P. Walker argued that the "orthodox hell" (by which he means a basically Augustinian conception of Hell as an actual place of eternal torment for unrepentant, damned souls) did not fall out of fashion until the 18th century, due to tensions between scriptural sources for the doctrine and, perhaps more strongly, the fact that an eternal Hell suggested a "morally static afterlife" (*The Decline of Hell* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1964) 3). Nevertheless, we see in Mephistopheles' claim that, regardless of whether or not Hell physically exists (it certainly seems to), its cognitive components are deeply important.

human and demon: Faustus becomes peculiarly conscious of his distance from God in a way that makes him akin to a devil, and his attempts to address or ignore this distance only drive him further away.

But Faustus also imagines himself and his studies as linear, progressive, and perpetually extendable: "go not backward," he says, urging himself to "be resolute" in his commitment to the demonic pact (2.1.6). Yet in Marlowe's play humanism's progress *does* loop back to deliver Faustus into the foolishness education is supposed to overcome. The human, it turns out, cannot be extended indefinitely, as Faustus's recalcitrant body tries to tell him: when he attempts to sign the pact in his own blood, he finds that it "congeals," and Mephistopheles must fetch coals to "dissolve it straight" (ll.62-63). As Faustus wonders aloud:

> What might the staying of my blood portend?
> Is it unwilling I should write this bill?
> Why streams it not, that I may write afresh?
> 'Faustus gives to thee his soul' – ah, there it stayed!
> Why shouldst thou not? Is not thy soul thine own? (ll.64-68)

The resolution he sought at the beginning of the scene breaks down at the level of the body – a body that Faustus has determined to trade away. Faustus comes terribly close to seeing through his own anthropocentric daring: he is conscious that his blood could "portend," that it means something, and he attributes it "unwilling" agency. Nearly he comes to realize that his soul (and hence himself) might not be his sole production and property. But before he can fully consider the significance of his rebellious blood, Mephistopheles returns with the coals and the contract is signed. Faustus is thus sealed into a state of ontological confusion he will inhabit until the end of the play.

Later, while looking to the heavens, Faustus curses Mephistopheles, "because thou hast deprived me of those joys" (2.3.4). Mephistopheles attempts to assuage him by saying, since

heaven was made for man, it is not as great as man – "If it were made for man," says Faustus, "'twas made for me. / I will renounce this magic and repent" (ll.10-11). Despite the devil's fatuous advice, Faustus recognizes that he has somehow been shunted outside the normal human order: he is deprived of heaven at the same time he is, by Mephistopheles's own admission, its ostensible beneficiary. At this point the Good and Evil Angels enter, the former urging Faustus to repent for God's pity, the latter insisting: "Thou art a spirit. God cannot pity thee" (l.13). "Be I a devil," Faustus returns, "yet God may pity me … if I repent" (ll.15-16). When the angels exit, however, Faustus finds his "heart's so hardened" that he cannot repent, that even uttering sacred words stirs "fearful echoes" in his mind and recalls his own damnation (ll.18-21). The reluctant blood from the signing of the pact now becomes the hardened heart: Faustus's bodily insensibility robs him of the strength to repent, instead forcing him to ponder, devil-like, the lost promises of an absent God.

Within the span of the same scene, Faustus once again comes close to repentance when he finds Mephistopheles cannot speak the name of God, rendering the deity's absence palpable. Calling his familiar an "accursèd spirit," Faustus says it was Mephistopheles who damned him, and the Good and Evil Angels reenter (2.3.75-77). This time, the Evil Angel promises him that "If thou repent, devils shall tear thee in pieces," while the Good Angel insists that if repentance comes "they shall never raze thy skin" (ll.80-81). Faustus's ontological status grows more confused: the Evil Angel's threat seems to contradict its earlier position, that Faustus could not be saved because he was a spirit, and to double-cross Hell is presented as the loss of a body Faustus has vowed to give up anyway. Sufficiently moved, however, by the Good Angel's words, Faustus goes so far as to ask for Christ's intercession before Mephistopheles reappears with Lucifer and Beelzebub. Terrified, Faustus believes they have come to take away his soul;

Lucifer says otherwise, persuading Faustus to promise to "never to look to heaven, / Never to name God or pray to him, / To burn his Scriptures, slay his ministers, / And make my spirits pull his churches down" (ll.95-98). Like Mephistopheles, then, Faustus must promise to give up the ability to utter the Lord's name, among other things. But in return, Lucifer offers him some "pastime," a pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins "in their proper shapes" – "Talk not of paradise nor creation," says Lucifer, "but mark this show. / Talk of the devil, and nothing else" (ll.100-106). Faustus exclaims that it "feeds [his] soul," and Lucifer informs him "in hell is all manner of delight" (ll.166-167). Taken with the idea that he could "see hell and return again" (l.169) Faustus is brought once more back into the infernal fold.

This is not the first time Faustus has been treated to a show from Hell for purposes of distraction. After the signing of the pact, Mephistopheles offered the despairing magician something "to delight his mind," a dance of devils that bestow upon Faustus robes and crowns, serving to "show thee what magic can perform" (2.1.82-84). As Sara Munson Deats has argued, in this play Marlowe effects a composite of the magician and the poet/player, and thus "the occult is equated with the stage" so that the play's "notorious contrariety" symptomatizes "not only Marlowe's ambivalence toward magic but also … his divided response toward his own medium, the drama."[83] What was implied by Mephistopheles's dance of devils is thus made explicit during Lucifer's pageant: in the play's own idiom, magic is theatrical, and the theater is hence an instrument of damnation and diabolical metamorphosis. As Augustine believed and Lucifer now affirms, performance is a "pastime" that serves to distract the mind from thoughts of God by presenting the stories of devils. And whereas until now devils orchestrated performances

[83] Sara Munson Deats, "'Mark this show': Magic and Theater in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* " in *Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe,* eds. Sara Munson Deats and Robert A. Logan, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008) 13.

for Faustus, his own diabolic capacities grow from this point forward, signaled by his increasing participation in and direction of the play's magical, theatrical chicanery.[84]

First on the playbill comes Mephistopheles and Faustus's pranks at the Pope's feasting table, where the invisible magician is mistaken by one of the friars present for "some ghost, newly crept out of purgatory" (3.1.73-74). The solemn pomp and ceremony of the Roman Church's crossings and exorcisms, however, prove no match for the devilry on offer when Faustus and Mephistopheles end the scene by tossing fireworks among the terrified clergy (sd.100). Faustus began his theatrical journey as a silent spectator during the dance of the devils, progressing next to an interlocutor during the pageant of the sins, and in the scene at Rome performs, with Mephistopheles's help, pyrotechnic slapstick for his own amusement. Afterward, he becomes a public player for the Holy Roman Emperor, commissioned to conjure up the shades of Alexander the Great and his paramour. Disclosing that these cannot be "true substantial bodies," but rather "such spirits as can lively resemble" the deceased, Faustus does as he is bid (ll.48, 62). The Emperor, spying a mole upon Alexander's paramour's neck, is nevertheless enraptured: "Sure these are not spirits, but the true substantial bodies" he cries (ll.71-72).[85]

But apart from such beguiling and uplifting spectacle, there remains a questionable edge to Faustus's magic. In addition to his antipapal tricks from the previous act, Faustus's pranks against the insolent knight in the Emperor's court and, later, the rustic Horse-courser, suggest the trouble that can come to those unwillingly embroiled in magic's theatricality. The horns upon the

[84] As Deats notes, "the sequences of performances" in the play "traces the historical development of the English drama, beginning with the morality play, moving to the classical drama, and then branching out to include farce, comedy, romance and tragedy" with this "progression" becoming even more pronounced in the B-text's revisions (20).

[85] Deats points out that in the B-text Faustus warns the Emperor these insubstantial bodies are "shadows," a word whose polyvalence refers in this time not only to demons and spirits, but actors as well (21).

knight's head and the rustic's accidental removal of Faustus's leg indicate an attitude toward bodies that horrifies some as much as it delights others. The horned soldier's transformation is an unusual form of corporal punishment wrought by Faustus, for which the Emperor must ask forgiveness, claiming the knight "hath done penance sufficient" (4.1.89), while when the Horse-courser takes Faustus's leg, the magician is delighted by the dismemberment he once fearfully imagined Lucifer and Beelzebub working upon him. This is not to deny these scenes their comic tone; rather, I wish to suggest that their comic tone is what marks the progression of Faustus's theatrical demonism both for his own character, and for the audience. In Faustus's fall to devilry we see the "chaf[ing]" Linda Charnes describes between the "discursive and nondiscursive forms of cultural production" peculiar to the early modern English stage.[86] That is to say, we see the tension between what Faustus as a damned soul should be and sometimes is (sorrowful, terrified, doomed), and what he nevertheless *also* is (unserious, renegade, powerful). This vacillation highlights the play's tincture of post-Augustinian antitheatricalism, cycling Faustus and the audience between a godly fear of devils to an enjoyment in and sympathy for the diabolic subject. The theater proves seductive because it is what spawns and suits Faustus's hybrid ontology: both a human body and demonic spirit, a real and visible presence and its intangible, invisible supplement (an actor and his many possible roles), Faustus overcomes the apparent limitations of the former to delight in the myriad possibilities of the latter.[87]

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[86] Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Harvard, UP, 1993) 207. Charnes makes this claim in a reading of *Antony and Cleopatra* focusing on its themes of messengers, reportage, and mediated communication. Specifically, she is referring to how Shakespeare casts characters' descriptions of events against later or earlier stagings (or conspicuous non-stagings) of those events, and how they shape the dispositions of auditors. I adapt the insight here to indicate the clear tonal "chafing" in Marlowe's play between comic theatricality and metaphysical tragedy.

[87] In *The Tudor Play of Mind*, Joel Altman argues rhetorical play-acting and the space of the theater allowed dramatists and spectators to experience "ideas and feelings not always accessible or expressible in the life of a hierarchical Christian society" (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978 [6]). In his more recent work, building from that of Linda Charnes (cited above), he suggests the overall end of the drama is to highlight "the immanence of the human in the world" (19). Altman argues the drama materializes a split between the idea of "the self" taken

The final turning point comes when Faustus is just as satisfied with his illusions as his gulls and patrons are. The last act of the play opens with a strange repetitiousness: the Old Man and Mephistopheles take the place of the Angels, the former pushing Faustus to repent after the latter hands him a dagger and encourages suicide. Faustus cries out that "I do repent, and yet I do despair. / Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast" (5.1.64-65). The religious drama is now enunciated by Faustus's embodied but confused cogitation: he is bewildered that one can repent and despair simultaneously (as if he has not done this before), and the audience is likewise reminded of the odd mixture of delight and terror that has led them here. Mephistopheles once more dissuades Faustus, threatening to "in piecemeal tear thy flesh," and Faustus responds by, strangely enough, tearing his own flesh: "To pardon my unjust presumption, / … with my blood again I will confirm / My former vow I made to Lucifer" (ll.69-73). The pledge renewed, now without any interference from Faustus's stubborn blood, the magician says he only requires the "heavenly Helen" as his companion, "[w]hose sweet embracings may extinguish clean / These thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow" (ll.86-87). With his freely flowing blood and disregard for whether or not he now devotes himself to a "true substantial body," Faustus gives himself wholly over to performance: "Her lips suck forth my soul," he says, kissing Helen, "See where it flies!" (l.94). Whether this theater is all a mere "pastime" or distraction from damnation ceases to matter, for the soul itself becomes a thing which, intangible, exists only in the performative moment: "See where it flies!" orders the audience to look upon a thing that cannot be seen, and that rightly speaking, shouldn't be there. As an invisible connective tissue between

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as a whole and a psychological recuperation and projection of the many positions and perspectives one may assume over time, and the self as a single "instantiation" of the many possibilities contained within the "reservoir of subject-possibilities" (2). See *The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Faustus and Helen, between the audience and what they see performed, the soul is damned when it is drawn out to the stage to take succor in (and become a part of) the theatrical illusion.

It is no coincidence that the form this illusion takes for the bad humanist Faustus is a disastrous classical precedent whose example, once again, he commits himself to follow:

> I will be Paris, and for love of thee
> Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sacked,
> And I will combat with Menelaus,
> And wear thy colors on my plumèd crest.
> Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel
> And then return for Helen for a kiss. (5.1.98-103).

As Elyot said in *The Governor*, "noble Homer" is a "fountain" from whom "proceeded all eloquence and learning," and it is in his tales of Ilium and its aftermath where "readers shall be so inflamed that they most fervently shall desire and covet by the imitation of their virtues to acquire semblable glory."[88] Faustus pledges to repeat the performance the audience just witnessed, but on a grander scale, casting himself in the role of an ancient hero at the apex of humanist mythography. By the next scene, however, with his twenty-four years coming to an end, this fantasy proves lacking, and Faustus gives up "semblable glory" for a different classical authority:

> Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
> Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
> Ah, Pythagoras' *metempsychosis*, were that true,
> This soul should fly from me and I be changed
> Unto some brutish beast. (ll.105-109)

Aside from the Greek Pythagoras, this plea draws on the Roman influence of Ovid, who concludes his *Metamorphoses* with a brief detour to the Pythagorean transmigration of souls. In the voice of Pythagoras, Ovid recalls the myriad transformations of the epic, telling us that "in one shape, bee sure that nothing long can last" (XV.285) and that "The day would end, / …

[88] Elyot, 81

Before all alterations I in woordes could comprehend" (XV.460-462).[89] Yet the power Faustus sought in diabolic performance proves not enough to save him, instead speeding him toward his messy conclusion: dilating time for the audience, Faustus's speech passes the hour from eleven to midnight in the space of fifty lines, and the B-text soon treats the audience to the dismembered body so often threatened in the play as Faustus's fellow scholars find his "limbs / All torn asunder by the hand of death" (B-5.3.6-7). Both versions of the play end with the same epilogue, commanding the audience to "Regard [Faustus's] hellish fall" and "exhort the wise / Only to wonder at unlawful things, / Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits / To practice more than heavenly power permits" (A-5.24-8).

In this moralizing epilogue I locate a curiously backhanded admission of the theater's own lack of ethical power. As the text reads, only "the wise" will "wonder at" the "unlawful" spectacle Marlowe presents – they will look, we might say, but will not touch. But these spectators are *already* "wise." The epilogue admits also to the existence of "forward wits" who, rather than being reformed by the example they've witnessed, might yet "practice more" what they've learned in the theater. In other words, what on the one hand seems like a moral admonition to the audience also, in the implicit admission that the stage alone cannot make spectators "wise," is a suggestion that the theater's diabolical power has already been unleashed and is ready to train up more bad humanists. Faustus's desire for self-governance repeatedly manifests as a longing to cast his mind into some other ontology (god, hero, or animal), only for him to find himself incapable of wholly escaping the performative apparatus of his own embodiment, rendering him an abject cybernetic hybrid.

[89] All citations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding, ed. John Frederick Nims (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2000). Kristen Poole argues this allusion gestures toward a fusion of poetics and physics, suggesting for Marlowe's audience "a material world that is eminently plastic, one which is accepting of devils and the physics that allow them to travel through a flexible system of time and space" (Poole 48).

As Hayles might describe the situation, Faustus loses his own body in an effort to surpass it, and hence loses also his mind. But what if we press further upon Faustus's suggestion that there is no difference between the superhuman and the subhuman, the godlike or heroic and the animal? Marlowe's play reveals that these polarities – which the human mediates in Mirandola's "Oration" – only make sense relative to an already stable, anthropocentric perspective, a "given" vision of humanity, and one which Faustus dissolves in his quest for magic power. By the end of the play, being an animal is just as appealing as being a god – as long as one *is* something, rather than stuck, as Faustus is, adjacent to devils in the metamorphic space of performance. In order to save the theater's humanistic (and cybernetic) potential, something must be done to account for the theatrical human's metamorphic tendencies in a way that does not permanently align them with the diabolic – and it is this project that Ben Jonson pursues in *The Devil Is an Ass*.

"Without the devil by direct means": Ben Jonson and theater's magical consumerism

What Marlowe suggests is that the theater cannot and will not reliably fulfill the humanist imperative to "delight and instruct," for it is far too tempting (and far too much fun) to repeat its mistakes. Performance's imperfect metempsychosis makes a devil of Faustus, catching his soul between the body he is and the parts he would play. What proves to be crucial is the tendency of the theatrical apparatus to divert the ends of art and poesy: Faustus's continuing education under hell's schoolmasters (Mephistopheles and Lucifer provide him with new books for study after they stage their respective pageants in 2.2 and 2.3) parallels Thomas Heywood's report that at Cambridge he has seen "Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorals and Shewes, publickly acted, in which Graduates of good place and reputation, haue bene specially parted," such

spectacle being "necessary for the emboldening of their Iunior schollers."[90] Faustus's emboldening, of course, ushers him only to his tragic end. The play orbits around the conundrum of humanity's supposed dignity and power in the face of its contingency and finitude, and hence its tendencies to go awry in ways that result specifically from the formal practices of humanist education; in terms of moral betterment and cybernetic self-governance, then, Marlowe seems to offer a theater whose ship founders before it has even set sail.[91] Faustus's folly is the belief that he could extend himself and his learning into a new medium while maintaining a humanity he takes for granted; a response to this problem of the humanist theater must then account for how to restabilize humanity in a performative element, re-embodying the theater and its multitude of intangible selves, or at least re-associating them with the body that Faustus wants to exceed, and yet to wallow in.

Ben Jonson – following in the footsteps of Horace, as already discussed – theorizes a humanist and salutary view of the theater that embraces the ends of the human in its embodiment.[92] 1616's *The Devil Is an Ass* – staged not too long after an apparent revival of

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[90] Heywood, sig. C3v.

[91] Following Judith Butler's theorization of the performative as a "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names," we can see how Marlowe's theater seems to facilitate the production of what Butler calls "abject beings … whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject" (Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* [1993: repr., New York: Routledge, 2011] xii-xiii). Yet if we consider the issue as technological – that is, if we understand the heart of the problem to be performance's salacious repetition-compulsion, and the emerging commercial theater to be a relatively new, early modern technology that offers a medium for such performance – then there is perhaps another way of approaching it. Jean-Christophe Agnew writes that the nascent capitalist market of early modernity pressured traditional notions of interaction and exchange among people, and thus called into question "the nature of social identity, intentionality, accountability, transparency, and reciprocity in commodity transactions" (Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988] 10.) The result, Agnew says, was that the actual theater offered a grammar of character-types, "the means and models by which [spectators] might refashion themselves" as the occasion called (Agnew 117). According to Andreas Höfele and Stephan Laqué, early modernity's scientific and epistemic revolutions are the beginnings of the plurality of "humankinds" recognized in modern sociology. See "Introduction" in eds., Höfele and Laqué, *Humankinds: The Renaissance and Its Anthropologies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) 1-20.

[92] Jonson's counter to Marlowe's self-destructive humanism aligns, to some extent, with Hayles's vision of a posthumanism that "recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and that understands human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continued

Marlowe's play, given the publication date of the B-text – addresses the paradoxes *Doctor Faustus* raises about theater, humanism, and educative poesy. But to do so, Jonson reassesses the terms of the human-devil relationship, recentering the human body in the theater, and he addresses the tendencies of his own earlier defense of stage-plays to run directly into the overpowering and sensational claims of magicians – and hence, the antitheatricalists – regarding the effects of the imagination. As Katherine Eisaman Maus argues, Jonson takes quite seriously the humanist outlook, borrowed from the Roman moralists, that art can and does teach not only "what characterizes the best forms of social intercourse, but also what makes people sociable, and how … institutions reflect their social impulses."[93] The result is a humanism distinct from Faustus's, one suited to the theater as a commercial institution and public medium, and accounting for the theater's promises and failures of transformative metempsychosis by focusing on the implications of a shared human embodiment.

Yet *The Devil is an Ass* presents several oddities for Jonson's Horatian poetics, the most commonly remarked upon being his apparent reneging on the idea that the stage engenders moral reform. Whereas the "pleasure and profit" of the earlier plays often owed to the public shaming and driving off of the characters most representative of vice, with the explicit call to laugh at faults to disavow them,[94] *The Devil* contains no such violent finale and, in fact, ends with the

survival" (Hayles 5). Though Jonson seems to embrace the finitude of humanity in a way that accords with Hayles's views, however, the play in the end inclines toward the construction of the very "humanism" which so much posthumanist philosophy aims to critique. As I explain later in this chapter, the difference is that Jonson universalizes human embodiment in a way that does not align with posthumanist thinking.

[93] Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985) 20.

[94] Perhaps the most extreme example of this is *Volpone*, where the title character is sentenced by a Venetian tribunal to "lie in prison, cramped with irons / Till thou be'st lame and sick indeed" (5.12.123-24) while his henchman Mosca is to be whipped and likewise made a "perpetual prisoner" on a galley ship (ll.114). One of the tribunes at the play's end, in a reprisal of the Horatian induction, observes: "Let all that see these vices thus rewarded, / Take heart, and love to study 'em! / Mischiefs feed / Like beasts, till they be fat, and then they bleed" (ll.149-151).

gallant Manly observing that those who did wrong during the course of the play should "repent" privately and "be not detected," for

> It is not manly to take joy, or pride
> In human errors. We do all ill things:
> They do 'em worst that love 'em, and dwell there,
> Till the plague comes. The few that have the seeds
> Of goodness left will sooner make their way
> To a true life by shame, than punishment. (5.8.168-174)

Donald Hedrick suggests Jonson's sudden theatrical ambivalence is due to a fundamental ambiguity in his own doctrine of delight and profit: "What if the spectator enjoys only vices and vicious characters on the stage, expecting and demanding only the deformed and unnatural?"[95] That is, what if instead of truly functioning as a moral corrective, the gratuitous punishments Jonson doled out were only a further example of the vicious stage asserted by antitheatricalists?[96] In a similar vein, Will Stockton attributes Jonson's dilemma in this play to an ambivalence resulting from "Jonson's recognition that to mock vices, the writer of comedy must first 'produce' them[.]"[97] This is all to say that Jonson seemed to be particularly aware, with regard to his own art, of the diabolic problem I located in Marlowe: in its quest for moral improvement the stage can veer off-course into human degeneration.[98]

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[95] Don K. Hedrick, "Cooking for the Antropophagi: Jonson and His Audience," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 17.2 (Spring 1977). 233-245, esp. 237.

[96] This line of thinking extends at least as far back as Jonas Barish's *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. The study offers a sweeping history of Western antitheatricalism, culminating in Jonson who, Barish argues, resented his own trade, finding his audience "bent on instant gratifications of a kind he has little wish to supply, and are, in the nature of things, prone to be swayed by opinion rather than reason" (139). For a similar opinion see George E. Rowe, Jr. "Ben Jonson's Quarrel with His Audience and Its Renaissance Context" in *Studies in Philology* 81.4 (Autumn 1984), 438-460.

[97] Will Stockton, *Playing Dirty: Sexuality and Waste in Early Modern Comedy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) 3. Stockton's psychoanalytic argument furthermore reads Jonson's leave of the theater as being necessitated "out of frustration with the ineluctable filthiness of his own creation" (3).

[98] As Katherine Eisaman Maus notes, Jonson's poetics consist of three mandates borrowed from Horace and Cicero: artwork "must be moral, it must be delightful, and it must imitate nature" (*Roman Frame of Mind* 62). The problem is that imitating nature as well as any given audience's delight comes at some expense to the representation of purely moral principles. In other words, Jonson's classical impulse to poetically imitate reality

Indeed, Manly's ending speech seems to echo the philosophical sentiment from *Faustus*'s epilogue: just as the "wise" would heed the doomed magician's example while "forward wits" would nevertheless be drawn to practice its damnable spectacle, Manly argues that there exist certain people so in love with their own "human errors" that they'll "dwell there, / Till the plague comes." The few with "seeds / Of goodness" will approach a "true life" not through the vicious comic punishment; only private "shame" is a spur to improvement. By circumscribing the power of the stage, Jonson also rethinks the devilish contract Marlowe puts at the heart of theatrical enterprise. However, Jonson also works to rewrite the Faustian view of magic into one that serves the humanist project and hence saves the cybernetic aims of the stage. Jonson was familiar with a wide variety of classical and Renaissance magical texts, and armed with this learning, he takes on Marlowe's similarly ontologically weightless but immensely seductive view of the stage's bad humanism.[99] For as disdainful as he was of magic, I think, Jonson notes the overlap between claims of magicians regarding the power of the imagination and the claims about the power of the theater and of poetry. Furthermore, his "antitheatrical" mind suggests he was well aware of how predecessors like Marlowe confounded diabolic magic and theatrical spectacle. Thus, he found himself in a position necessitating a new poetics, one that allowed for the moral effects of theatrical performance but in a way which both maintained his spectators' agency over their minds and bodies and foreclosed on the possibility of demonic interference.

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within the parameters of classical decorum mean he must choose between Sidney's idea of "another nature" and his own commitment to realism.

[99] Jonson knew two texts I've discussed already, Agrippa's *De Occulta* and Del Rio's *Disquisitiones*, works he cites in his annotations to 1609's witchcraft-themed *The Masque of Queens*. In the first book of their 11-volume complete works and commentary, C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson reconstruct Jonson's library through textual references in the plays and the marginal notes to *The Masque of Queens*. See *Ben Jonson* 1:250-71 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1947). They point to Del Rio's *Disquisitiones* and the *Malleus Maleficarum* as the works Jonson seems to have consulted most, though they do not clearly explain how they judged this to be so.

Despite allowing it on the stage, Jonson goes to great lengths to ensure that the efficacy of magic in *The Devil* is circumscribed. Like Fitzdottrel's catalogue of London magicians who have gone in and out of public favor, and like the devil Pug appearing in an unexpected guise in response to an invocation Fitzdottrel was perhaps not entirely aware he was making, the play introduces magic as subject to both custom and errors in human apprehension. What we recognize as magic may not be the real thing, while the real thing may slip by unrecognized. By casting magic and devils into terms of comic confusion, Jonson's play attempts to exorcise from the theater the devils that Marlowe and Faustus summon there. The play begins as Satan and the minor devil Pug enter, debating whether or not Satan should honor Pug's request to travel to London in order to spread iniquity and champion the cause of Hell. Satan claims that Pug is "too dull a devil to be trusted" with such a task, for "[t]he state of Hell must care / Whom it employs in point of reputation, / Here about London" (1.1.26-31). The Arch-Fiend reveals the reason for his hesitation: it is the year "[s]ix hundred and sixteen" and Hell's traditional Vices are not as effective as they used to be. As Satan explains,

> …they are other things
> That are received now upon earth for Vices,
> Stranger, and newer: and changed every hour.
> They ride 'em like their horses off their legs,
> And here they come to Hell, whole legions of 'em,
> Every week, tired. We still strive to breed
> And rear 'em up new ones; but they do not stand
> When they come there: they turn 'em on our hands.
> And it is feared they have a stud o'their own
> Will put down ours. Both our breed and trade
> Will suddenly decay, if we prevent not. (ll.100-110)

Satan suggests that humans are riding traditional sins ragged, and yet "[w]e still strive to breed / And rear 'em up new ones." These new Vices are a subpar product, returning completely exhausted. Thus, when Pug finally ascends to earth with the intent to mislead its inhabitants, he

discovers a London that is already so corrupt that not only do all his own devious plots come up short, but no one recognizes Pug for what he really is.

At the beginning of this chapter I paralleled Faustus's intentional summoning of Mephistopheles, first as a horrible dragon and then as a friar, to Jonson's decision to have Pug appear, inconspicuously, in a human body that none can recognize as diabolic. Jonson's choice repays more attention, for as the poor commerce of Hell indicates, his play is concerned with subsuming Marlowe's more devilish characteristics under the rubric of the human. While *Faustus* suggested traffic between humans and devils undermines the former in favor of the latter, Jonson begins by inverting the terms of the market, implying that humanity is overtaking devils in the production and consumption of sins. Meanwhile, the foolish occult enthusiast Fitzdottrel is gulled by a series of London con artists who repeatedly deny any claims of magical involvement and yet seem to reproduce magical practices and effects in their schemes. Jonson's weird intersocial "magic" indeed seems to anticipate intellectual historian Ioan Couliano, who claimed that "human society at all levels is itself only magic at work," and that people who "find themselves in an intermediate, intersubjective place participate in a magic process."[100] Couliano's conception of magic seems entirely applicable to what characters in *The Devil Is an Ass* attempt to do, with varying degrees of success. For Couliano, a magician is a "manipulator," someone who is "first an observer of intersubjective relations," but then through this observation "gains knowledge from which he means to subsequently profit."[101] Similarly, Jonson presents his characters as continually observing those around them and assessing the best ways in which to take advantage of them.

[100] Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 103.
[101] Couliano 103.

For instance, Fitzdottrel's wife Francis is the romantic target of a young gallant named Wittipol, who saw her once and since "she hath stuck / Still i' [his] view, no object hath removed her" (1.4.12-13), recalling Couliano's idea of the magical and erotic "phantasm," an imaginative vision that incites in the subject a "desire," and upon which the magician works in order to effect action in the world.[102] Desiring an audience with his would-be mistress, Wittipol trades the vain Fitzdottrel a fine cloak for fifteen minutes' conversation with her. Fitzdottrel understands this as a "contract" that starts to sound suspiciously like that made with a demon: Francis herself will not be allowed to speak, but Wittipol may talk as he pleases, "always keeping / The measured distance of your yard, or more" while Fitzdottrel stands by to ensure the "covenant" is fulfilled (1.6.67-69). Martin Del Rio explains that in instances where magicians make pacts with demons in return for various benefits, it is always the demon who has true power precisely because the magician is deluded into thinking he has bound the demon to his contract, when in fact the devil always has the upper hand.[103] Wittipol – the demon in this situation, brought into the home on the condition he would render unto Fitzdottrel the cloak – confesses that he "work[s] by no false arts, medicines, or charms, / To be said forward and backward" (ll.108-109), simultaneously invoking and casting aside memories of Faustus's summoning of Mephistopheles, drawing a circle within which is written "Jehovah's name / Forward and backward anagrammatized" (*Faustus* A-1.1.9-10).

Fitzdottrel's scheme is to thwart Wittipol's audience by commanding his wife's "obstinate silence" (*Devil* 1.6.54). Nevertheless, during the course of his profession to Francis, Wittipol manages to win her favor, which Fitzdottrel tries to dismiss as an insubstantial fantasy: "look on me: and think / You've had a wicked dream, wife, and forget it" (ll.228-229). What

[102] Couliano 38-39
[103] Del Rio 77.

Fitzdottrel does not account for is Wittipol's poetic ode to Francis, covering some sixty lines of praise (ll.75-134). When he finishes and she stands silent, Wittipol is not perturbed, instead assuming her voice *for* her in a form of play-acting, reciting a monologue on her behalf that returns his sentiments and echoes his criticisms of her foolish husband for another forty lines (ll.154-192). The relationship between Fitzdottrel and Wittipol, though specifically marked as non-magical, reproduces in its manipulative performances the relationship between a foolhardy magician and his demonic familiar. Yet rather than making Francis's mind "like" his poetic fiction, Wittipol's strategy is to base his performance in sympathy with Francis's predicament, beholden to a husband who "let his wife to be courted, / And at a price, proclaim[ing] his asinine nature," as he explains it on her behalf, condemning the very foolishness that has allowed him into her presence (ll.164-165). After her suitor's exit, Francis informs her husband that "What thought" the people of the city have of him "may soon be collected / By the young gentleman's speech" (ll.234-235). Like Couliano's magician, Wittipol's manipulations rest not so much on asserting his will over others, but on a foundation of keen perception and understanding of others' dispositions: in this case, Fitzdottrel's vanity and his wife's resentment and exasperation.

Jonson's overwriting of magical tropes in non-magical language continues throughout the play. Later, Fitzdottrel is introduced to the con artist Merecraft, who styles himself a "projector," meaning, as his henchman Engine explains, one "that projects / Ways to enrich men, or to make 'em great, / By suits, by marriages, by undertakings / According as he sees they humor it" (1.7.10-13). As in Jonson's earlier "humors" plays, "humor" here can be glossed as temperament or fancy,[104] and suggests the imaginative axis upon which Couliano's magic and poesy's efficacy is charted. Merecraft's "projects" must be tailored to the fancies of his clients, a feat whose necessary intersubjective acuity raises Fitzdottrel's suspicions: "Can he [Merecraft] not conjure

[104] See Happé, 91n13.

at all?" (ll.14). Engine replies: "I think he can sir— / To tell you true—but you do know, of late / The State hath ta'en such note of 'em and compelled 'em / To enter such great bonds they dare not practice" (ll.14-17). Engine refers to King James's 1615 injunction of the Mayor of London to more strongly enforce the Witchcraft Act of 1604, which stated that "any Invocation or Conjuration of any evill and spirit … for any intent or purpose" would result in execution, while using "Witchcrafte Inchantment Charme or Sorcerie to tell or declare in what place any treasure of Golde or silver should [be found] or had in the earth or other secret places" would result in a year's imprisonment and regular public shaming.[105] The law makes a distinction between magic that operates according to the will of a magician, and that which requires the intercession of a spirit. Fitzdottrel, oddly enough, wants to combine what the Witchcraft Act presents as two potentially separate offenses: not simply summoning a devil, an infraction punishable by death on its own, but the summoning of a devil in order to lead him to hidden treasure, an offense of less serious repercussion. However, Merecraft provides a way out of the legal predicament: riches without magical *or* diabolic intervention. As Merecraft describes his own work, it is "without the devil / by direct means: it shall be good in law" (2.1.18-19).

The line break produces an ambiguity when we consider how it is to be recited: does Merecraft mean he works "without the devil" as magical intermediary and instead by "direct means," *or* does he want to suggest to Fitzdottrel that he does indeed employ demonic services, but *indirectly*, in a way the law currently does not recognize? Merecraft does not clarify, and the play aids and abets him in blurring the boundaries between his "mere craft" and magic. Francis sees him as providing her husband with yet more "false spirits," but Fitzdottrel excitedly corrects her: "This man defies the Devil, and all his works! / He does't by engine and devices, he!"

[105] "Witchcraft Act of 1604," quoted in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* ed. Marion Gibson (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003) 6.

(2.3.45-46). The projector's trade is something that is and is not demonic, something that looks like magic in one light but not in another, and it is all the better for it.[106] In complement to what John Mebane says of 1610's *The Alchemist*, that Jonson aims to "reduce the [occult] tradition to the level of ordinary fraud,"[107] I would argue that *The Devil Is an Ass* provides an unusual reversal where fraud is elevated *above* magic, not only in terms of legality, but also in its presumed efficacy: Merecraft is trustworthy precisely because he is *not* a magician, and has no traffic with devils.[108]

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[106] Another point worth observing, if only briefly, is that the epilogue of Jonson's play echoes the epilogue spoken by the magician Prospero at the end of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but the magician has been replaced: "Thus the projector here is overthrown / But I have now a project of my own" (*Devil* Epi.1-2). Cf. Shakespeare, "Now my charms are all o'erthrown / And what strength I have's mine own" (Epi. 1-2, *The Tempest*, Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds, London: Bloomsbury 2011). The implications of Jonson's substitution of "projects" for magic in the space of the theater are pursued later in this chapter.

[107] John S. Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 142.

[108] In studies of Jonson, critics tend to present him as essentially skeptical of magic. Mebane follows the examples of Ficino and Pico to formulate magical enterprises as utopian projects intended to reverse the Fall of Man and sees Jonson as "condemn[ing] as madness the belief that the individual can obtain magical power by perfecting the soul" (57). Ryan Curtis Friesen, in the other extended study on Jonson's attitude toward magic (*Supernatural Fiction in Early Modern Drama and Culture*, Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2010) also focuses on *The Alchemist* and observes that Jonson's characters "are not sincere practitioners of magic, nor is their art efficacious" (6). However, it is admitted that Jonson's courtly masques "demonstrate exactly what *The Alchemist* denies: an efficacious and socially beneficial magic in the form of the monarch's capacity to impart moral rectitude and spiritual fecundity on his subjects through the grace of God" (6). Mebane likewise notes this disjunction, but maintains Jonson's skepticism by figuring it as poetic license, a function of ethical idealism, allowing Jonson to "creat[e] an image to which one wished the ruler to conform," while still personally maintaining a commitment to "not an imaginary vision of humankind's infinite potential or the secrets of another world, but the concrete possibilities of the here and now" (166, 173). For Mebane, Jonson's masque magic is a poetic figment, a shorthand used to gesture toward a fictional ideal who actualization is not a given. As the title of Friesen's book suggests, Jonson appears to move magic from the realm of reality to that of fiction, a transition that is assumed to deflate magical power, making it "unreal" with little resistance. Both Mebane and Friesen, as Latour might say, deprive "beings of fiction … of their ontological weight" (*Inquiry* 233). Both of Mebane and Friesen's understandings of magic take for granted the inherent poetic falsity characteristic of Sidney – the notion of 'fiction' as a safe and detached space from the real world, an impossible ideal where Jonson can work with materials he otherwise disparages – and ignore the fact that many arguments in favor of (and opposed to) poetry's power rested on what were understood to be its very real effects. It should also be noted, then, that both Mebane and Friesen ignore *The Devil Is an Ass*. This is an unusual oversight, because it is the only non-masque in the Jonsonian corpus where magic is allowed a diegetic reality. There is no rationale provided by either author for its exclusion – they simply do not mention the play – but the fact that *The Devil* has been historically seen as lacking in comparison to Jonson's previous work, and thus less important to the canon, perhaps has something to do with it.

For as Jonson tells us in the title, his devil is indeed an ass. Richard Dutton has written that the "basic conceit of Jonson's play is simply that Jacobean London has become so sophisticated and ingenious in its vices that it goes far beyond anything hell and Satan can offer: all of Pug's efforts to encourage sin fail pathetically."[109] But while it is true that this play does *not end* with a character being publicly excoriated like Jonson's earlier works, it still features a character occasionally subject to similar assaults: Pug himself, whose repeated failed attempts to lead mortals to sin result in his own beating and shaming, culminating in his imprisonment at Newgate. Crucially, this seems to be because Pug is in the opposite position as Faustus: whereas Marlowe's magician was torn between a human body and an airy, demonic nature, Jonson's devil is a spirit forced into a human body. When Satan allows Pug to venture to earth for a single day to deceive and corrupt humans, he says that "you must take a body ready-made," for Satan "can create you none" (1.1.135-136). The side-effect, Satan warns, is that Pug will "become subject / To all impression of the flesh you take / So far as human frailty" (ll.137-139). Pug is made to inhabit the body of a thief that was recently hanged, and must steal a clean set of clothes in order to make his appointment with the unwitting Fitzdottrel.

But Satan emphasizes that Pug will be physically susceptible to anything that affects that body: "look how far your subtlety can work / Through those organs; with that body, spy / Amongst mankind" (1.1.144-145). Exactly how much "subtlety" Pug is lacking becomes clear when, taken with the possibility of fleshly lust, he decides to seduce Francis Fitzdottrel. "I'll ha' my share," he remarks after seeing her wooed by Wittipol: "Most delicate damned flesh / She will be! O that I could stay my time now," he adds, fearing that his limited stay on earth will "cut [his] pleasure" short (2.2.19-22). However, still fresh from her encounter with Wittipol, Francis

[109] Richard Dutton, "Jonson's satiric styles," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, eds., Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2001) 67.

finds Pug's approach crass and artless. Pug first confronts her, calls her beautiful, and describes in extensive detail the fun to be had in making her husband a cuckold. The appeal is so clumsy that Francis decides this can be "none but [her] husband's wit," claiming it "creaks his engine" – that is, only someone as unimaginative as her husband could have devised this shoddy plan (ll.85-88). When she calls Fitzdottrel into the room, he is angered at the insolence of his eccentric new servant "DeVille," and provides Pug with a new embodied, human sensation: he repeatedly beats him with a cudgel. Upon joining Fitzdottrel's household, these were terms Pug readily agreed to: "if you offend me I must beat you. / It is a kind of exercise I use, / And cannot be without" (1.3.42-43). As the play develops, however, it becomes clear Pug was not prepared for this aspect of his time on earth: he fears worse assaults in the future from Fitzdottrel, wondering if "he will geld me" or "pluck out my tongue" (2.5.1-2).

Later, Pug is sent by Fitzdottrel to deliver a ring to Merecraft's counterpart, the "Projectress" Lady Tailbush. However, Pug is waylaid by Tailbush's handmaid, Pitfall, who puts him once more in mind of "the taste of venery" he longs to have while "in this body" (3.6.7-8). While Pitfall coyly distracts Pug with promises of carnal pleasure, one of Merecraft's henchmen makes off with the ring, putting Pug once more into a position for a sound beating at the hands of his master. As the stage directions tell us, the devil now "*confesseth himself cozened*" and laments: "I was so earnest upon her, I marked not! / My devilish chief has put me here in flesh, / To shame me! This dull body I am in, / I perceive nothing with! I offer at nothing / That will succeed" (ll.26-31). Whereas Faustus lost himself in the myriad roles afforded by demonic power, Pug is lacking in guile and theatrical ability, losing himself in the roles demanded by human sociality. In the end, Pug laments his ontological muddling and echoes Faustus's desire for metempsychosis, wishing he could "[r]un from [his] flesh" and "put off mankind" (ll.36). He

does not get his wish until he is finally imprisoned for stealing his clothing, and he hopes to leave behind the "unlucky carcass of a cutpurse, / Wherein [he] could do nothing" (5.5.35-46). Satan, bursting through the wall of Newgate in a plume of smoke, bellows:

> …Out upon thee!
> The hurt thou'hast done, to let men know their strength,
> And that they're able to outdo a devil
> Put in a body, will for ever be
> A scar upon our name! Whom hast thou dealt with,
> Woman or man, this day, but have outgone thee
> Some way, and most have proved the better fiends? (ll.56-62)

The idea that men can "outdo a devil … in a body" is a stark reversal of religious orthodoxy, in which devils were considered not only incredibly sly, but capable of performing amazing magical feats due to their quick wit and vast knowledge. As preacher William Perkins wrote on witchcraft and magic:

> [The] deuill is furnished for his purpose, [with] his owne exquisite knowledge of all naturall things; as of the influences of the starres, the constitutions of men and other creatures, the kinds, vertues, and operations of plants, rootes, hearbs, stones, &c. which knowledge of his, goeth many degrees beyond the skill of all men, yea euen of those that are most excellent in this kind, as Philosophers, and Physicians. No marueile therefore, though out of his experience in these and such like, he is able aforehand to giue a likely gesse at the issues and euents of things, which are to him so manifestly apparent in their causes.[110]

In this way of thinking, Satan is not merely an arch-magician, but an arch-naturalist whose apparent astounding deeds are nothing more than the exploitation of natural principles not yet comprehensible to easily fooled mortals. A devil's "exquisite knowledge" of everything from astrology to the "constitutions of men and other creatures" so exceeds humanity's capacity that he puts natural philosophers and physicians to shame – this devil is the sort Faustus is hoping to meet (and hoping to become) when he summons Mephistopheles. But while Faustus wished to

[110] William Perkins, *A discourse of the damned art of witchcraft*, sig. D6r (Cambridge: Cantrel Legge, 1610). For more on this line of thought as it particularly relates to natural philosophy and scientific knowledge, see John Henry, "The Fragmentation of Renaissance Occultism and the Decline of Magic" in *History of Science* 46 (2008) 1-48.

learn from devils, Jonson's human-demon relationship works the other way: Pug amazedly remarks that Hell is but a "grammar school" in comparison to the "university" of duplicity and thievery he witnesses in London (4.4.170-171).

Pug's downfall is that while "put in a body" he is not adequately prepared to deal with, in Couliano's terms, the "*natural* pneumatic activity involved in any intersubjective process," the social and, in Couliano's argument, magical "phenomena in which the individual plays the role either of manipulator or of the manipulated or of the instrument of manipulation."[111] As Darryll Grantley notes, "With the advent of the London-based commercial theatre, though there is some persistence of the representation of the city in terms of vice, there is also a pride in its power and a considerable positive interest in the reality of the material environment."[112] Pug's inability to truly understand and manipulate principles of human interaction in the city marks a definitive line between the human and the diabolic at the level of the social, which is given an ontological basis: a devil summoned into a human body would simply be inadequate in the face of the full scope of human experience. Pug is a poor cyberneticist: he cannot grapple with embodied human desires and communications, the imaginations and fantasies of which magicians and playwrights and poets must be aware, and upon which men like Wittipol and Merecraft work. Thus, Jonson imbues his London with not-quite-magic, something that relies on the direct observation and manipulation of the human disposition, as opposed to the intercession of supernatural, superhuman power; Pug, along with the archaic demonism he represents, is driven from the stage in a metatextual exorcism, his poor social skills becoming the constitutive exception to the play's human social world.

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[111] Couliano 103.

[112] Darryl Grantley *London in Early Modern English Drama: Representing the Built Environment,* 12 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

What Jonson's play offers is thus the reembodied and rehumanized operative mechanism for such intersubjective manipulation – theatrical performance, grounded in a variation of the dynamic Joan Pong Linton has called "magical consumerism." Writing on the colonial context in the Americas, Linton argues "magical consumerism" is a discourse "whereby Englishmen assume positions of power with respect to other cultural subjects," specifically women and Native Americans, by presenting these others as "trifle-lovers," overcome with an irrational and mystified regard for goods the Englishmen "truthfully" know to be simple commodities.[113] An example Linton uses is the mirror, which was thought to capture the fancy of women in particular, and when purchased risked making them vulnerable to an ever expanding consumption of cosmetics, clothing, and other fashionable trinkets. "If the female consumer is implicated in an erring fancy," Linton writes, "then … the ability to capitalize on this fancy without being drawn into error marks the merchant's masculine self-possession."[114] And if this discourse works to produce certain people as naïve consumers, eliding their agency at the expense of the composed and manipulative merchant, we can see how it applies to Jonson's play, in the form of the con artists Merecraft, Tailbush, and to some extent Wittipol, all of whom at various points successfully outwit the play's central dupe, Fitzdottrel. Indeed, the canniness of human "projectors" stands in stark contrast to the crisis Satan describes at the beginning of the play, as if he is a merchant who cannot adequately keep up with the market: Londoners now only desire vices of "quality" or "fashion," things like "yellow starch" for their clothing, "tobacco and strong waters, hum, / Mead, and obarni" (1.1.11-115). Rather than women or Native Americans, then, Jonson's magical consumerism works to the disadvantage of devils, who are not naïve consumers but rather inadequate merchants, incapable of keeping tabs on the rapidly changing

[113] Joan Pong Linton, *The Romance of the New World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 85.
[114] Linton, 87

fancies of urban London, a fact that Pug makes incredibly clear as he fails time and again in search of "venery." As Herford and Simpson remark on the play, "the privileges of the infernal world are gone, it has sunk to the footing of a mere rival state whose merchandise can be impounded and its citizens put in the Counter or carted to Tyburn."[115] But this infernal reassemblage still requires one more twist, accomplished by way of the human most closely aligned with the play's asinine devils: Fitzdottrel, whose foolishness and magical preoccupations allow Jonson to critique quite specifically the magical consumerism of his own audience.

As I have already established, one of the central dilemmas of the theater was how audiences were disposed to follow its examples. While the stage's advocates argued the audience would imitate the good and disavow the bad, the antitheatricalists believed there were simply no good examples on display. Indeed, Jonson himself was particularly sensitive to this critique, eventually recognizing how a personality already inured to vice would not necessarily benefit from seeing it punished in show.[116] With that in mind we should note that Jonson makes a point of presenting Fitzdottrel as a total buffoon *despite the fact* he is an avid theater-goer, and as a matter of fact, *an attendee of Jonson's own plays*. Fitzdottrel rents fine clothing to show off at the public theaters, and as Wittipol explains at the beginning of the play, Fitzdottrel is currently going to see a new show called *The Devil Is an Ass*, for he "dares not miss a new play," and on the subject of his clothing, "thinks himself new, in other men's old" (1.4.21-25). Already Jonson is taking aim at a certain sort of spectator who attends the theater and learns precisely the wrong

[115] Herford and Simpson, *Ben Jonson,* 2:158.

[116] Writing in his commonplace book *Discoveries* Jonson admits "It is a dangerous thing, when men's minds come to sojourn with their affections, and their diseases eat into their strength: that when too much desire, greediness of vice, hath made the body unfit, or unprofitable; it is yet gladded with the sight, and spectacle of it in others: and for want of ability to be an actor; it is content to be a witness" (Jonson, *Discoveries*, 1816-1823). Vice, as Jonson understands it, inevitably enervates the body's capacities, making it "unfit" and "unprofitable," and yet these bodies weakened by "disease" may nevertheless sate their perverse desires by being a "witness" if they cannot be an "actor." Such a disposition "enjoys the pleasures of sinning," Jonson explains, "in beholding others sin" (Jonson, *Discoveries*, 1823-1824).

lessons: when Merecraft commends later him for being well-read in history, Fitzdottrel responds "No, I confess I ha't from the play-books, / And think they're more authentic" (3.4.12-13). What I am suggesting is that Fitzdottrel is not simply a victim of the magical consumerism spun for him by con artists like Merecraft, but he is consumed by the pseudo-magical fancies of the theater. Repeating, in a sense, Faustus's error of relying on performance (of history, of social prestige) at the expense of a truth grounded in bodies both individual and social, Fitzdottrel becomes a complement to Pug, who must likewise steal his clothes and his very body, yet is hopelessly unprepared to do anything useful with them.[117]

It is only fitting that the play which Fitzdottrel hopes to see ends with him staging his own degenerate spectacle. After his wife, with the help of Wittipol and Manly, tricks him out of his estate in order to stop him from losing it all to the con artists, Fitzdottrel is so incensed that he and Merecraft together plot to fake Fitzdottrel's demonic possession and frame Francis for witchcraft. Merecraft and Fitzdottrel commence to "outdo the Devil" (5.7.49) with a series of theatrical tricks, such as a bellows to produce bulges in the stomach and soap to feign foaming at the mouth. Though Francis and Wittipol see the sham for what it is ("How now, what play ha' we here?" [5.8.39]), the plan is almost on the verge of success when the gullible Justice Eitherside comes to investigate. The ostentatious theatricality of Fitzdottrel's foaming, spitting, and speaking in tongues only serves to convince Eitherside of their reality: "How the Devil can act!" remarks the goldsmith Gilthead, to which Eitherside replies, "He is the master of players!

[117] The parallels between Fitzdottrel's foolish gambit of renting clothing, Pug's own stolen outfit, and indeed his stolen body suggest a kind of metaphysical metastasis of early modern sumptuary laws and the culture of fashion. As Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass write in *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) clothing was seen as constitutive of social and political personhood, and yet while clothes "materialized social status and indebtedness" they also were "circulating commodities" that undermined any given ideas about static class or gender roles (11). In Jonson's play bodies also are figured as circulating in a cosmological market, though while human beings may be able to fool each other (or at least stroke their own egos) by wearing clothes outside their station, devils categorically are unsuited to inhabiting human bodies. In this way, Jonson establishes the body as the baseline material for human existence, relegating clothing to an ancillary position.

Master Gilthead, / And poets too!" (ll.77-78). But the theatrics are interrupted as, across town, Satan invades Newgate to return Pug to Hell, leaving behind only the corpse the devil once occupied and "an infernal stink and steam" that clouds the air of London (l.132). When the spectators at the mock-exorcism are informed by a jailer of the bizarre event, Fitzdottrel immediately breaks character, confessing his deceit in order to "tell the truth / And shame the fiend" (ll.142-143).

While Fitzdottrel's exorcism is a farce, it circumstantially coincides with the driving off of a devil from the mortal world. Jonson figures not the ceremony of exorcism itself but rather the narrative machinery of his play, which encapsulates an empty performance of exorcism, as the power which inevitably conquers and crushes the devils – albeit ones it has admittedly conjured. In Fitzdottrel, Jonson constructs a spectator inclined to misread him, someone already miseducated by too much time in the theater with the wrong outlook; by making it clear Fitzdottrel aims to see the play he's already in, Jonson places that character both onstage and in his audience. Actual theatrical spectators are thus implicated, by proxy, in Fitzdottrel's foolishness. When Fitzdottrel puts off his act of possession, Jonson stages a sincere expression of regret in the face of a supernatural event. But this is reliant on a basic misapprehension about the nature of the supernatural event itself – Fitzdottrel seems to think the explosion at Newgate was a show of diabolic power rather than, as the audience knows, an admission of diabolic defeat. It is Jonson's moral theater that now operates "without the devil by direct means," because while Fitzdottrel sees his performance as fraud in the light of an intervention by actual devils, his repentance hinges on the fact that he does not know that those devils are basically powerless.

In other words, Jonson manages to turn Fitzdottrel's "magical consumerism" around, taking his habit of misunderstanding what he sees and aiming it toward a better end. In the process, the audience is brought to a new level of awareness regarding their own viewing habits, invited to break the spell of their own enchanted consumption of stage-plays and to approach them with a more critical eye. "I know I speak to those can apprehend me," Manly says in his closing speech, hailing precisely the savvier audience Jonson hopes for, bringing them into the world of the play with their full knowledge of what has transpired (l.167). Manly admits that the reformation of the truly wicked is impossible, but those "few that have the seeds / Of goodness" will grow into a better life if allowed the time and opportunity. Performance is not guaranteed to work its magic on the spectator, but under the right conditions, Jonson suggests, it can help. In a manner similar to how Sidney's poet famously "nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth," Jonson denies the direct efficacy of both supernatural and theatrical entities precisely to recuperate the possibility of theater's moral teleology – for the potential of a spectator to (mis)read into an empty event a true moral lesson. We are all subject to "human error," as Manly puts it, and that is exactly what ontologically fortifies humans against their constitutively unhuman, diabolic opposition: akin to Wiener's conception of a conservative cybernetics, Jonson suggests that through art, humanity's inborn failures and frailties may with care and effort be corrected. Devils, terminally artless, will not fare so well.

Early modern (un)humanism

If Marlowe's tragedy was founded upon Renaissance humanism's paradox of a naturally occurring human creature facing its own ideological construction and discursive contingency, the solution Jonson proposes in his comedy is to embrace that contingency, making it a human rather

than diabolic trait. Jonson's humanism is ontologically grounded in the proper control and understanding of a body, and hence a certain finesse or fellow-feeling with others in similar bodies. The body's affects and limitations thus become foundational for the human experience – tendencies toward venery, the potential for transformative sympathy – and performance (social or theatrical) is figured as a supplement to embodied human finitude. That is to say, by this point in Jonson's career, performance becomes a vehicle for the *expression* of moral improvement, rather than an instrument of its direct implementation. By rethinking this relationship between embodiment and performance, Jonson sidesteps the trap into which Faustus falls: Marlowe's magician found himself undone by the relationship between his body and the many roles he played, while Jonson's characters (and by extension his audience) are taught to occupy their roles, social and ideological, as extensions of the bodies they already inhabit, and forsake those roles deemed socially inappropriate.

But while Jonson's humanism can be read as a solution to the problems posed by Marlowe's, I refrain from describing it as "posthumanist" in the way I described the outlook suggested by *Doctor Faustus*. This is because, by recentering his human subjects in a universalized, idealized notion of the body, Jonson capitulates to a bodily anthropocentrism that evinces a "[f]aith in the unique, self-regulating and intrinsically moral powers of human reason" that Rosi Braidotti describes as characteristic not only of Renaissance humanism but the liberal Enlightenment humanism that is to follow it.[118] I would like to conceive of the issue less linearly: at the time Jonson wrote, the humanism which so many anti- and posthumanist theories have set out to dismantle was yet-to-be, and indeed, his play's metadramatic finale has a part in constructing the very "self-regulating and intrinsically moral" notion of humanity Braidotti intends to critique. As Manuel DeLanda says, "Human history is a narrative of contingencies, not

[118] Braidotti, 13.

necessities, of missed opportunities to follow different routes of development[.]"[119] What I aim to illustrate by placing Marlowe and Jonson side by side, then, is that many of the alternatives to humanism are not produced wholesale in our postmodern, technologically and socially fraught times, but rather have a historical basis, should we choose to activate it.[120]

Hayles's critique of disembodied techno-utopian humanism indicates we have yet to adequately recognize and respond to the problem Marlowe saw four-hundred years ago: what do we become if and when we step outside our own bodies and the discourses that make them? For Marlowe what prompted this question was the emergent technology of the commercial theater; Jonson's response was to assert that the body preceded both performance and the theater, which he further aligned with the stabilizing force of nascent consumer capitalism. That is to say, society, ideology, and performance are all incidental to Jonson, because for him, a "given" humanity always already exists at the level of the body, ignoring how bodies themselves (as Judith Butler tells us) are constructed by a confusion of matter and discourse.[121] Devils are but one place where we can see how the human wheat was winnowed from the nonhuman chaff, allowing us to recognize they were not simply metaphors for humans or ready-made demons but, in a Latourean sense, actants cast as the villains in the drama that brought us to this point. Marlowe locates a disturbing contingency about the "given-ness" of humanity, and Jonson embraces that contingency by setting it in orbit around a universalized and socialized body. [122]

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[119] Manuel DeLanda, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000) 99.

[120] This point is highly indebted to the method laid out by Linda Charnes in "Anticipating Nostalgia: Finding Temporal Logic in a Textual Anomaly." *Textual Cultures* 4.1 (2009): 72-83. Charnes reads an 18th century emendation of a textual crux in Shakespeare's *Henry V* as instrumental in the subsequent interpretation of the character of Falstaff, demonstrating how an editorial move seems to uncannily predict a scene of reception with which we are familiar, but which historically had yet to be.

[121] Butler views matter and hence the body "not as site or surface" upon which meaning is inscribed, a preexisting container for the ideas a culture ascribes to it, but it is itself subject to "a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (*Bodies That Matter* xviii).

[122] Neil Badmington notes the "apocalyptic" tenor of some posthumanist theorists, especially as they ponder what the human is to be in the face of climate change, resource shortage, globalized war, and economic collapse figured

Yet by looking backward we might, paradoxically, move forward, avoiding what philosopher Reza Negarastani calls the "two pathologies of history … conservation and progression — one an account of the present that must preserve the traits of the past, and the other an account of the present that must approach the future while remaining anchored in the past." Negarastani radicalizes human contingency, suggesting humanity is always being rewritten and reenacted in what he calls "the catastrophe of revision." He places "the human" in a continuous state of becoming that is neither teleological nor progressional: "the revisionary vector of the future," he explains, "is not to redeem but to update and revise, to reconstitute and modify."[123] In comparison with the rest of this project, my opening chapter has focused not on one primary text but rather considered two very different primary texts in relation to one another. The following chapters present something like a counter-history to the teleological progression I have sketched out here. After all, in drawing my line as I did from Marlowe to Jonson, ending with the latter's ideal of a "gathered self," I have not done much more than echo claims made by Catherine Belsey, among others, that early modern texts exhibit traces of an incipient "liberal humanism," a post-Enlightenment bourgeois artifact that "proposes that the subject is the free,

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in contemporary disaster films, but also warns that the human has an uncanny capacity to recur in unexpected forms (*Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within*, New York: Routledge, 2004 [109]). Similarly, Stefan Herbrechter justifies posthumanist critical approaches to Shakespeare in particular by claiming when we look to an era before the "humanisms" we currently know existed, we are bound to find consonances with theories dedicated to questioning or unsettling those very ideologies, since Shakespeare's texts "anticipate the impending disappearance and displacement of their world, and they solicit the reciprocal recognition that our world, likewise, conceals the evolving past of a prospective present" ("Shakespeare Ever After: Posthumanism and Shakespeare" in ed, Herbrechter and Laqué, *Humankinds: The Renaissance and Its Anthropologies* 261). To this extent, posthumanism signals "a strategic move away from many anthropocentric premises … so that the human can no longer be taken for granted, humanity as a universal value is no longer self-legitimating, and humanism as a reflex or self-reflex cannot be trusted" (265). Obviously, Shakespeare's texts are not alone in arising from Renaissance theories of humanism and contributing toward the formation of post-Enlightenment humanisms, though they certainly play a privileged part. Yet as I have shown, Marlowe and Jonson approach humanism and its discontents in ways that can contribute to our understanding of how the human can be unsettled and resettled in in the face of cultural and material upheaval.

[123] Reza Negarastani, "The Labor of the Inhuman, Part II: The Inhuman." *e-flux*. 2014. < http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-labor-of-the-inhuman-part-ii-the-inhuman/ >

unconstrained author of meaning and action, the origin of history," as well as "unified, knowing and autonomous[.]"[124] In other words, a Marlovian Faustus purged of his ills, though even Jonson's admission of a necessary ignorance for a peaceable social world may trouble too closely his alignment with liberal humanism's ostensibly democratic impulse.[125]

In moving forward, then, we also move backward in pursuit of different avenues for the early modern theater's cybernetic potential, looking at variations of the unhuman outside the specifically diabolic, and other visions of the human it produced. I want to recuperate the "ontological unsettling" Latour attributes to beings of fiction and art, and following Negarastani's example, I believe it has only been through careful attention to and engagement with ontologically unsettling obstructions, adversaries, and devils that the human comes into view. In further chapters, then, I investigate the emergence of not a single, unified notion of the humanity like the one suggested by labels like "liberal humanism," but rather various notions of the human necessarily defined by and with the unhumanities that give rise to them. The early modern theater becomes a key site where we can observe the careful work of reassemblage and revision that creates humanity (or rather *a possible* humanity), as each play and performance

[124] Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985), 8. This arc of the modern subjects becoming is a familiar one in Renaissance studies, repeated variously by Jonathan Dollimore in *Radical Tragedy* (1984) and Stephen Greenbatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980). Though most scholarship from at least the time of Greenblatt on is critical of the notion in some way or another, the narrative to which they respond is Jacob Burckhardt's in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). For a psychoanalytic overview of how critical arguments such as Greenblatt's still uphold Burckhardt's idea of an emergent autonomous, liberal, modern subject, see Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). The idea of Jonson's valuing of a "gathered self," meanwhile, is drawn from his lyric poetry, and laid out mostly clearly in a chapter by Sarah Van Den Berg, "True relation: The life and career of Ben Jonson" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 1-14.

[125] Belsey, of course, is interested precisely in how "liberal humanism" and "Western liberal democracy" have worked to promote white men as universal standards against which women were found personally and politically lacking. Much current scholarship on the ascent of the humanist subject is likewise dedicated to noting the schisms within its supposedly universalist programs.

communicates to its audience a conjectural drawing (and redrawing) of the boundaries between Heaven, Hell, and the spaces in between, along with what place the "human" has within them.

2

Material Phantasms: Unliving Blackness in *Othello*

Spinoza's vision

In July of 1664, Baruch Spinoza wrote to an associate, the Flemish Mennonite Peter Balling, regarding a letter the latter had sent the previous month. Though Balling's letter is lost, it seems he wrote to Spinoza to voice a concern about omens and the recent death of his son from an illness. It appears that when his son was healthy Balling nevertheless apparently heard, as Spinoza recapitulates it, "groans like those [Balling's son] uttered when he was ill and shortly afterwards died."[1] Spinoza assures his friend that these phantom groans were not real, but rather "only the effect of your imagination." To prove his point, Spinoza offers his own parallel experience, "which befell me at Rhijnsburg last winter":

> When one morning, after the day had dawned, I woke up from a very unpleasant dream, the images, which had presented themselves to me in sleep, remained before my eyes just as vividly as though the things had been real, especially the image of a certain black and leprous Brazilian whom I had never seen before. This image disappeared for the most part when, in order to divert my thoughts, I cast my eyes on a book, or something else. But, as soon as I lifted my eyes again without fixing my attention on any particular object, the same image of this same negro appeared with the same vividness again and again, until the head of it gradually vanished.[2]

Spinoza says that what happened with Balling's hearing happened with his own sight, though he admits "the causes were very different, your case was an omen and mine was not." The similarity

[1] Baruch Spinoza, "Letter XXX" in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, Vol. 2, trans. R.H.M. Elwes, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1891), 325.
[2] Spinoza, "Letter XXX," 325-326.

and difference, he goes on to argue, lie in the fact that they were both particular manifestations of the workings of the imagination. Spinoza posits that "effects of the imagination arise either from bodily or mental causes," meaning, first of all, that physical health and disposition to some extent influences the imagination ("fevers and other bodily ailments are the causes of delirium" while "persons of stubborn disposition imagine nothing but quarrels, brawls, slaughterings, and the like").[3] In other words, what we imagine is in some respect a result of our history of experiences as embodied beings. Imaginations arising from immediate sensory experience cannot prove to be omens, because "their causes do not involve any future events." Nevertheless, Spinoza allows, "images originating in the mental disposition, may be omens of some future event; inasmuch as the mind may have a confused presentiment of the future." That is to say, our inability to directly *feel* the future does not disbar us from imagining it. As Spinoza explains in the *Ethics*, "As long as a man is affected by the image of a thing, he will regard the thing as present even though it may not exist, and he does not think of it as past or future except in so far as its image is joined to the image of past or future time" (III.P18).[4] Hence, omens for Spinoza are not so much truly predictions of the future, but a "confused presentiment," a kind of disjointed cognition wherein the mind "imagine[s] a future event as forcibly and vividly, as though it were present," but does not properly recognize the thought as a future projection. In Balling's case, Spinoza finally suggests, Balling knew his son so well that he could forcefully imagine the boy's future illness without being consciously aware he was doing it.[5]

What falls by the wayside is Spinoza's own imagination, his odd vision of the "black and leprous Brazilian." Whereas Balling's premonition is worth investigation and explication, the

[3] Spinoza, "Letter XXX" 325.
[4] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and Selected Letters*, trans. James Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992).
[5] Spinoza, "Letter XXX," 326.

disturbing image of the black man serves no other purpose than to intrude and disappear. It would seem Spinoza offers the example as a counterpoint to his understanding of Balling's experience, one that demonstrates the vagaries of the imagination rather than its subtler operations. Spinoza suggests his vision was more the result of corporeal and cognitive misfire, rather than the sign of intense emotional identification he attributes to Balling and his son. As Spinoza says, he awoke from a "very unpleasant dream" and elements of it appeared to follow him into the waking world. Focusing on other objects in the room seems to make the vision fade, but Spinoza finds that when his eyes are not directed toward anything in particular, the image comes once again fully into view. Thus, Spinoza's anecdote primarily serves to bolster his claim that the imagination is more prone to strange excitation when the mind is otherwise at rest.[6] In shifting his focus to Balling's concerns, Spinoza rhetorically enacts the dislocation and "gradual vanishing" of the image that confronted him in his bedchambers.

In discussing this episode, I want to rethink how Spinoza's anecdote both mediates and obviates the tensions in early modern notions of race. That is, I am here searching for the beginnings of race *as* a medium, as W.J.T Mitchell has argued it is:

> …race is not merely a content to be mediated, an objected to be represented visually or verbally, or a thing to be depicted in a likeness or image, … race itself is a medium and an iconic form – not simply something to be seen, but itself a framework for seeing through or (as Wittgenstein would put it) seeing as.[7]

In my last chapter, I look to how the stage both unsettled and, potentially, could reassemble one's relationship to the human body. My primary concern in the larger chapter will be on how early modern blackface performances contribute to the construction and stabilization of race as a

[6] Noting that Balling most often heard the phantom groans apparently abruptly, in unspecified situations when he was then moved to "[get] up and compose [himself] to listen," Spinoza explains that "the imagination, when it was unfettered and free, could imagine groans more forcibly and vividly than when you sat up in order to listen in a particular direction" (325).

[7] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 13.

medium, as a way of seeing, but the point to be taken here at the start is the quite literal instability of Spinoza's racialized vision, which flickers in and out of view before finally fading entirely.

Indeed, commentary on the racial aspects of Spinoza's anecdote has been limited. Michael A. Rosenthal, in an overview of the critical position that "such ad hoc examples" in early modern philosophy "are really symptomatic of a larger pattern of racial discrimination," argues that Spinoza misreads his own dream, neglecting to see in it his own "confused mental awareness of the colonial enterprise itself and the representations of that enterprise in his culture."[8] Spinoza's murky presentiment of the horrors of slavery and colonial exploitation is given a slightly different historical cast by Justin E.H. Smith, who notes the hallucination of black figures to be a recurring symptom of melancholy in humoral medicine. Drawing on Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Smith notes that melancholics were traditionally believed to be susceptible to hallucinations of noises and visions of curious creatures, including devilish "black men."[9] Taking Burton's catalogue as indicative, Smith argues that these visions have "no racial connotation whatsoever" in humoral discourse, and that "between the time of Burton's work and Spinoza's letter, there is a superimposition of a racial or quasi-racial connotation upon the figure of the black man," signified by Spinoza's vision being marked specifically as a "Brazilian."[10] While I think Smith is correct to highlight the relationship between the imagination, blackness, and early modern humoral theories, to argue older humoralism was

[8] Michael A. Rosenthal, "'the Black, scabby brazilian': Some thoughts on race and early modern philosophy," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31.2 (2005): 212, 218.
[9] Justin E.H. Smith, *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference: Race in Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015) 61.
[10] J.E.H. Smith, 61. In particular, Smith relies on Spinoza's specification that the Brazilian is "leprous" or scabby (*scabiosi*) in order to suggest that Burton's primarily medical understanding of blackness and melancholy as illness is here in a place of transition toward modern racialization.

wholly devoid of racializing qualities (or that humoralism was itself removed from racialization) is misleading.

First, humoral theory not only provided an explanation as to the behavior and inclinations of melancholic personalities, but was also more broadly used to posit explanations for why people in different geographical locations varied distinctly in their complexions. As Mary Floyd-Wilson has shown, drawing from the humoral writings of Jean Bodin, Pierre Charron, and Juan Huarte, Africans were generally understood to be dark skinned because their proximity to the sun and its heat had dried up their excess humors, leaving them with a surfeit of black bile and therefore, both black skin and a cultural tendency toward melancholy. In tracing how continental writers acknowledge a classical humoral tradition of melancholic Africans, Floyd-Wilson argues that they also participate in a rewriting of that tradition, allowing "the northern appropriation of Africa's melancholic darkness" that would result in, among other things, Burton's massive treatise.[11] Secondly, during the early modern period a tradition of blackness as an *effect* of the imagination circulated through medical discourse, its most famous example being drawn from Hippocrates, who, in a retelling by French physician Ambroise Paré,

> saved a princess accused of adultery, because she had given birth to a child as black as a Moor, her husband and she both having white skin; which woman was absolved upon Hippocrates' persuasion it was [caused by] the portrait of a Moor, similar to the child, which was customarily attached to her bed.[12]

[11] Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 71. Floyd-Wilson's argument concerning what she calls "geohumoralism" posits that both Europeans and Africans were rendered marginal in classical humoral theories, which privileged a "temperate" Mediterranean center. In adopting classical humoralism, then, continental and English writers were faced with the challenge of rewriting their own regional stereotype as "excessively pale, moist, soft-fleshed, inconstant, and permeable" (13). One key tactic, she argues, involved "transform[ing] melancholy" and its associations with passivity, introspection and wisdom "from a physical complexion to an indiscoverable, yet universally accessible mental state" – and thus newly available to white Europeans (80).

[12] Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1983) 38-39.

Sir Thomas Browne, writing in 1646, makes the case for the maternal imagination being the origin of racial difference when he covers Hippocrates' anecdote himself and then supposes "it was at the beginning of this complexion, induced first by Imagination, which having once impregnated the seed, found afterward concurrent productions, which were continued by Climes, whose constitution advantaged the first impression."[13] With these points acknowledged, Spinoza's strange vision of a black man seems less poised between a formerly unracialized humoralism and the incipient horrors of a racialized slave economy; rather, what Spinoza does here is participate in a venerable white European tradition in which blackness is inscribed in a body and simultaneously posited as a figment of the white imagination. In other words, what comes to the fore in the examples I have outlined is an uneasy vacillation between blackness as a contingent somatic condition and blackness as an imaginative artifact; indeed, as Hippocrates' anecdote suggests, imagining blackness has the odd tendency to bear it into physical reality. In this sense, Mitchell's idea of the medium of race – again, race as a method of seeing – is of utmost importance, for early modern blackness is positioned in a fraught site of material objectivity, a result of forces "outside" human control, while it is also conceived as symptomatic of certain spectacular-imaginative experiences or processes.

That Spinoza can in passing put to bed the image that haunted him so insistently upon waking seems founded at least in part on his ability to project and localize blackness within a certain type of body – a "leprous Brazilian," someone both diseased and other. Spinoza marries this imagined blackness to larger, stabilizing racialist discourses in order to render the vision legible, suturing skin color to notions of health and geographic origin. In the process, he secures race as a visual medium, as a way of explaining where and why blackness originates *outside of*

[13] Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica*, (London: T.H., 1646) 326. < http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:11875658>

an imagination that, in perceiving such objectified blackness, comes to see itself as white. In this chapter, I will argue that it is precisely this dynamic – the slippage of race between sites of material reality and cognitive fantasy – that Shakespeare exploits to profound effect in *The Tragedy of Othello* (1604). Moving first through current applications of cognitive science in literary studies and of Shakespeare in particular, I then combine cognitive insights with the work of media theory through D. Fox Harrell's concept of *phantasmal media* to describe how the cognitions elicited by art objects are, simultaneously, fundamentally imaginary and ultimately real. Taking blackface performance as my key area of concern, I then provide a brief history of its uses in a handful of medieval and early modern plays in different genres in order to demonstrate that blackface was not always used to mark racial difference on the stage but also served as an allegorical indicator of sin (in religious drama) and ignorance (in humanist and educational drama). Blackface performance does, by the early modern period, take on a distinct racializing quality, but it exists in tension with these earlier conventions. I thus dub the performative effects of blackface a "material phantasm," highlighting how the material stage property, in performance with an actor, calls up a multitude of different epistemic schema for the audience.

What these schema share, however, is the use of blackness's materiality – since blackness as a racializing characteristic becomes conflated with the makeup used to impersonate it in performance – to render black subjectivity in a sense unliving or unlivable for a presumed white audience. By "unliving" I mean to emphasize the material aspect of blackface makeup as a prop, as part of a costume; by "unlivable" I mean to emphasize the way that blackness (and its racialized subjects) must be disavowed or relinquished by subjects that have come to see themselves as white. Discussing what he calls "racial cross-dressing" in Ben Jonson's *The*

Masque of Blackness, Ian Smith anticipates my argument here by describing the phenomenon by which theatrical technologies render blackness unliving and unlivable: "The prosthetic materiality of Africans in the early modern stage reduces selfhood to an evacuated interior, or rather, an interior that is never [the Africans'] own but, like Eve in accounts of the Creation story, exists *ex viro* – after man, after the white man."[14] To reduce blackness to a material prop and/or artifact of a consequently white (or whitened) imagination evokes what Hari Ziyad calls blackness's "nonhuman objectivity" – blackness figured as the constitutive limit or "outside" to a white, humanized subjectivity.[15] I take substantial direction from both Smith and Ziyad, but I am more invested here in investigating the early modern theater as a proving ground where race as a medium – race as a method of both seeing and thinking – is distilled from a series of discourses, from religious drama to allegories of ignorance and wisdom to humanist commonplaces, that are in themselves not always racialist but that nevertheless, by sharing theatrical practices with dramas of racial impersonation, come to bolster racialized thinking and racialized spectatorship in early modern England.

The effect is the dramatic construction and naturalization of a subjectivity that sees itself as both white and human, and by consequence excludes its others from both rubrics. This happens in part because early modern blackface performance encourages the conflation of ephemeral, performative effects with the extro-theatrical bodies of racialized peoples. But as in the case of Spinoza's vision, disavowed blackness returns in a ghostly form, validating Anne Alin Cheng's remark that white supremacy is "secured through the melancholic introjection of

[14] Ian Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-Dressing on the Early Modern Stage," *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003): 33-67, esp. 39. Smith also responds elsewhere to Jonson's masque as it tackles the subversion of the tradition of black beauty, see Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 54-72.

[15] Hari Ziyad. "Playing "Outside' in the Dark: Blackness in a Postwhite World." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3.1 (Spring 2017): 143-161, esp. 151.

racial others that it can neither fully relinquish nor accommodate and whose ghostly presence nonetheless guarantees its centrality."[16] The final leg of the this chapter turns to the affect theory of Lauren Berlant to propose a reading of *Othello* that accounts for its use of blackface and the structures of feeling it fosters with its audience as it constructs a spectating whiteness through a dramatic encounter with feigned blackness that, on the one hand, mediates an obviously performative and artificial notion of race, and on the other, insists on the existence of race as a quality of bodies that exists prior to and outside all mediatory effects.

Brabantio's dream

Some decades before Spinoza's hypnopompic vision of a ghostly black body, Shakespeare staged a curious precursor scenario, in which one of his characters imagines a black body that, by contrast, does not fade upon waking. At the very beginning of *The Tragedy of Othello*, Iago and Roderigo rouse Brabantio from his sleep to inform him of Desdemona and Othello's elopement. For the first few exchanges, Brabantio does not credit them, asking them "have you lost your wits?" (1.1.91).[17] Once he discovers one of his hecklers is Roderigo, whom he's turned away from his doors before, he grows even more suspicious, asking "What tell'st thou me of robbing? This is Venice: / My house is not a grange" (ll.104-105). Brabantio is inclined not to believe anything he's hearing; yet when Iago, whom Brabantio does not recognize, insists that Desdemona has run away with "the Moor," he turns to Roderigo for

[16] Quoted in Arthur L. Little, Jr., "Re-Historicizing Race, White Melancholia, and the Shakespearean Property" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67.1 (2016):84-103; 92n34. Little's argument expands and adapts many of Cheng's claims within the specific context of early modern and Renaissance studies, taking a critical look at Shakespeare's cultural complicity in projects of white supremacy and the nebulous sense that early modern studies is thus a field for white or "unmarked" scholars. What he proposes, then, is to understand early modernity as a site wherein whiteness is conceived and forged as a particular racial property, which subsequently attaches to Shakespeare (or Shakespeare to it). His insight is deeply formative for my argument here, which hopefully further elucidates that concomitant racial constructions at work in *Othello*.

[17] All citations from *Othello*, ed. E.A.J Honigmann (London: Arden, 1997).

verification. The latter confirms that Brabantio's daughter has fled to "the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor," an "extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" before daring the senator to check his daughter's room (ll.124, 134-135). It is at precisely this moment that Brabantio's tenor changes:

> Strike on the tinder, ho!
> Give me a taper, call up all my people.
> This accident is not unlike my dream,
> Belief of it oppresses me already.
> Light, I say, light! (ll.135-141)

Like Peter Balling's auditory hallucinations of his healthy son's death rattle, Brabantio is struck by the sudden sense that he has encountered an omen, as what must have first seemed an idle fancy now wields a "belief" that "oppresses." Mentioning the dream allows him to own some bit of knowledge – namely, what Iago and Roderigo have been telling him for the past few dozen lines – while still not fully articulating it. When did this "dream" occur? Was he just awakened from it, or has it happened at some indefinite point in the past? No matter what, it has retroactively become significant. But Spinoza's vision comes into play here, as well.

For what did Brabantio dream? Did he dream only of Desdemona running away, or did he dream specifically of her relationship with Othello? If Brabantio was the one who initially "loved [Othello], oft invited [him]" (1.3.129) into the home, where Desdemona first met the Moor and fell for him, then we might have more evidence for Spinoza's thesis. For just as Spinoza told Balling that the latter was so close to his son that he imagined his imminent death without fully realizing it, we might here suppose that Brabantio somehow anticipated this "accident" he provided grounds for without being fully conscious of doing so. In short, up until this point it seems Brabantio has been haunted by his own lingering impressions of a lost child and a black man that have, quite abruptly, become "real." By mentioning the dream Brabantio

manages to tell himself he saw this coming, and to assert that he still has time to stop it. But as we know, this knowledge comes too little, too late; this is the characteristic move of Shakespeare's play, which prompts its characters' and its audience's imaginations in ways that pull into question the links between language, imagination, and reality.

My argument draws on contemporary media theory as well as recent research on the intersections of cognitive science and literature. Much work has already been done to bridge the latter category to the early modern theater. Amy Cook in *Shakespearean Neuroplay* summarizes the cognitive linguistic theories of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, explaining that they illustrate how "language and cognition" emerge "from an embodied experience of the world" and thus indicate "there is no transcendental truth that thinking and language attempt to capture and represent."[18] Rather than a theory of language that posits words as signs pointing from the mind out to things (and meanings) in the "real world," cognitive linguistics suggests that meaning arises from particular bodily and sensory experiences – in other words, from the *relationality between* things in the "real world" and human cognitive processes that receive and interpret them.[19] Cook aligns the work of Lakoff and Jonson with Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner's conceptual blending theory (CBT) to further underscore how meaning may be generated not only between the relationality of embodied minds and their environments, but between cognitive "input spaces," giving rise to novel ideas not directly associated with a

[18] Amy Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay: Reinvigorating the Study of Dramatic Texts and Performance through Cognitive Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 9.

[19] To draw a clarifying example from Johnson, the ethical concept of "moral uprightness" builds upon an embodied sense of the posture as "standing straight and tall," which furthermore draws in associations with pride, a healthy body, physical strength, and so on. Rather than being a simple metaphor that gives poetic coloring to moral sentiment, Johnson argues that our understanding of moral sentiment is inherently metaphorical and involves the transference into the ethical domain sensations and ideas "root[ed] in movement and other bodily experiences at a pre-reflective level" (*Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007] 26).

particular sensory experience but rather resulting from the networking of two otherwise unassociated ideas: "Blends are constructions of meaning based on projection of information from two or more input spaces to a blended space, such that the blended meaning contains information and structure from more than one space."[20] For Cook, CBT is the key operation of the theater, whose fictional scenarios serve as ways of "staging and challenging categories" that derive from nontheatrical experience;[21] she argues this can be seen most clearly in Hamlet's suggestion that the theater holds the "mirror up to nature." As she explains, this metaphor combines three input spaces: a sense of mirrors as flat reflective surfaces that reflect more or less objectively, a complementary sense of convex mirrors that distort what they reflect, and the agential position of "holding" a mirror to reflect with specificity and intention. The end result, she argues, is a sense of a theater that "Intentionally … distorts … what it simply reflects."[22]

Similarly, Evelyn Tribble brings to bear the idea of "distributed cognition" to the historical space of Shakespeare's theater, emphasizing how thought arises from the relationality between the embodied mind and a multitude of material and cognitive forces:

> cognition is distributed across a coordinated yet shifting and uneven triad of insides, objects, and people: internal neuro-biological mechanisms that constrain and enable such processes as memory, perception, and attention; material tools ('cognitive artifacts') and environments; and social systems.[23]

Arguing for what she terms a "cognitive ecology" of the early modern theater, Tribble advocates a deepened understanding of Shakespeare's theater as deeply multimodal, "an entire system" that consists of "neuro-biological systems, material artifacts, the social surround, and technologies

[20] Cook 11.
[21] Cook, 2.
[22] Cook, 58.
[23] Evelyn B. Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 7.

such as sound and lighting among others."[24] Both Cook and Tribble share a desire to use the insights of cognitive science to better understand the complexity and nuance of how meaning is made in the world generally and the early modern theater specifically. Indeed, the flagship work linking Shakespeare and cognitive science, Mary Thomas Crane's *Shakespeare's Brain*, is positioned explicitly against what the author sees as the overbearing determinations of critical theory that strips texts of the embodied experiences that give rise to them: "Cognitive subjects are not simply determined by the symbolic order in which they exist; instead, they shape (and are also shaped by) meanings that are determined by an interaction of the physical world, culture, and human cognitive systems."[25]

In the face of the scaling complexity of analysis offered by cognitive science, and the concomitant desire to reckon with texts as artifacts of that complexity, the introduction of cognitive science into the study of Shakespeare has allowed us to recognize the theater as a space of what Richard Grusin has recently called "radical mediation." Grusin's concept arises from his dialogue with contemporary media theorists and his own prior work on what he calls the "nonhuman turn" in the twenty-first century, a movement he argues is precipitated by, among other things, advances in cognitive science and its deployment in cultural theory.[26] In contrast to older senses of media as being specific technologies or objects that participate in the transfer of knowledge between humans, Grusin advocates for an increasing sense of the "experiential

[24]Tribble, 22.
[25] Mary Thomas Crane, *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), 12
[26] Richard Grusin, "Introduction" in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), viii. Grusin's idea of radical mediation responds most directly to media theorists Alexander Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark, using the agential realism of Karen Barad as a theoretical launchpad. See "Radical Mediation," *Critical Inquiry* 42.1 (Autumn 2015), 124-148.

immediacy of mediation" in all aspects of life, indeed, as in some way *fundamental* to lived experience.[27] As he explains:

> media and media technologies have operated and continue to operate epistemologically as modes of knowledge production, they also function technically, bodily, and materially to generate and modulate individual and collective affective moods or structures of feeling among assemblages of humans and nonhumans.[28]

Cook calls her acknowledgement of the complex interweavings of language, culture, objects, bodies, and minds "[r]eading for the network," a term which for her is primarily grounded in the language for cognitive science.[29] I want to press this notion just a bit further to consider the network not so much as a descriptor of the cognitive process, but as what Bruno Latour thinks of as a method of description, wherein "all actors" in a situation, from the nominally human to the nominally nonhuman, "*do something*," where each node "may become a bifurcation, an event, or the origin of a new translation" of the meaning of that situation.[30] Grusin's description of radical mediation allows us to perceive this as a type of media theory: how and through what avenues does information arrive in the brain to "make meaning"? What we see in the cognitive turn in Shakespeare studies, in other words, is the realization of and insistence upon the ways the theater "generate[s] and modulate[s] individual and affective moods or structures of feeling" between actors and audience members, between playwrights and their audience, between the physical space of the theater, it sights and sounds and props, and the people inside it, and between all of those people and the cultures and ideologies outside the theater that otherwise inform them.

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[27] Grusin, "Radical Mediation," 130.
[28] Grusin, "Radical Mediation," 125.
[29] Cook 13. Specifically Cook, whose focus is primarily cognitive linguistics, refers to what she calls an "integration network," which she borrows from the "conceptual integration network" in the work of Fauconnier. See 168n1.
[30] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Trans. Catherine Porter. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 128.

What provides the union between the two seemingly disparate fields of cognitive and media study is D. Fox Harrell's work on what he terms "phantasmal media," and which, I will show, is useful for considering the mediation of phantasmatic notions of race in the early modern theater. Poised between both theories of cognition and mediation, Harrell synthesizes these insights in his analysis of computational media such as videogames and digital art. Central to his project is what he calls the *phantasm*, which is his term for "*a combination of imagery (mental or sensory) and ideas*" (emphasis original).[31] Building from Fauconnier's conceptual blending theory, Harrell argues that interaction with works of art elicits immediate thoughts and sensations, which he calls "images," that are cognitively yoked to "ideas" – an umbrella term that encapsulates various assumptions, associations, and preconceptions that have their basis in the personal and cultural history (what Harrell calls a "worldview") of the individual experiencing the artwork. Thus, a phantasm for Harrell is a bit of sensory imagery that is, more often than not, endowed by "ideas" with a "semivisible" or "connotative meaning" that, in the moment, often seems "natural and uncontroversial." It is the particular power of art, Harrell claims, to "ground concepts and images in multiple worldviews" and thus "reveal" a phantasm in its partiality and particularity. Of interest for my argument is Harrell's claim that phantasms are "made real by the imagination," like "self-fulfilling prophecies," and that there is "an important, underexamined relationship between … experiential realities and the basic human processes of imaginative cognition."[32] Indeed, as Harrell insists, "*much of what human beings experience as real is based upon the imagination*" (emphasis original).[33] Though Harrell's object of inquiry is computational and digital media specifically, this is more a result of his study's intent to provide

[31] D. Fox Harrell, *Phantasmal Media: An Approach to Imagination, Computation, and Expression,* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013), 4.
[32] Harrell, 6.
[33] Harrell, 4.

case-studies in programming and designing media that reveal certain phantasms and "interrogate disempowering social constructions."[34] He admits, however, that other genres of art can accomplish this work as well, singling out literature in particular for its ability to incite "expressive mental images" that seem "clearly apparent, yet [are] without the material presence of a solid object or even the stability of a memory (because memories point to objects and events that have occurred in the real world)."[35] To apply such logic to the dramatic stage, we might recall Peggy Phelan's claim that "[p]erformance is the art form which most fully understands the generative possibilities of disappearance."[36] To be sure, the homology between Harrell's phantasms and Phelan's disappearances is tempting but not precise, since for Phelan the performance itself is what is of interest and what disappears, while for Harrell the phantasm would be, technically speaking, a particular viewer's fragile imaginative apprehension of the performance from moment to moment. Yet the relationship between Phelan's unrelenting presentness of performance and Harrell's idea of phantasmal media can be further elucidated by returning to *Othello*'s opening scene and Brabantio's dream, and what the texts suggests for the possibilities of performance.

Revealing the phantasm

The play begins with Roderigo doubting Iago's intentions, to which Iago insists that in a "personal suit to make me his lieutenant" he has been overlooked in favor of "Michael Cassio, a Florentine" (1.1.8, 19). Iago berates Cassio's book knowledge compared to his own field experience, before exasperatedly announcing that he, for the time being, is only "his Moorship's

[34] Harrell, 63. Harrell considers such "disempowering" phantasms to be, among other things, "social ills" such as racism, slavery, bias, hegemony, and so on.
[35] Harrell, 339. In this cited chapter in particular, Harrell devotes generous time to his readings of Italo Calvino and Jean Toomer's formally experimental literature as analog precursors of phantasmal media.
[36] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 27.

ancient" (ll.32). This is, apart from the title of the play, the first way in which the audience is introduced to Othello. Following an interjection by Roderigo, Iago again articulates his displeasure at the lost promotion in order to establish that he does not "love the Moor" (ll.39). Iago's remarks foreground his conflict with Othello, highlighting the latter's status as an accomplished military personage, and only belated specifies that he is a "Moor," a term with a considerable number of valences in early modern England. "Moor" connoted not simply differences in skin color – since the distinction between "black" and "tawny" Moors so common in the history of *Othello*'s critical reception stems from a distinction made on occasion in Shakespeare's own time[37] – but also the history of Moorish Islam in the Iberian peninsula, which furthermore, as Daniel Vitkus has argued, begged for an association with the Muslim Turkish Empire.[38] Even "black" as a descriptor did not necessarily connote a Moor since, as Kim F. Hall has shown, early modern blackness, though often founded in discourses concerning Africa and African peoples, operated broadly as a trope for the expression of difference between (and sometimes even within) the (white) English and a broad spectrum of cultural Others.[39] The idea

[37] This tradition is most often traced to S.T. Coleridge's assertion that "it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro" (*Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets*, ed. T. Ashe, [London: Chiswick Press, 1883] 386). The resulting choice to make Othello "tawny" has often been nested in the racial horror palpable in Coleridge's declamation and is not tremendously popular today, though it still has some support if we, along with Arden editor E.A.J. Honigmann, choose to associate Othello closely with the portrait of the Moorish ambassador to Queen Elizabeth who was present in London some few years before the play's composition (Honigmann admits his fondness for this interpretation in his "Introduction," 2-3).

[38] For the historical genealogy of the word "Moor" in England, see Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987), 1-17. Barthelemy discusses the shifts in history and translation practices that slowly but firmly wed the idea of the Moor to blackness, even while many sources attested to the existence of "tawny" Moors. See also Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991), who focuses primarily on the Moor in relation to Morocco and plays set there. For the association between Moors and Turkish Islam, see Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002).

[39] Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995), 6-7. Hall notes the use of the term "black" to describe Native Americans, the Spanish, and the Irish, among others, and her larger study is dedicated to unpacking how rhetorically blackness (as part of a binary with 'whiteness') operates as a trope across early modern sociological and poetic discourses to various but not unrelated ends, including the construction of the foundations of contemporary racialized and gendered categories.

of a Moor hence charts and twines together several axes of difference – the somatic, the religious, and the geographical – and throughout this opening scene, Shakespeare uses the exchanges between Roderigo, Iago, and Brabantio to construct an imaginative idea of Othello that hovers among all of them. To clarify this point in Harrell's terms, what I mean is that the experience of hearing Othello described by other characters incites in the audience a phantasm of the Moor, one that expects them to draw from a multitude of contemporary discourses on Moorishness, and only as the scene progresses does Othello come more into focus.

Thus, we are introduced to Othello first as the Iago's superior, and one with whom he has some considerable quarrel; it is only after this that we learn he is a Moor, and hence, the title character. Furthermore, in terms of early modern racial physiology, it is not until Roderigo deridingly refers to Othello as "old thicklips" (l.65) that the audience would receive a suggestion that Othello is what early modern spectators would call a "blackamoor" rather than a "tawny" one. This is further emphasized after they rouse Brabantio and Iago refers to Othello obliquely as "an old black ram" that is "tupping [a] white ewe" (ll.87-88), casting Othello's complexion into relief against the presumed whiteness of Brabantio's daughter. Such language also taps into bestial imagery that played a part in racialist or proto-racialist[40] distinctions between Africans and Europeans.[41] This at first makes no sense at all to Brabantio. Iago's metaphorical language fails to stick the landing, and Brabantio is distracted momentarily by his recognition of Roderigo.

Fundamentally, however, she posits the black/white binary as originating with the perceived differences between Europe and Africa and the colonial encounters between them, but the trope is often abstracted to other areas of life.

[40] I draw this term from Benjamin Isaac in *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004). Isaac uses the term "proto-racism" to distinguish his historical subject of classical Antiquity from modern racism, but his argument in part is that modern racialist theories are derived from forms of Enlightenment thought that, in turn, "constantly employ Graeco-Roman concepts and ideas" (5).

[41] See Barthelemy, 5. Barthelemy notes that both Leo Africanus' *The History and Description of Africa* (translated by John Pory in 1600) and Samuel Purchas' *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613) ascribe to Africans both extremely bestial characteristics and extreme sexual license (eg, wearing not clothes but animal skins and foregoing monogamy). See also chapter six, "The Erotic Moor," in Elliot H. Tokson, *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama, 1550-1668* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982).

When he asks for clarification, Roderigo responds with due reverence: "Most grave Brabantio, / In simple and pure soul I come to tell you—" before Iago cuts him off:

> Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you, and you'll have courses for cousins and jennets for germans! (ll.105-112)

Iago, apparently impatient with Roderigo, rushes in to redirect the self-flattery of Roderigo's "pure and simple soul" onto Brabantio, suggesting he is cautious to a fault ("will not serve God, if the devil bid you"). The interruption is made all the more brash by Iago slipping into prose as he resumes the vulgar, bestial language from before with the mention of the "Barbary horse." Rather than referring to Desdemona as an animal, however, Iago finally clarifies the situation by referring explicitly to "your daughter," upholding Desdemona's humanity while denying it to Othello. This vulgarity finally catches Brabantio's attention: "What profane wretch art thou?" (ll.113). Iago can then drop the payload: "your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs" (ll.114-115). During this exchange, the audience is led strongly to imagine that the "Moor" they have been hearing so much about is indeed black, not only through the explicit blackness of the "ram" but through the association with a general sense of bestial blackness. Brabantio's stakes in the situation are slightly different, however, since Othello is already known to him; Iago works to establish the black and bestial before finally revealing that he is referring specifically to the Moor. The rhetorical capstone – that Desdemona is now "making" a beast with Othello, linking the claim back into the network of monstrous animal imagery that preceded it – is so outrageous that Brabantio turns again to Roderigo to verify what is being said.

Roderigo's more deferential approach toward Desdemona's "gross revolt" into the "gross clasps of a lascivious Moor" (ll.132, 124) translates Iago's crude, bestial language into a less

vulgar but no less racialized idiom,[42] and it is at this point Brabantio absently mentions his prophetic dream. Brabantio is finally persuaded, I have already claimed, precisely because he has had some "dream" that emerges, as he thinks, into terrible reality. In other words, in inviting Othello into his home, the possibility that Desdemona might fall for the Moor has crossed his mind – indeed, such invitation stands in stark contrast to his response to Roderigo: "I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors: / … My daughter is not for thee" (ll.95-97). The phantasm that Roderigo and Iago now conjure for him – the interloping, deceitful Moor – works so well because Brabantio has already done some of the work for them, harboring doubts about Othello's presence in his home and, as is soon revealed, a superstitious streak that is quick to associate Othello's blackness with "charms / By which the property of youth and maidenhood / May be abused" (ll.169-171). But what of the audience? Roderigo and Iago are not in positions to be fully trusted – Iago's frank discussion of his duplicitousness, including his admission that "I am not what I am" (l.64), clearly mark him as an untrustworthy Machiavel figure[43] – but the assumptions and stereotypes the characters levy regarding Othello's blackness were nonetheless widely available in the English discourse surrounding Moors. That they work well enough on Brabantio, who knows Othello, suggests there might not be terribly strong evidence at this point for the audience to doubt some of their claims. But the very next scene, when Othello finally appears on stage, casts much of what we've heard so far into doubt. Eldred Jones writes that in this play Shakespeare's villains "continually invoke the clichés of accepted belief, while the hero

[42] As Arthur Little argues, the entire play is haunted by a specter of interracial sex. See *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 84.
[43] Iago's pronouncement clearly travesties God's claim at Exodus 3:14, "I am that I am." See also Leah Scragg, "Iago – vice or devil?" *Shakespeare Studies* 21 (1968): 53-65.

himself with the aid of other characters sets up a different image."[44] Thus, rather than bestial, lascivious, and brutal, Othello is in fact calm, eloquent, and diplomatic: the racist caricature sketched by Roderigo, Iago, and Brabantio is revealed as purely imaginary in the face of Othello himself.

Or, rather, such a revelation *might* take place, but there is a complicating factor to take into account: the Othello Shakespeare's earliest audiences would have seen was not at all a black Moor who neatly disproved the stereotype, but in fact a nonblack actor in blackface. No matter how conventional such blackface performance was, it important to consider here. In a study of the use of cosmetics on the early modern stage, Andrea Stephens notes that "the same materials used to paint canvases, scenery, and props were also applied to bodies – and thus we should not think of early modern theatrical paint as producing a 'naturalistic' effect or as effacing its own artificiality."[45] Thus, the revelation of Othello in the play's second scene is not as simple as displaying a "real" Moor, or even a "realistic" Moor, in the wake of what has come before. Shakespeare's play, rather than casting competing "images" of Moors against one another, instead exploits its audiences' imaginings of blackness against the artificial impersonation of blackness on stage.

"I saw Othello's visage in his mind"

[44] Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), 87-88. I generally agree with Jones as to the matter of the drama, but I intend to highlight how clichés and stereotypes and their subversions are complicated by the overt impersonation of blackface performance.

[45] Andrea Stephens, *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013), 3. Stephens devotes little space to *Othello*, focusing instead on *The Masque of Blackness*, but her materialist approach to cosmetics is complemented by Farah Karim-Cooper in *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006). Following on Dympna Callaghan's point that, in addition to impersonating Moors through makeup, early modern actors played women in "whiteface" (see Callaghan's *Shakespeare Without Women*), Karim-Cooper notes that Othello's "cosmeticized blackness and the glistening white of the boy playing Desdemona" create "a photonegative of beauty through which Shakespeare metatheatrically enlivens the metaphorical significance and materiality of cosmetics" (174). For both authors, stage cosmetics indicate not a move toward naturalism but in fact a high degree of stylization.

Blackface performance lies at a juncture of the cognitive and the material: it cues the audience to imagine the performer *as* something while knowing they are not, in fact, the "real thing." In this way it becomes, I claim, what cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins calls a "material anchor," his term for "the stabilizing role of [a] material structure" in human thought.[46] As he explains:

> If conceptual elements are mapped onto a material pattern in such a way that the perceived relationships among the material elements are taken as proxies (consciously or unconsciously) for relationships among conceptual elements, then the material pattern is acting as a material anchor.[47]

Thus, under certain performative conditions, the actor's makeup in a blackface performance might be said to function as a proxy for the audience, indicating "blackness" as an attribute of real persons outside the spectacle at hand, and hence helping the audience "stabilize" their imagining of the character as black. This is not, however, the only possibility in early modern blackface performance.

D. Fox Harrell incorporates Hutchins' work on the material distribution of cognition into his own theory of phantasmal media. Refining his claim that phantasms are produced by a combination of imagery and ideas, Harrell argues that imagery may also be thought of in terms of "image space" while ideas may be considered "epistemic space."[48] As before, the first term encompasses the sensual imagery evoked by an object or situation, while the latter indicates the associated knowledge claims that derive from a preexisting "worldview." Images spaces, for Harrell, expand the concept of the material anchor in that they "acknowledge[] that the material structures of external objects perceived in the world can be inherited by the structures of mental

[46] Edwin Hutchins, 1555, "Material anchors for conceptual blends," *Journal of Pragmatics* 37 (2005):1555-1577. Hutchins first developed his idea of material anchors in an earlier book, *Cognition in the Wild* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995).
[47] Hutchins, 1562.
[48] Harrell,35.

or verbal images."[49] In other words, while Hutchins suggests material anchors are imbued with representational significance by the act of cognition ("mapped onto"), Harrell argues that material anchors can act in turn upon the cognitive process, opening up a "space" of associated imagery rather than a single representational program. As Harrell summarizes his point, "image spaces allow us to consider how the forms of images trigger further imaginative processes."[50]

In the specific case of *Othello,* Ayanna Thompson has written on contemporary calls, often under the banner of "original production" methods, to once again stage the play with the lead actor in blackface. These advocates, she writes, "sense that it is accurate for Shakespeare's practices and intentions," but also "wholly new, a twenty-first century creation that helps the audience understand the constructed nature of blackness."[51] But as Thompson alleges, such readings tend to assume that Shakespeare's "original practices and intentions" were, if not indeed anti-racist, at the very least race neutral: thus, she claims, is the power of Bardolatry, so that "[w]hen it comes to Shakespeare, reception is always written out of production because it is implicitly positively written into it."[52] We thus must not be too eager to assume that the "epistemic space" of Shakespeare is itself enough to combat the forces of racialization

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[49] Harrell, 42.

[50] Harrell, 40. Harrell is drawing particularly from the work of W.J.T. Mitchell and what the latter terms "fantasmata," recollections of prior immediate sensory experiences. Similarly, as I will later explain, Shakespeare's deployment of blackface performance in *Othello* invokes a wide breadth of potential "fantasmata" and prior uses of black makeup in dramatic performance.

[51] Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 115.

[52] Thompson, 117. Thompson's larger project investigates performances that, as she puts it, leave Bardolatry behind, situations where "Shakespeare's authority is uncoupled from the text and performance" (117). Since I am dealing, though in a highly theoretical manner, with historical conditions of performance that I see as possible in Shakespeare's time, I don't necessarily divest him from the play. Nevertheless, I try to take Thompson's cue to resist the temptation of finding a "race neutral" Shakespeare, even as I argue his approach to the character of Othello is unique given prior stage-portrayals of Moors. What we must keep in mind, I think, is that regardless of how comparatively generous Shakespeare's treatment of the Moor of Venice might have been, Virginia Mason Vaughan has shown how deeply the play's new tropes become embedded in subsequent, overtly racist thinking and policy-making in both England and America; see *Othello: A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

(especially with regard to the material anchor of blackface, which has historically *not* served to highlight the constructedness of race but to entrench it). And while I have already outlined how Shakespeare seems to cast stereotypes of Moors against his own initial presentation of Othello, I think we should note that, first, those stereotypes are imaginatively efficacious at least insofar as Brabantio is concerned, and second, that the original blackface impersonation of Othello jeopardizes any claim that Shakespeare intentionally produces some "authentic" Moor to counteract the phantasmal one conjured in the prior scene. Indeed, at this point the audience is dealing with two different forms of phantasms: the one they imagine based on what they have heard from Iago and Roderigo, and the one they imagine based on the impersonation they see onstage.

Dympna Callaghan makes a distinction between the spectacles she calls the "exhibition" of black people in early modern England, in such instances as when Africans were put on display at public events or kept by the elites as servants and curiosities, and the "mimesis" of such people by whites through the costuming and performance.[53] Such early modern spectacles, Callaghan claims, serve to commodify both blackness and Africans in modes commensurate with the incipient emergence of the slave trade.[54] On the one hand, blackness is objectified as a "real" and hence non-performative spectacle, while on the other it is *reproduced as* a performative grammar and hence is appropriable by white actors.[55] As Virginia Mason Vaughan has argued, witness accounts from *Othello*'s production history indeed suggest "a major ingredient in the audience's fascination with the Moor is the pleasure of seeing the white actor personate a black

[53] Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 77.
[54] Callaghan, 90.
[55] Callaghan astutely notes the horror with which Ira Aldridge's performance of Othello in London in 1833 was greeted evinces a sense that, in having a black man play Othello, "it ceases to be acting, becoming not the *representation* of the-thing-itself but, instead, *the-thing-in-itself*" (91). Her claims that blackness is detached from personhood and rendered into a commodity are echoed by Ian Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks" 37-38.

man and knowing that this is what he or she is seeing."[56] Vaughan calls this response a spectator's "double consciousness … a recognition that the actor underneath the blackened skin is actually white."[57]

My proposition for the first appearance of Othello on stage, then, is that blackface, which should be a "material anchor," in fact does the *precise opposite* of stabilizing the audience's perception of the Moor. Indeed, the character's actions on stage contradicts everything they have been told up to that point in terms of Othello's behavior. But I contend furthermore, that prior to the actual appearance of Othello, the audience has likely been imagining not a white man in black makeup, but imagining an actual black body. The language and clichés that have circulated around Othello in the first scene were understood to pertain to "real" Moors, and so for the duration of the scene the audience is allowed to imagine not so much a mimetic representation of blackness as a rhetorical exhibition of many presumed "facts" about it. While there were no black actors on the early modern stage, and we have no evidence that they attended the playhouses, there *were* black people in early modern England, and we should not chalk racial impersonation up to a merely transparent "convention" but a conscious substitution.[58] Therefore, the first scene of the play establishes a particular image space that is countered by the second scene on multiple levels: by Othello's speech and behavior, as well as by his appearance as a

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[56] Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 97. As Vaughan notes, looking over some three centuries' worth of scattered reviews, white actors portraying Othello are often lauded for their ability to assume the role, and fetishistic attention is often paid to the methods by which the actor "blacks up" and presents their cosmeticized body for the audience.

[57] Vaughan, *Performing Blackness*, 98.

[58] Imtiaz Habib (*Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1577: Imprints of the Invisible*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2008) estimates that there was a black population in London of approximately 900 by the end of Elizabethan's reign, and while this constituted a small percentage of the city's overall population, the growth from earlier Tudor records suggests that around 15-18 percent of immigrants flowing into London at this time were read as black (117). Proof that this resulted in no small anxiety for white Londoners is Elizabeth's attempted deportation of the "divers blackmoores brought into this realme" in 1596 and again in 1603. The quoted line is from Elizabeth's 1596 letter to the Mayor of London, as printed in Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1984), 10.

nonblack man in costume. In this sense, the play foregrounds the imaginative work the audience is expected to do in order to bridge what characters *say* with the spectator actually *sees*; while Desdemona insists she can overlook his blackness when she says she "saw Othello's visage in his mind" (1.3.253), any early modern observer in search of an authentic Moor would have to ignore the cosmetically blackened visage they *actually* see in order to bring to mind the black face previously imagined.

Indeed, when Brabantio wonders what caused Desdemona to "[r]un from her guardage to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou," (1.2.71-72), he deploys a discourse Ian Smith calls "chromatic materiality," a dynamic wherein "Africans figure neither principally nor solely as persons, but are construed as visible to English consciousness based on the shared feature of color with specified objects."[59] As Smith notes, the mention of "sooty" calls attention not simply to Othello's dark complexion but also the makeup applied to color the actor's skin, which was likely a mixture of charred cork and oil.[60] Yet rather than strengthen the audience's imagination of Othello as black by combining dramatic practice and racial discourse, the play's second scene highlights the actor's dramatic performance of blackness as distinct from the first scene's rhetorical exhibition. Historically speaking, one crux of Shakespeare's play in particular and early modern blackface performance generally is the negotiation and synthesis of disparate discourses and dramatic conventions that may (or, again, may not) result in what W.B. Worthen calls the "effect of representation," the sense that performance mediates or reproduces a verisimilar "reality."[61] However, I do not think the contrasts between *Othello*'s first and second scenes Shakespeare intentionally draws attention to what Thompson calls the "constructed nature

[59] Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks," 37
[60] Smith, "White Skin, Black Masks," 51. See also Jones, 27-28.
[61] W.B. Worthen, "'The written troubles of the brain': Sleep No More and the Space of Character." Theatre Journal 64.1 (2012):79-97, esp. 96.

of blackness,"[62] and if such a thing happens it is merely a side effect of the broader dramatic situation: early modern blackface performance was not understood *only* as a racializing practice, and so the play is complicit in a number of alternative theatrical perspectives that it uses, finally, to animate its racialization. The image space of *Othello*'s phantasmal, artificial blackface invokes not simply the explicitly racializing epistemic spaces discussed thus far, but older traditions of "blacking up" not necessarily aligned with race that, nevertheless, are blended into the use of blackface in early modern performance.

The material phantasm and the early modern history of blackface

The uniqueness of Othello's introduction becomes clear when it is considered against the prior major Moorish characters to grace the early modern stage. Notably, *none* of them is subject to the same process of excessive rhetorical description prior to their eventual revelation. Shakespeare's earlier Moor, Aaron, famously takes the stage at the very beginning of *Titus Andronicus* (1594) but remains silent and unremarked until his first soliloquy. His words reveal, clearly enough, his sexual relationship with Tamora and his desire to see her "charm Rome's Saturnine / And see his shipwreck and his commonweal's" (1.1.523-523).[63] Immediately afterward, he orchestrates with Chiron and Demeterius the rape of Lavinia; prior to this point, it seems that Aaron is meant to be seen rather than heard, his appearance providing the foreground for his eventual rhetorical confirmation of his evil, and by extension his blackness.[64] Meanwhile, the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-98) enters and immediately requests that

[62] Thompson, 115.
[63] All citations from *Titus Andronicus,* ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden, 2009).
[64] Eldred Jones suggests Aaron's Moorish deviousness is a direct response to the brutality of Muly Mahamet in *The Battle of Alcazar* (52).

Portia "[m]islike [him] not for [his] complexion, / The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun" (2.1.1-2), presenting and then rhetorically authenticating his own blackness.[65]

Outside Shakespearean predecessors, Thomas Dekker's *Lust's Dominion* was performed a few years before *Othello*, around 1600. Like both *Othello* and *Titus* (and at least in potentiality, *Merchant*), this play also concerns an interracial relationship between a Moor and a non-Moorish woman, but in keeping with villainous tradition, it opens with the Moorish antagonist Eleazar bursting from behind the curtain of the discovery space to berate his attendants and enjoy an adulterous dalliance with the Spanish Queen Mother. The closest approximation to Othello's introduction is, indeed, the first extensive dramatic treatment of a Moor on the popular stage: Muly Mahamet, the villain of George Peele's *The Battle Alcazar* (1591).[66] Muly Mahamet is introduced by a "Presenter" in a prologue describing how the King of Portugal, Sebastian, aims to "aid with Christian arms the barbarous Moor," namely the rightful king of Morocco, Abdelmelec, against his usurping brother, "the negro Muly Hamet" (1.Prol.6-7).[67] Muly Mahamet, having obtained his throne by treachery, is described thus before his first appearance:

> Black in his look and bloody in his deeds,
> And in his shirt, stained with cloud of gore,
> Presents himself, with naked sword in hand,
> Accompanied, as now you may behold,
> With devils coated in the shapes of men. (ll.16-20)

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[65] Citations from *The Merchant of Venice,* ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J.J.M. Tobin in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (New York: 1997). Though the Folio stage directions specify that the Prince is a "tawny moor, all in white" the lightening of his Moorish complexion seems not to have made him any "whiter," presumably, in the eyes of the audience. Jane Donawerth argues his lines suggest that, tawny or not, he was played in some form of blackface. See "Bianca: The Other African in Othello," in *Roman Literature, Gender and Reception: Domina Illustris*, ed. Donald Lateiner, Barbara K. Gold, Judith Perkins, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 222-240.

[66] As Eldred Jones points out, Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* seems to be the first instance of an Moor on stage as an "individualized character[] worthy of treatment," instituting a vogue for Moorish Machiavels (40). Elliot H. Tokson concurs, suggesting that the devilish character of Moors on the stage is strongly indebted to Muly (54-55). Prior to this, Moors had appeared in some plays, such as *Tamburlaine*, incidentally and often as nonspeaking characters.

[67] All citations from *The Battle of Alcazar* in *The Stukeley Plays*, ed. Charles Edelman (New York: Machester UP, 2005).

At this point, Muly Mahamet enters in a dumb show with his Moorish attendants who, presumably, are the "devils coated in the shapes of men" that aid him in smothering his younger brothers in their sleep and strangling his uncle, the prior king of Morocco. The Presenter then informs the audience that "[t]his negro" performed these heinous executions by "proud command," and should it seem too unbelievable, the Presenter urges us to "[s]ay not these things are feigned, for true they are" (ll.29-30). The Presenter's warning accomplishes double duty: first, it reminds the audience that the Battle of Alcazar was indeed a real historical event, and second, it thus prompts them to imaginatively overwrite the "feigning" of the dumb show with the knowledge that somewhere, a "real" Moor "truly" committed the very acts they have just seen reproduced.

What all these introductions have in common, when compared to *Othello*, is that they work to rhetorically stabilize and authenticate the material phantasm of blackness, cued by the actor's blackened face. Blackface taken as a racial signifier provides the spectator with a prompt to imagine *something else*, namely, an "actual" black body, and thus to make a conscious or unconscious substitution in order to uphold the dramatic fiction. That this happens consciously and unconsciously by turns is, I believe, partly a result of the metatheatrical tendencies of the early modern theater (such as the mention of Othello's "sooty bosom," which calls attention to the performance as such) but also indicates some overlap between the theater and what N. Katherine Hayles has called the "cognitive nonconscious." Hayles' idea rests on the position of contemporary cognitive science that "consciousness is belated," with conscious perception arising milliseconds after the initial exposure to and processing of a stimulus by other mediatory sensory systems.[68] These "nonconscious" activities are akin to reflexes, and as Hayles argues,

[68] N. Katherine Hayles, "Cognition Everywhere: The Rise of the Cognitive Nonconscious and the Costs of Consciousness," *New Literary History* 45.2 (Spring 2014): 204.

modern computational technology performs nonconscious cognition at a much more efficient rate than human thought allows; the increasing presence of such technologies in our lives, furthermore, recursively influence how information is delivered to us, screened, and acted upon.[69] While blackface makeup is by no means as complex, I propose a parallel between how a technologized "built environment instantiates nonconscious cognition" and the way theatrical conventions such as blackface allow spectators to imaginatively "believe" that a white man on stage "represents" someone with dark skin.[70]

I have elected to call the performative effects of blackface in early modern drama "material phantasms." By this phrase, I mean to describe the process by which a material environment is perceived and imaginatively overwritten in the space of the theater. By combining Hutchins' idea of the material anchor and Harrell's formulation of the phantasm, I intend to emphasize the wide possibility of imaginative work an object may elicit in performance with a human actor. I intend, also, to emphasize the relationship between the actor and the object more strongly than the term "performing object," which is often used to describe puppets, masks, and similar things.[71] Indeed, despite its similar status as a dramatic prop, blackface is far more amorphous than a mask, much less readily legible as an "object" distinct from the face of the actor who wears it.[72] Neither the presence of the actor's bare body nor the paint without a face to

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[69] Hayles, 211

[70] Hayles, 211. Drawing on the work of Antonio Demasio, Hayles goes so far as to suggest that the conscious apprehension of a "representation" is actually a "re-representation," in that it is a conscious translation of primary sensory experience that already "represented" information about the object to a nervous system (207).

[71] The term "performing object" was coined by Frank Proschan, "The Semiotic Study of Masks, Puppets, and Performing Objects," *Semiotica* 47 (1983): 3-36. A more recent turn on similar themes is offered by John Bell, "Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects at the End of the Century," *Drama Review* 43 (1999):15-27. Both essays precede special issues of their respective journals dedicated to the performances of puppets and masks; my decision to consider the power of makeup in performance distinguishes my approach from approaches whose apprehension of an "object" is more narrowly focused on the discrete physicality of the thing in question.

[72] Eldred Jones notes that, prior to the popularity of the Moor on the public stage, black characters were common in court masques where, rather than being portrayed with makeup, they were often presented through "black gloves, nether stockings, and face masks" (30). The use of "soot" or cosmetics was more common in medieval and

bear it can effect the performance; the two must work in concert. Despite my use of the term "unliving" to describe these materials, my formulation of this proposition draws deeply from recent theories what Jane Bennett calls "vital materiality," arguing for the participation of nonhuman actants in the process of daily life.[73] But it is precisely the way that blackface makeup can be subtracted *after* it has done its work on stage that, I think, allows it to seem like an inert and essential material despite its performative vibrancy. More to the point, my claims are precipitated by Karen Barad's theory of "agential realism" and her neologism of "intra-action," which, as opposed to interaction, provides a method of describing how "distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through" conflation and "entanglement," at which point they are "only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement."[74] The impersonation of a black person is the result of a human actor donning the makeup perceived by an audience who is cued to read that makeup in a certain register. As the actor and makeup become "entangled," then, in the eye of the viewer, they also become entangled with the viewer's epistemic space of black people *and* the image space of other blackface performances.

The stage-business in plays with Moorish characters often appears to be designed to aid the audience in a process of "nonconscious cognition," allowing spectators to jump the hurdle of blackface performance's artificiality by establishing either a visual or rhetorical blackness and then blending the two by showing a stage-Moor conforming to what has already been explicitly or implicitly established as "Moorish" behavior. In particular, *Titus Andronicus* and *Lust's*

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folk drama (28, 120). Jones posits that the folk tradition found greater traction in the popular theater because it suggested a greater degree of "realism," as well as allowing black characters to have more dynamic speaking roles (121). In "Othello's Black Handkerchief," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64.1 (Spring 2013):1-25, Ian Smith points out that Shakespeare's verbal treatment of his Moorish characters suggests knowledge of both of these traditions, while noting that both styles of performance contribute to a theme of racial objectification through an association of blackness and materiality (23-24).

[73] See Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke UP, 2009).

[74] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 33.

Dominion establish a trope of male Moorish lasciviousness that Iago and Roderigo make great use of in heckling Brabantio. The preamble and eventual introduction in *Othello*, however, thwarts the conventional phantasm by evoking earlier, villainous visions of stage-Moors, and then highlighting the inaccuracy of the rhetorical description. In consequence, the play also does not neatly suture the gap between the actor's skin and the obvious fact of his blackface. Yet by leaving racialized blackness open to instability, Shakespeare's play does not disprove or critique the vulgar racism of the earlier plays; rather, in highlighting blackface as a performative mechanism, it in fact invites associations and comparisons with older dramatic histories of blackface. In short, Shakespeare's foregrounding of the theater's artifice does not serve to undercut the mediation of race, but in fact enriches it by highlighting blackface's "phantasmal" resonance across several epistemic spaces, from fallen angels in mystery plays to motley fools in humanist classroom drama.

Indeed, "blacking up" has a longer history in performance than strict racial impersonation. Eldred Jones records that prior to the rise of the commercial theater, blackface makeup was used in festive folk drama such as Morris dancing, mummers' plays, St. George pageants, and the mystery plays where the "devils … were also usually portrayed as black" to allegorically signify their sinful natures.[75] In the context of Morris dancing and mummers' plays, blackface connotes comic grotesquery; this association with blackface has been pursued with relation to *Othello* by Michael D. Bristol, who understands the play not so much as a romantic tragedy as a "comic spectacle of abjection" indebted to carnivalesque practices of *charivari*, thus viciously satirizing the idea of interracial marriage.[76] Of particular interest, however, is the

[75] Jones, 27-28.

[76] Michael D. Bristol, *Big-Time Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 145. There has been some critique of the historical accuracy of black fools in medieval drama, however. Eldred Jones and most subsequent writers on the subject have relied on the scholarship of E.K. Chambers, particularly *The Medieval Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

medieval use of black makeup to mark the faces of devils and the damned. Virginia Mason Vaughan notes that the Draper's Company at Coventry, in putting on the Doomsday pageant for nearly two decades, paid the actors playing "damnpnyd Sowles" extra for the trouble of "blacckyng … the Sowles facys."[77] The Wakefield Mystery Plays dramatize the fall of Lucifer and the rebel angels, having one newly minted demon exclaim as they enter hell: "Lucifer, why fell thou so? / We, that were angels so fare / And sat so hie above the ayere, / Now are waxen black as any coyll [coal] / And ugly, tatyred [tattered, shaggy] as a foyll [foal]" (133-137).[78] In addition to the blackened face (the demon's mention of 'coal' suggests the soot that could be used in local drama), a change of costume has occurred that, in an anticipation of Iago's mention of a "Barbary horse," turns the angels into "shaggy foals." Similar blackenings seem to occur in the Chester cycle, where the fallen angel Lightborne berates his demonized leader Lucifer about the latter's "stinking face," again invoking soot, and they together lament that they are now "2 feendes blacke" (216, 230).[79] In the Coventry cycle, likewise, the fallen Lucifer observes: "I am a devyl ful derke / Þhat was An Aungell bryht" (77-78). [80]

In these instances, painting the face black is a device intended to signal an ontological and moral shift in the characters it afflicts. Such is the implication of the Moors whom *The Battle*

1903) and *The English Folk Play* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933). John Forrest, in *The History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) alleges there is no evidence medieval Morris dancing employed blackface, and suggests that Chambers did not recognize that mummers and Morris dancers of his time had adopted certain racial elements of nineteenth century minstrelsy. With that said, Robert Hornback has nevertheless recently mounted a compelling argument for the early modern use of African "pidgin" speech reported by European merchants and colonizers as a comedic device, particularly by way of Tristano Martinelli's rendition of the *commedia dell'arte* character Arlecchino, or Harlequin, who traditionally wore a black face mask. See Hornback, "'Speak[ing] Parrot' and Ovidian Echoes in *Othello*: Recontextualizing Black Speech in the Global Renaissance" in *Othello: The State of Play*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin, (Huntingdon: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 63-93.

[77] Quoted in Vaughan, 22.

[78] "The Creation and Fall of the Angels (Wakefield)" in *Medieval Drama*, ed. David Bevington (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975).

[79] "The Fall of Lucifer" in *The Chester Plays*, ed. Hermann Deimling (Oxford: Early English Text Society, 1892).

[80] *Ludus Coventriæ: or, The plaie called Corpus Christi*, ed. K.S. Block (London: Early English Text Society, 1922).

of Alcazar's Presenter calls "devils coated in the shapes of men" (1.Prol.20) or when Iago informs Brabantio that "the devil will make a grandsire of you" (1.1.90) – or indeed, more pointedly, when Emilia calls the murdered Desdemona an "angel" and her killer and husband "the blacker devil" (5.2.128-129).[81] The difference, of course, is that for the devils and the damned, blackness is not an inherent condition, but a result of their actions with respect to God's will. The Moor, by contrast, is understood to be *indelibly* black – not black like coal, perhaps, but with a darker skin pigmentation that would not change in response to interior will or exterior forces. Yet the association between demonic blackness and dark skin holds in early modern England: Othello was described as black and a "devil" in the first scene, long before he made the mistake of smothering his wife. Nevertheless, early modernity was rife with fantasies of a changeable blackness, often in service of a myth of white priority; paralleling the purity and sin of the mystery plays, such tropes present whiteness as a "natural" state with blackness as a cosmetic aberration or consequence of some calamity. An outgrowth of the mystery plays' practice of face-blackening as an allegorical device to signal such a moral or ontological disaster is found in the series of humanist classroom dramas known as the *Wit and Science* plays, which rely on a semiotics of blackface performance decoupled from explicitly religious themes, recoding the blackening of the face (and, crucially, the possibility of the face being washed) as signifying the potential failures (or successes) of humanist education. And just as the language of Shakespeare's characters in *Othello* draw attention to blackface performance's presence in the mystery plays, so too does it recall the place of blackface – and race – in the early modern humanist curriculum.

[81] See also the chapters on this trope in Tokson, "The Devil and the Moor: 'Being Hell's Perfect Character'" (54-67) and Barthelemy, "Satan's Livery: Blackness in the Western Tradition" (1-17).

Blackness, ignorance, and the "unteachable person"

In 1700, a double-facing English and Latin edition of Aesop's *Fables* prepared by the late humanist schoolmaster Charles Hoole was posthumously published. Uniquely, it offered parallel Latin and prose vernacular translations, with its subtitle making Hoole's aim clear: "so that little children being used to write and translate them may not only more exactly understand all the Rules of Grammar but also learn to imitate the right Composition of Words and the proper Forms of Speech belonging to both Languages."[82] As Hoole writes in *A new discovery of the old art of teaching schoole*, fables are useful because students "will take delight in reading the Tales, and the moral in a Language which they already understand, and will be helped thereby to construe the Latine of themselves" (63).[83] In addition to translations between Latin and English, Hoole advocates that students should translate them into both prose and verse (158-162). I want to take a moment to consider fable 156, "Of the Black-More":

> 1. ONE bought a Black-more, thinking that he had such a colour through the negligence of him that had him before.
>
> 2. And after he had taken him into his house, he *used all kind of washing towards him*, and strove to make him clean with all kind of baths.
>
> 3. But he could not alter his colour; but the *smart bred a disease*.
>
> Mor. *The fable signifieth, that,* natures remain, as they were bred at the first. (234)

Aesop's fable makes a point of blackness's indelibility, going so far as to point out that the new master scrubbed his slave raw, resulting in the latter's illness. The moral, that "natures remain"

[82] Charles Hoole, *Aesop's fables English and Latin* (London: R.E., 1700). <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:11466652> Though the date of publication for Hoole's edition is relatively late, it was prepared before his death in 1667, and prior translations of Aesop were not as extensive, usually focusing on a selection of fables in the vernacular, and often in verse. Though some earlier editions contain the fable of the Moor, I quote Hoole here because his prose translation is the most direct and the explicitness with which he foregrounds his project's place in the classroom is useful for my purposes.

[83] Charles Hoole, *A new discovery of the old art of teaching schoole* (London: J.T., 1661). <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:12431508>

as they were first "bred," understands blackness not as the result of an avoidable or remediable process, but as an inherent condition. Despite the relative lateness of Hoole's translation, the *Fables* in Latin had been a fixture of the humanist grammar school since the prior century.[84] The fable of the black slave shows up frequently in Renaissance emblem books, and was often cross-referenced with a Biblical precedent, Jeremiah 13:23, as it was rendered in the Geneva Bible: "Can the Moor change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" As Ania Loomba points out, in the Biblical mode this phrase was intended to suggest "the impossibility of religious conversions," intended to emphasize the fixity of a sinful nature while, consequently, conflating that nature with an indelible skin color.[85]

The fable of the black slave also had currency in humanist rhetoric. Erasmus mined Aesop for *copia*, handy images and phrases to be deployed in writing and speech, and listed variant derivatives of the "black-more" fable in his *Adages*: "Aethiopiem lavas/Aethopiem dealbas" (I.iv.50).[86] Erasmus notes the saying in Lucian but attributes its earliest instance to Aesop. He says this phrase is "particularly apposite when a matter of doubtful morality is decorated by a gloss of words, or when praise is given to one who does not deserve praise, or an

[84] Ian Green writes that the tidy ending glosses on many of Aesop's fables (authentic or apocryphal) were added by compilers in Latin editions and "barely changed in content after the 1530s, so that Valla's and Erasmus's and other Italian and Dutch humanists' take on the message of individual fables was perpetuated well into the eighteenth century in English grammar school education" in *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (London: Ashgate, 2009) 166.

[85] Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 55-59. Loomba also points out that "Moor" was not always the favored translation of this word from the original Greek, which had in earlier English editions of the Bible been rendered as "the man of Ind." Loomba does not talk about the phrase's circulation in humanist writings of the time.

[86] Erasmus, *The Adages of Erasmus*, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips, ed. William Barker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). The phrase translates to "You wash the Ethiopian," though "dealbas" from the verb "dealbo" suggests a more stringent process of whitewashing or purification. Erasmus lists the saying again, later, in yet another form: "Aethtiops non albescit" (III.x.88) In this second version, translatable as "The Ethiopian cannot become white," the weight of the phrase is transferred from the one doing the washing to the Ethiopian body itself, but Erasmus's gloss only repeats his mentions of Lucian and Aesop (316-317).

unteachable person is being taught" (81).[87] Erasmus's adaptation of the fable takes on a curiously judgmental character, obscuring the ignorant cruelty of Aesop's original story to equate the black slave with "a matter of doubtful morality," "one who does not deserve praise," and "an unteachable person." All three of these applications, also, apply to areas of interest for Erasmus: the proper uses of rhetoric and the practice of education. Blackness is thus blended between a particular physical state – the Ethiopian or "Black-moor" – and a metaphorical indicator of a spurious cause, a questionable person, or a difficult student.

The last figure, Erasmus's "unteachable person," found a minor dramatic life in England in the "Wit and Science" plays of the mid-to-late sixteenth century in the recurring allegorical character of "Ignorance," a character that is not explicitly racialized in any texts but which, I argue, bears marks of a racializing process that equates dark skin with foolishness and folly.[88] Each of the Wit and Science plays is a short, allegorical interlude dramatizing the trials and travails of a young man named Wit as he seeks the hand of Lady Science in marriage. The earliest, called *The Play of Wit and Science*, was written by the humanist educator John Redford during his time as the master at St. Paul's choir school in 1534. The play combines many tropes from other sorts of drama, adopting the generally allegorical approach of a morality, some romantic elements of a St. George pageant, and the blackening of the face as observed in the

[87] Erasmus himself uses the phrase in the second way in *The Praise of Folly*, when he has Folly berate fawning encomia for unworthy men as "the wretched crow … decked out in borrowed plumage, the 'Ethiopian washed white,' 'an elephant created out of a gnat'" (11). See *Praise of Folly,* trans. Betty Radice (London, Penguin, 1993).
[88] As a commonplace, "washing the Ethiopian " also had a more literal stage presence than what I am here arguing. For a brief but comprehensive overview of every known play which deploys the phrase – usually in a moralistic register, and sometimes in a racial one – see Luciano García-García, "Washing the Moor White on the Early Modern Stage (1550-1666): Five Undetected Cases," *Notes and Queries* 6.4 (2013): 547-549. A broader overview of the proverb in the vein of the history of ideas and art is available in Jean Michel Massing's "From Greek Proverb to Soap Advert: Washing the Ethiopian" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995):180-201.

mysteries – but all in service of a humanist fable about the path toward education.[89] In order to win the right to marry Lady Science, Wit is charged by her father, Reason, to slay the monster Tediousness. While taking a break in his quest with Honest Recreation, however, the latter is replaced by Idleness. She lulls wit to sleep in her lap and places her "marke on him," (432) blackening his face. This is followed by a comic scene in which she calls in her son "Ingnorance," [sic] who wears a fool's motley and speaks in vulgar, broken English. After switching Ingorance's motley with Wit's coat, so that "he shall soone scantlye know himsealfe" (568), the two exit. When Wit awakes, he encounters Science and her mother Experience, who have seen him before in portrait but now do not recognize him – Experience says he is "Ingnorance, or his likenes" (719), implying that in addition to his fool's motley Ingnorance also has a blackened face. Indeed, Robert Hornback argues Ingnorance – who in the play's longest comic scene cannot even be taught to say his own name correctly – combines elements of folk culture clowning with an implicitly racialized satire of the non-native speaker's acquisition of English.[90] Though Hornback does not mention Aesop, Erasmus, or the *copia*, I'm inclined to see in Ingnorance – and in Wit's unwitting physical reproduction of him – a dramatic embodiment of Erasmus's "unteachable person," or to pursue the implicit allegorical logic of Erasmus's gloss, an unwashable Ethiopian. In the allegorical logic of the play, however, it is only Ingnorance himself who is unteachable; Wit's journey toward Science is also a journey back to whiteness.

But the trip is accomplished through some struggle. Wit, unaware of his transformation, twice attempts to kiss Science, who pushes him away:

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[89] See Peter Happé, who traces these connections, 144-145 in *English Drama Before Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1999). Editor David Bevington also notes that the play seems to be a "morality play adapted to the humanistic concerns of early Tudor England" (*Medieval Drama* 1029)

[90] Hornback, 76-77 "'Speak[ing] Parrot' and Ovidian Echoes in Othello: Recontextualizing Black Speech in the Global Renaissance." *The State of the Play: Othello*. Ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Huntington: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014) 63-93.

SCIENCE. What good felowshippe wold ye of me,
Whom ye know not, ne[i]ther yet I knowe ye?
WIT. Know ye not me?
SCIENCE. No, how should I know ye? (758-760)

Science and Experience exit, and Wit is left alone and confused. However, earlier in the play, Reason bestowed upon him a mirror, which he now remembers and produces. When he looks into it, however, he is shocked: "Hah, Goges sowle! What have we here, a divill? / This glas, I se well, hath bene kept evill" (802-803). Thinking the mirror is to blame rather than his appearance, Wit polishes the glass and looks again, only to realize that either "this glas is shamefully spotted, / Or els am I to[o] shamefully blotted" (807-808). To test the mirror, he wonders "How look ether facis here rownd abowte?" before, apparently, holding the mirror up to the audience and remarking "All fair and cleere, they, ev'rychone!" (809-810).[91] Indeed, in language recalling the blackening of the fallen angels in the mystery plays, he is forced to conclude his "face" is now "abhominable, / As black as the devill" (815-816). Wit is then whipped by Shame and begs Reason for forgiveness. Reason orders Instruction, Study, and Diligence to "[t]ake him and trim him in new aparell" (875). After Wit is led offstage, Reason and Confidence give speeches that altogether consist of approximately 120 lines, presumably to accommodate the time needed for Wit's costume change and the washing of the actor's face before he reenters to finally slay Tediousness and bring the play to its happy end. *The Play of Wit and Science* proved popular enough that two later adaptations are known to exist, following the same general outline. The first, *The Marriage of Wit and Science*, was published anonymously in 1570 and possibly performed at court in 1567 or 68.[92] In this version, Idleness again lulls Wit to sleep in her lap before blackening his face, remarking that "Thys chayer [chere, face] is chared [turned, done]

[91] Since Wit is alone on stage, it only makes sense he is directly addressing the audience with his mirror. Bevington adds a stage direction in his edition to emphasize this.
[92] Happé, 144-145.

well now" (sig. D4v).[93] The third version, *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* (1579), is attributed to Cambridge student and eventual preacher and schoolmaster Francis Merbury, and survives as a curious manuscript that appears to have been written as a copy of a printed play.[94] Here, Idleness becomes a male character and poses as Honest Recreation, taking on the role of a pander by introducing Wit to his accomplice and lover Wantonness. Again lulling Wit to sleep, they place a "fools bable" on his head and set about "colling his face" – as Wantonness sings, "now of a scollar, / I will make him a colliar" (20-21).[95] Later the stage directions indicate that, uniquely for these plays, Wit's face is washed on stage by the character Good Nurture (22).

All three versions of the interlude deploy face-blackening as a device to show Wit's fall into witlessness, but they also highlight it as a theatrical convention. In twice calling himself a devil, the Wit of *The Play of Wit and Science* metadramatically invokes the mystery plays' blackening of the fallen angels and the damned, but subsequently reverses the normal practice: Wit is eventually washed white and redeemed. This is adopted by the two later versions of the play; *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* goes so far as to call attention to the soot being used to blacken Wit's face, likening him to a collier. Furthermore, in the earliest version of the play, Wit holds his mirror up to the audience – who were, more than likely, the assembled students of St. Paul's school – and he playfully suggests that their own whiteness indicates they are already on the path to Science by virtue of their place and station. Nevertheless, as the play itself demonstrates by its allegorical nature, all are susceptible a lurking, black-faced "Ingnorance." By

[93] *A new and pleasaunt enterlude intituled the mariage of witte and science* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1570). The glosses on "chayer" and "chared" are my own, drawing from the OED; see "cheer, n.1" and "chare | char, v.1.4". Other modern-spelling editions of MWS gloss "chayer" as "char" or "chare" meaning "deed," so Idleness's line reads something like "this deed is well done" – see *The Marriage of Wit and Science,* ed. Arthur Brown (Oxford: Malone Society, 1960). Because, however, Wit sees himself as "blotted" in his mirror later on, it seems likely that his face has been blackened, and Idleness's line here, I think, is intended as a pun, in that plays off her next and more direct question to Ignorance, "Thou seest all this howe fittlye it is done[?]"

[94] Happé, 147.

[95] Francis Merbury, *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom: An Ancient Interlude*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1846).

establishing the binary between whiteness and blackness as one encoding a difference between wisdom and folly, learning and intractability, these plays contribute to a humanist semiotics of blackness that sublimate the explicitly racial nature of Aesop's fable, rendering blackness not as an unchanging "nature" but a damaging fall from grace, unhappy accident, or inessential material fluctuation. However, such a fantasy of "accidental" blackness also has grounding in more explicitly racialized areas of humanist study.

The mistake of blackness

Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*, written at the behest of Queen Anna and presented at Whitehall in 1605, provides a bridge for discussing how English humanism influenced explicitly racial theories of blackness. Jonson opens his published text by noting his sources, including "Pliny, Solinus, Ptolemy" as well as the more recent "Leo the African" (20).[96] In the masque's opening, a personification of the river Niger ("in the form and colour of an Ethiop" [51]) visits the god Oceanus on behalf of his daughters ("twelve nymphs, Negroes" [55-56]) over their dissatisfaction with their blackness. Niger feels as if he is humoring his daughters, since to his mind blackness is beautiful and has a noble pedigree: his daughters are "the first formed dames of earth" and the Sun itself "in firm hues draws / Signs of his ferventest love, and thereby shows / That in their black the perfectest beauty grows" (132-134). Niger's evidence is that "the fixed colour of their curléd hair" never grays, nor does black skin wax pale in death (134-144). In short, Niger understands blackness's strengths as its durability, which indicates a place of honor in the order of creation. But, as he says

> Poor brainsick men, styled poets here with you,
> Have, with envy of their graces sung

[96] All citations from *The Masque of Blackness* in *Masques of Difference: Court Masques*, ed. Kristen McDermott (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007).

> The painted beauties of other empires sprung,
> Letting their loose and wingéd actions fly
> To infect all climates, yea, our purity;
> As one of Phaeton, that fired the world,
> And that before his heedless flames were hurled
> About the globe, the Ethiops were as far
> As other dames, now black with black despair;
> And, in respect of their complexions changed,
> Are eachwhere since for luckless creatures ranged. (146-156)

Niger singles out the Ovidian story of Phaeton as particularly responsible for an undermining of the dignity of blackness. Whereas, in Niger's understanding, the sun's gift of a black complexion indicates favor, Ovid's "loose and wingéd" poetry is like Phaeton's rogue chariot, careening through global discourse and rendering blackness a cosmological accident. Thus, Niger's point of the privilege of blackness is hamstrung by his own implicit admission of the priority of whiteness. Though he insists his daughters were "first formed," and hence deserve honor, the "brainsick" poets can exploit blackness's inherently secondary nature in a jealous bid to uphold their own "painted beauties" – but Niger's attempt at anti-cosmeticism backfires in performance since, of course, it invokes the presence of the Queen and her ladies, who have successfully demonstrated that blackness is no great thing by assuming it temporarily for the purposes of the masque. The performance ends with the Ethiopians traveling to the shores of England where, in exchange for the sun held dear by Niger, they are bathed in the radiant light of King James's presence and ordered to "steep / [Their] bodies in that purer brine / And wholesome dew called rosemarine," and once they have their "gentler limbs o'er-lave[d]," they will be washed white "and perfection have" (329-330, 335-336).[97]

Jonson's use of Ovid bears some further scrutiny, especially in light of how the story of Phaeton seems to so easily trump Niger's claims of a privileged blackness. Arthur Little writes in

[97] The transformation of from black to white is promised but does not occur onstage, presumably because removing the makeup and costumes in time would have been difficult. By the time Jonson wrote *The Masque of the Gypsies Metamorphosed* in 1621, such a change was more easily effected in performance.

response to the masque that "blackness throughout the seventeenth century came to represent a lost identity."[98] But as my earlier examples from the mystery plays and the *Wit and Science* plays show, this was not unique to the seventeenth century, since blackness – though not explicitly racialized – just as well marked the lost identities of the fallen angels, damned souls, unworthy rhetorical subjects, and bad students. If anything, then, the Ovidian myth of blackness's accidental origin provides Jonson a method of transposing the loss of identity via blackness onto a different cultural schema, one that attributes blackness not so much to divine Christian forces or creation, nor the dynamics of knowledge and ignorance, but a naturalized order where blackness's secondary nature always already discloses its inferiority. The upshot is that, while blackness previously suggested a misstep on the part of its bearer, it now renders black subjects helpless in the face of an ontological mistake in which they had no active part. As Ovid writes, Phaeton himself called Ethiopia "first his native home" (1.986)[99] before he sought out Phoebus for his fateful ride in the sun's chariot. Therefore, once things go wrong, Phaeton also becomes his own first Ethiopian victim:

> Again the culme and smouldring smoke did wrap him round about,
> The pitchie darknesse of the which so wholy had him hent
> As that he wist not where he was nor yet which way he went.
> The winged horses forcibly did draw him where they wolde.
> The Aethiopians at that time (as men for truth uphold)
> (The bloud by force of that same heate drawne to the outer part
> And there adust from that time forth) became so blacke and swart. (2.294-301)

Phaeton, enveloped by "pitchie darkness," renders his homeland perpetually scorched ("adust") and hence black; the indelible burning of all of Ethiopia becomes a lasting marker of Phaeton's mistake, while the rest of the damage he wreaks does not. Indeed, the Earth suggests her own physical transformation in her plea to Jove to stop the chaos: "Behold my singed haire: behold

[98] Little, 76.
[99] All citations from *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding, ed. John Frederick Nims (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2000).

my dim and bleared eye, / See how about my scorched face the scalding embers flie" (2.359-360). But the Earth, in time, heals; Ethiopia is changed forever. As Ian Smith writes of this episode,

> Error is the sign under which the black Ethiopian race is born, and the accidental nature of its beginnings makes a strong case for blackness being the unintended and unexpected result of a wayward undertaking. As an accident, the result of a young man's overreaching, blackness is the distortion of the original course of human nature.[100]

Given the English stage's association between blackness and personal sin or ignorance, it is also important to note that here blackness becomes the mark of a mistake dissociated from those who bear its consequences;[101] in Jonson's courtly fantasy of white priority, however, the blackness of an Ethiopian can still be remedied by bathing in English waters, in the light of an English monarch.

Or rather, it might be said, the power of Jonson's masque is predicated on the knowledge that, outside blackface performance, the Ethiopian truly *cannot* be washed white; that is, Jonson's masque is effective precisely *because of* the impossibility it stages. Though earlier, humoral understandings of skin color suggested that complexion was primarily a result of climate, Mary Floyd-Wilson has argued increasing colonial and mercantile activity forced a collision between received classical knowledge and an emergent empiricism, resulting in a bevy

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[100] Smith, *Race and Rhetoric*, 54.

[101] In many ways this reading of the myth anticipates a Christianized counterpart, the story of the tribe of Ham, which as yet had not come into wide popularity, though George Best had first articulated it in *A true discourse of the late Voyages of discoverie*. According to Best, Ham saw his father Noah naked and in consequence he and all his descendants were cursed by God with black skin and a predisposition to servitude. As critical analysis has shown, this particular reading of Genesis is spurious, but nevertheless became a popular talking point for the slave trade as the era of colonial expansion continued; see Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Early Modern Periods," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997):103-142, as well as David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (London: Ashgate, 2009). The key difference I see between the Ovidian story and the Biblical one is that the latter, in Ham's curse of servitude to his brothers, provided scaffolding for the institution of slavery, which in turn cast racial differences into much sharper relief; Ovid's story, while setting black Ethiopians apart from the "natural" run of a white humanity, leaves their eventual fate an open question.

of theories that tried to explain how complexion could be ingrained by climate *and then* transmissible through heredity.[102] The following anecdote from George Best's *A true discourse of the late Voyages of Discoverie* (1578) illustrates the point:

> …I my selfe haue séene an Ethiopian as blacke as a cole broughte into Englande, who taking a faire Englishe woman to Wife, begatte a Sonne in all respectes as blacke as the Father was, although England were his natiue Countrey, & an English woman his Mother: whereby it séemeth this blacknesse procéedeth rather of some naturall infection of that man, whiche was so strong, that neyther ye nature of the Clime, neyther the good complexion of the Mother concurring, coulde any thing alter, and therefore we can not impute it to the nature of ye Clime. (sig. FIIIr)[103]

As Floyd-Wilson writes, Best is "contributing to a genre of promotional tracts aimed at persuading the English that they would not be ineluctably altered by moving to and residing in a foreign climate."[104] Thus, Best understands blackness as a "natural infection" transmissible between generations, but otherwise not related to issues of climate. That this was not a wholly accepted idea must be kept in mind when we attempt to understand the material phantasms of blackface performance in early modernity: on the one hand, blackface staged dramatically the fear implicit in Best's story, of a white body turned black, and yet on the other hand, it rendered that fear part of a temporary and hence potentially pleasant fantasy. Comparing the masque to a Freudian dream form, Ian Smith writes that "belief" in Jonson's racialized fantasy "is instrumental in affirming the mythic reality of a racial community," so that in presenting a "derogatory racial construction" of the Ethiopians, Jonson "simultaneously institutes … interpretive faith in Englishness as a concomitant imagined racial community."[105]

This, I think, is what is at stake as blackface performance shifts from its older epistemic resonances of contingent vice, sin, and personal error and comes to signify primarily as a marker

[102] Floyd-Wilson, 8-11.
[103] George Best, *A true discourse of the late voyages of discouerie* (London: Henry Bynnyman, 1578).
[104] Floyd-Wilson, 8. Hall also discusses Best,12–13.
[105] Smith, *Race and Rhetoric*, 68.

of racial difference. In that sense, the hypothetical early modern mind at the center of the operations I have been describing is coming to imagine and see itself as white just as it learns to imagine and see others as black, enacting race as the mediatory apparatus or "framework for seeing through" that W.J.T. Mitchell describes.[106] In dramatic performance's bid to "generate and modulate individual and collective affective moods or structures of feeling," to return to Grusin,[107] Jonson's masque promises the whitening of its Ethiopians in order to cast "real" – which is to say, indelible – blackness safely out of the court and out of England. Whiteness becomes defined by its ability to master blackness, to assume and discard it as need be. What we see here, in the words of Arthur Little, is the "transformation of whiteness into a racial property of those whom we would later more formally reference as white people."[108] And whiteness as a property is, in blackface performance, cast into relief as the unmarked original that can be temporarily obscured; blackness, from the perspective of a subjectivity that understands itself as white, becomes unliving and unlivable, a condition under which one will not or cannot continue for long. "Real" blackness, then, the "nonhuman objectivity" that constitutes the obstinate, outermost limit of white subjectivity, is understood as that which has no choice in what it is, a senseless "natural infection," the naturally dark sign of a mistake that no one made. And to return to the matter of *Othello*, I believe it is this notion of blackness and its nonhuman, unliving objectivity that Shakespeare's play dramatizes.

"This accident is not unlike my dream"

Iago, I have already said, finally manages to persuade Brabantio because of the latter's vaguely mentioned "dream" – that in having dreamt of a possibility "not unlike" Desdemona and

[106] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Seeing Through Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 13.
[107] Grusin, "Radical Mediation" 125.
[108] Little, "Re-Historicizing Race," 88.

Othello eloping, Brabantio unwittingly contains the seed which Iago will help to germinate into a full fantasy of exotic magic and miscegenation. As Ania Loomba has written, "Iago's machinations are effective" because he leverages ideological beliefs that "are not entirely external to us."[109] For Loomba, this is the central crux of the play, since Othello falls under Iago's influence precisely because he is susceptible to the latter's strategic deployment of misogynist stereotypes that, in turn, foster the Moor's eventual adherence to racial ones.[110] The resulting drama exists in a space of "ambiguity" where the audience cannot find a moral high ground: "any sympathy for Othello reinforces the misogynist sentiments mouthed by some characters, and any sympathy for Desdemona endorses the view that Othello is a 'gull, a dolt, a devil'."[111] Ultimately, what is notable about this formulation is the easy flow between how Iago "works" on other characters in the play and how the play in turn "works" on its audience. And indeed, I have argued that Iago preys on the audience's imaginative habits with regard to Moorishness to engender much the same end as he does with Brabantio, recalling the performances of Moorish evil and depravity so common up to this point. When Othello finally appears in the following scene, however, the fantasy is smothered; the Moor of Venice does not live up to type; and furthermore, by revealing the phantasm of the stage's Moorish Other, Shakespeare's play also foregrounds the fact that what is on stage is not a Moor at all, but a man in blackface. To fully understand the impact of this staging, however, we must consider further the issue of Iago, and how he utilizes fantasies "not entirely external to us" in achieving his ends.

First, it is not only conventional ideological fantasies of women's infidelity and Moorish brutality that Iago exploits, but ideological fantasies that are, on the whole, otherwise quite innocuous. In the first act, after Othello successfully negotiates his way out of the standoff with

[109] Loomba, 91.
[110] Loomba, 91.
[111] Loomba, 100.

Brabantio before the Venetian court, Roderigo gives over to despair and informs Iago he will now go "incontinently drown [him]self," for "[i]t is silliness to live when to live is torment" (1.3.306, 309). While the case may be made that Roderigo, perpetually put-upon as he feels, takes this stance for dramatic purposes, Iago's response is particularly charged, resulting in a moralistic excursus on the power of the mind and will over the body and the emotions: "If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to the most preposterous conclusions" (ll.327-330). Following this comes nearly thirty lines of prose where Iago essentially encourages Roderigo to cheer up, and work to be more productive with his repeated call to "Put money in thy purse" (l.340). Iago promises that if Roderigo continues to accrue capital, all he has to do is wait: Desdemona will grow tired of Othello (ll.333-334) or Othello will grow tired of her (ll.337-338), because she will overcome his novelty or he is a Moor and hence subject to abrupt changes in disposition. Whatever happens, Iago promises, if Roderigo can wait and in the meantime make money, "thou shalt enjoy her" (l.339). Aside from the brief but explicit misogynistic and racist gestures toward flighty women and changeable Moors, Iago's advice here would not be terribly out of place in a contemporary self-help book: cheer up, control your emotions, focus your attentions, work hard, make money, and you will get what you want – you *will* achieve your dream. This whole exchange echoes the play's opening, where Roderigo doubts Iago's allegiance in the matter of the Moor. In that instance, Iago provides the first of his several motivations: that, like Roderigo, Othello has kept him from something he feels he deserves.

In the second act, Iago repeats this strategy with Cassio after the latter has been stripped of his position. Iago plays the part of a sympathetic ear, assuring Cassio that reputation "is an idle and most false imposition," and that "you have lost no reputation at all, unless you report

yourself such a loser" (2.3.264-267). Just as when he told Roderigo to bide his time, Iago now suggests it is possible Cassio could make amends with Othello, if only he has the right outlook and plan of action. Cassio attempts to blame the wine, and Iago chides him as "too severe a moraler" (l.294), insisting that wine is not the culprit and that anyone can fall under its sway. That Cassio does not once think to mention that it was Iago who persuaded him to drink is interesting; partly this might be because Iago is now the only person listening to him, and partly it might be because Cassio already felt obliged. Indeed, Iago first urges the lieutenant to drink by emphasizing that the "Cyprus gallants" want him to take part in their "night of revels" (ll.28, 40). Cassio assents, it seems, because he would not be thought of badly by the Cyprian locals, but ironically ends up losing his cherished "reputation," what he calls "the most immortal part of myself" (ll.258-260). To supposedly mend the damage he has already wrought, Iago suggests Cassio present the suit to Desdemona, who will speak to Othello on his behalf, and "your love shall grow stronger than it was before" (l.320), gesturing toward the possibility of restored and bettered standing. The use of Cassio's fantasy of reputation parallels the manipulation of Roderigo's fantasy of finally "enjoying" Desdemona: Iago is finely attuned to the other characters' "dreams" and persuades them that he has privileged knowledge on how to make them real – yet this always results not in the realization of a fantasy, but a terrible accident.

In martialing others' affect for his own purposes, Iago instrumentalizes what Lauren Berlant has called "cruel optimism." Berlant defines optimism as when "the subject leans toward promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with her object." Cruel optimism, by contrast, is "a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or *too* possible, and

toxic."[112] Cruel optimism as an affective structure, for Berlant, is symptomatic of the contemporary West, where the economic fluctuations of late capitalism jeopardize the fantasies of the "good life" that many people still hold dear. In this case, optimism is cruel because it debars the subject from imagining alternative "good lives" sustainable in a changing present. As Berlant explains, "one of optimism's ordinary pleasures is to induce conventionality, that place where appetites find a shape in the predictable comforts of the good-life genres."[113] However, Iago's compulsive return to "common sense" wisdom – on the character of Moors and women, on the best way to make amends with one's superior and impress gallants, on the proper way to conceive of oneself and of one's agency in the world – evinces an early modern formulation of cruel optimism in that he repeatedly directs his gulls toward the fantasy of a "good life" whose conditions he is always already working to compromise. Indeed, he seems to take pleasure in it, asking, "How am I then a villain / To counsel Cassio to this parallel course / Directly to his good?" (2.3.343345).

Even Iago's more explicitly negative promptings – seen in his interactions with Brabantio and, above all, Othello – might be subject to the same dynamic. Berlant explains that "the *affective structure* of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way." Optimism is only recognized as cruel

> when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming.[114]

[112] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011), 24.
[113] Berlant, 2.
[114] Berlant, 2.

For the most part, characters in *Othello* do not recognize the cruelty of their attachments until it is too late; from the perspective of the audience, however, it is almost too glaringly obvious. Iago provides an opportunity for Brabantio to relive his dream, to now hope it has not yet become reality, but he has also already told the senator that his "heart is burst" long before his death is reported at the end of the play (1.1.86, 5.2.202-204). Similarly, the quickness with which Iago brings Othello to jealous thoughts is a direct result of his master remembering how, during his courtship of Desdemona, Cassio "went between us very oft" – a detail missing from his speech to the Senate (3.3.100). In helping Othello recall this fact and then insisting that "Cassio's an honest man" (l.132), Iago forces Othello to become what Linda Charnes has aptly called "a kind of historicist reader of the texts he has hitherto spun for others,"[115] constructing a different story of the courtship, one where Othello did not win Desdemona by his own eloquence – through his own surprisingly "fair" virtue, despite his Moorishness – but through the intercession of his friend. Othello's dream of matrimony with Desdemona, his own vision of the "good life," cracks. His compulsion to believe "she had eyes and she chose me" (l.192) thrusts him into a cruelly optimistic fantasy where encountering the threat of Desdemona's infidelity becomes its own sustaining circuit: "She's gone, I am abused, and my relief / Must be to loathe her" (ll.271-272).

Coming to see her death as his duty, Othello tells himself he is "cruel but merciful," (5.2.86), and in the end gives what might be the most succinct summation of cruel optimism in literature: he is "one that loved not wisely, but too well" (l.342). But in this reading I risk running aground on what Loomba has already pointed out: by placing so much blame on Othello and his unhealthy relation to his fantasy object, I lay responsibility for his miseducation on him, and ignore how Othello's fast fall to jealousy and murderousness is a capitulation to stereotypes

[115] Linda Charnes, "Shakespeare, and belief, in the future" in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (New York: Routledge, 2006) 77.

that, as I've already argued, the play at first seems interested in foregoing. But I think this too is an effect of the play's cruel optimism, a relation that exists not between its characters and their fantasies, but between the audience and the stage, and what we fantasize *could* happen, if something in *The Tragedy of Othello* just went *differently*.[116]

Whiteness's poisoned sight

As Ellen MacKay writes, "*Othello* stirs its audience by the depiction of events that are patently fictitious, that derive from a bald lie, and that occur in full view of their own staged inauthenticity."[117] While MacKay is referring most pointedly to the audience's knowledge that the events that they see stirring the characters to action and misfortune are false – being, as they are, the machinations of Iago – I would add that the character of Othello's break from the Moorish type operates in a parallel manner. Othello is represented as a "patently fictitious" Moor, thus inserting a wedge between the actor and his makeup, and foregrounding blackface as a theatrical convention.

So while earlier stage Moors – including Shakespeare's own – eagerly blended their Moorish signifiers with blackface's associations of religious vice or humanist folly, *Othello* brackets what the audience has been accustomed to know as "Moorishness" in favor of seeing a Moor who by his own "unvarnished" words can bring the Duke of Venice to insist Othello is full

[116] Since at least Kenneth Burke's "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," *The Hudson Review* 4.2 (1951) 165-203, the interlocking actions of the play have been cause for deep scrutiny as a series of "potentialities" that are set up and then fulfilled in later scenes. My argument is deeply indebted to Colleen Ruth Rosefeld, who notes the "unfulfilled" potentiality of someone knocking on the door to Desdemona's bedchamber in 4.3. This could have been, Rosefeld notes, someone who comes to warn her of Othello's jealousy, but in the end it's just "the wind"; Rosefeld connects this with the long critical tradition, from Rymer and Samuel Jonson onward, that the play is too cruel, almost unbearable, because it "scripts the audience as complicit by way of a missed opportunity that is itself already foreclosed upon by the conventions of dramatic form" (269). See Rosefeld, "Shakespeare's Nobody" in *Othello: The State of Play*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin, (Huntingdon: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014) 257-279.

[117] Ellen MacKay, *Persecution, Plague, and Fire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 123.

of "virtue" and hence "far more fair than black" (ll.290-291). Not only does the audience know Othello is truly "more fair than black" – a nonblack actor in blackface – the play has made them keenly aware of the fact. By holding the nonblack actor and his black makeup in tension, Shakespeare's play at first seems to stage the impossible fantasy that Othello might, by the end, not be a "Moor" at all – that is to say, instead of foolish or lascivious or violent, the play raises the possibility that Othello might indeed be wise and temperate and noble, shorn of all the baggage the Moorishness on the English stage carries with it. The play highlights the racialized impersonation of Othello and implicitly contrasts it with prior Moorish performances, with the final effect being that when Othello finally does fall to jealousy and violence, the sting is all the greater.

I take my cue from an admittedly dubious source – American Confederate sympathizer Mary Preston's 1869 essay on *Othello*, wherein she takes the time to explain for her reader, with characteristic italics, that "[i]n studying the play of *Othello*, I have always *imagined* its hero a *white* man." She admits "the dramatist paints him black," but in her view this merely "is a stage decoration," so she feels safe in "dispens[ing] with it." Shakespeare, she insists, could not have actually made Othello black if he had ever met a person of color, which Preston thinks would have summarily shown the Bard that his efforts to make a black man a tragic hero were misguided. Othello's "daub of black" becomes, for Preston, Shakespeare's error: "one of the few erroneous strokes of the great master's brush, the *single* blemish on a faultless work," and she emphatically concludes: "Othello *was* a *white* man!"[118] Notorious today for its frank racism, Preston's account interests me because she demonstrates in photonegative, we might say, what I have thus far said about *Othello*: Shakespeare's representation of blackness is *too much* for

[118] Mary Preston, "Othello (1869)," in *Shakespeare in America: An Anthology from the Revolution to Now*, ed. James Shapiro (New York: Library of American, 2014) 216.

Preston, something she simply cannot live with, and in order to uphold the play as a masterpiece she must blot it out entirely – she must "imagine" it away.

Preston rehearses the longstanding critical aversion to the spectrality of implied or imagined interracial coupling that Michael Neill has traced in *Othello*'s reception history, though uniquely her response is so intense that she must tortuously discount the entirety of the play's racial content as an incidental "stage decoration."[119] Yet writing in the aftermath of the American Civil War, Preston speaks from a very different racial context than the one I have outlined for early modernity: for her, blackness is both paint and the mark of an entire people. For Shakespeare and his audience, blackface in performance was not so settled. The early modern vision of theatrical blackface conjures a multitude of distinct epistemic spaces, not all of which are commensurate in their stances on blackness's meaning or durability. Blackface's history, indeed, from the mystery plays up through *Wit and Science,* suggested half of a fluctuating binary, a mark of sin or a mistake but still, in some way, perhaps remediable. Meanwhile, Shakespeare portrays Othello as noble despite his complexion, yet still hopelessly misled. When Emilia realizes what Iago has done, she refers to Othello as Desdemona's "filthy bargain" (5.2.153), a "gull," a "dolt," and "ignorant as dirt" (ll.159-160). Emilia's jibes the "dull Moor" (l.224) insult his intelligence, but also recall the actor's blackened ("filthy") face that, like the hapless Wit, has rendered him "ignorant as dirt." By so strongly insisting that a senseless mistake has been made Emilia suggests that, had Othello just been a bit more perceptive, he would have seen through Iago's lies. But what difference could have possibly achieved that?

[119] Michael Neill, "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.4 (1989): 383-412. Preston does not appear in Neill's essay, though her neurotic disavowal of the supposedly incidental detail of Othello's race provides a rather acute illustration of his observation that "The play thinks abomination into being and then taunts the audience with the knowledge that it can never be *un*thought" (395).

Thus, by way of conclusion, I want to ask one last question: Why does Desdemona drop the handkerchief? If it is such an important token, a sign of her relationship to Othello, why does she leave it behind without a mention? Looking to the scene in question, we find Othello alone on stage, still reeling from Iago's implications of Desdemona's infidelity. He vows to leave her, first, "to fortune," and suspects she may have strayed because he is "black," or not as soft-spoken as a courtier, or because he is "declined / Into the vale of years" (3.3.267-270) – there are many reasons, he discovers, that Desdemona may not truly love him, and he considers her already "gone" (l.271). Ten lines later, however, Desdemona enters with Emilia, and at the sight of her Othello's disposition immediately changes: "Look where she comes: / If she be false, O then heaven mocks itself, / I'll not believe't" (ll.281-283). Desdemona, sensing something is wrong, asks if Othello is feeling well; he tells her of "a pain about [his] forehead" (l.288). Desdemona approaches, offering to "bind it hard," but Othello interjects: "Your napkin is too little" (ll.290-291). "Let it alone," he says, before following her offstage (l.292). There is no stage direction for who drops the handkerchief, but it must fall here; Emilia immediately picks it up after the couple exits. Editors suggest that Othello himself does not clearly see the handkerchief, which is why he tells Desdemona to leave it alone;[120] from one perspective, this may be the case, but I would like to suggest another reading, based on the conditions of Shakespeare's theater.

Desdemona approaches Othello, producing her handkerchief; Othello has pointed out that his forehead aches. Thus, as the boy actor playing Desdemona reaches out with the handkerchief, drawing it close to the other actor's head, *he risks smearing the makeup on the face of the actor playing Othello*. Othello has been led to doubt Desdemona's fidelity, going so far as imagining what he'll do in revenge, before his heart softens abruptly at the sight of his wife. At this

[120] See Lodwick Hartley, "Dropping the Handkerchief: Pronoun Reference and Stage Direction in Othello III. iii" in *English Language Notes* 8.3 (1971), 173-176.

moment, I would like to propose, *Othello* stands a chance of going differently: let's say Othello allows Desdemona to bind his head, reconciling with her, and perhaps, the blackface smears, highlighting the whole play's artifice and revealing the noble white man the audience has known was on stage all along. But instead, Othello lashes out, causing Desdemona to drop the handkerchief – upholding the dramatic illusion that his face is black, and becoming, like Wit, marked in his error and his estrangement from his lover.[121] Indeed, like Wit, he will soon become unrecognizable: "Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate / Call all in all sufficient?" (4.1.264). In my understanding, then, Preston's egregious misreading of *Othello* only serves to dodge the cruel optimism at the heart of the play: for Shakespeare's drama is structurally predicated on the fantasy that this might have gone *differently*, that this might have been *better*, and that, in the phantasmal logic of early modern blackface performance, *Othello* might have been a white man after all.

By working so insistently to highlight the racial impersonation of the actor playing Othello, Shakespeare's play offers a glimmer of hope for spectators like Preston and an entire cultural and critical lineage loath to imagine the supposedly "hideous" sight of a black hero or an interracial union.[122] But by also insisting that this "stage decoration" – the actor's blackface makeup – is really and truly there, or that it is quite objectively "real" within the world of the

[121] The ink spilled over this stage property is immense, but I am most indebted in my thinking here to Lynda E. Boose's influential "Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love,'" *Studies in Shakespeare* (Autumn, 1975) 260-374. Boose reads the handkerchief as white and, spotted with strawberries, as coming to metonymically stand for Desdemona's wedding sheets, stained with virginal blood, and hence a kind of objective correlative for the entire relationship between her and Othello. I am also influenced by Ian Smith who, in "Othello's Black Handkerchief," notes that if the napkin were indeed dyed in "mummy" (3.4.70) the fabric would not be white but *black*, and thus "This arresting color is a graphic reminder of the handkerchief 's function as visible metonym for Othello, the portable object that Desdemona carries around as a constant reminder of her black African love" (20). I find Smith's argument deeply persuasive, though what I intend to argue about the handkerchief – that it threatens to wipe away the actor's blackface makeup – is not dependent upon its color as such. What it changes, rather, is the interpretive resonance of the handkerchief's loss: either we see Othello inadvertently denying a token that symbolizes his link with Desdemona, or we see him unintentionally robbing her of his material stand-in.

[122] See Neill, 394-395, for more on the resonance of "the hideous" in *Othello*.

play, *Othello* doubles back on its offered relief. Simultaneously allowing and undercutting the desire to discount an "objective" black presence as merely a figment of one's imagination, the play goads its audience to see racialized color difference *as both* part of a temporary dramatic diversion *and* as a real and immanent quality of non-theatrical bodies. Furthermore, in aligning blackness with sin, folly, ignorance, and "objective" materiality, the play participates in what Ian Smith calls the "agonistic subject-object relation whose purpose is to install whiteness as cultural plenitude," in that it supposes the actor's white "body beneath" as the foregone remedy for all the character's troubles.[123] Shakespeare's play dangles the knowledge and hope of whiteness before its audience, only to snatch it away, leaving them with the phantasmal materiality of performed blackness. Early modern whiteness is thus produced as a category that coheres in opposition to the presumed objective and innate reality of the blackness it sees – or rather, the blackness it *imagines* it sees.

In Shakespeare's play, the supposedly artificial bodies and experiences assumed in performance do not stand in neat separation from their allegedly more authentic varieties – either those bodies that enact those experiences, or those that observe them. The results are too much to bear: "Look on the tragic loading of this bed," Ludovico orders Iago: "This is thy work. The object poisons sight, let it be hid" (5.2.361-363). The play ends with the injunction to both look at, and to look away. The audience is confronted with the "Moor" they have seen, and then left to imagine him as he was or might have been as the curtain falls. By making his seemingly false Moor, in the end, "real," Shakespeare participates not only in the construction of a racial Other but, in its affective intensity, his vision of the Other oversteps the bounds of performance to

[123] Smith, "Whit Skin, Black Masks" 60.

result in the historical trend Celia Daileader has called "Othellophilia."[124] The fantasy is a fundamentally "white" one: a fantasy that blackness is an aberration, something that must be seen and then somehow "hid" from "sight," if not fully washed away. This is all in keeping with my understanding of Shakespeare's position as a white playwright working for white early modern audiences – or rather, people coming to see themselves as white, in relation to the early modern positions on color difference and what we now call race.

If this leaves us with little to hope for in *Othello*, and no way of finding a fantasy that speaks against its cruel optimism, I offer the observation of Homi K. Bhabha, that "resistance" to exercises of power can be "the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference."[125] In this "ambivalence" of a dominating discourse, then, we can see how Shakespeare's play reveals the instability of race even as it helps construct it. Shakespeare thus participates in what Arthur Little has called "melancholic whiteness," the attempt to shore up a white subjectivity that is haunted by the racial others that it categorically rejects but also requires for its self-understanding; "whiteness," Little writes, "always already signals a failure of those who construct themselves around and through an ideology of whiteness to ever truly become ontologically so."[126] As its name implies, Little's melancholic whiteness devours the self-reflective space of subjectivity, leaving blackness flat, subjectless, and dehumanized at its margins. To return to Hari Ziyad:

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[124] See Celia R. Daileader, *Racism, Misogyny, and the "Othello" Myth: Inter-racial Couples from Shakespeare to Spike Lee* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005). Daileader defines the term in her introduction, arguing that *Othello* forecloses on "broader definitions, and more positive visions, of inter-racial eroticism" (6). As the title suggests, Daileader argues that the success of *Othello* inflected not only discourses of race in England and America, but left an indelible mark on the representation of interracial relationships for centuries to come. *Othello* persists because it is useful, she claims, for linking white patriarchal discourses of misogyny and racism, since it supports the view that "fear of female sexual autonomy regularly shades into fears of miscegenation" (46). A more general history of how *Othello* inflected discourses of race from the time of its first performance until now is available in Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Othello: A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

[125] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 158.

[126] Little, "Re-Historicizing Race," 92.

"Blackness cannot exist as humanness within the realm that whiteness conceives. Black lives cannot matter under the standards of whiteness, by necessity and design."[127] The play establishes race for a viable medium of seeing *as*, and the tragic arc of *Othello* shows Shakespeare aligning a catastrophic end with an intractable blackness that lingers in the mind of the spectator long after the curtain has fallen – and that thus becomes somehow "realer" than the performance which produces it. But it should not be overlooked that, just as much as this gesture produces an unlivable blackness one cannot bear to witness, it also births a whiteness that, no matter how much it wishes not to, is still confronted with a phantasmal blot at the center of its vision: it is Othello's afterimage that does not ever fully fade from view.

[127] Ziyad, 147.

3

Playing Undead:

The Duchess of Malfi and Early Modern Necromedia

Ghosts in the machine

In his *Discourse on Method* (1637), René Descartes follows up his discussion of physics and blood's circulation through the body to ponder the issue of subjectivity he has recently raised through his famous maxim of "*cogito ergo sum*." Comparing and contrasting the physical body to machines and automata, Descartes supposes that the body's complexity shows its designer to be God: "incomparably better ordered" than automata, the body "has within itself movements far more wondrous than any of those that can be invented by men" (V.56).[1] Descartes pauses here to note that, if a working machine in all respects resembling an animal were built, down to synthetic internal organs, it would be difficult if not impossible to tell the artificial animal from a naturally occurring one. However, he continues, "if there were any such machines that bore a resemblance to our bodies and imitated our actions as far as this is practically feasible," it would be trivial to distinguish these automata from "true men" (V.57). First, Descartes says, the automata

> could never use words or other signs, or put them together as we do in order to declare our thoughts to others. For one can well conceive of a machine being so made that it utters words, and even that it utters words appropriate to the bodily actions that will cause some change in its organs (such as, if one touches it in a certain place, it asks what one wants to say to it, or, if in another place, it cries out that one is hurting it, and the like). But it could not arrange its words differently so as to respond to the sense of all that will be said in its presence, as even the

[1] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy,* trans. Donald A. Cress (Hackett: Indianapolis, 1998).

dullest men can do.

In addition to the issue of speech, these automata, despite their liveliness, "would inevitably fail in … tasks" that required "knowledge" rather than "the disposition of their organs." Descartes claims that the "universal instrument" of reason is required to orient sense-organs, suiting their "particular disposition for each particular action," and hence it is "for all practical purposes impossible for there to be enough different organs in a machine to make it act in all the contingencies of life in the same way as our reason makes us act" (V.57).

Descartes argues for the necessary existence of what he interchangeably calls the mind, spirit, or soul: the interiorized *cogito* that allows for more than simple, reactive speech and action, and thus he locates the well of emergent human behavior in a transcendental, dematerialized subject. Though he is by no means historically unique in this respect, I want to draw attention to Descartes' reliance on language and its use as an index for distinguishing the uniqueness of the human animal (or rather, the human mind within the human animal) from the imagined automaton. More recently such privileging of language has been questioned, particularly in contemporary theories of cognition and artificial intelligence, and in these fields most famously by analytic philosopher John Searle's "Chinese room" thought experiment. For context: in 1950, Alan Turing supposed that artificial intelligence would be demonstrated when a human being could pose questions to a concealed human and a concealed computer, receiving responses from both, and be unable to distinguish the communicating machine from the communicating person. In other words, Turing not only supposes, contra Descartes, that we might conceivably build an automaton whose linguistic capabilities fully mirror a human's, he dispenses with the idea of the interior *cogito*, instead suggesting that intelligence is not

necessarily beholden to a transcendent origin and that appearance and interior reality might not be meaningfully divisible.

In response, John Searle in his 1980 article "Minds, Brains, and Programs" asks us to imagine him stuck in a room filled with a series of books of Chinese characters. He does not know Chinese, but he is given a "program" written in English that gives him clear, procedural steps for how to look up and correlate these various Chinese characters. Outside the room, Chinese speakers write questions and slip them through a slot; inside, Searle takes the written question and uses his "program" to assemble what to him appear to be meaningless symbols in the order prescribed. Outside the room, Searle's interlocutors then receive what appear to *them* to be perfectly intelligent, cogent responses to the questions they have asked. And yet, Searle emphasizes, *he still does not know Chinese*. He thus argues that machines cannot think because at no point does the person in the room comprehend the conversation in the same way as the person outside of it: machines produce results that hold meaning only for people, not for the machines themselves, and hence are not truly thinking or intelligent.[2] In brief, then, we have three points of view: Descartes supposes language to be the mark of human exceptionality; Turing suggests that complex human language can be mechanically reproduced given enough technological complexity; and Searle argues that regardless of linguistic complexity, by their nature communicating machines are little more than the automata Descartes imagined four centuries before.

To this unusual genealogy of an analytic philosopher, a computer scientist, and an early modern philosopher-physician, this chapter will add an older basis: the place of language arts

[2] John R. Searle, "Minds, brains, and programs." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3.3 (1980): 417-457. At the end of this chapter I provide one counterpoint to Searle's argument through N. Katherine Hayles' use of cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins. For a view of this famous thought experiment's long tail within the field of cognitive science and artificial intelligence studies, however, see the edited *collection Views into the Chinese Room: New Essays on Searle and Artificial Intelligence*, John Preston and Mark Bishop, eds. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

such as poetry and drama in the curriculum of Renaissance humanism. Structured around the exercise of *imitatio* – the imitation of the styles of selected classical authors – the humanist program highlights the mediatory nature of language and begs the question of differentiating between meaning and understanding, between knowing imitation and uncomprehending repetition. What I find interesting is that lurking behind each model – from humanism to Descartes to Searle – is a distinction between ideas of what things are living and what things are inert or dead, or rather the mutual interdependence of living and death in proposing models of "cognition." To that end, "death" might not be the mostly useful term for the chapter to follow; instead, as my title indicates, I will opt for the *undead*, which since the 19th century has carried connotations of ghoulish vampires, but in early modernity operated as a poetic but macabre synonym for life. That which is undead is, in a sense, living (it is literally *not* dead), but it is living with an eye toward death, a vision of life in orbit around the point where life becomes its opposite, or where the two become indistinguishable.[3] Just as Descartes' automata are, in a sense, alive – but emphatically *not alive* in the way that real humans are or should be – I hope to map a similarly nebulous unease around humanism's program of language education and English Protestantism's iconoclastic disavowal of the body. I will then conclude the chapter with an extended reading of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), which deploys this educational, artistic, and religious unease around issues of imitation, repetition, life, and death to considerable dramatic effect.

In building this argument I want to focus my attention on early modernity's sense of what Marcel O'Gorman has called *necromedia*, which he theorizes as the tendency of media to point

[3] "unˈdead, adj.". OED Online. December 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/Entry/211195?redirectedFrom=undead (accessed January 14, 2017). As the OED reports, Bram Stoker rescued "undead" from obscurity with *Dracula* in 1897, though it is not clear he had any sense of its prior meaning as a mostly poetic or religious term for life.

"at once to [humanity's] technicity and finitude[.]"[4] Drawing from the work of Bernard Stiegler, O'Gorman argues that humanity is not a purely biologically natural or socially constructed category, but rather the result of a coevolution between biological materiality, social reality, and technological extension: "we *are* our prostheses, and technology is not something we use to control so-called nature."[5] With examples ranging from Plato's critique of writing – which increases culturally stored data at the cost of an atrophied personal memory – to the mildly deadly radioactive injections that make bone scans possible in our contemporary oncology wards, O'Gorman argues that even though what he calls "modern technoculture" is primarily interested in "strategic maneuvers to help humans deny their own finitude"[6] there is nevertheless "an incontrovertible link between death and technology," as every diversion from our finitude (you live on through your writing, you are being treated for a fatal disease) also serves to point subtly back toward death (your writing literally outlives you, you are taking on a lesser sickness in hopes of combatting a greater one).

Of course, Plato's thoughts on writing are more apposite for early modernity than advanced cancer treatments, and I will deal with the nexus of finitude and futurity in humanism's linguistic apparatus later. First, however, I want to return to the issue of the human body and Descartes' soul-haunted machine. If necromedia, as O'Gorman says, point to continued life and imminent death simultaneously, then this is equally true of the body itself, which functions in Descartes' view as a medium for the soul, extending the it out into the world even though it is destined to decay and die, failing the mind it mediates. Early modernity prior to Descartes is no less preoccupied with what I will call the body-medium, by which I mean the use of the material human body as both a location for the inscription and a conduit for the communication of

[4] Marcel O'Gorman, *Necromedia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 15.
[5] O'Gorman, 17.
[6] O'Gorman, 3.

transcendent meaning – concerns emblematized in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and Protestant objections to the Eucharist, and exactly who (or what) counts as a "body."

Thus Descartes' automata become undead in both the premodern and the gothic sense: literally *not* dead in the way an animal (as Descartes would have it) is not dead, they are also an example of a ghoulish unhuman life, since their finite bodies do not communicate between a material world and immaterial soul, and hence life and death (understood as the union and disunion of the body and soul, respectively) hold little meaning for them. These undead automata, these empty bodies – in their modern incarnations with Turing and Searle – return to trouble our thinking: for Turing's test, human subjects must not be able to see the human or unhuman bodies of their interlocutors, while Searle likewise erases visible bodies from his experiment and, because knowledge of Chinese is not contained "within" his own personal corpus, claims there is no ghost in the machine. As we move forward into a more granular history of the body-medium in early modernity, we will find that these oscillations between disembodied and internalized discourse are not simply mutually exclusive methods of separating the quick and the dead, but rather they point to language's fraught relationship with the necromediated body – that is, the speaking body understood as living, but not permanent or essential to a broader concept of "life." In such a self-consciously twilit realm, the capacity for language becomes capable of signaling not only life or death, but – as in the case of Descartes' speaking automata – the uncertain liminalities that constitute the undead.

The body-medium in Protestantism and humanism

In considering the human body as a medium, I am indebted to and differ from a history of media theory that has always, in some way or another, been concerned with what Marshall

McLuhan's pioneering work in 1964 called "the extensions of man [sic]." McLuhan's understanding of what constitutes a medium is anything that results in "a specialist speedup or exchange of information," from money to cars to electric light.[7] However, the use of a medium is always intensely related to the sensorium of the human body, as he explains when he says that "[a]ll media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms."[8] Just as, for example, written language provides a new method of translating the experience of spoken language, a medium takes one element of human experience and "translates" it into another form. In McLuhan's view, media technologies thus radically reconfigure the lived and embodied experience of human beings: "we can translate more and more of ourselves into other forms of expression that exceed ourselves."[9]

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, borrowing from the posthumanist and feminist theory of Donna Haraway, return to the issue of the body by agreeing that "the body itself" can be a type of medium by means of "clothing and jewelry, … cosmetic surgery, body building, and body piercing," a phenomenon they call the "reconstructed" or "technologically constructed" body.[10] As philosopher Eugene Thacker points out, however, Bolter and Grusin's thinking suggests that the body is a medium only insofar as it interfaces with external technologies.[11] The same might be said of McLuhan, for whom a medium always points back to a basic embodied experience that is intensified or alleviated through technological stimulus. While Thacker writes in the context of contemporary biotechnology research, his insight that such work allows us to recognize the body's "technicity from within" has important applications for the early modern

[7] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (1964:repr., Berkeley: Gingko Press, 2015) 41.
[8] McLuhan, 85.
[9] McLuhan, 86.
[10] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999) 237-38.
[11] Eugene Thacker, *Biomedia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) 9.

period, insofar as the body's "quality of being a medium comes first and foremost from its internal organization and functioning."[12]

Thacker means this quite literally: genetic and material components of the body, along with the processes they underwrite, are being increasingly recontextualized as operable technologies by science and medicine.[13] However, I see such thinking illuminating early modernity more on the level of the cultural imaginary, as shifts in England through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reordered the understanding of what sort of *thing* the human body was in a metaphysical sense, and what it might be able to do.[14] The Reformation shifted attention to matters of the soul above the material concerns of the body, contrary to an earlier Catholic sense that, in Caroline Walker Bynum's words, "that persons *are* in some sense their bodies, not merely souls temporarily inhabiting matter."[15] For Protestants, spiritual growth was meant to occur through hearing or reading the Word of God in a sermon or Bible and the resulting inward cogitation – a practice Gina Bloom has called "active audition"[16] – rather than the sensuously diverse practices associated with Catholic worship and ritual. In short, from the perspective of the English Reformation, the question is not so much how media are extensions of humanity, but rather, to what degree humanity and its material, embodied existence is an effective medium for – which is to say, an extension of – God and His divine order.

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[12] Thacker, *Biomedia,* 10.
[13] Thacker, *Biomedia* 11-12.
[14] Though he is not discussed here specifically, my thinking on bodies (and especially bodies as *things*) is deeply influenced by Dylan Trigg's *The Thing: A Phenomenology of Horror* (Washington: Zero Books, 2014). Trigg's basic thesis is a reevaluation of phenomenology in a way that denies mind/body holism, instead stressing how the mind – though it arises from the body – is belated and hence estranged from its embodiment, hence making embodiment a site of horror.
[15] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (1991:repr., New York: Zone Books, 2002) 224.
[16] Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) 113.

The humanistic program of education likewise dealt with this question in a more secular register, particularly in the case of to what degree students' bodies were or could be utilized in the transmission or demonstration of knowledge. For instance, Charles Hoole defended his 1659 translation of Johann Comenius's illustrated Latin textbook *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* precisely because it is pleasurable to the student in a way simply learning grammatical rules is not. According to Hoole, by including illustrations for his Latin exercises, Comenius has

> descended to the very Bottom of what is to be taught, and proceeded (as Nature it self doth) in an orderly way; first to exercise the Senses well, by presenting their objects to them, and then to fasten upon the Intellect by impressing the first notions of things upon it, and linking them one to another by a rational discourse. (sig. A9r)[17]

Hoole's language indicates his opinion that the sensuality of vision is in some way fundamental ("the very Bottom") to the acquisition of knowledge, a method endorsed by "Nature itself." The educational process is at its base bodily (it "exercise[s] the Senses well") before slowly working up to the more abstract concerns of a "rational discourse." Some humanist schoolmasters, like Richard Mulcaster of London's Merchant Taylors' School, even considered intellectual and physical exercise to be interdependent parts of the educational program.[18]

In the prior century, Erasmus shared with Hoole the belief in the progressive nature of education, and how it must begin with the delight and amusement of the student.[19] But he also

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[17] Charles Hoole, "The Translator to all judicious, and industrious School-Masters" in Johann Comenius, *Orbis sensualium pictus* (London: J. Kirton, 1659).

[18] Mulcaster pays a great deal of attention to students' bodily health, devoting large portions of his work to it, and in particular endorses "within dores, *lowd speaking, singing, lowd reading, talking, laughing, weaping, holding the breath, daunsing, wrastling, fensing, and scourging the Top*. And these for without dores*, walking, running, leaping, swimming, riding, hunting, shooting, and playing at the ball*" (*The first part of the elementary* [London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1582] sig. G3r).

[19] As he explains: "The teacher's objective is always the same, but he must use different methods at different times. While his pupil is still a little child, he can introduce into entertaining stories, amusing fables, and clever parables the things he will teach directly when the boy is older" (Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince,* ed. Lisa Jardine, [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997] 12). Similar to Hoole, pleasure and amusement are the basis of education that prepares the way for less pleasurable and more mature lessons as the child ages. As Richard Halpern has argued, this is a defining characteristic of humanist educational practice: "Humanism no longer views

disparages what he calls the "old time," when humans "led their lives in woods in wandering lusts of the body, [and] were rather wild beasts than men."[20] Whereas Hoole glosses over the ascent from sensuality to "rational discourse," Erasmus charts the journey while compulsively returning to the threats posed by an education that leans too heavily on bodily gratification. He argues that such an upbringing denies the human creature the perfection of "Reason, which maketh a man, that hath no place where all things are governed after affection."[21] Similarly, after describing the transformations wrought by Circe on Odysseus's men, Erasmus says that worse than a human mind trapped in an animal's body is the "marvelous monster" of "a beast's mind … in a man's body."[22] As we saw in chapter one, there is certain constructionism in the humanist outlook: as Erasmus claims, "Nature is an effectual thing, but education, more effectual, overcometh it."[23]

But where and how is the success of education – the "overcoming" of a beastly nature – to be remarked? Hoole claims the older scholastic method of teaching Latin through rules rather than examples and exercises "do teach children, as we do Parrats, to speak they know not what" (sig. A9r). The parrot is emblematic of the failure of education because a parrot can repeat human speech without rationally understanding – or internalizing – the significance of the words, much in the way Searle's "Chinese room" produces coherent responses without internal

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the child's desires as a useless and dangerous force ranged against the violence counterforce of the instructor, It does not found itself on a wasteful neutralization of opposing charges but sets up an imaginary machine that feeds on the desires of the child, engaging them in a relation of constructive interference with those of the instructor" (*The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991] 30).

[20] Erasmus, "On giving children an early and liberal education" in *English Humanism: Wyatt to Cowley,* ed. Joanna Martindale (London: Croom Helm, 1985) 54.

[21] Erasmus, "On giving children an early and liberal education," 54

[22] Erasmus, "On giving children an early and liberal education," 55

[23] Erasmus, "On giving children an early and liberal education," 54

understanding. Bruce Boehrer notes the tendency of early modern poets and playwrights, likewise, to deploy the parrot as "an emblem of mindless inferiority."[24]

Apropos of Erasmus, Hoole's image of the parrot signifies not the human mind trapped in an animal's body, but an element of supposedly uniquely human embodiment – the voice – that appears disingenuously in a nonhuman creature, lacking the uniquely human characteristics of mind and reason. Thus, Hoole's critique of scholastic education relies on installing not simply language but, in anticipation of Descartes and Searle, *also* understanding at the center of the humanist curriculum. As Erasmus says, man is "called a reasonable creature" precisely because he is "divided from those that cannot speak."[25] But when we consider the example of the parrot, employed by Hoole as a *defense* of humanism, a concern arises: though humanist education is meant to help one eventually outgrow bodily and beastly interests, the final mark of humanism's success remains in the end both bodily and inaccessible, relegated to an interiority that supposedly shows itself through the spoken or written word, but which might just as easily be another uncomprehending, parrot-like repetition. That is to say, as with Searle's thought experiment, it can be difficult to discern from the interlocutor's perspective the degree of comprehension of the other party. We may be tempted to find reason and sense where there is, on a certain cognitive level, none at all.

Uncomprehending mimicry, or mimicry in general,[26] prove to be troublesome points for humanism, precisely because so much of the humanist program is based in *imitatio*, a series of

[24] Bruce Boehrer, *Parrot Culture: Our 2500-Year-Long Fascination with the World's Most Talkative Bird*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Boehrer explains that the parrot is often used derogatorily to describe "women, the lower social ranks, and figures of effete privilege" (68).
[25] Erasmus, "On giving children an early and liberal education," 59
[26] As Boehrer explains, Ben Jonson introduced both the word "poll" into English, along with the word "plagiary." The conjunction of plagiarism and parrots in Jonsonian satire, especially his satire of other poets, allows him to "assert[] his status not just as the creator of a poem, but as the inventor of the very language in which it is written"

practices intended to teach young boys by example. Students imitated the styles of classical authors in their own writing and speaking, but were also expected to imitate the moral examples to be discerned in those texts with the help of their instructor (whose bearing and good judgment, furthermore, were expected to serve as yet another model for imitation). As Hannah H. Gray has observed, "imitation of stylistic and ethical models are spoken of in identical terms" by the humanists.[27] Situating this dynamic within the model of the Lacanian imaginary, Richard Halpern argues that this "mimetic education … is distinctive" from prior educational programs because "the subject comes to assimilate or internalize a set of practices and thus enacts his subjection 'automatically,' as if he himself had chosen it."[28]

Yet precisely what a student *does* with his chosen example is a matter of some concern, as Erasmus himself indicates. One of the primary models for imitation in the early modern schoolroom was Cicero, but there were extensive debates as to what imitating his style actually entailed. Erasmus feared too closely adopting a Ciceronian style, for as he says in the dialogue *Ciceronianus*, "if you want to express the whole of Cicero, you can't express yourself."[29] Halpern argues it is precisely in the space between the Ciceronian model and the writer "himself" that humanism allows for a seemingly "self-fashioning" subjectivity that "internalizes texts in the hopes of mastering them, not of being mastered by them."[30]

Erasmus's defense of imitation depends on an idea of a meaningful difference, for "one can succeed in being equal or at least close to [Cicero], although dissimilar" because "[w]hat

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(69). Similarly, humanist debates about *imitatio* are concerned with whether or not students should be beholden to an original style, or capable of turning a learned style to their own personal ends in search of a personal voice.

[27] Hannah H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24.4 (1963): 506.

[28] Halpern, 29.

[29] Erasmus, "Ciceronianus" in *English Humanism: Wyatt to Cowley*, ed. Joanna Martindale (London: Croom Helm, 1985) 137.

[30] Halpern, 37.

comes nearer to the style of Cicero isn't automatically better."[31] The application of a Ciceronian style to an unfit subject by an unfit author, in Erasmus's view, would be grotesque:

> no animal resembles a man's shape more closely in all its limbs than an ape; if nature had given it a voice, you could really take it for a man; nothing's more unlike a man than a peacock or a swan, and yet you'd prefer to be a swan or a peacock, I think, than an ape.[32]

Erasmus is allegorizing a distinction between form and content: while the ape looks close to a man, just as some writing may approximate Ciceronian style, the ape lacks a "voice" (metonymic with reason) to make it fully human and instead renders it distasteful, just as Ciceronian style badly applied would fall flat and fail to deliver its message. Indeed, Erasmus ventures, "the best Ciceronian may be the man who's most unlike Cicero, the man, that is, who speaks fittingly, although he speaks differently."[33] A persuasive stylist, Erasmus advises, begins with "imitation of a model that agrees with you and your natural ability," but also takes what it imitates and "dispatches it into the author's mind" so that it reappears as "a product of your own true talent" rather than a "gem drawn from Cicero." Discourse that has been sufficiently internalized and repurposed, rhetoric that is therefore filled with "true and authentic feelings," is something that "lives, breathes, acts, moves, and sways others, and expresses the whole of you."[34]

Erasmus is deploying a vitalistic language that has a counterpart in Western Christianity, and was given a particular edge in England following the Reformation. Particularly, the Reformation's iconoclasm wrought havoc on what we might think of as the Catholic Church's wide-ranging necromedia empire, and hence the ways in which early modern Europeans conceived of the differences between life and death. Eamon Duffy explains that the late medieval Catholic doctrine of Purgatory and its attendant "cult of the dead … was also in an important and

[31] Erasmus, "Ciceronianus," 137.
[32] Erasmus, "Ciceronianus," 137.
[33] Erasmus, "Ciceronianus, 138.
[34] Erasmus, "Ciceronianus," 144.

often overlooked sense a cult of the living, a way of articulating convictions about the extent and ordering of the human community, and hence of what was to be human."[35] Thus, as the Reformation sought to "redefine the boundaries of human community" by "limit[ing] the claims of the past, and the people of the past, on the present," it also sought to change what constituted a properly human community.[36] Indeed, for English reformers, the origins of idolatry are bound up in necromedia, as idols indicate historically the remembrance of the dead. Bishop John Jewel, in the third part of the 1571 *Homily against the Peril of Idolatry*, recounts from the Book of Solomon how idolatry "began of a blynde loue of a fonde father, framing for his comfort an image of his sone, being dead, and so at the last men fel to the worshiping of the image of him whom they did know to be deade" (sig. I1r).[37] Thus, the "blynde loue of a fonde father," intended to assuage loss by extending a son's life and memory, becomes the spiritual blindness of idolatry; the gesture of fond remembrance metastasizes into the worshipping the image of a dead son *despite* knowing him to be dead.

Susan Zimmerman understands the English turn toward iconoclasm and its obsession with the "dead" status of idols as symptomatic of the Protestant shift from "the independence of body and soul to the priority of the spirit" toward their dualism.[38] Zimmerman argues that before the Reformation, there was a greater sense of the interdependence of matter and spirit, with a "Catholic emphasis on the body as a hermeneutic matrix to the soul as ascendant spiritual principle."[39] As the Reformation worked to unknit the body and soul, it concomitantly worked to

[35] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 8.
[36] Duffy, 8.
[37] John Jewell, *The second tome of homilees*, London: Richarde Iugge, and Iohn Cawood, 1571.
[38] Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse in Shakespeare's Theater* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005) 45-56.
[39] Zimmerman, 8.

"establish[] the *dead* body as detritus, devoid of informing spirit."[40] The incipient dualism of matter and spirit – evocative of the Cartesianism to come – carries with it a broader injunction to recognize "de-animated materiality and externality" as essentially "dead."[41] Consequently, like corpses, "visual representations, which cannot recreate the sentience or interior spirit of the body, are themselves 'dead.'"[42]

But the language of the *Homily against the Peril of Idolatry* suggests that, like the story of the fond father, there is something insidiously alluring about "dead" things. Like the image of the dead man's son, which mysteriously draws others into idolatrous worship, dead matter proves fascinating to those that behold it:

> The paynting of the picture and carued image with dyuers colours, enticeth the ignoraunt so, that he honoureth and loueth the picture of a dead image that hath no soule. Neuerthelesse, they that loue such euyll thynges, they that trust in them, they that make them, they that fauour them, and they that honour them, are all worthy of death[.] (sig. C1v)

Idols contaminate the people who traffic in them, causing the forfeiture of their right to life by driving them to what the homily consistently calls "spiritual fornication." Thus, materiality becomes a synecdoche for death, as the "liuing God" who is the source of the Christian animating spirit, cannot be adequately represented "by the basenesse and vilenes of sundrye & diuers images of dead stockes, stones, and mettals" (sig. C2v-sig. C3r). From this point onward, the homily is unrelenting in mentioning the "dead" status of idols, a status made all the worse by their formal similarity to life: "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 fitte similitudes of the lyuyng God" (sig. C3r).

[40] Zimmerman, 9, my emphasis.
[41] Zimmerman, 47.
[42] Zimmerman, 47-48.

Such rhetoric is by no means unique to the homilies. John Calvin's *Institutes*, translated into English by Thomas Norton in 1561, also aligns death with material fluctuation, explaining that people "couet visible shapes of God, and so to forge themselues Gods of timber, stone, golde, siluer, and other dead and corruptible matter" (sig. 22r).[43] Calvin argues that in religious image-making, God "beeyng without body is likened to bodily mater: being inuisible, to a visible image: being a spirit, to a thing without life," and concludes that "nothing is lesse allowable, than gods to be made of ded stuffe" (sig. 23r-23v). In basing its claims on a distinction between life and death, however, Protestant iconoclasm enacts and responds to an inherent contradiction that philosopher and media theorist Eugene Thacker has pointed out regarding any philosophy of "Life" and "living": "…while we can point to numerous instances of the living, Life, in itself, is never existent as such. The only 'evidence' of Life is precisely its manifestation in and as the living; Life, or that which conditions the living, is in itself nonexistent."[44]

Thacker wants us to understand, in other words, that "Life" as a kind of pure vital force or animating principle is unthinkable outside of its particular instantiations in things that we designate as "the living," and our experience or understanding of those entities as living creatures. His conclusion is that "Life … in itself" is thus nonexistent, which leads to Thacker's claim that the proper way to approach the issue of Life and the living is through "the acceptance of a negative theology[.]"[45] Since negative theology attempts to describe God not through positive attributes but by stating what God is *not*, Thacker claims, we can use it to grapple with the similar issue of "Life" as a "superlative" and all-encompassing force that at the same time

[43] John Calvin, *The institution of the Christian religion,* trans. Thomas Norton, (London: Reinolde Wolfe & Richarde Harison, 1561)
[44] Eugene Thacker, *After Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) 21.
[45] Thacker, *After Life*, 21.

seems to be "nothing" in and of itself.[46] What is most important for Thacker about negative theology is what he calls the "superlative negation," that is, "a negation of all finitude and limitation that is, in the same breath, an affirmation of the limit and finitude of thought."[47] As he explains, in the apophatic view God is not simply an effect of varied rhetorical descriptions, but necessarily something that precedes and grounds them, and thus always *surpasses* and therefore implicitly *undermines* them.[48]

Thacker's thought bears on early modern iconoclasm particularly because we can find in iconoclastic polemic a clear conflation of the two threads that preoccupy his philosophy: the proper means by which to describe a superhuman power, and the distinctions to be made between Life, the living, and the dead. Early modern Protestantism is faced with, but unable to resolve, the contradiction Thacker formally outlines: in the rush to assert that idols and their matter are "dead stuff," the iconoclasts often define death by the absence of a sensibility and motility appropriate to human embodiment. At the same time, this is a form of material embodiment that the *living* God, the wellspring of spirit, *cannot possibly have*, and thus such sensible and motile embodiment is *also* used as reference point for the definition of the "dead."

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[46] Thacker, *After Life*, 35. Thacker summarizes the development of negative theology by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the fifth century and the commentary on his writings by John Scotus Eriugena in the ninth. Negative theology is grounded in a critique of affirmative theology, which "is dependent upon and begins from the creaturely world" insofar as it describes God by ascribing Him positive attributes within a worldly and human frame of reference (39). For instance, in an affirmative theological framework we might say "God is wise," which immediately imports issues of what "wisdom" *means* from a *human* perspective. The first objection might be that "wisdom" always suggests its opposite, ignorance, and the perpetual tension between them. However, an omniscient and eternal God obviously could not ever be ignorant in any sense. To this extent, positive theology actually inevitably leads the thinker toward two distinct types of negation. In the first, we accept that God is wise, but His wisdom is a perfected and non-human sort of wisdom devoid of ignorance – Thacker's term for this conceptual move is "privative negation" (42). Secondly, we can also describe God negatively through an "oppositional negation," absolving God of worldly and human foibles, such as when we avoid applying positive attributes to God by saying "God is not ignorant" (42).

[47] Thacker, *After Life*, 43.

[48] Thacker, *After Life*, 43. Therefore, even if we say something like "God is wise" and accept that *wisdom* in its divine aspect would lack its oppositional human threat of ignorance, what we end up describing is in fact a sort of wisdom that precedes and hence radically undermines our ability to even conceive of what *human* wisdom is. Thacker explains that consequently, for the negative theologian, God is "always receding into a sort of dark, opaque nether region that later authors … will simply call *nihil*."

In effect, the very things that mark human beings as *living* creatures also categorically separate them from the eternally living divinity and thus, paradoxically, render them susceptible to idolatry and spiritual death. While the Reformation attempts to wipe clean the slate of Catholicism's idolatrous necromedia, it cannot remove (or at least think outside the terms of) the body's basic tendency toward necromediation, and its ability to signal life, death, and undeath.

The *Homily against the Peril of Idolatry*, for instance, covers familiar ground when it says that idols "be made but of small peeces of wood, stone, or mettall," and it is precisely this materiality that means "they can not be anye similitudes of the greate maiestie of God, whose seate is heauen, and the earth his footestoole" (sig. C3r). God's majesty is so great that to assume it could be successfully mediated by "wood, stone, or mettall" is a gesture of immense folly. But in addition to this, the homily adds, idols are "dead," because they "haue eyes and see not, handes and feele not, feete and can not go. &c. and therefore they can not be fitte similitudes of the lyuyng God" (sig. C3r). Presumably, then, a "lyuyng God," can indeed see, feel, and "go" – since it is precisely the lack of these animate characteristics that make idols dead matter. But this logic begins to turn on itself in the third part of the homily as it insists on God's "incomprehensible maiestie" during a paraphrase of Isaiah 40:21-22, when the "maiestie" is said to "greater then that it could be expressed or set foorth in any image or bodily similitude[.]" (sig. F2v–sig. F3r).[49] Here the issue is not simply the materiality of idols, but their "bodily similitude." In particular the third part of the homily is dedicated to discrediting Catholic statuary, but in criticizing what it sees as the undue valorization of the human form, it creates a

[49]The paraphrase might be seen as particularly pernicious in this instance, as it changes the ending of the passage to suit the needs of the message at hand. While this portion of Isaiah does indeed decry the follies of idolatry, this particular section makes no mentions of "bodily similitude." As it reads in the Geneva Bible: "Know ye nothing? have ye not heard it? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood it by the foundation of the earth? He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, he stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out, as a tent to dwell in."

version of God who is, at least in terms of the body, radically nonhuman. As the homily then asks:

> …how can God, a most pure spirite, whom man neuer sawe, be expressed by a grosse, bodily, and visible similitude? How can the infinite maiestie & greatnes of god, incomprehensible to mans mynde, muche more not able to be compassed with the sense, be expressed in an infinite and litle image? How can a dead and dombe image expresse the lyuyng God? (sig. F3r)

The purely spiritual nature of God, like Thacker's superlative negation, threatens to invalidate not just material devoid of spirit, but to negate materiality wholesale, even as it is experienced by the divinely inspired human creature.[50] The reader of the homily is left with a God who, because He is living, must be able to do the many things idols cannot do – speak, hear, move, and so on – but at the same time, this God does not and cannot do these things with the body and motions common to "corruptible man" – with a mouth, ears, hands, and feet. Thus, though humans supposedly or at least potentially share their spiritual life with God, they share a material, bodily existence only with "dead" and immovable idols.

There is nevertheless one saving grace (so to speak) that allows the Protestant believer from slipping into total despair: the Word, or to be more precise, the spoken word, the voice. No matter how much an idol may *look* human, no matter how *similar* to a material body it may be, idols cannot engage with the vocal and auditory elements that were central to Protestant worship.[51] In his *Institutes,* for instance, Calvin makes much the same argument as the *Homily*, but provides a typically Protestant lifeline by way of Deuteronomy 4:12, when Moses gathered

[50]It is one thing to say that a "lyuyng God" cannot be expressed by a "dead and dombe image," yet the alternative is not simply a God who lives and speaks, but a God in some fundamental way "incomprehensible to mans mynde," who lives and speaks without any of the characteristics by which we normally recognize both living and speaking. Cementing the fact that God's truth is beyond the limited toolset provided by human embodiment, the homily then turns to the "heresie of the Anthropomorphites, thinking God to haue handes and feete, & to sit as a man doth: which they that do … fall into that sacriledge which the apostle, in who haue chaunged the glorye of the God, into the similitude of a corruptible man" (sig. F4r)

[51] See Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, especially Chapter 3, "Fortress of the Ear: Shakespeare's Late Plays, Protestant Sermons, and Audience."

the Israelites in Horeb to deliver the Ten Commandments: "Thou heardest a voice, but thou saweste no body" (sig. 23r). The voice becomes the Calvinist method of accessing God, even as the body is negated, for as Calvin says "We see how openly God setteth *his voice* against all counterfaite shapes, that we may knowe that they forsake God whosoeuer do couet to haue visible formes of hym" (sig. 23r, my emphasis).

Indeed, the voice seems to not only be untethered from a speaking body, but is upgradable to a more ineffable realm. Calvin defends the doctrine of predestination, for example, by claiming "the electe do come when thei haue hearde and learned of the father," but he is quick to point out they do not come to this learning by "the office of a teacher" – rather, Christ "with his voice dylygentlie calleth them, whome it necessarily behoueth to bee inwardely taughte by the holly Ghoste, that thei maie any thinge profyte."[52] God's voice becomes a way of simultaneously imbuing Him with force while denying Him form (sig. 29r). In the case of Calvin's elect, to properly hear Christ amounts to a type of inner communion with the Holy Ghost, and more generally speaking, listening attentively and well to a sermon was understood as an act of mediation that could "supernaturally" effect an inward change in the auditor through nominally natural means.[53]

In Protestant discourse, matter generally and the human body specifically face a severe attenuation in their mediatory power for religious experience. But English Protestantism doubts the value of matter and the "natural" senses most closely aligned with particular materials and

[52] Calvin, sig. 29r.

[53] Gina Bloom notes that unlike Catholic priests, Protestant ministers could not directly bestow grace and thus had to work indirectly, through limited means. The common use of the parable sower and the seed in in Protestant religious writing, where the "seed" of the Word of God will only take root in hospitable soil, thus delineates a "receptive agency" since it "shift[s] much of the responsibility for salvation to … listeners" (117). A good example is John Donne who, though less hostile to matter, presents a similar logic in a sermon on the conversion of St. Paul: "Man hath a natural way to come to God, by the eie, by the creature; so *Visible things* shew the *Invisible God*: But then, God hath super-induced a supernaturall way, by the eare. For, though hearing be naturall, yet that faith in God should come by hearing a man preach, is supernatural." See *Complete Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: California UP, 1953-62). Vol 6, 216.

objects in favor of emphasizing a more or less *dematerialized* notion of the voice. Still, it would be specious to claim that speech was believed to be wholly immaterial in early modernity. Francis Bacon claimed that "breath in mans Microcosmos, and in other Animals, do very well agree with the winds in the greater world;" he argued breath was born of the interplay of humors in the body before it was expelled: "breaths are engendred of matter that yields a tenacious vapour, not easie to be dissolved" (sig. F2r).[54] Carla Mazzio has shown, however, that despite this knowledge that air was material, it troubled natural philosophers precisely because it could not be seen or manipulated.[55] And when it came to speech, air and breath were seen as *unique* materials: they entered into and emerged from the body, and hence were closest to the spirit that supposedly animated that body. As courtier and tutor Balthazar Gerbier explains in his manual *The Art of Well Speaking* (1650):

> [T]he life of a humane voyce, the very Spirituall Soule of that voyce, that is to say, its sence, is partly Spirituall, and partly Intelectuall; its that which enters into the pores by permission of the corporall ayre, where it remaines; and having knockt at the doore, and obtained entrance, the spirit then of humane speech, which is the speeches sence, bereaves its selfe of that Corporeall robe, and is conveyed unto our intelectuall parts, and there manifests it selfe, as in a true draught, the very being, thoughts, conceptions, desires, inclinations, and the other Spirituall passions of him that speaketh. (sig. D1v)[56]

Gerbier's model of speech makes clear divisions between medium and message. The "corporall ayre" carries the message of speech, already impressed with the "Spirituall passions" of a speaker, until it enters the listener's body; at this point speech's "sence" drops its "Corporeall

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[54] Francis Bacon, *The natural and experimental history of winds* (London: Anne Moseley and Tho. Basset, 1671). Though breath is "man's" microcosmos, Gina Bloom notes how the material and humoral assumptions in this passage contribute to understandings of the differences between the voices of men, women, and children (*Voice in Motion* 23-24).

[55] Mazzio points out that unlike other materials, air "could only be approached by indirection or metonymy. It could be gleaned through the movement of wind on leaves, waters, or skin; the liquid condensation of clouds, vapors, and fog; the sounds of moving air; the smell of air, be it foul or fair" ("The History of Air: *Hamlet* and the Trouble with Instruments," *South Central Review*, 26.1-2, [2009], 153).

[56] Balthazar Gerbier, *The art of well speaking being a lecture read publiquely at Sr. Balthazar Gerbiers academy*, (London: Robert Ibbitson, 1650).

robe" and is immediately taken up by the "intellectuall parts" that allow it to manifest itself clearly and distinctly. Meaning and understanding, in other words, are predicated on the voice's unusual ability to seemingly dematerialize itself when the speaker's vocalized breath incites the auditor's cogitation. Tellingly, Gerbier describes this encoded content – the unseen message hidden in the invisible medium of breath – as the "life of a human voice" and its "Spirituall Soule." Thus, the material air of the voice is not the "dead" material of icons and idols. As in the case of Calvin's elect, who must listen inwardly for the Holy Ghost, speech remains lively because it primarily arouses interior mental faculties in a process of cognition and scrutiny, rather than engaging other sensual appetites. The voice also becomes the primary index of spiritual "liveness" since, like the bodiless God that spoke at Horeb, the voice is taken to be air that is directly impacted by the soul. And yet, despite this fairly uncontroversial notion of language's basic materiality, in humanistic practice, the voice is instrumentalized – situated within the world – through the frame of rhetoric. In rhetoric's focus on pleasure and persuasion, as I will explain in the next section, humanistic theories of language attain a troublingly sensual quality at odds with theories of linguistic immediacy.

Humanism's rhetorical monstrosity

As I have already outlined above, the transparency of the voice is troubled in the program of English humanism and its approach to language through the use of *imitatio.* We find in Erasmus's urge to his readers to make sure their oratory "lives, breathes, acts, moves, and sways others" so that it truly "expresses the whole" of the speaker a similar schema to the one in speech-oriented Protestantism and Gerbier's genteel materialism: a space interior to the body draws in language and supplies it with meaning in both Protestantism and humanism, though in

the case of the former the responsible faculty is the "soul" that deciphers and internalizes meaning, while humanism tends more to term this "reason." In Protestant Christianity that which lacks a soul is dead, spiritually if not also literally, while that which lacks reason in humanism is subhuman or bestial. Both views asymptotically approach a dividing line where the full and functional human is separated from its inferiors, primarily by means of a body with a certain surplus indexed by its use of language. Idols are simulacra of bodies that cannot breathe, walk, talk, or hear, while Erasmus's ape, Hoole's parrot, and Cartesian automata can approximate certain features of humanity but lack the reasonable faculty that, like the soul, provide the body with voice, or the voice with meaning.

However, the dark consequence of humanity's assumed "uniqueness," in both Protestantism and humanism, is that challenges to that uniqueness lead to scenes of necromediated horror. We can turn to an early scene in *The Duchess of Malfi* to illustrate this point. In the second act the bitter and cynical Bosola is provoked by the "painting" he notices on the character of the Old Woman, whose cosmetics he decries as a "scurvy face-physic" (2.1.26). He then delivers what he calls a "meditation" on the potential horror of the human body:

> What thing is in this outward form of man
> To be beloved? We account it ominous
> If nature do produce a colt or lamb,
> A fawn or goat, in any limb resembling
> A man, and fly from't as a prodigy.
> Man stands amazed to see his deformity
> In any other creature but himself. (ll.50-58)

This diatribe begins with the recognition of physical elements of the human body in the form of monstrous animal births, but Bosola's complaint moves into a more pointed *contemptus mundi* where not only is humanity's "deformity" seen in terrifying "prodigies," but even in our natural state we are "eaten up of lice and worms" and "bear about us / A rotten and dead body" that will

only be "made sweet" after burial (ll.61-66). His philosophical outlook at this moment emphasizes the continual changes wrought on the body by age and disease, a fluidity that he figures as indicating the body is always already "rotten and dead" – whatever the body may be or what it might do, Bosola sees the body first and foremost as necromedium, a living thing perpetually on the journey to death, and hence his philosophy bends back around to figure the human as always already dead, or undead.

But it is worth emphasizing that he understands the Old Woman's cosmetic artifice as unnerving precisely because of its effectiveness in misdirecting one's reception of the other's body – to see a woman unpainted "inclines somewhat near a miracle" (l.27). Thus, while the first half of Bosola's satirical outburst is grounded within early modern discourses on monstrous births, the latter half fits into early modern anti-cosmetic polemics.[57] Bosola deploys a double logic in order to secure his argument against embodiment: not only is it horrific that we have bodies that continually or will inevitably fail us, but sometimes we can be deceived into thinking this isn't case. That his rant at the Old Woman is pointedly misogynist also reveals a fissure in the play's approach to necromedia: women become the locus of necromedia's most treacherous powers, where a false scaffolding of "life" around a body distracts one from but also invites one toward death and disintegration.

Indeed, Bosola's initial view of the horrors of the body concern how ominous it is when we notice pieces of that body in places where it should not be, namely, *in other creatures*. That is, the first half of Bosola's argument proposes that the elements constituting what we recognize as a human body are not necessarily unique features of that body, appearing as they do in

[57] See Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006). Of especial note is chapter four, "John Webster and the Culture of Cosmetics" (89-110), where she argues that though Webster is aware of anti-cosmetic discourse, Webster sees cosmetics as being epistemologically important not only generally but for his theatrical practice specifically (108-109).

monstrous births, and thus in a sense dissolving human exceptionalism.[58] His cynical stance insists that it is not the exception to the rule (the mingled forms of human and animal) but rather the rule itself (the form of the human body) that should and in fact does incite our horror and disgust. But more disgusting than that is the Old Woman's attempt, as Bosola interprets it, to disguise the decay of her body. Artificiality – glossed by Bosola as a theatrical cosmeticism – is to be disparaged, but beneath such deceptive appearances he finds no grand truth about a naturalized body, no baseline nature from which to work: rather, he imagines a mongrel form that degenerates, rots, and sometimes strays into the bodies of what should be distinct creatures.

Bosola's meditation is thus a complement to Protestant iconoclastic discourses, which attacked both the materiality of idols and their attendant sensual pleasures. The dead and dumb painted image that shares its outward form with the human body unites the horror of recognizing that body when it is improperly replicated with the deceptive artifice denoted by the Old Woman's cosmetics. This gendered notion of art and artifice is something I will return to in my fuller reading of Webster's play; for now we can observe that while Bosola seems to corroborate

[58] Bosola's words run counter to prevailing discourses on monstrous births as deviations from a norm. As the sixteenth-century French surgeon Ambroise Paré explained, monstrous bodies where one can witness "a fusing together of strange species … proceed from the judgment of God," often in response to a human infraction of "laws ordained by God and Nature." See *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 5. In the seventeenth century, at the advent of a more secular viewpoint, Francis Bacon argued that despite their apparent deviations, in monstrous bodies "every irregularity or peculiarity will be found to depend on some common form; and the wonder at last lies merely in the minute *differentiae*, and in the degree and the unusual combination, not in the species itself." See *The New Organon*, ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 148. Thus, in the more theological view represented by Paré, monstrosity is something authorized by God's higher power, while for Bacon, monstrosity is also authorized insofar as it is always a peculiar outcome of the natural variations or *differentiae* to be found in the "common form" of nature's generative capacity. Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park trace the increasing sense of a "maternal nature" animated by and subject to "a patriarchal God." Nature's myriad generative possibilities were restrained by rules or ideal forms dictated by God. Under this rubric, "irregularities like monsters were no longer divine suspensions of the regular order of nature, but rather the unintended consequences of God's refusal to amend his ordained regularities in particular cases" (*Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* [Boston: MIT Press, 1998] 209). The dissolution of human exceptionalism for Bosola, then, is notably also a kind of material feminization of the body, in that it becomes a mess of distinct and drifting parts that can only reach some sort of semblance of stability through cosmetic artificiality.

certain Reformation ideas about bodies and materiality, his scorched-earth cynicism leaves no way out of the problem of embodiment.

While Protestantism proper, in response to this issue, to some extent managed to dematerialize the voice, a similar move was not possible for humanism, dependent as it was on the embodied student's (relative) comfort and scholastic performance. It is perhaps not too surprising that Bosola, whom Delio describes as "a fantastical scholar" that has "studied himself blear-eyed" in the bodily minutia of the classics ("what color Achilles' beard was, or whether Hector were not troubled with the tooth-ache … the true symmetry of Caesar's nose…"), would have few kind words to say about actual bodies (3.3.41-47). Furthermore, although humanism relied on the same humoral theories of breath outlined earlier, its instrumental approach to language through classical rhetoric resulted in what Richard Halpern has called "an absolute disjunction between elocutionary force and any given content or ideological position."[59] To follow Erasmus, if a good rhetorician is he who suits his style to his talents and subjects, then a successful rhetorician will have at his command a large multitude of styles, what Erasmus called the *copia*.[60] But in the end there is no guarantee that persuasive rhetoric is so because, as Erasmus might wish, it "lives, breathes, acts, moves, and … expresses the whole" of its author; like Searle's missives from the Chinese room, these words might just be pleasant or useful for the listener.

Because the *copia* and language in general are fundamentally external to the speaker, their subsequent degree of internalization is always in doubt, and humanists are always

[59] Halpern, 50.

[60] See Erasmus, *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style,* trans. Betty I. Knott, vol. 24 of *Collected Works* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978). Of note also is Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979), though Cave's context is primarily French humanism.

threatening to live up to what Francis Bacon disparagingly said of them and their "affectionate studie of eloquence, and copie of speech":

> This grew speedily to an excesse: for men began to hunt more after wordes, than matter, and more after the choisenesse of the Phrase, and the round and cleane composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their workes with tropes and figures: then after the weight of matter, worth of subiect, soundnesse of argument, life of inuention, or depth of iudgement. (sig. E3r-E3v)[61]

For Bacon, the rise of humanistic study in the sixteenth century is part and parcel of a stylistic superabundance – "the whole inclination and bent of those times," he says, "was rather towards copie than weight" (sig. E3v). It is precisely in the obsession with "words" *over* "matter" that humanist rhetoric evinces a tendency to produce parrots who prattle excessively, flaunting their ability without thoroughly subjecting their words to the considerations of reason. In forgoing "weight," moreover, the humanist stylists rob speech of its meaningful force, hollowing out language to its bare forms and thus reducing their work to a chorus of insubstantial "copies."

As Bacon says, while humanist schoolmasters in England such as Car and Ascham did "almost diefie Cicero," Erasmus took "the occasion to make the scoffing Eccho; *Decem annos consumpsi in legendo Cicerone*: and the Eccho answered in Greeke, *One; Asine*" (sig. E3v). Bacon is paraphrasing one of Erasmus's *Colloquia* titled "Echo," wherein a youth attempts to discuss his studies with an echo, only to be mocked by his own words. The youth attempts to defend his learning from the hostile echo by saying "*Decem annos consumpsi in legendo Cicerone*" – "I have spent ten years studying Cicero" – and the echo mangles "*Cicerone*" to produce the Greek word *óne*, or in Latin, *asine,* "ass."[62] Though Erasmus means to suggest that one cannot learn by reading Cicero alone, Bacon's resituation of the joke in his complaints about

[61] Francis Bacon, *Of the proficience and aduancement of learning* (London: Thomas Purfoot and Thomas Creede, 1605).
[62] In untangling this unusual allusion I am indebted to Wayne A. Rebhorn's *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000), 267n43.

excessive, insubstantial copying implies that the echo, here responding to Erasmus himself rather than the youth of the dialogue, already has one up on the humanists. As the multilingual punning of the echo suggests, language slips out of humanism's control as words change only slightly while meanings multiply significantly. This linguistic playfulness or, if we are to follow Bacon's thinking, prattling excess, found its home in the humanist curriculum under the fraught banner of poetry, for which the echo, I suggest, serves as a useful metaphor.

First, however, I should clarify how humanism's sense of language – in both rhetoric and poetry – diverges from the Protestant valorization of it. When I claim that humanism could not dematerialize speech as Protestantism did, I do not mean to say that it did not rely on similar humoral or metaphysical theories as Protestantism, early modern medicine, or faculty psychology. Indeed, as Judith H. Anderson has argued, the materiality of language as situation inspirations and exhalations was often a given in the Renaissance, and in humanism in particular.[63] But Protestant thinking emphasizes language and the voice's transparency or potential for transparency in contrast to other sensual and bodily functions, and it is this point of view that is categorically opposed to the humanist's position within the sprawl of the *copia*.

To put it another way, humanism falters when it brings to bear on language what Bolter and Grusin have called the logic of "immediacy," the act of "ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation."[64] When Gerbier argues that spoken words are "the very being, thoughts, conceptions, desires, inclinations, and the other Spirituall passions of him that speaketh," he is making a claim for the general immediacy of language based on how thought dematerializes the material components of speech. As Bolter and Grusin understand it, the logic

[63] Using Rabelais's parable from the frozen words, Anderson argues that in the Renaissance "human language has not only intelligible substance but material dimensions" (*Words That Matter: Linguistic Perception in Renaissance English* [Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996] 19). Her subject, however, primarily skews toward writing and print, while I intend to highlight more acutely the material conditions of speech itself.

[64] Bolter and Grusin, 11.

of immediacy is marked by "the belief in some necessary contact point between the medium and what it represents."[65] It is this immediacy – the idea that language necessarily functions as an index for the soul and its passions – that Protestantism makes crucial to its theology. Erasmus would also wish to adopt such a stance, perhaps agreeing with Bolter and Grusin that the immediate is "exciting, lively, and realistic," descriptors that recall his praise of effective rhetoric.[66] However, in the face of the *copia* and the stylistic excess Bacon decries, we see how humanism slides toward what Bolter and Grusin would call a hypermediated view of language: "If the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible."[67]

Humanism's rhetorical superabundance turns language potentially into all medium and no message, or sometimes – as in the case of Erasmus's punning echo – too many possible messages. Calling this tendency "the autonomy of style," Richard Halpern notes that while in post-Reformation England it "served limited functions of censorship" by untethering classical pagan words from their ideological content, it "posed the greater threat of the skeptical erosion of dominant values" precisely due to its tendency to empty all words of inherent or stable meaning. However, despite their potentially corrosive qualities, not rhetoric nor education but "*poetry* became the privileged sign of [the autonomy of style's] ideological danger."[68] As Halpern explains, "because it is fictional, and idle," poetry's use of language makes undeniable the "discomfiting notion that elocution has no fundamental allegiance with what is serious or true."[69] The potential for language to become hypermediate and to "acknowledge multiple acts of

[65] Bolter and Grusin, 30.
[66] Bolter and Grusin, 29.
[67] Bolter and Grusin, 34.
[68] Halpern, 51, original emphasis.
[69] Halpern, 53.

representation" aligns with the excess of "tropes and figures" Bacon notes in the humanistic writing of the sixteenth century, and Bacon gives this unseemly proliferation of words and meanings form in his play on Cicero's words via the figure of the echo. Excess threatens to rob speech of the "weight of matter" and turn it into mere prattling, a problem which early modern poets treated with serious concern.

Poetry and echoes

That there was strong antipoetic sentiment in early modern England is, of course, a commonplace.[70] Sir Philip Sidney's defense of poetry meets the challenge of the art's notorious waywardness by famously claiming that the poet "doth in effect grow another nature … freely ranging in the zodiac of his own wit."[71] Sidney attempts to honor the creative power of the imagination by likening it to the creative power of God, who "made man to his own likeness," and "in nothing [man] sheweth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth."[72] This is uplifting language, including a gesture toward the creative power supposedly shared by God and man through the link of language, or "divine breath." However, poetic imaginings also provide "no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will

[70] For an overview of how several major poets of the period, including Sidney, responded to such sentiment and incorporated it into their own poetic projects, see Peter C. Herman, *Squitter-wits and Muse-haters: Spenser, Sidney, Milton, and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment (*Detroit: Wayne State, UP, 1996). Also of note is Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). In addition to antipoetical philosophical traditions handed down by Plato and the antitheatricalists of his time, Sidney must defend poesy against a strong social prejudice that fiction was an idle pastime. For a more in-depth view of this point, see Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), especially Chapter 3.

[71] Philip Sidney, "The Defense of Poesy" in *The Renaissance in England*, eds. H.E. Rollins and H. Baker (Boston: Heath, 1954) 607.

[72] Sidney, 608.

keepeth us from reaching unto it."[73] In his ability to "grow … another nature," the poet reproduces in miniature the deity's act of creation, but the poetic product is troubling insofar as humanity's "infected will" bars one from the actualization of a moral perfection that can only be imagined. To Sidney this strengthens rather than weakens the case for poetry, since a world of pure invention cannot be held at fault for its ipso facto falsity; as Sidney says, "the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth."[74] In Sidney's view, poetry results in a parallel imagined world, an unreality that is both better than known reality and fundamentally impossible to achieve. Because realization of poetry's "golden" world in our "brazen" one is impossible,[75] Sidney dodges the charge of poetry's untruthfulness by basically claiming that poetry does not and cannot make claims about what is true in any empirical sense.[76]

For Sidney, the language of poetry is not one that carries any straightforward message, but instead confronts the reader with "many mysteries … which of purpose were written darkly lest by prophane wits [poetry] should be abused[.]"[77] Its excess and apparent inutility, therefore, become its strengths rather than its weaknesses. But Sidney admits that due to its "sweet, charming force, [poetry] can do more hurt then any other army of words,"[78] and this threat is never fully expunged, even when Sidney places the burden upon the abuser of poetry rather than poetry itself. Indeed, the search for particular meaning where there ostensibly is none might very well be the core pleasure of the poetic exercise, as Sidney himself reveals in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. At the end of the second book, King Basilius asks the shepherd Lamon to

[73] Sidney, 608.
[74] Sidney, 617.
[75] Sidney, 607.
[76] Sidney explains that historians, astronomers, geometers, musicians, philosophers, and various other specialists devote their resources to studying the world as it is and discerning the patterns of Nature within it, as opposed to growing a new nature (607).
[77] Sidney, 624.
[78] Sidney, 618.

entertain his melancholy mistress Zelmane with the performance of some songs. First, Lamon performs a mournful poetic dialogue "with great cunning, varying his voice according to the diuersitie of the persons," in imitation of the absent characters Strephon and Klaius.[79] When finished, the narrator tells us, "[s]o wel did Lamons voice expresse the passio[n]s of those shepheards, that all the Princely beholders were striken in a silent co[n]sideration of them; indeed euery one making, that he heard of another the bala[n]ce of his own troubles."

The song of the absent shepherds moves the audience to a state of wonder, and most curiously, produces an effect of imaginative identification or projection, the sense for each listener "that he heard of another the balance of his own troubles." Basilius asks for another song, which Lamon supplies, but this time the dialogue is not between two absent shepherds but "an Eclogue betwixt himself and the *Echo*[.]" As the narrator explains, by "framing his voice in those deserte places, as what words he would haue the *Echo* replie, vnto those he would singe higher then the rest," and in this way Lamon "kindly framed a disputation betwixt himselfe and it." The following poem, which shows up in only a slightly different context in the *Old Arcadia*, is a well-known entry in the English tradition of the "echo poem," in which a speaker, usually a shepherd in a pastoral scene, carries on an interlocution with an echo over the issue of an unrequited love.[80] The chief formal characteristic of these poems is, of course, the echo itself, which repeats back to the speaker parts of their original speech, though distorted by implied reverberation in order to take on a new meaning. For instance, when Lamon calls out "*O I doo*

[79] All citations from *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (1590),* transcribed by Risa Bear. *Renascence Editions*. October 2003. < http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/arcadia1.html >

[80] To date the most extensive study of the echo poem on its own terms remains *The Echo-Device in Literature* by Eldridge Colby (New York: The New York Public Library, 1920). As he explains, the poems broadly "all deal with disappointment and that disappointment has often brought about a distinctively attitude on the subject of women in general or a woman in particular" (22). To a lesser extent, John Hollander treats these same texts, but more in service of developing his poststructuralist theory of echo as an intertextual device. See *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

know what guest I doo meete: it is Echo," the echo replies with "T'is *Echo*" (3). Formally Sidney's poem is not particularly unusual, but its situation within the text is peculiar for what it suggests about poetry. As Lamon speaks with the echo, the poet's reliance on inert, nonhuman materials is foregrounded and made a part of the poetic performance as such.

Whereas before, Lamon impersonated actual people (other characters known to his audience), here the dialogue is only "betwixt himself and *Echo*." In both cases Lamon's entertainment demands his audience entertain a counterfactual. First, that he is both Strephon and Klaius, "varying his voice according to the diversity of the persons," but in the second case, the listener must buy into the illusion that Lamon is conversing with something that *cannot actually speak*, a product of his own voice and an alien physical environment. Echoes speak without reason or spirit, instead throwing back a distorted reflection of another's words – which, tellingly, Lamon's persona does not find all that flattering. Sidney's narration makes clear that the echo is an effect of Lamon's ingenuity. It is itself not a "person" or even a "character" in the romance; it is only a reverberation of Lamon's voice in "those deserte places" as "he would haue the *Echo* replie." Yet, similar to the odd projection and identification that accompanied Lamon's impersonations of Strephon and Klaius, the poem persuades the auditor to accept that the echo is providing actual responses to the initial speaker's lines, at least insofar as the speaker continues to respond to *it*. In Lamon's song, for instance, his speaker comes away more resolute to pursue his love, though he begins by asking the echo for advice about "*medicine*" for unrequired love, what he calls "*a paine that drawes me to death*" (6). As the dialogue progresses, Lamon's speaker becomes progressively more resentful of the echo's negative responses – eg, when the speaker calls his love "*so heau'nly a woman*" the echo punningly returns that she is "*A wo-man*" (37). By the end he abandons the echo in favor of continuing to pursue his love, despite its

apparent advice to the contrary. One is left with the impression that the echo has *done something* to or for the initial speaker, even though its nonhuman, uncomprehending mimicry should be speech without true content – that is, we have effectively witnessed an early modern dramatization of Searle's "Chinese room" problem, where two interlocutors carry on a full conversation despite one of them being ostensibly devoid of understanding.

Thus, the echo poem begs the reader to make something out of nothing, to find meaning in highly artificial and performative speech that, properly understood, is not speech at all. Jonathan Goldberg has argued that early modern poetry often fixates on and complicates the "idealizing proximity of the voice and self" by drawing attention to how "the textual relay … short-circuits and recirculates the voice" rather than providing "unmediated access" to the speaker's thoughts.[81] In Lamon's echo poem, the delay between what he speaks and what the echo returns dramatizes through a sonic fiction precisely what Goldberg sees as a textual phenomenon: the delayed echo distorts the speaker's voice, returning apparent commentary on the initial speech that further influences what is spoken next. Lamon's poem tracks a shift in the speaker's psychological state; through its iterations of call and return, the poem does not grant us "unmediated access" to the speaker's thoughts but nevertheless generates a sense of subjective complexity by staging for the reader someone who in turn appears to be "reading" the echo for or with us. As Laura Kolb has recently pointed out:

> Almost all echo poems seem to be at least in part about the readerly production of poetic texts, with echoic repetitions and alterations allegorizing the sonic and semantic processes of repetition, distortion, addition, and appropriation that mark reception. Because their speakers rarely anticipate the echo's response, these poems often seem to figure a situation in which an unintended, non-diegetic

[81] Jonathan Goldberg, *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Texts* (New York-London: Methuen, 1986) 12.

reader alters a text's sound and sense.[82]

In Anthony Munday's translation of Giacomo Affinati's moralist treatise "in praise of silence," the echo is called "a counterfetting Ape of the voyce of man" and is taken to represent the flatterer, who subsists by "imitating the actions and gestures of him whom he seeketh to flatter" (sig. G4v).[83] Like Erasmus's ape or Descartes' automata, the echo is an inexact replica, being speech devoid of body and reason; by making the echo represent a flatterer, furthermore, Affinati underscores how, like the opinions of a flatterer, what an echo speaks is not its own.

But to fully understand this moment in the *Arcadia* – unflattering as it is for Lamon's speaker – we should contrast it with the echo's second poetic life, distinct from but related to the acoustic virtuosity glimpsed in Sidney: the tradition stretching from Ovid to the humanist curriculum. This Echo, a "babling Nymph," is cursed by Juno so that when "hearing others talke, / By no meanes can restraine hir tongue but that it needs must walk" (3.443-4).[84] Added to that, she does not have "of hir selfe … powre to ginne to speake to any wight" (445). But it is made abundantly clear by Ovid that though Echo can only repeat the words of others, she is still possessed of an interiority, of wants and desires, and that her repurposing of words often allows her to express herself. As in the echo poem, Ovid's Echo repeats words spoken aloud, but with a twist that suggests what Gina Bloom calls a "vocal agency" and the ability to constitute "personhood through the words available to her."[85] When Narcissus asks, "Is there any bodie nie?" Echo replies "I" (3.474). And even when she does not change what Narcissus says, she changes the meaning, such as their next exchange when he commands her "And Come,"

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[82] Laura Kolb, "Stella's Voice: Echo and Collaboration in *Astrophil and Stella* 57 and 58," *Sidney Journal* 30, no. 1 (2012), 93.
[83] Giacomo Affinati, *The dumbe diuine speaker, or: Dumbe speaker of Diuinity A learned and excellent treatise, in praise of silence*, trans. A[nthony] M[unday, (London: R. Bradock, 1605).
[84] All citations from *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans. Arthur Golding, ed. John Frederick Nims (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2000).
[85] Bloom, 165.

meaning to reveal herself, and she replies "And Come," suggesting sexual coupling (3.476-7). Ovid's Echo, in other words, subsists solely in language's hypermediate capacity, its ability to mean multiple things at once.

The issue is not whether anyone actually hears her, but what happens when they do – Narcissus, of course, famously rejects her. But as Lynn Enterline has pointed out, Echo "reveals herself by piecing together the sounds made by others" just as her author, Ovid, recycles the histories and myths of Rome to forge a name for himself.[86] Notable also is Echo's eventual fate:

> Hir bodie pynes to skinne and bone, and waxeth wondrous bare.
> The bloud doth vanish into aure from out of all hir veynes,
> And nought is left but voyce and bones: the voyce yet still remains:
> Her bones they say were turnde to stones. From thence she lurking still
> In Woods, will never shewe hir head in field nor yet on hill.
> Yet is she heard of every man: it is hir only sound,
> And nothing else that doth remayne alive above the ground. (3.494-500)

On the one hand, this is ostensibly Echo's "death," and on the other, it is not a death in any final sense. Indeed, "nothing else … doth remayne alive" *but* her voice, which seems to have taken on a life of its own, an echoic undeath. Enterline suggests that while Ovid, in his ending address of the *Metamorphoses*, "pictures his own survival on his readers' lips," nevertheless "his own earlier story of the same circumstance stresses two problems … [that] even the most faithful, literal revoicing alters the original; and every 'original' utterance is … inhabited by an echo within."[87] In the Ovidian scene, the voice unexpectedly becomes the ultimate necromedium: it outlives the body, but the cost is that the imitative nature of discourse undermines any claims of pure autonomy, simultaneously introducing the possibility of distortion or interference at the scene of reception, and thus at the subsequent moment of imitative continuance.

[86] Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 56-57.
[87] Enterline, 58.

Echo's tragic end troubles any attempt to evacuate imitation – no matter how inaccurate, malformed, or even rote – of intent and agency. Though Sidney's eclogue makes no overt allusion to Ovid[88] it still exhibits this Ovidian crux about the nature of language, its tensions with the body, and in particular, about the nature of poetry. In Lamon's echo-poetic scene, Sidney suggests that artificial sound, even if it is merely a "counterfeit" of speech that is thrown back without sense or reason, *can be read as if* sense or reason informed it. Indeed, Sidney's poem pivots on the fact that the echo *seems not* to flatter Lamon's speaker, leaving the reader to observe through the dialogue a character who becomes "psychologized" precisely by *seemingly not hearing* what his words seem to say back. The echo is not a sounding board, but a distinct yet depersonalized entity produced by the poetic fiction.[89]

Furthermore, I would argue that this echoic entity – a speaker's words divorced of a tangible body, a simulated voice speaking without reason but potentially understood as doing so, an entity that "lives" only in a moment of contact with another, in a scene of reception and interpretation – becomes a way of conceptualizing the problem of poetic enterprise itself. If Lamon can call up an interlocutor from "deserte places" that, despite its lack of a soul or reason, seems to his auditors and readers to respond to his queries, he has made something from nothing. Like Sidney's idealized poet, he has grown "another nature" that is perceptible but at the same

[88] One might note that Narcissus's first lament when he realizes he cannot catch his reflection, however, exhibits many features of the pastoral echo poem – a thwarted lover's complaint to the natural world – though Echo herself does not return his cries even in distorted form. Nevertheless, he begins by addressing his surroundings and continues by lamenting the fact that his chosen object of desire avoids him.

[89] I am here indebted to Linda Charnes's idea of "*entification*." Charnes posits the term in a dual reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Stanislaw Lem's science fiction novel *Solaris*. Charnes uses entification to describe how the planet defies traditional notions of subject and object: "what has sentience without consciousness, what exercises agency without legible intentionality? With no discernable motivation, the Solarian ocean has an incomprehensible agenda that defies all existing logic systems" ("Extraordinary Renditions" in *Shakespeare after 9/11,* eds., Douglas A. Brooks, Matthew Biberman, Julia Reinhard Lupton [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011] 63). Charnes links this with the Island in *The Tempest*, suggesting that Prospero's magic arises not so much from his knowledge as a student of the liberal arts, but his *location*; like Solaris, the Island is a subjunctive space and an Entity where normal Western European logics of personhood and agency do not apply. I would add that the echo poses a similar limit to legibility and intentionality.

time curiously removed from the real world, formless and weightless. And as the text itself demonstrates, poetry's rhetorical excess overflows and feeds into the "real" world, beyond even the speaker of Lamon's ecologue and back into the scene he inhabits: the narrator tells us that "*After this well placed Echo, other shepheards were offring themselues to haue continued the sports*[.]" Though Basilius now calls the night to an end, Lamon's performance has already inspired a new legion of echoing shepherd-poets. Poetic performance speedily results in an excess of imitative vocal and linguistic generation. This issue pertains especially, we will now see, in the early modern theater, where many citizens of London would have heard poetry recited, and the issue to what degree or in what way the non-events portrayed on the "deserte place" of the stage were echoed by the audience witnessing them was a point of no small concern.

The theatrical necromedium

Protestant iconoclasm turned away from inert partial objects of and for the body and decried the anthropomorphism and materialism of idols, looking to the voice as a vector for divine contact. As the body proved an unreliable medium, language was held up as uniquely suited to overcoming bodily distractions. Humanism, meanwhile, also upheld language as an index for a successful education and the triumph of reason, but the practice of *imitatio* raised the question of precisely where the line was drawn between learning and irrational mimicry. Furthermore, in its attention to pleasures both bodily and rhetorical, humanism emphasized language as a hypermediate instrument in a way that complicated its relationship to truth and meaning. Poetry became the privileged site of rhetorical excess, and the echo can be taken as a

figure through which humanism's rhetorical anxieties find their way into scenes of poetic production and reception.

As a disembodied voice, the echo's estrangement of speech provides an analogue for how poetry emphasizes the gaps between the writer, what is written, and what is read. These estrangements, moreover, carried over into the theater, where poetry was transformed into drama, but still troublingly related to both to Protestant thinking on the voice and idolatry, and on humanism's plea for the delight and instruction of rhetoric. In line with Bosola's critique of cosmeticism, the early modern stage presented bodies that both seemed human but were, like idols, only simulations, "images" of humans engaged in dynamically represented plots that required auditors to track the development of meaning through the interactions of various characters speaking in verse and prose.[90] Nowhere are these problems enunciated more clearly than antitheatrical tracts. For instance, Philip Stubbes in *The Anatomie of Abuses* addresses "you masking Players, you painted sepulchres, you doble dealing ambodexters" (sig. LVr).[91] condensing nicely the anxieties thus far outlined: the "masking Players" impersonate what they are not, earning them the title of "painted sepulchres," a phrase whose biblical resonances evoke not only the deceptive and theatrical cosmeticism decried by Bosola, but the bygone age of

[90] Kent Cartwright claims that "the excitement of the Tudor stage derives partly from a humanist dramaturgy that embroils feelings and emotions in the creation of meaning" (*Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* [1999:repr., Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004] [1). Joel Altman, meanwhile, insists that Shakespeare and his contemporaries' training in humanist rhetoric – which required students to assume personae in order to fashion and often perform persuasive speeches in varying and sometimes opposing situations – resulted in a unique method of understanding one's place in the world as, in effect, radically discontinuous and deconstructive. In *The Tudor Play of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) Altman argues rhetorical play-acting and the space of the theater function as modes where "ideas and feelings not always accessible or expressible in the life of a hierarchical Christian society" can be inhabited or experienced (6). From the point of view of the antitheatrical polemicists, such vibrant imaginative tendencies felt part and parcel of idolatry; the connections drawn between the "idols" of the Catholic church and the "images" of the stage is traced aptly by Michael O'Connell in *The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theater in Early-Modern England* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000) esp. 14-35.

[91] Phillip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses* (London: John Kingston, 1583).
< http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99853175>

Catholic statuary; finally, the "doble dealing ambodexters" indicates a suspicion of theatrical language, suggesting how players can say one thing and intend another.

In giving the poetic fiction a temporary, yet visible form, the body's potential as a medium is acutely emphasized – through acting, gesture, costuming, and make-up it is rendered hypermediate *along with* the poetic language the players speak. "An Excellent Actor," an addition to the 1615 reprinting to Thomas Overbury's *Characters* commonly believed to be written by John Webster, points to such a hypermediate conception of the player: "Hee addes grace to the Poets labours: for what in the Poet is but ditty, in him is both ditty and musicke" (sig. M2v).[92] The actor's work is here conceived as an expansion of media effects, music added to lyrics. Henry S. Turner claims that "At the heart of the antitheatrical challenge lay a staggering question: what does it mean to make life, and especially forms of life that depart from a normative category of the 'human' understood to be the measure of all living things?"[93] As Turner understands it, the trouble the cross-dressing stage posed for gender stabbed directly into the heart of how early modern England constructed a "human" identity; I would like to press this assertion further by claiming the very notion of constructing a human identity belies the artifice of humanity-as-such by troubling boundaries between "real" and "unreal" bodies.

To return to the earlier scene from *The Duchess of Malfi*: Bosola finds nothing in "this outward form of man / To be beloved," for, as in the case of monstrous births, "Man stands amazed to see his deformity / In any other creature but himself" (2.1.50, 57-58). Though he speaks not within the realms of religion or education, I have demonstrated that the question of how one was to encounter one's own form "in any creature but" oneself preoccupied early

[92] Thomas Overbury, *Sir Thomas Ouerburie his wife with new elegies vpon his (now knowne) vntimely death* , London: Edward Griffin, 1616. < http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:20234643>

[93] Henry S. Turner, *Shakespeare's Double-Helix* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008) 10.

modernity on several levels, including the witnessing of simulated persons and events in the theater. Indeed, perhaps moreso than poetry alone, the stage complicates the relationship between what is presumed as reality or fiction, or in other words, the relationship between life and art. The antitheatrical argument, on the one hand, proposes that stage-plays represent temporary appearances and a multiplicity of meanings – this renders stage-plays dangerous, because they are therefore untrue and therefore unreal. But on the other hand, that which appears to happen on stage seems to have an uncanny capacity to *become* real as actions, behaviors, and attitudes are supposedly mimicked by the audience.

Bosola's diatribe on bodies and makeup turns this argument inside out, for while it grants the unreality of the hypermediate cosmetics, removing them unearths not a comforting and stable form safe from performance, but a "rotten and dead body," that produces "delight" only when we "hide it in rich tissue" (2.1.62-63). In other words, Bosola reveals that to strip life of art means only to notice a gross body whose "deformity" threatens to become indistinguishable from other animal bodies; the "rich tissue" is precisely what holds the body together, granting humanity both its coherence and its exceptionalism. Thus, in decrying the Old Woman's cosmetics, he ironically disavows the one thing that keeps the body's parts pinned together.

Turning once more to Thacker's idea of the human body's "technicity from within," we can conceptualize the body not as a singular entity that must be reproductively self-identical, but an effect of the assemblage of biological and material process that all mediate in their own turn. In Bosola's idiom the human body only becomes legible in the addition or conspicuous subtraction of its "rich tissue" – we are left either with the necromedium of the body itself, or the necromedia that adorn it, since all appurtenances fundamentally distract from and point back to the inevitably decadent "body beneath." Hence, the truth of Bosola's meditation lies not in

showing the degeneracy of life without art, but rather the necessity of a certain level of artifice at the core of what is recognized (or naturalized) as human life.[94] Certainly "An Excellent Actor" demonstrates a belief in such a performative life: "what wee see him personate, wee thinke truely done before vs," writes Webster, proving the antitheatricalists' greatest fears that when something *seems* to happen on stage, it truly *does happen* ("wee thinke") for the audience (sig. M2v). *The Duchess of Malfi*'s primary mode of action here is to survey all of the necromediating tendencies I've so far outlined – in bodies, simulacra, language, art and artifice – and reveal the queasy mixtures of life and death that can be glimpsed in their constellation. In this play, Webster positions the theater as a space filled with an apparitional presence that, from a certain point of view, cannot possibly be the vessel of meaning – but something nevertheless seems to mean *something*.

The Duchess of Malfi's "tedious theater"

The Duchess of Malfi, under Webster's pen, has no name apart from the title of the play she inhabits. During her imprisonment, she claims to "account this world a tedious theater" in which she "play[s] a part against [her] will" (4.1.81-82). Her barb is echoed later, when Bosola remarks upon Antonio's accidental death that he has "often seen" such strange things "in a play" (5.5.95-96). These two lines, coming late as they do, are in fact clear pronouncements of an odd metatextuality that has characterized the play from the start. As Arden editor Leah S. Marcus says, the play's language is "filled with echoes,"[95] as characters repeat phrases, words, and images used earlier. Webster also liberally peppers their speech with well-known adages, a move

[94] I here am indebted Linda Charnes's claim that "in the Renaissance, drama is the dominant mode in which the provisional, performative, and contingent nature of subjectivity can literally be embodied" (*Notorious Identity*, [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993] 9).
[95] Marcus, "Introduction," 42.

some commentators have called "overly-derivative."[96] R.W. Dent, whose *John Webster's Borrowing* to date remains the most exhaustive Websterian source-study, avers in his own introduction that Webster was "the dramatist perhaps second only to Shakespeare among writers of English tragedy, [and] certainly second to none in his dependence upon sources."[97] But as the Duchess's and Bosola's remarks make clear, the play's citationality transcends mere allusiveness or simple imitation, since here these two characters point not so much outside their situation to other texts as they do brush up along their own performative boundaries, each finding themselves hemmed in by a theater they can hardly believe exists. Webster's characters draw attention to the work of artifice that contains them, the stage itself, and thereby suggest their own artificiality – yet they are not given over entirely to understanding *themselves* as mere constructs. Indeed, as Bosola's early diatribe on cosmetics indicate, a number of the moments in the play concern precisely how to distinguish a "real" person from a reified representation.

As the conflation of title and character might suggest, and as Bosola's anti-cosmetic misogyny foreshadows, it is the person of the Duchess who most explicitly bears the brunt of the play's uneasy relationship with its own art. In the first act, Antonio describes her to Delio in terms both iconoclastic and cosmetic: "Let all sweet ladies break their flattering glass / and dress themselves in her" (1.2.122-3). Exemplary of her sex, the Duchess supposedly surpasses and nullifies all models for feminine imitation; yet in doing so, she becomes the ultimate model. When Delio chides him for hyperbole, Antonio makes the comparison more explicit, saying he will "case the picture up" (l.125), suggesting that in describing the Duchess he is showing Delio a portrait miniature that he puts away only reluctantly. It is precisely this sort of pseudo-idolatrous inclination the Duchess chastises Antonio for during her proposal. She pleads for him

[96] Marcus, 48.
[97] R.W. Dent, *John Webster's Borrowing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960) 3.

to "[m]ake not your heart so dead a piece of flesh / To fear more than love me" – for, as she insists, she "is flesh and blood" and "not the figure cut in alabaster" placed outside her late husband's tomb (ll.361-65).

The ensuing marriage shuns all "vain ceremony" (l.366): the Duchess persuades Antonio to exchange vows with her in the presence of Cariola, the servant's observation binding the oath. As the Duchess explains, "lawyers say a contract in a chamber / *Per verbi presenti* is absolute marriage" (ll.385-6). The deed done, the Duchess insists the ecclesiastical ceremony could not "build faster" a union, and that "'tis the church / That must echo this" (ll.397-9). While this may seem to belie no small deal of Protestant sympathy, especially in the austere nature of the proceedings, such a reading is troubled by Antonio's brief but notable fall into a near idolatrous stupor. Despite her insistence that she is not a statue, the Duchess sees she threatens to render Antonio's heart a "dead piece of flesh" in his overawed admiration of her, so much so that her language suggests that he himself has become petrified: "Awake, awake, man!" she cries, urging him from his amazement. The Duchess continually asserts that she lives, breathes, and speaks, and that for this reason she is not a mere work of artifice – but the arc of the play will eventually suggest these possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

Even during his earlier encomium Antonio emphasizes the Duchess's living graces, noting especially how "her discourse … is so full of rapture" that "[w]hen she doth end her speech," one would "wish in wonder / She held it less vainglory to talk much / Than your penance to hear her" (ll.108-12). *Per verbi presenti*, even the Duchess's normal speech wreaks a suspiciously enchanting "wonder" on her future husband, not to mention her "sweet countenance" that "speaketh so divine a continence / As cuts off all lascivious and vain hope" (ll.116-18). Like the "common fountain" of the virtuous French prince's court, from which

"flow / Pure silver drops in general" (1.1.10-12), Antonio takes the Duchess's body as both radiant and mediatory, to the effect that even her face "speaketh" of a "divine" chastity. Whether or not this is only Antonio's infatuation making itself known is beside the point when we consider the other characters' overt preoccupation with the Duchess's mediatory body. Ferdinand's incestuous fixation on her "darkest actions" and her "privatest thoughts" (1.2.231-32), for example, suggests not so much Antonio's Petrarchan idolatry as her brother's sense of a darker interiority that will, in time, "come to light" (l.233). Parallel to this is Bosola's "trick" with the dung ripened apricots to discern the cause of why the Duchess "pukes, [her] stomach seethes, / The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue," and so on (2.1.75, 69-71). Coming short on the heels of his meditation against embodiment and cosmetics, Bosola's description of the symptoms of the Duchess's pregnancy repeat and relocate his invocation of bodily distemper onto another female corpus that is to be read not only by its material fluctuations and discolorations but even her manner of dress ("contrary to our Italian fashion / [She w]ears a loose-bodied gown" [ll.73-74]). Like the actor's body, the body read as female is understood to be significantly hypermediate, always already invoking and obscuring a multiplicity of potential meanings.[98] Further, the misogynist bent of Bosola's meditation and the other characters' obsessions with the Duchess's secrets – along fact that it is a boy actor portraying her – make the performance of femininity the foremost extra-theatrical example of art-in-life. However, the female body also becomes in some sense *more* than its construction: in addition to its artifice,

[98] Including perhaps, the boy actor 'beneath' playing the part of the Duchess, and further metatheatrically emphasizing the play's pure dissimulation of a supposedly female body. While this may seem like a tired rehearsal of the Lacanian maxim that woman is the symptom of man, a fantasy object to be read and reread, I see in the Duchess's hypermediacy – especially as it metastasizes later in the play – what Rosi Braidotti has called a subversion through a "pure dislocation[] of identit[y] via the perversion of standardized patterns of sexualized, racialized and naturalized interaction" (*The Posthuman* (Malden: Polity, 2013) 99). I pursue this connection further below in n100.

there is something inherently 'beyond' mere appearances, a horrific site of animal generation (for Bosola) or a threatening incestuous obsession (for Ferdinand).

Indeed, Ferdinand's obsession with his sister turns her into, in his apprehension, "a bare name / And no essential thing" (3.2.73-74). His inability to pin her down, to "cas[e]" her "up like a holy relic" (l.137) not only recalls Antonio's blazon from the first act, it suggests that Ferdinand's horror is of a body that "means" so much, it threatens to mean nothing at all. His solution is to cast the Duchess in a play of his own devising.[99] Presenting her with the wax figures of her dead family, Bosola tells her that she now knows "directly that they are dead" (4.1.57), performing the authoritative chorus in Ferdinand's plot to "plague[]" her "in art" (l.109). The artificial bodies of the wax figures, with Bosola's gloss, present their meaning "directly," and in deceiving his sister into taking them for "true substantial bodies," (l.113), the Duke hopes to lead her to madness and despair. "That body of hers," he explains to the reluctant Bosola, "While that my blood ran pure in't, was more worth / Than that which thou wouldst comfort, called a soul" (ll.118-120). The "essential thing" that Ferdinand earlier suggested had disappeared from the Duchess is here revealed to be his own "blood" coursing through her, subordinating even her potential worth as a "soul" to his perverse need to strip her of mediatory agency and read categorically his sister as an extension of himself.

Yet Ferdinand's strategy of using art to fix meaning proves disastrous for all involved. As Cariola describes the Duchess, she becomes "[l]ike to [her] picture in the gallery: A deal of life in show, but none in practice" (4.2.30-31). Sapped of strength by her tortures, the Duchess seems on the verge of becoming both the lifeless artifact her brother hopes she would be, as well as a horrific version of the transcendent object Antonio nearly made of her: "like some reverend

[99] As Inga-Stina Ekeblad observed, Ferdinand's torture of the Duchess takes the form of a hellish wedding masque. See "The Impure Art of John Webster," *Review of English Studies*, 9 (1958), 253–67.

monument / Whose ruins are even pitied" (ll.32-33). But when Bosola enters, disguised as a tomb-maker, she famously claims "I am the Duchess of Malfi still" (ll.137).[100] Unlike her earlier discussion with Antonio, here the Duchess seems to be in no hurry to distinguish between herself and the dead statuary others would turn her into. This is not a capitulation to the script her brother has written for her; rather, the embrace of her title (and Webster's title) suggests an assertion of self that, in its austerity, rejects what Ferdinand or others would claim of her while also owning their central preoccupation: what, exactly, *is* the Duchess of Malfi?

She is in fact soon dead, or so it would seem, but even this does not pin her down in the world of the play. As she says of the many doors that lead to death, "[t]hey go on such strange geometrical hinges, / You may open them both ways" (ll.213-214).[101] And indeed, though it has no life "in practice," the moment Ferdinand glimpses her body it appears to emanate an unsettling power that assaults his vision: "Cover her face. Mine eyes dazzle" (l.254).[102]

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[100] In addition to the provisional and contingent aspects of identity outlined by Charnes in *Notorious Identity*, the Duchess as a performing (and, if we recall the boy actor beneath her loose gown, *performed*) woman aligns with the "new hystericism" Charnes sees in the "mimetic disrespect" exemplified by Shakespeare's Cleopatra: a woman who "poach[es]" authority's symbolic structures "while refusing to reside within its boundaries" (152). Furthermore, Braidotti writes of the feminine cyborgs and emotionless femme fatales that populate modernist cinema, they represent a gendered fusion of "technological artefact and mechanic 'other'" and thus these works "locate the issue of artistic practice at the core of industrialized modernity" (*The Posthuman* 105, 107). In the fusion of industrialized machines and the construction of female bodies, "[f]emale sexuality is inscribed in this inhuman script as a threat but also as an irresistible attraction: techno-Eves of multiple temptations, pointing the way to unsettling futures" (107). In addition to the plot of the play and the various obsessions over the Duchess's character and body, I would borrow this point to suggest that Webster's play effects much the same result by fusing female identity not with industrialized machinery, but with new media of theatrical technology as such, in order to consolidate similar anxieties about the potential and reality of artistic practice. Here, the Duchess poaches not only her title as royalty but the title of the play itself, demonstrating the uncanny knack for artifice to outstrip its instrumental capacities.

[101] Jill Philips Ingram links Websterian tragedy and early modern *Ars moriendi* in her essay, "'Noble Lie': Casuistry and Machiavellianism in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 31:1 (Summer 2005), 135–60. Todd Borlik in "'Greek is Turned Turk': Catholic Nostalgia in *The Duchess of Malfi*" (in *The Duchess of Malfi: A Criticial Guide,* ed. Christina Luckyj [New York: Continuum 2011] 136-152) follows her lead to chart how Webster's drama evinces distrust of both Catholic and Protestant arts of dying, creating a "secular *ars moriendi"* in the performative space of the theater (149).

[102] Ellen MacKay notes the bodily symptoms of Ferdinand as paralleling the plague in her study of "the pollution of performance." MacKay's argument anticipates my own in several ways, particularly in her sense of the play's concern with "art's primer, realer, and untimely presence" as opposed to "human life and its neat progression."

Ferdinand's abrupt descent into madness distracts him from seeing his own device turned against its designer: like the waxworks that "directly" communicated the false deaths of the Duchess's family with the intent to drive her despair, the Duchess herself seems not to have been a true, substantial corpse at all. Within some hundred lines she slips back through the strangely hinged door of death: "She stirs! Here's life!" cries Bosola, urging her to "Return, fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine out of this sensible hell" (ll.330-332).

In his moment of regret Bosola turns her into a personal saint, affirming her mediatory power. And after the Duchess (again) breathes her last, he vows to "execute [her] last will," delivering her body for proper burial rites before seeking out Antonio to help him against her brothers. She is the Duchess of Malfi, still, and though her body is gone her presence lingers over the final act. Nowhere is this made clearer than when Delio and Antonio approach the Cardinal's fortress, built over "the ruins of an ancient abbey" that is host to what Delio calls

> …the best echo you ever heard –
> So hollow and so dismal, and withal
> So plain in the distinction of our words
> That many have supposed it is a spirit
> That answers. (5.3.5-9).

In his study on the topic, Eldridge Colby called this scene "the most dignified and most serious use of the echo-device in all of English literature," finding it both powerful and anomalous in that no prior writers "made the interlocutor so clearly conscious of the fact they were talking to an echo."[103] Indeed, Delio and Antonio are "caught" by the echo for a few lines before Delio explains "You may make it / A huntsman or a falconer, a musician / Or a thing of sorrow" (ll.22-24). Despite the copiousness of the echo's potential, Antonio says the latter choice suits it best,

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But whereas MacKay's argument is primarily concerned with the early modern English stage's relationship to its Medieval and Catholic forebears, blurring the temporal divides the Reformation and Renaissance would cleave open (*Persecution, Plague, and Fire,* 124), I am not so much interested in the time past, as it were, as I am interested in the time to come: for the Duchess, I argue, art is not simply life's aftereffect, but its precondition.

[103] Colby, 44.

noting that it is "very like my wife's voice," which the echo seems to affirm: "I, wife's voice" (l.26). After the Duchess's death in the previous act, Webster appears to consciously invoke the echo poem's conceit of the lost love. Likewise, the echo recontextualizes Antonio's speech, appearing to advise him to "fly [his] fate," so that Delio remarks that "[t]he dead stones seem to have pity on you / And give you good counsel" (ll.34-36). Thus, like Lamon's speaker in Sidney's *Arcadia*, the Echo-Duchess supplies advice that its interlocutor refuses to heed; as Antonio says, "I will not talk with thee, / For thou art a dead thing" (ll.37-38).

Just as Ferdinand feared his sister was "a bare name / And no essential thing" (3.2.73-74), Antonio names the echo as his wife and then refuses to see it as such, disavowing it as a "dead thing," though he does not yet know his wife is indeed dead. In a charitable reading, he sees the echo as a version of Searle's "Chinese room," returning apparent sense but with no interiority and, hence, no validity. He finds nothing to like about this voice as it rebounds from the dead stones of the "ancient ruins" he professes to "love" (l.9). As the Duchess foretold in the first act, the church's walls echo the words spoken by her and her husband, *per verbi presenti*, but in a moment of disunion.

The scene illustrates perfectly what Marcel O'Gorman calls "miscommunication networks," that is, "communication networks created by a dysfunctional use of media technologies."[104] As he says, media often reveal their necromediate aspect in moments of failure, when their purported distraction from finitude fails to launch; this scene's setting in a desolated abbey (the ruins of Catholicism's necromedia empire) with a dialogue between two speakers, one of whom refuses to listen to the other, provides such a tableau. Like the immobile statues that surely once populated the decrepit abbey, like the corpses Antonio suspects lie in tombs beneath his feet, or like the chattering parrot that speaks without understanding, the echo has every

[104] O'Gorman, 41.

reason to be "dead" and yet, nevertheless, exerts no little active force. Indeed, as Gina Bloom has argued, "the echo problematizes a binary between expressive *voice* and mere *sound*" because "it throws into question one of the central ways in which human beings in this period (and perhaps in our own) defined themselves against animals and objects."[105] Antonio's voice is not his own, nor does it belong wholly to the echo that returns it to him. Webster's play thus evokes Ovid's Echo, wasting away as her bones slowly turn to stones: the play sublimates its titular Duchess into an uncanny vocal afterlife that thwarts her brothers' attempts to end their exegesis of her vanishing body. But also like Echo, the Duchess's distillation into an imitative voice leaves her dependent on an interlocutor's willingness to act *as if* her presence informs the words they hear.

Though Delio has, perhaps half-jokingly, said the echo gave Antonio good counsel, he does not press his friend to follow it. Indeed, when Antonio abruptly says he "marked not one repetition of the echo" until "on the sudden a clear light / Presented me a face folded in sorrow," Delio assures him that it was "[y]our fancy, merely" (ll.42-45). The imagined face – brushed away almost as soon as it is mentioned – is the one moment Antonio seems to nearly fall into the same abyss as Ferdinand and the Cardinal have in the wake of their sister's murder. For in his guilt the Duke has succumbed to his madness, falling into a fight with his own shadow ("Stay it! Let it not haunt me" [5.2.32]) while the Cardinal, more composed but no less uneasy, "look[s] into the fishponds in [his] garden" and believes he "see[s] a thing armed with a rake / That seems to strike at [him]" (5.4.5-7). Both brothers together become Narcissus to the Duchess's Echo; as Ovid describes the moment when the beautiful youth leaned over a pool to "staunch his thirst," he "chaunst to spie the Image of his face, / The which he did immediately with fervent love embrace," for there "[h]e thinks the shadows that he sees, to be a lively boddie" (3.520-522). Like Narcissus, they are consumed by what they think they see, and where they once angled to

[105] Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, 161.

discern what truths the Duchess's body held, they now only shrink from the unfriendly reflections of their own forms.

Antonio, turning away from the face Delio has told him is only his fancy, decides he will "be out of this ague, / For to live thus is not indeed to live. / It is a mockery and abuse of life" (5.3.45-47). So, though ostensibly casting away melancholy contemplation for his final stand against the Aragonian brothers, in leaving his "ague" Antonio is also refusing to let what the disembodied echo might be saying – indeed, what he might be perilously close to *seeing* – overtake him. Like the idolater worshipping a false image, to see and hear things where there is rightly only a "dead thing" is "not indeed to live;" it is, like the verbally perverse echo itself, "a mockery and abuse of life." But the most unusual trick of this scene is that, even as Antonio denies he hears the warnings, knowing as he does that he speaks only with an echo and not the Duchess herself, the audience is afforded no such luxury.

In Sidney's poem, Lamon's echoic eclogue incited his audience to enthusiastic praise, ready to continue the pastoral games long into the night. In *Malfi*, however, the echo excites the imaginations not of a diegetic audience, but the audience *in the theater watching the play*. The scene is written so that, in performance, its full blow lands on the spectator or auditor. Antonio's trembling ague is displaced onto the audience because they have no choice but to hear the voice's warnings. They cannot so easily forget the face Antonio only imagines he has seen, for if it *is* the Duchess speaking, then the warnings do indeed come from a "dead thing." The meaning of the echo's speech lands not with the other characters, but only in the body of the attentive audience member, who apprehends what the characters onstage cannot: whether or not this is an echo or a ghost, *what it is saying is entirely true.* Webster's theater thus exploits a humanistic blindspot: whereas early modern humanism would have it that texts speak in the comforting,

identifiable voices of classical forefathers, presenting themselves for instruction and imitation, this echo – a version of the Duchess of Malfi whose name still titles the play from which it emanates – is an obscurer thing. Rather than leading the audience to a lesson or a truth, the echo demonstrates an abject failure of communication, perhaps an impossibility of communication, between "living" and "dead" things. Yet because the echo nevertheless leads the audience to do what Antonio will not and make something out of nothing, they become complicit in its "abuse and mockery of life" and the play's necromediated enterprise.

But we should note "abuse and mockery" are Antonio's words, and ones he uses to explicitly reject the echo and its message. Bosola will do much the same when, at the moment of his death, he says "[w]e are only like dead walls or vaulted graves / That, ruined, yields no echo" (5.5.95-96). Death is final, and ruin and echo play no part in our afterlives. A similar fantasy of discontinuance is expressed by Delio in the play's final lines, when he urges the installation of the Duchess's oldest son to "make noble use / Of this great ruin" in the hope that

> These wretched, eminent things
> Leave no more fame behind 'em than should one
> Fall in a frost and leave his print in snow –
> As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts
> Both form and matter. (ll.108-15)

In the case of the Duchess herself, at least, Bosola's claim about echoes is patently wrong; no matter what noble use we wish to put to ruins, the play suggests, we might not recognize what they have to tell us. And as for Delio's wish, the dissipation of both "form and matter" was not enough to end the tragic life of Ovid's Echo, as her voice outlasted both. And if Antonio's encounter by the ruined abbey is any indication, the same might be said of the Duchess of Malfi, who seems no longer to be any essential thing but remains a name on the lips of the characters and the audience.

Finally, then, Webster's echo anticipates a phantom remnant of a performance. The Duchess, imprisoned and close to despair, wonders if the "greatest torture souls feel in hell" is that "they must live and cannot die" (4.1.68-69). When Bosola reminds her of her Christianity, she flippantly asks if he would, upon meeting a man killed on the wheel, "[e]ntreat him live, / To be executed again" (ll.79-80). Here Webster points to the "life" of his Duchess as she is performed, time and again, on the stage. But rather than suggesting her echoic afterlife is a result of her despair, I would like to consider that her final escape from the "tedious theater" (l.81) in which she is trapped is to *become that theater*, embracing her role in the theatrical necromedium, poised between life and death. Just as the Duchess, in the end, does not distinguish between herself and funerary monuments, the audience is persuaded not to distinguish between her and her impossible, theatrical echo.

This is not to say such a bargain is wholly without its diabolical overtones, as Webster's play is freighted with the material detritus of what an early modern Protestant audience would understand as the darkened past of Catholic devilry.[106] But perhaps the Duchess's echoic afterlife is akin to what Eugene Thacker has called "haunted media," a term he uses for media objects used in "non-normative ways," fleshing out their latent possibilities. His example is spirit photography in the nineteenth century, which exemplifies "a temporal disjunction … between a contemporary artifact" and a supposedly more primitive or historical "adjacent field such as religion and spirituality."[107] The Duchess's echo, emanating from a ruined abbey that should have "canopied … bones / Till doomsday" (5.3.16-17) calls to mind not only the tomb marker the Duchess once insisted she was not, it also brings to the fore the links between England's

[106] As Ellen MacKay says, "the play is a veritable wunderkammer of the Catholic theater's lost objects" (124). See also Borlik, "'Greek is Turned Turk': Catholic Nostalgia in *The Duchess of Malfi*."
[107] Eugene Thacker, "Dark Media" in *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, ed. Alexander Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 129.

religious past, it claims for the afterlife, and the contemporary playhouses the antitheatricalists insisted were the heirs to Catholicism's pageantry.[108] In resuscitating the promises of a life after death associated with a superseded and ruined religion, the Duchess becomes, quite simply, undead.[109] Webster's play illustrates the undeath offered by the theater, the potential of the dead thing without a soul to nevertheless feel or seem ensouled by performance's dark rituals, and hence continue onward after its supposed end.

In her echoic remediation, the Duchess thus ceases to be entirely human. Her theatrical sublimation into an insubstantial voice robs her of form – which, of course, as a theatrical artifact performed by a young boy's body never 'truly' existed – and thrusts the apprehension of her uncanny afterlife into the auditor's imagination. If we bracket Antonio's sense of "mockery and abuse," we might see the theater makes good on Sidney's poetical promise to grow another nature that can be imagined but never tangibly experienced – it gives us a nonhuman life, an unlife perhaps, a temporary flicker, but a form of apparent life nonetheless.[110] For a moment, Webster's play allows us to glimpse performance not simply diverted from a humanist end, but alienated from any straightforwardly humanist possibility. The audience encounters speech that

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[108] William Prynne points out the parallels between Catholic worship and stage-plays with characteristic alarm: "Such honour, such worship give the Papists to our blessed Saviour, to these their idolized Saints, as thus to turne, not onely their Priests into Players, their Temples, into Theaters; but even their very miracles, lives, and sufferings into Playes" (*Histrio-mastix,* [London : Printed by E[dward] A[llde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes] and W[illiam] I[ones], 1633] sig. Q3v).

[109] From the OED, "not quite dead but not fully alive, dead-and-alive." See "un'dead, adj.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/Entry/211195?redirectedFrom=undead (accessed May 26, 2016). Worth noting is that all of the OED's examples prior to Stoker's *Dracula* occur in a religious context, affirming the relationship between "theology and horror" that Eugene Thacker recognizes in post-Enlightenment fiction (*In the Dust of This Planet*, Washington: Zero Books, 2013).

[110] For the idea of "nonhuman life" intended here I am indebted to Cameron Kunzelman, who uses it in his thesis *The Nonhuman Lives of Videogames* (Georgia State University, 2014) as a way of conceptualizing the ontology of videogames as objects that exist independently of but are nevertheless produced in part by, and make certain affordances for, humans. I am arguing, in essence, that early modern theatrical performance, though more apparitional than objective, occupies just such an unhuman subjunctive ontology that hails a human subject but also inevitably recedes from its apprehension.

can be heard, with a meaning that can be comprehended in the moment of performance, but which, by dint of its status as a dead repetition and staged simulation, cannot be *really* meaningful.

Unlike John Searle, who places himself in the Chinese room to let us know certainly that what seems to be communicating doesn't speak our language at all, Webster keeps the final nature of his echo shrouded. N. Katherine Hayles, summarizing responses to Searle's argument, points to cognitive scientist Edwin Hutchins' idea of "distributed cognition" to resolve the paradoxes of the encounter Searle's experiment imagines: in this view, the whole system of the Chinese room "knows" more than its individual components, so while Searle doesn't understand Chinese any more than his notepad and reference materials do, together they accomplish the work necessary to provide a cogent response to an interlocutor. As Hayles argues, distributed cognition takes into account how humans have historically delegated parts of their thinking to technologies (such as memory to writing, or mathematics to calculators and computers) – a fact that doesn't change the nature of the human body so much as it changes the "relation of human subjectivity to its environment," making the work of cognition not the sole property of the human mind but part of interactive processes between the embodied mind and its surrounding tools.[111]

Into what sort of environment, then, does Webster's echo interpellate its audience? As Antonio himself demonstrates, what may be learned from this imitative voice cannot be acted upon in any self-evident way, and we are left only to reckon with the acknowledgement and consequences of its existence. What does it mean to recognize such an apparitional entity,

[111] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 189-190.

supposedly devoid of mind and, it would seem, certainly devoid of body? What are we to make of the uncanny knack this "dead thing" has for not seeming dead at all? For Webster, I think, there are no firm answers, for such questions are issues of theatricality itself, and weigh particularly heavily on the early modern stage in its capacity as a post-Reformation necromedium that both promises continuance and cannot help but serve up death again and again.

Gone are the idols and vain ceremonies of ruined abbeys, but in their place remains an auditory phenomenon, the power of the sermon or, more pressingly in the playhouse, the power of performed poetry, which shows that despite humanism's best arguments about the benefits of art and imitation, voice and language animated on the stage have no small capacity to move, and yet nevertheless are just as open to confusion and misapprehension as Catholicism's abrogated sensuality. Webster's echo emanates from this environment, bounces off the theater walls, but the site of the its final reverberation, dark and uncertain, is in the bodies of the play's auditors, who know what they just heard was only a theatrical trick, an actor speaking *as* an echo, and yet nevertheless are led to entertain the idea of a mindless echo that speaks with apparent reason. As with Descartes' automata, it only speaks when spoken to, responds to someone else's stimuli, and yet the drama does not let us shake the sense that, like Ovid's Echo, it repeats not mindlessly but with purpose. The play marches toward its tedious end, and we are left behind in the ague Antonio has disavowed, the significance of the echo's fateful pronouncements witnessed only by our own creeping flesh.

4

Intermediate Shakespeare:

Unreading and Unreadability in *The Tempest*

McLuhan's handbook

Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) is one of the founding texts of contemporary media theory. Throughout the book, McLuhan references William Shakespeare over a dozen times, providing at various points protracted interpretations of scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello, Troilus and Cressida*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest, Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Richard II*, along with a selection of the sonnets.[1] In addition to being brief, the interpretations might seem overly broad, and indeed, might appear to be nothing more than attempts by McLuhan to bolster his own arguments by tapping into Shakespeare's cultural capital.[2] Yet regardless of what we have to say about McLuhan's manically aphoristic, often

[1] All citations from Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964: repr., Berkley: Gingko Press, 2015). I discuss McLuhan citations of the first three plays within the first section of this chapter; *As You Like It* is read as an allegory of a postscarcity, postlabor society (68); McLuhan's mention of *The Tempest* is discussed later in this chapter; the sonnets and *Macbeth* McLuhan uses to discuss the effect of mechanized printing presses and clocks on the human sense of time (203-204), along with some examples from John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton.

[2] Works on this theme are numerous; my argument is most indebted to Terence Hawks, *That Shakespeherian Rag: Essays on a Critical Process* (London: Methuen, 1986); Graham Holderness, ed., *The Shakespeare Myth* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988); Michael D. Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1990), especially chapter 1, "Historicizing Bardolatry"; Jean I. Marsden, ed., *The Appropriation of Shakespeare: Post-Renaissance Reconstructions of the Works and the Myth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer, eds., *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Hugh Grady (ed), *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early Modern to Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 2000) and Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*: *Religion, Ideology, and Power* (1984: repr., New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

gnomic style, I think we must bear an important point in mind: he was by training a Renaissance scholar. His doctoral dissertation at Cambridge (advised by M.C. Bradbrook) was on Thomas Nashe, and his book prior to *Understanding Media* was *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), a pioneering study on the collision of printed and oral cultures in early modern Europe and the subsequent historical fallout. He also served as an advisor to Walter Ong, whose argument that the humanist curriculum's emphasis on young boys learning Latin functioned as a kind of Renaissance "puberty rite" has been deeply influential in early modern studies.[3] True, the majority of McLuhan's work – especially once he embraced his role as a twentieth-century media guru after the success of *Understanding Media* – has little direct bearing on early modern or Renaissance studies, yet I think by reminding ourselves of McLuhan's background we may find important linkages between this particular arena of literary scholarship and the field of media theory.[4]

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[3] See Walter J. Ong, "Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite," *Studies in Philology* 56.2 (1959): 103-124. Ong's argument is deeply influential in the field and has been cited more times than I could possibly collate. Later in this chapter I make particular use of Bruce Smith's reading of Ong in *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Juliet Fleming's "Dictionary English and the female tongue" (175-204) in Jean R. Brink, ed, *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England* (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993), and Todd W. Reeser, *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), especially chapter 2, "Engendering a Moderate Class in Renaissance Pedagogical Discourse," 77-121.

[4] McLuhan's legacy within the field of media theory is fraught for several reasons. Histories of the media studies acknowledge its roots in the social criticism of the Frankfurt school, but its "contemporary" origins lie in the postwar period where McLuhan and his chief predecessor, Harold Innis (whose arguments about Ancient societies and the use of writing were immensely important to McLuhan's own work), rose to prominence, along with the "mass media" of television. McLuhan was, in the words of Paddy Scannell, "an avid but hasty reader" (131), and this will become clear as I discuss him further in this chapter. In addition to his broadstrokes approach to scholarship, he also attained the status of academic celebrity which, in drawing him into numerous (well compensated) television appearances, meant his messages often landed more with popular audiences than with fellow academics; that said, he by all accounts disliked the normal functions of academic argument and seemed to treat scholarship more as an engine for the generation of ideas rather than the assiduous connections between propositions, research, and conclusions – again in Scannell's words, McLuhan "was blessedly indifferent to whether he was right or wrong and was never intimidated by facts" (133). McLuhan has also been criticized for what some see as his technological determinism, drawn from his belief that media innovations change human sense-life in ways that can only be fully comprehended retroactively, and from his general indifference to the political and institutional concerns that were commonplace in the academy by the end of the 60s (Williams, 66-67; Scammell 135-136). McLuhan's reputation was somewhat rehabilitated in the 1980s and 1990s through the work

However, I do not think media theory exhibits the "uncanny causality" that Marjorie Garber has noted in methods like Freudian psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstruction. I feel as if McLuhan's use of Shakespeare is, indeed, somehow different: Garber notes that Shakespeare seems to haunt Western modernity and postmodernity's intellectuals because his texts "have mined themselves into the theoretical speculations that have dominated our present discourses[.]"[5] In this vein, she argues that "Shakespeare" is the site of continual Freudian transference, a "love object of literary studies" whose texts become our spur to theorizing and hence prove amazingly yielding to our inquiries with those theories.[6] It might seem strange for me to point out that McLuhan was a Cambridge-trained, midcentury Renaissance scholar on the one hand, and on the other allege he is – in Garber's idiom – *less* haunted by Shakespeare than one might expect. This might seem even stranger since I have already demonstrated how McLuhan often insists on citing Shakespeare, whether he is discussing the shift to print culture in early modern Europe or speculating about the effects of the automation of labor.

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of Joshua Meyrowitz (*No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* [Oxford, Oxford UP, 1985]) and Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (*Remediation: Understanding New Media* [Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999]). For more on McLuhan's place in media theory see Kevin Williams, *Understanding Media Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003) 65-67 and Paddy Scannell, *Media and Communication* (London: SAGE, 2007) 129-138. I use McLuhan here despite his shortcomings for two reasons. One, as I will emphasize frequently, McLuhan was trained as a Renaissance scholar and hence, in addition to "owning" him for the fold of early modernists wherein I count myself, I believe his immersion in Renaissance studies inflected his theories in a way that has never been fully accounted for. Second, I am using McLuhan much in the spirit of McLuhan himself: as a way of establishing a vocabulary for discussing the idea of "media" in a very slippery historical period where, before the rise of electricity and automation, media theory as it is currently articulated has limited purchase. McLuhan's penchant for using his scholarship as what he called a "probe" more than as an argument proper works in my favor insofar as, through him, I can connect the insights of media theory with the histories of humanism and the book, performance studies, and the recent "nonhuman" or "posthuman" turn represented in this chapter most strongly by Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and the work on electronic literature by N. Katherine Hayles. There is also, I will admit, a sense in reading McLuhan that the man is having fun with his writing, which I have always found admirable and I hope is reflected somewhat in these pages.

[5] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York: Routledge, 2010). xxiii-xxiv

[6] Garber, xxiv-xxv. As Garber says, Shakespeare has historically functioned "as text, as authority, as moral arbiter and as theoretical template" (xxv). Linda Charnes has likewise claimed that Shakespeare, for mass audiences, signifies "History itself," supplying a literary past not only in a historiographic sense but in fashioning temporality itself as a "particular 'structure of feeling' … which lets us feel as if we are still living in a world marked by the passage of meaningful time" (Linda Charnes, *Hamlet's Heirs* [New York: Routledge, 2006] 43).

So it is, then, I want to return to an earlier point: that McLuhan's use of Shakespeare – to the early modern scholar in the early twenty-first century, and probably any other – is not particularly good. In fact, his first use of Shakespeare in *Understanding Media* is something of a joke: "A fairly complete handbook for studying the extensions of man," writes McLuhan, "could be made up from selections from Shakespeare." At first seeming as if he is going to rely on Shakespeare's status as our eternal contemporary, McLuhan suddenly travesties the scholarly trope through an egregious misreading:

> Some might quibble about whether or not [Shakespeare] was referring to TV in these familiar lines from *Romeo and Juliet*:
>
> But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
> It speaks, and yet says nothing.[7]

This should set any Shakespearean to howling. Not only does McLuhan write off his knowing anachronism as a "quibble" – Shakespeare writing about television! – but he goes so far as to condense and edit, without noting it for the reader, around ten lines of Romeo's speech, aligning Romeo's first glimpse of Juliet as she walks onto the balcony with his later observation that "*She* speaks, and yet says nothing." Who would not pause in the midst of McLuhan's quotation to ponder the missing lines? The original second line, wherein the window is "the east, and Juliet is the sun," is probably as well-known as the first. But it is profoundly strange to bungle such "familiar lines." McLuhan might as well have quoted *Hamlet* by saying "To be, or not to be? The rest is silence." And while one might argue this is a more or less accurate summary of *Hamlet*, it certainly doesn't give us the Shakespeare we already know.

This is par for McLuhan's course, as he soon interprets Brabantio's mention of "charms" that enrapture young women and Ulysses's invocation of the "providence" that "almost like the gods / Does thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles" as examples of "Shakespeare's intuition of

[7] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 21.

the transformative powers of new media."[8] After the initial example from *Romeo and Juliet*, McLuhan shows much more fidelity for Shakespeare's text, but nevertheless makes some offbeat claims, suggesting that Brabantio's panicked invocation of witchcraft and Ulysses' notion of providence both indicate Shakespeare's "increasing awareness of the action of media" on human life.[9] One may wonder what makes magic or providence a "medium" in any sense like those McLuhan discusses – as he defines them, "media" are "active metaphors in their power to translate experience in new forms." They are confusions of language and technology that allow humans to "let go" of the environment "in order to grasp it in a new way."[10] These Shakespeare quotations do make sense if one assumes, as McLuhan apparently does, that both Brabantio's fear of charms and Ulysses' reflection on providence suggest similarly "active metaphors" for conceptualizing the system of the world and the place of the human within it – explanations not only for what is happening, but why things happen as they do.[11] Why did my daughter disobey me? Why does everyone seem to know more about the famed Achilles than Achilles knows about himself?

But what McLuhan offers in the first entry of his Shakespearean "handbook" is an unusual experience of doubt. Surely that's not how those lines from *Romeo and Juliet* go? Yet surely he would not misquote them? In a preface to his second edition McLuhan admits the quote was "whimsically modified" but he has had to deal with "reviewers" who thought "this was an involuntary misquotation." McLuhan explains that he takes as axiomatic the idea that "the arts anticipate future social and technological events," that they are "prophetic" and in some sense operate as an "alarm system," though it is often not until it's too late that we realize what the arts

[8] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 21-22.
[9] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 22.
[10] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 85.
[11] Indeed, McLuhan insists that language was the "first medium" that allowed this kind of reconceptualization of the human-world relationship (85).

were warning us about.[12] Elsewhere in *Understanding Media* he elaborates this point, claiming that "to make celebrities of artists … can be a way of ignoring their prophetic work, and preventing its timely use for survival." In other words, McLuhan suggests, the cult of deferential and timeless celebrity garnered by some artists – such as Shakespeare – can function as a way of cloaking their more radical applications in the pressing questions of what must be done for "human survival" in a world of technological and mediatized upheaval.[13] Thus, in half-jokingly putting Shakespeare "under erasure," as Derrida might say, McLuhan suggests a use of Shakespeare that is and is not like the normal citation of the Bard for his cultural capital.[14] For certainly while quotes extracted from Shakespeare are almost always haunted by the "present absence" of the context supplied by their plays, McLuhan happily throws context to the wind in order to turn Juliet's metaphoric radiance into the literal glow of a television screen.

Marjorie Garber argues, regarding the great dearth of personal and biographical information we have on Shakespeare, that it is precisely this scarcity that makes Shakespeare such a literary powerhouse: "Freed from the trammels of a knowable 'authorial intention,' the author paradoxically gains power rather than losing it, assuming a different kind of kind of authority that renders him in effect his own ghost."[15] Garber says it is Shakespeare's ghostly nature that allows him to "possess" writers as distinct as Marx, Freud, and Derrida, whose use of his texts as examples for their theories means those theories forever thereafter exhibit the marks

[12] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 16.
[13] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 96.
[14] Derrida, of course, borrows the idea from Heidegger, but grants it considerable new meaning in his method of deconstruction. For Heidegger it was a way of acknowledging a word's inadequacy for a particular philosophical concept; for Derrida, it performs the inadequacy of all language, rendering linguistic meaning self-sabotaged or paradoxical. See *Of Grammatology* (1967: repr., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 61. Gayatri Spivak's "Translator's Preface" to the cited edition also delves into the history of and trouble with translating "under erasure." In the sense that I invoke his name and theory here, I intend Derrida's idea to describe how McLuhan's invocation of Shakespeare self-consciously draws attention to its own citation at the same time it clearly misquotes Shakespeare's lines, simultaneously "erasing" and drawing attention to Shakespeare and his "original" language.
[15] Garber, *Ghost Writers,* 15.

of a Shakespearean ghost-writing process. But I do not think this is quite true for McLuhan's media theory, based on the way he deploys his own Shakespearean evidence, and indeed, the way he believes art functions. What I want to suggest is that McLuhan recognizes Shakespeare not so much as a Foucauldian author-function but as an *author-medium*, an "active metaphor" for the translation of experience.[16] Magic and providence were certainly not "new" ideas in Shakespeare's time, and yet, just as when he turns Juliet into a glowing TV screen, McLuhan reads them as ways of looking forward to the challenges posed in postwar society by new technologies and mass communication. McLuhan, in the words of Terence Hawkes, assumes "the plays have the same function as, and work like, the words of which they are made. We *use* them to generate meaning."[17] That comparisons between Juliet's radiance and a television screen are, from a more traditional scholarly perspective, absurd is totally beside the point for someone like McLuhan, who would likely see more deference to early modern history as a way of preserving the idea of a reified, celebrity "Shakespeare" at the expense of his potential prophetic worth.

Whether or not we wholly agree with McLuhan, I think he gestures at a sense of Shakespeare that challenges the terms of Garber's thinking and might, possibly, afford us new ways for pondering the connections between early modern literature and contemporary media theory. As Linda Charnes argues, the figure of Shakespeare provides Western modernity with a

[16] These claims are adapted from a public blog post I made on the use of Shakespeare by an independent game developer, Kitty Horrorshow; see Michael Lutz, "Kitty Horrorshow's *Pontefract* and Shakespeare as author-medium," Correlated Contents, May 2015. http://correlatedcontents.com/?p=1946

[17] Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare*, 3. While Hawkes' argument and mine have considerable overlap, mine is differentiated in that, as will become clear later in this chapter, I don't believe Shakespeare's plays (and the meanings they effect) are adequately captured by thinking of them purely as a language. I therefore intend to put a bit more pressure on Hawkes' claim that "Shakespeare doesn't mean. *We* mean *by* Shakespeare" (3) by underscoring the necessary interplay between medium and message, as demonstrated by McLuhan, with my notion of the "Shakespeare-medium."

history charted by reference to a meaningful, affectively resonant past.[18] But in following through on her Latourian claim that "we were never early modern," I would argue that McLuhan resonates with Shakespeare outside the paradigm of a sentimentalized history.[19] What I mean to say is that McLuhan sees in Shakespeare art that looks insistently *forward*, and in so doing is the opposite of Walter Benjamin's Angel of History: it is never quite capable of adequately describing what it sees before it, a terrible mess in the process of perpetual construction.[20] Contrary to Garber's general argument, in this chapter I am aiming not to demonstrate that media studies is haunted by Shakespeare, but rather, that Shakespeare is haunted by media studies.

I risk here falling into my own McLuhanesque aphorism, which warrants some further explanation. McLuhan's anxieties about the shifts of postwar Western society toward a secondary, electronic orality, away from models of literacy rooted in early modernity, its educational practices, and the expansion of print technology, can help us illuminate the concerns of Shakespeare's time, as well as (I wager) our continuing concern with Shakespeare himself.[21] Specifically, McLuhan and his media theory are useful for recognizing how Shakespeare thought

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[18] Charnes, *Hamlet's Heirs* 43-44.

[19] See Charnes, "We Were Never Early Modern" in *Hamlet's Heirs*; her title draws from the work of Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993).

[20] See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). Benjamin interprets a monoprint by Paul Klee as representing an angel "turned toward the past" that is "history," which rather than being the logical chain of events it appears to us, is in fact "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (249). I am suggesting, conversely, that McLuhan's notion of prophetic art works in the opposite direction: that rather than a mounting mess of catastrophe, McLuhan argues that art sees construction arise from the present's rubble. I am indebted here also, to Linda Charnes's discussion of temporality in "Anticipating Nostalgia: Finding Temporal Logic in a Textual Anomaly." *Textual Cultures* 4.1 (2009): 72-83. Her argument is particularly illuminating in her opening discussion of anthropological research on the Andean Aymara people, whose language (like Benjamin's angel, and in contrast to normal Anglophone notions of linguistic temporality) conceptualizes the future as being behind oneself, with the past, being known and visible, spread out before.

[21] The idea of a "secondary orality" belongs to Walter J. Ong, and builds from McLuhan's work. See Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982). Ong argues that after an oral culture becomes a literate culture, it eventually attains a "secondary orality" after the spread of literacy and the rise of mass media; it is "essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print" (136). In other words, secondary orality is the spoken communication that occurs with or over (telephones, television, etc) and is marked by the background presence of writing or literacy.

about the loss (or absence) of literacy and the end of the book even at the incipient moment of their widespread cultural ascent. This is how I mean Shakespeare was "haunted" by a media theory later more pointedly articulated by McLuhan. I do not mean to say that Shakespeare, for instance, anticipated in any concrete sense television, cinema, electronic hypertext, or e-reading devices, but rather that – in a McLuhanite vein – Shakespeare realized the media innovations of his time were not total, and would not last forever. He thus evinces a concern, as McLuhan later would, that the vision of the "human being" supported by early modern reading technologies and humanist education was just as susceptible to faltering as the media that sustained it. No other play shows this more strongly than *The Tempest*, which culminates in a vow to destroy an unnamed, unseen book. In this play, I argue, Shakespeare demonstrates a preoccupation with the limits of the supposed innovations of literacy and the early modern print revolution by staging their dissolution in the face of a problem I am calling the *unread*.

By "the unread" I mean to invoke a range of concepts, from the cachets of meaning which are missed or suppressed in any text or communication, to those people who are deemed uneducated, to the obstinate existence of books which have not been and may never be read.[22] This chapter will cover all of these connotations, but I will begin with the first, pondering a bit more what goes unread in McLuhan's (mis)use of Shakespeare, especially its relevance to the problem of reading, knowing, and recognizing the Shakespearean text. With the rise of mass media giving way to the digital revolution of the past few decades, media theory is today something much larger and more amorphous than even McLuhan could have predicted, but its

[22] My thinking on this term grows from its use in Richard Burt and Julian Yates, *What's the Worst Thing You Can Do with Shakespeare?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), in particular chapter 1, "What's the Worst Thing You Can Do to Shakespeare?" But also, though I am not performing a study of textual variation and editing practices, I am indebted to the "unediting" practiced by Leah S. Marcus, an editorial stance that offers "a preference for variability over fixity of meaning … [that] is to open the play once more to an unsettling, polysemous menace" of Shakespeare's varied textual lives (*Unediting the Renaissance*, New York: Routledge, 1993), 17.

influence is still palpable in early modern studies. Perhaps counterintuitively, the contemporary rise of "new media," if anything, has resulted not in fewer comparisons between early modernity and the present moment, but more.

The Shakespeare-medium or, a map of unreading

Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday argue for a parallelism of early modern and contemporary media technologies in their edited collection *The Renaissance Computer,* explaining that Gutenberg's printing press in the fifteenth century paved the way for a conception of "the book as an intellectual tool rather than as a devotional object or as the badge of luxury," which in turn facilitated "the creation of a community or network of scholars throughout Europe."[23] This network of humanist scholars, their printers, and their books is, Rhodes and Sawday argue, both echoed and undermined at the turn of the millennium. At the advent of the digital age, networks formed by computers mirror the global proliferation and transmission of printed information in early modernity, while also suggesting that books may no longer be taken "for granted as the natural medium for storing and transmitting knowledge."[24] More pointedly, Ann M. Blair turns her attention to the digital phenomenon of "information overload" – the sheer excess of usable data provided by the internet – to argue for a comparison between our present moment and early modernity's own information explosion with the expansion of print technologies. In "the preoccupation with accumulating and managing information among the learned in the Renaissance," by which she means the expanded access to printed materials and the recovery of classical texts, Blair recognizes the formation and systemization of knowledge management technologies – reference books, encyclopedias,

[23] Sawday and Rhodes, *The Renaissance Computer* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.
[24] Sawday and Rhodes, 2.

catalogues, compendiums, and so on – that formed the basis for much later scholarship and which are attenuated or transformed by the advent of the digital.[25]

What unites the problems highlighted by Sawday and Rhodes with those recognized by Blair is the idea that what, on the one hand, is seen as an innovation in information technology (such as the printing press or the internet) is on the other hand a challenge to the methods and attitudes by which any culture at a particular point in time comes to "know" anything at all. This may be akin to McLuhan's belief that media are not simply inert objects for our use but rather "extensions" of the human experience, part of a feedback loop for how humans come to know and understand themselves. Shakespeare's sensitivity to the media upheavals of his own time – the printing press and, I add, the commercial theater – means his texts can provide us with useful ways of thinking about the historical contingency of all media events. That is to say, in contrast to McLuhan, who sees in Shakespeare the advent of print and literacy, I argue we can also see their end.[26]

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[25] Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011) 12.

[26] Opening 1962's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* with a reading of *King Lear*, McLuhan argues that that division of the kingdoms expresses early modern concerns regarding the fall of the monarchical, feudal order in favor of a proto-bourgeois, proto-capitalist society of fragmented government and specialized labor. The play's ensuing chaos is the result of the people who enter this brave new world failing to fully understand and account for their place in a reformatted universe: "Shakespeare shows an utter clairvoyance concerning the social and personal consequences of denudation and stripping of attributes and functions for the sake of speed, precision, and increased power" (*The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962] 12.) But rather than being a purely social phenomenon, McLuhan makes it clear he believes that these developments are concomitant with and partly a response to the mechanization of language via the printing press, which exploded "human sense life" by interrupting the "tactile synesthesia" of spoken and hand-written language (17). Compared to previous examples above, his reading of Shakespeare is more traditional and granular here, but McLuhan's claims are still vertiginous in scope. However, successive waves of scholars, such as historian Elizabeth Eisenstein and media theorist Friedrich Kittler, have followed through on his insights to more nuanced ends. See Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in. Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980) and Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer, Chris Cullins (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993). Eisenstein's monumental work argues that the press heralded a communications revolution, and she traces the implications of a culture shifting from script to print while discussing the role of printing presses as disseminators of knowledge in the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and finally the scientific revolution. Kittler's approach, informed by what later scholars have termed a

To follow McLuhan and consider Shakespeare as an author-medium, understanding his texts as "active metaphors" for experience, does not have to be simple reification and Bardolatry, a reduction of all that is or will be to the scope offered by the Shakespearean canon. Rather, the idea of a "medium" works with that of the "mediator" in the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour. For Latour, no medium is a passive substance; it is a mediat*or* because it takes part in the collective action of the network. Therefore no medium – not even the Shakespeare-medium – is wholly transparent or innocent, but is rather something "endowed with the capacity to translate what [it] transports, to redefine it, to redeploy it, and also to betray it."[27] Thus McLuhan's first repurposing and redaction of Shakespeare's language warrants attention not so much for how it misreads the Bard but *unreads* him.

By way of adaptation studies, Richard Burt and Julian Yates variously posit and theorize what they consider to be the "unreadability" of Shakespearean texts – their ambiguity, multiplicity, inscrutability, and even at times, their apparent meaninglessness. McLuhan's adaptation, I have already said, is important because of how it very consciously leaves the familiar context and scene of *Romeo and Juliet* unread, bringing it strongly to mind at the same moment it erases it. But I want to think about what I am calling "unreading" as more than clever remixing. Burt and Yates say that unreadability – as the great amount of sense or nonsense that may arise from the Shakespearean text – "is the uninvited guest to the surplus of 'life' certain texts and authors are granted by their translation to successive media platforms and their sponsorship by such a great variety of readers."[28] Shakespeare's unreadability, then, is partly a function of his untimeliness, his persistence beyond his moment.

"media archaeology," seeks to trace material developments and changes in media related to speech, script, and print in Europe as they impact the cultural imaginary, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

[27] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 81.

[28] Burt and Yates, 2.

Thus, when McLuhan rewrites Romeo's lines into a paean to television, he parodically highlights precisely the sort of "unreading" that must happen when we adopt a position of Shakespeare's timelessness or eternal relevance: the selective deployment *or* obliteration of contextual data that produces individual meaning at the scene of reading. The "handbook" McLuhan hopes to assemble from Shakespeare's writings does not take relevance at the expense of historical accuracy, but rather foregrounds the work that must be done to wrest some sort of meaning out of the text's intransigent, historically freighted opacity. By presenting well-known lines in a way that fractures and changes their accepted, comfortable meaning, McLuhan brings to our attention the Shakespearean text's simultaneous usefulness as a medium for the translation of experience, as well as the sheer difficulty of making "relevant" sense of the Shakespearean text to begin with. What I am calling *unreading*, then, is a reading practice that underscores its limits and acknowledges that meaning does not reside *in* a text *or* its interpreter, but arises in the mediated space between them – emphasizing the Latin derivation of *medium*, the middle. I call it *unreading* to foreground the idea that every "reading" of a text is a selective one, the collective product of a network of supporting evidence, methods, and analysis at the necessary expense of alternative allies in the claim for truth. This is not to devalue reading and interpretation, but to underscore the fact that all forms of critical meaning are contingent truth claims based on the work of prior scholars, generic or textual conventions, and the material and ideological situation of a critic in space and time.[29] Literary interpretation, in this view, is akin to the production of what Bruno Latour calls "the factish," things that are not quite objective facts and not quite imaginary fetish-objects; reading is a phenomenon that, in Latour's words, allows us "to pass

[29] In my theorization of unreading I am resuming a line of thought that Matthew Harrison and I began in our discussion of a "playful criticism" that conceives of "reading and of interpretation not as wholly unconstrained, but rather as akin to other types of play in their tension between freedom and rule." See Matthew Harrison and Michael Lutz, "South of Elsinore: Actions That a Man Might Play" in Valerie Fazel and Louise Geddes, eds, *The Shakespeare User: Adaptation and Appropriation in the 21st Century*, forthcoming from Palgrave.

from fabrication to reality" as the process of interpreting a text, like magic, produces what that text "is" or at what it at least *seems* to be about.[30]

By acting as if meaning were "in" Shakespeare, waiting to be discovered, and being surprised that we ourselves have been the lucky ones to discover it, we enact what is to Latour the quintessential fantasy of the factish: we bestow "*an autonomy we do not possess to beings that do not possess it either*, but that by this very token gives it to us."[31] Unreading is a practice that accounts for what Ivo Kamps describes as the politically charged "circulation" of Shakespeare's texts between critics, the literary establishment, and popular culture. But while Kamps argues that in "our competitive and adversarial climate critics overwhelmingly hold each other responsible for the meanings 'found' in plays" and that "no one blames Shakespeare for meaning so much," I want to place the blame squarely on the Bard's shoulders.[32] Why *does* Shakespeare mean so much? Why has his art – as it has been (re)produced and labelled by the historical concatenations of technology, class, and capital – proven so amenable not to rereading but rather our continuous unreading?

As I have already claimed, Shakespeare was haunted by media theory. What this means, to connect two threads of my argument, is that he himself was skilled in unreading – that is, skilled in seeing uses of media, but also their ends and limits, the way that each media innovation changes the mode of production for and hence threatens the dissolution of all meaning. I have talked about this phenomenon most specifically with regard to the early modern print revolution

[30] Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, trans. Catherine Porter and Heather MacLean (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 35.

[31] Latour, *Factish*, 35, italics original. My reading of Latour in this case is deeply inflected by Terence Hawkes' argument in *Meaning by Shakespeare*, though I believe Latour's approach through Actor-Network Theory moves the idea of Shakespeare and his uses outside the pure play of language belied in Hawkes' more traditionally poststructuralist view.

[32] Ivo Kamps, "Alas, Poor Shakespeare! I Knew Him Well" in eds., Desmet and Sawyer, *Shakespeare and Appropriation* 26. More explicitly than Hawkes, Kamps suggests that Shakespeare is essentially "meaningless" and the picture he paints of scholarly ladder-climbing is consequently rather cynical; by making the Shakespeare and the texts' role in this process more active, following Latour's example, I aim to blunt this edge.

and the contemporary digital one – and indeed, McLuhan takes Shakespeare as exemplary of the mind in the realm of mobile type – but what goes missing (unread) in McLuhan's calculus is Shakespeare's theatrical character. I aim to correct this by arguing that it is not an issue of page or stage but rather the *tension between* the dual media of print and drama that have given Shakespeare his multifarious longevity, a tension that informs both the production and reception of his texts.

One line of critical argument in this regard, as voiced by Richard Levin, is that "Shakespeare, so far as we know, took no interest in the publication of his plays" – or at least, this is how it looks with our historical knowledge of the First Folio's posthumous assemblage by Shakespeare's former associates.[33] If this is true then it's obviously a bit odd to consider him, as McLuhan does, an emergent thinker and prophet of print. But as Lukas Erne has more recently pointed out, at the time of the sonnets' publication most of Shakespeare's plays up to that point *had* been published as stand-alone quartos, and hence Shakespeare "could not help knowing that his plays were being read and reread, printed and reprinted, excerpted and anthologized as he was writing more plays."[34] So while Shakespeare did not concern himself with authorly matters in quite the same way that his contemporary Ben Jonson did, there is good reason to think

[33] Richard Levin, "The New Refutation of Shakespeare," *Modern Philology* 83.2 (1985): 123–41. Levin's particular complaint in this article is the "ironic" readings of various plays that suggest they speak ambivalently and at times subversively and counterintuitively about early modern social and political issues; his general argument is that, if these readings are only gleaned by close attention to the text when read, they could not possibly be produced in performance and therefore are essentially invalid as interpretations. He supplemented his initial volley a year later with "Performance-Critics vs. Close Readers in the Study of English Renaissance Drama," *Modern Language Review* 81 (July 1986) 545-559. His argument is supported by Harriet Hawkins, *The Devil's Party: Critical Counter-interpretations of Shakespearian Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985).

[34] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 50. Erne further highlights the massive amount of editorial work that longer plays underwent in order to be prepared for print, suggesting that Shakespeare had at least some presence in the preparation of the texts published during his lifetime.

Shakespeare, regardless of his personal investment in the matter, knew his plays sometimes functioned as reading material alongside their roles as dramatic scripts.[35]

Harry Berger, Jr.'s intervention in the page-versus-stage debates in Shakespeare studies near the end of the last century offers some insight here:

> It is no doubt perverse to find that the desire of theater burning through Shakespeare's texts is crossed by a certain despair of the theater, of the theater that seduces them and the theater they seduce; a despair inscribed in the auditory voyeurism with which the spoken language outruns its auditors, dropping golden apples along the way to divert the greedy ear that longs to devour its discourse.[36]

Taking as specious the initial terms of a criticism primarily based on reading opposed to one based on audition/performance, Berger notes that both are really different "interpretive emphases" that decide which norms should govern the critical act of reading.[37] In the idiom I've developed, each method of reading is a way of *unreading* the other. When Berger notes that Shakespeare's texts "despair" of the theater because there is more in their language than could ever be gleaned in a single moment of performance, and surely never enough to fully sate our "auditory voyeurism," he is not simply describing how we need to read the text to better understand the play's language, but suggesting how texts in performance *invite us* to revisit and (re)read them as texts; at the same time, such a reading method cannot erase the texts' "desire" of theater as they concomitantly invite the reader to suppose a real or imagined performance.

This, then, is the tension that so acutely animates the Shakespearean corpus. His work bears that mark of its inception and production at the nexus to two major media events: popular

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[35] On Jonson's meticulous work on his own printed folio, see Francis X. Connor, "Ben Jonson's *Workes* and Bibliographic Integrity" in *Literary Folios and Ideas of the Book in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 93-120.

[36] Harry Berger, Jr, *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1989) 149-51. Berger's entire project is a response to the work of Levin and Hawkins, cited above, as well as the performance-based approach advocated by Gary Taylor, most specifically in *Moment by Moment by Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1984).

[37] Berger, xiii.

print and the commercial theater. Shakespeare's texts exist in a space of oscillating unreadings, presenting meanings in one medium (performance or print) that shift in register or dissolve entirely in the move to the other. But this movement does not track a simple back and forth across an eternal binary, from the stage to what Heminges and Condell call, in their introduction to the First Folio, "the great Variety of Readers," and back again. Rather, the shifting meanings of stage and performance, reading and unreading, affect each other in a process like a feedback loop, each changing in response to the other, and facilitating changes further down the line.

Borrowing from complex systems theory to describe her work with electronic literature, N. Katherine Hayles has introduced the notion of "intermediation" to describe the way electronic texts like games and interactive fiction elicit reader action, which in turn influences the subsequent content of the text. As Hayles defines it, intermediation is the process "whereby a first-level emergent pattern is captured in another medium and re-represented with the primitives of the new medium, which leads to an emergent result captured in turn by yet another medium, and so forth."[38] Hayles excludes traditional print literature from intermediation, since she argues that while "print literature changes a reader's perceptions" the full feedback loop proper to intermediation is not completed, "because the words on the page do not literally change in response to the user's perceptions."[39] While that is certainly true, I want to widen the scope of intermediation just enough to consider how the reading and critical practices like those described by Berger and Kamps reveal Shakespeare's "intermediate" nature: texts born at a time when

[38] N. Katherine Hayles, "Intermediation: The Pursuit of a Vision," in *New Literary History* 38.1 (2007), 100. Hayles's idea of intermediation is first ventured, in less detail, in the first chapter of her book *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and is given a fuller treatment in the second chapter of her subsequent monograph *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). In both cases, Hayles is concerned with the circulation of electronic literature from code to machine interpreter to reader, then back through the cycle as the reader makes choices which cause the computer to make changes based on the code underlying the experienced fiction. As I explain here, with regard to Shakespeare I want to widen the network of intermediation from a purely electronic scene to the realms of textual production, reception, dramatic performance, literary criticism, and adaptation.

[39] Hayles, "Intermediation," 120.

commercial plays in their "first-level emergent pattern" migrated to the second-order medium of print, they have spent the last four centuries circulating not only between those domains but through academic scholarship and the realms of visual art, music, television, film, and many others.[40] Here I draw from Hayles's own call for "media-specific analysis," a mode of reading that emphasizes the material existence of any text but which recognizes "materiality" not as an inert substrate but something that "exist[s] in complex dynamic interplay with content, coming into focus or fading into the background, depending on what performances the work enacts."[41] In other words, as it was succinctly put by historian of the book D.F. McKenzie, "forms effect meanings."[42]

But the precise issue with the Shakespearean text is that its form is anything but settled. Indeed, Shakespeare is intermediate because he – not the person, now, but rather the cultural figure, not the author-function but the author-medium – is historically poised at the crossroads of two media, print and drama. Shakespeare's texts register a media split or overlap, and this has made them a fecund site for adaptations in successive media platforms. The Shakespeare-medium contains within it inherent media ambivalence; it is always already "remediated" and "remediating" in the terms of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin.[43] One profound remediator

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[40] See Richard Burt, *Shakespeare After Mass Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) and *Shakespeares After Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006).
[41] N. Katherine Hayles, "Print is Flat, Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis," in *Poetics Today* 24.1 (2004) 72. As is the case with intermediation, Hayles means to draw our attention to how the machine or computer which renders electronic literature is "media-specific" insofar as it relies on various literary and technology conventions to function properly, and again, I want to leverage this idea into a broader arena in the case of Shakespeare.
[42] D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and Sociology of Texts* (1984: repr., Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 13.
[43] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin define "remediation" as "the representation of one medium in another" (45). See Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, (Boston: MIT Press 2000). It is a radicalization of McLuhan's insight that "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium" and hence "no medium has its meaning or existence alone, but only in constant interplay with other media" (*Understanding Media* 19, 43). My contribution, by way of Hayles, is to propose "intermediation" as a broader descriptor for how various media interact – rather than the notions of priority or mimicry inherent in Bolter and Grusin's

is how Shakespeare scholarship influences the editing and annotation of Shakespeare's plays, which in turn influence stagings and adaptations, which could be adapted to films, which are included in textual annotations to later editions, which influence scholars, and so on and so forth. *Pace* Hayles, Shakespeare is not intermediate because his texts literally change in response to the reader's actions (although the stability of the Shakespearean text-qua-text can certainly be interrogated).[44] Rather, he is intermediate because the thing we call Shakespeare is both a medium for translating experience, and a many-splintered media icon. That is to say, in the case of Shakespeare, we might accurately reformat Marshall McLuhan's most famous maxim to the plural: "The media are the messages."[45] Shakespeare's texts are useful *as* media – for translating experience – because they are *about media*, and the ways they align, intersect, affirm, and contradict each other.

Unread Caliban (I)

The Tempest (1611) can be understood as an extended meditation on media and their ends – not simply their limits, but their eventual, literal ends. It is a play concerned both with books and with plays, with reading and with spectating, with learning and with ignorance; yet contrary to McLuhan, what it articulates is not the advent of the printing press or the theater, but their

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"remediation" (to mediate something again), I want to suggest the more contiguous or parallel nature of media events.

[44] In addition to Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance,* see Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991) and Gary Taylor and John Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped, 1606-1623* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993). A more metadiscursive view of this scholarly trend is also available in Gabriel Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare's Text: Twentieth Century Editorial Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010).

[45] One of McLuhan's most famous adages, I take "the medium is the message" (*Understanding Media* 19) to indicate that aside from any particular content, what is most important about the emergence of a new medium is "the personal and social consequences" of that medium," or as he elaborates, "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into our lives" (19-20). At the end of this chapter I pursue this idea further, with reference to Harold Bloom's claim that Shakespeare "invented" the human.

shortcomings and their loss.[46] Prospero's book is drowned, and the play's "insubstantial pageant" itself is doomed to fade, leaving "not a rack behind" (4.1.155-56).[47] But something comes after the end: a repeat performance, a rereading, an adaptation, an afterlife of media and the successive unreadings it invites, and this is where we find ourselves as Shakespeare's audience. Exemplary here is the situation and history of *The Tempest*'s most unread figure, Caliban.

Note that I am not saying Caliban is *under-read*, but quite the opposite. Caliban has long been considered a standout character; John Dryden (1679) admired the many disparate elements that came together in him, noting he had "all the discontents and malice of a witch, and of a devil besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins," not to mention his "dejectedness" in slavery and his "ignorance" as the native of an isolated island.[48] Virginia Mason Vaughan and Aldon T. Vaughan observe Caliban has served as "a particularly sensitive barometer of intellectual and social change," arguing that his abjection and rebellion against Prospero's rule seem to articulate with ease "issues fundamental to a culture's ideology."[49] Accordingly they note Caliban's range of interpretations and associations include the myth of the "wild man," the "savages" and

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[46] I am greatly indebted here to the argument of Ellen MacKay that the "[d]isasters" that frequently (supposedly) accompanied stage-plays in early modern London are a kind of affective presentiment of the public theater's eventual end in the 1640s, "the looked-for culmination of an era too tightly bound to the stage's dissolutive practice" (*Persecution, Plague, and Fire: Fugitive Histories of the Stage in Early Modern England* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011], 5). In her theorization of theater's "dissolutive practice" MacKay is herself drawing from the work of performance theorist Peggy Phelan, whose scholarship on performance's apparitional character is no less important to my work here (*Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* [New York: Routledge, 1993] and *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* [New York: Routledge, 1997]). Outside the specific scope of dramatic performance, however, I am arguing that *The Tempest* is not merely concerned with the dissolution of the theatrical medium but, in the case of Prospero's books, the eventual destruction or loss of print media, as well.

[47] All citations from the Arden edition of *The Tempest*, ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Aldon T. Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury, 1999, rev. 2011).

[48] John Dryden, "Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*" in ed W.P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden Vol 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 219-220.

[49] Virginia Mason Vaughan, Aldon T. Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), xiv, xvi. The Vaughans also mention the Dryden quote above, as well as note the great poetical fondness for Caliban that lasted approximately up until the nineteenth century.

"cannibals" Europeans claimed to have encountered in their travels abroad, the deeply racialized "missing link" that haunted early evolutionary historians, and the enslaved and colonial subjects under English rule in places as diverse as the Americas, Africa, and Ireland.[50]

What troubles later, more socially minded readings of Caliban turns out to be exactly what delighted Dryden: Caliban's otherworldly, poetic grotesquerie, his status as a "freckled whelp," the son of a witch and "the devil himself" (1.2.283, 320).[51] Interpretations and performances that portray Caliban as an island native under oppressive European rule, for example, often hinge on taking these descriptors and other like them – usually uttered by the less than neutral Prospero – as hyperbole, obfuscations to justify Caliban's enslavement and dispossession. And yet *something* seems to be different about Caliban: even Stephano and Trinculo, upon encountering him for the first time, repeatedly refer to him as a monster. Certainly this too can also be explained as hyperbole, or it might be an issue of some visible physical difference between Caliban and what the characters consider to be a "normative" human body. But there is persistent question in the play as to whether or not Caliban is even human. At first, Prospero seems to admit the character's humanity in describing Sycorax's history:

> …Then was this island
> (Save for the son that she did litter here,
> A freckled whelp, hag-born) not honored with
> A human shape (1.2.281-284)

With a canny manipulation of clauses, however, Prospero rhetorically aligns Caliban more closely with being a "whelp" and "hag-born," distancing him from his own "human shape." Later, upon seeing Ferdinand, Miranda mentions he is "the third man e'er [she] saw," (ll.446), seeming to count both her father and Caliban as "men," but later when speaking to Ferdinand

[50] The Vaughans' introduction to the Arden edition of the play condenses much of the material from their full book on Caliban, but the section on colonialist criticism of the play (98-108) is nevertheless illuminating.
[51] Jonathan Goldberg, *Tempest in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 52.

directly she drops him from the tally, claiming she has not seen "[m]ore that I may call men than you, good friend, and my dear father" (3.1.51-52). As Peter Hulme says, pondering these discrepancies, Caliban registers as "a man and not a man[.]"[52]

As characters throughout the play describe him, Caliban is "earth" (1.2.314), but then he is also a "tortoise" (ll.314) and "filth" (ll.437). When Trinculo discovers him cowering under his gabardine he is an odorous "fish" (2.2.24). He is also "puppy-headed" (l.151), by his own admission has "long nails" (ll.165), and several times is referred to as a "mooncalf" (l.105), a general term for monstrous births. He is also a "devil, a born devil" whose "body uglier grows" as he ages (4.1.188, 191), a "misshapen knave" (5.1.268), and perhaps most famously, a "thing of darkness" (l.275). It is conspicuous how disparate the phrases used to describe Caliban are, and how they fail to resolve into a gestalt, other than conveying that he somehow looks *different*. And curiously, most of these descriptions come from outside observers: apart from his mention of his long nails, Caliban never seems to be so concerned as to descant on his own deformity in the manner of Richard III. This division of description results in, among other things, precisely the interpretive division I've described: critics historically have been inclined to either trust the European characters in their exposition on Caliban, or to doubt the Europeans in order to recuperate for Caliban his humanity.

A quick look at the performance history of *The Tempest* shows that various Calibans have been subject to "fins, fish scales, tortoise shells, fur, skin disease, floppy puppy ears, and apelike brows."[53] Mark Thornton Burnett, in describing Caliban's stage legacy, notes the proliferation of

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[52] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean*, 1492–1797 (London: Methuen, 1986) 107. As Goldberg points out, Hulme here is echoing Caribbean poet George Lamming's observation that "Caliban is Man and other than Man" (qtd. in Goldberg, 42). Goldberg goes on to consider the process by which Caliban is dehumanized in the colonial scene, and connects this to a reading of his mother Sycorax's own indeterminacy (42-43).

[53] Vaughan and Vaughan, "Introduction" 34.

descriptions in the text and says that it is "only in theatrical production, where a directorial perspective is privileged, that visual anomalies are resolved, uncertainty is clarified, the social determinants of perception are subordinated and 'monstrosity' moves out of the realm of the individual beholder."[54] This is a reasonable way of looking at the problem, but it is one that preserves the media binary of page and stage, upholding the "directorial perspective." What I want to point out, then, is that to resolve the textual anomalies on stage, by choosing some of the descriptions and epithets and discarding others, also obscures the apparent deliberateness with which Shakespeare makes Caliban *unreadable*. Our inability to conceptualize Caliban's appearance through language alone points to a body, which in performance both solidifies and disambiguates his appearance – but nevertheless, to the spectator, raises the question of why so many characters describe Caliban so variously. Meanwhile as readers, we are trained to look for a body that isn't there and which, if it were to be materialized according to every verbal specification it is given, either verges on the *visually* unreadable in how nonsensical it is (a long-nailed, puppy-headed tortoise?) or which is disconcertingly, unreadably vague (an earthy, filthy, thing of darkness?). The intermediate nature of Shakespeare's theater is illustrated perfectly by this loop between text and performance, from which emerge readings of the play that are also unreadings of counter-evidence and other interpretations, readings that attempt to translate out of Caliban's threatening incoherence some sort of meaning. Caught between performance and print, Caliban thus embodies the media split at the center of Shakespeare's art.

With this is mind, though, it is necessary also to consider the relationship of Caliban to printed language by metonymy of Prospero's books. As James Kearney writes, "Caliban's violent insistence on the importance of the book as object not only fetishizes the book but

[54] Mark Thornton Burnett, *Constructing Monsters in Shakespeare's Drama and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) 134.

materializes Prospero's power as something distinct from both Prospero and his knowledge."[55] Kearney connects this with the construction of the discourse of the fetish in European colonial projects which, he argues, remaps the ignorance associated with idolatrous worship in the Reformation onto the "primitive" religious practices of indigenous peoples. But rather than revealing Caliban's simple ignorance – that is, rather than emphasizing how wrong he is to obsess over Prospero's books – the play seems to encourage our own fetishization of these objects since, unlike the historical fetishes constructed by the peoples colonialists encountered, they are taken to be the primary signifier of Prospero's magic, the material totem of European power and knowledge on the island.[56] Bruno Latour has coined the term "iconoclash" to describe the ambivalence that can sometimes prevail in the iconoclastic gesture: "one hesitates, one is troubled by an action for which there is no way to know, without further inquiry, whether it is constructive or destructive."[57] Is Caliban's obsession with the books merely his own "primitive" and hence fetishistic nature – which implicitly validates a superstructure of colonial assumptions – or is he something like an iconoclast, striking at the symbolic heart of Prospero's rule, attempting to clear our eye of the mote Prospero's magic has put there? In short, what can Caliban's obsession with Prospero's books tell us about *our* obsession with books?

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[55] Kearney, "The Book and the Fetish: The Materiality of Prospero's Text," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32.3 (2002) 447. This article is expanded as the fourth chapter of Kearney's book, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[56] As Kearney explains, it is the obsession with books as objects that allowed Europeans to belittle indigenous peoples; the colonialists themselves were safe in the knowledge that the book as an object was not important, but the ideas that it contained were. This argument resumes many points made by Mark Taylor, "Prospero's Books and Stephano's Bottle: Colonial Experience in *The Tempest*," CLIO 22.2 (1993):101-113. I deal with this argument later in my own discussion of Stephano's bottle.

[57] Latour, *Factish* 68. Burt and Yates draw Latour to coin the term "Bardoclash," which specifically describes the compounding effects of textual and cinematic cuts across Shakespeare adaptations, pulling into question audience or reader allegiances and their orientation toward the mediatized Shakespeare (*What's the Worst* 50). This is in line with their general project of pulling into question Shakespeare's singularity, but my use of Latour's terms to describe Caliban's aims is pointed to a different end.

Unread Caliban (II)

In thinking about the colonial situation inherent in the play, we must also think about the role books and the Western, humanist educational system have had in it, such as when Miranda describes Caliban as something upon which "any print of goodness wilt not take" (1.2.353). As Jonathan Goldberg notes, Caliban is conceived as a "failed pedagogic project" for both Miranda and her father, but it is in Miranda's words that the unreadable Caliban is rendered, additionally, unwriteable: "Pedagogy here is thereby a means for reproduction," says Goldberg, "cultural reproduction that nonetheless, in its very metaphorics of printing, suggests sexual reproduction as well."[58] Miranda's line, coming just after Caliban scoffs at his attempted rape of her and gloats about "people[ing] … / This isle with Calibans" (ll.351-352), certainly highlights the common early modern troping of sexual and textual reproduction. Lorie Jerrell Leininger has aptly called this moment a "trap" set by the play, as it forces the reader sympathetic to Caliban to in some manner unread his attempted rape, and the reader more inclined to Miranda to unread her reproduction of her father's colonial subjugation.[59] As Prospero insists to Miranda, "I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit / Than other princes can that have more time / For vainer hours, and tutors not so careful" (ll.172-174). But to the extent Miranda has internalized the colonial ends of Prospero's education, Caliban likewise exhibits his entrapment in European modes of thinking with regard to his erstwhile inheritance and ownership of the island and,

[58] Goldberg, 123-124; on the overlaps of printing, reproduction and gender, see also Margreta de Grazia, "Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg, and Descartes" in *Alternative Shakespeare* Vol. 2, ed. Terrence Hawkes (London: Routledge, 1996) 63-94 and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994).

[59] Lorie Jerrell Leininger, "The Miranda Trap: Sexism and Racism in Shakespeare's *Tempest*" in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, eds. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 292. This claim is resumed by Richard Halpern, "The picture of Nobody: White Cannibalism in *The Tempest*" in *The Production of English Renaissance Culture*, eds., David Lee Miller, Sharon O'Dair, Harold Weber (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994) 262-292.

indeed, his very patriarchal belief that he can reproduce himself if he can assume control of Miranda.[60]

If Caliban therefore desires the reproductive and fixitive powers of print, Miranda's response is to deny him imprintability altogether. They are locked in a synchronous orbit around what Kearney has called early modern "logolatry," a belief implicit in certain strains of Erasmian humanism that the power of "written language" offers education and transcendence in a way that, as the word "logolatry" itself indicates, is nominally opposed to but nevertheless formally similar to idolatry. The key for logolatry, as Kearney argues, is its conceptualization of writing as an "abstraction" from the "human body" that elevates language to an immaterial realm seemingly opposed to that of traditional idolatry.[61] But as Caliban and Miranda's lines indicate, there is no clear divide between an immaterial language and the material reproduction of text. "Imprinting" an idea in a book and the means by which we describe its process of comprehension and dissemination, as mediated "extensions" of humanity, blend easily with bodily concerns of sexuality and autonomy, and beyond that, the highly charged notions of civilization and barbarism. The printed medium, in this play's vision of humanist education, is not something which stands alongside the human being but functions in concert with it, a source of rich conceptual overlap that is part of the active definition of what the "human" in humanism *is*: people and their media are co-constitutive.

With that in mind, I ask: did Caliban learn to read? Here I invoke another meaning of "unread," carrying forward from my ruminations on the word thus far, but also adding a fairly literal dimension: is Caliban himself literate? Quite famously, it was Miranda who taught him to

[60] See, Goldberg, 22, where he is reading Caliban through George Lamming's postcolonial lens.
[61] Kearney, *The Incarnate Text*, 53-54; Kearney reads Sir Thomas More as Erasmus's less idealistic counterpart in the logolatrous tension that, he argues, can be detected throughout the latter history of European humanism.

speak, she "taught [him] language" (1.2.364), but what of the rest of his education? [62] Despite its apparent moral failure, Miranda admits Caliban's schooling was not totally ineffective: "thy vile race / (Though thou didst learn) had that in't which good natures / Could not abide to be with" (ll.359-361). Apart from his acquisition of European language, we do not hear much else about Caliban's education, save for his wistful remembrance a few scenes later of Miranda telling him the tale of the man in the moon (2.2.138). But this detail might be more illuminating than it at first seems. Adam Fox writes that in the early modern period "oral, scribal, and printed media fed in and out of each other as part of a dynamic process of reciprocal interaction and mutual infusion."[63] But the people who conducted these processes did not do so with equal access to the media: women, in particular, "infrequently intrude into textual sources," but nevertheless made use of printed ballads and fables as a "stimulus to the edification and entertainment of youngsters," while at the same time enacting oral transmission of knowledge in teaching children to speak and attend to various household duties.[64] They also told their own fabulous stories, however, and in "a long tradition of prejudice against the products of female culture as at best trivial and erroneous and at worst dangerous and corrupting," such nursery learning was looked down upon by fathers and humanist schoolmasters, encapsulated in the blanket term of "old wives' tales," and "rarely deemed worthy of transcribing, still less of dignifying in print."[65] Thus, Caliban's mention of Miranda's tale of the man in the moon suggests his immersion in women's nursery lore and belies his foreclosed education.

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[62] Mark Taylor argues that Caliban must be illiterate, which is why he cannot discern Prospero's singular magical book from the rest of his library: because he cannot read he "does not see *how* power resides in, or comes out of, books" ("Prospero's Books and Stephano's Bottle" 105).
[63] Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 410.
[64] Fox, 174.
[65] Fox, 174-175.

In the three-way schism between print, orality, and script we find Caliban and Miranda uneasily situated. Miranda taught Caliban to speak, and as his mention of the man in the moon indicates, she apparently did so with the help of the fables often employed by nursemaids and decried by learned men. Furthermore, media theorist Friedrich Kittler points out that as literacy spread in Europe, by the eighteenth century mothers and nurses were frequently tasked with the "alphabetization" of their children, rather than simply teaching them to speak.[66] As Kittler argues, the delegation of the first stages of literacy to women was an attempt to naturalize written language by aligning its "discourse network" with that of spoken language learned in the nursery so that "Woman" broadly construed "remains at the originary ground of all discourse production and is thus excluded from the channels of distribution as these are administered by bureaucrats or authors."[67] In Kittler's media theory, a "discourse network" is "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, process, and store relevant data."[68] Though he speaks of a time a century after the composition of *The Tempest*, something can still be gleaned from reading backward for the discourse network of the enchanted island. For one thing, from the story of the man in the moon, we can see how Caliban's education is marked – by the standards of early modern humanism – as unfinished, or at least substandard.

Aside from language and the old wives' tales Miranda has given Caliban, his education has stopped short insofar as he's been denied the extensive tutoring Prospero offered his daughter. Following on the work of Walter Ong on the acquisition of Latin as an early modern "puberty rite" for young boys, Bruce R. Smith has called early modern Latin a "tribal language of educated men," a "language of male power and private male desire[.]"[69] In early modern

[66] Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, 27.
[67] Kittler, 125.
[68] Kittler, 369.
[69] Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, 83-84.

England, prior to the moment that Kittler charts, the introduction to the humanist schoolroom and to literacy in both Latin and "the mother tongue" is conceived as a necessary movement in the process of male maturation. I am not saying Caliban should have learned Latin or that Prospero or Miranda once thought to teach it to him – but rather, it is precisely the transition marked by Latin acquisition and its concomitant introduction to general literacy that Caliban has been conspicuously denied, left only with a "basic" linguistic capacity fit for his role as a servant.[70] Thus Miranda's charge that he is unwriteable as well as unreadable takes on additional depth: locked out of the further reaches of education, the world of script, print, and literacy, Caliban is left only with his adopted tongue and a fancy inflected by supposedly childish fables.

And what of Miranda's education? Prospero boasts that the learning he bestowed upon her exceeded that of "other princes," and indeed, early handbooks of humanist education are deeply concerned with instilling particular reading practices in young rulers, since the difference between good and bad government was a core problem for humanist thinking.[71] As Erasmus writes in *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), "Whenever the prince takes a book in his hands, let him do it not for the purpose of enjoyment but in order that he may get up from his

[70] Todd Reeser argues that the learning of Latin also marked a break from femininity (associated with the mother and domesticity) into the professional, homosocial world of educated men, which humanists such as Erasmus saw as deeply necessary for producing a psychologically whole and sound male individual (*Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* 94-97). Caliban, whose education is forestalled after his attempted rape of Miranda, is thus doubly blocked from the fullness of European masculinity – since, prior to Miranda's tutelage, his primary caregiver was likely his biological mother Sycorax. This is articulated with a psychoanalytic bent by Janet Adelman, who sees Caliban as "violently separated from this maternal body by the father's intrusion...Perpetually excluded from the patriarchal world and the patriarchal psyche that cannot tolerate him, crying to dream again of a lost fusion with the place of plenitude" *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to the Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 237.

[71] This is especially true of the strain scholars have called "civic humanism," though this also encompasses the republican thought; see James Hankins, ed*, Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004). In this latter case, humanism concerned itself with training ideal political subjects. Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) and Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) provide, on the other hand, divergent examples of what humanist study looks like when turned explicitly to the person of the ruler. A more localized English example is Thomas Elyot's *The Book of the Governor* (1531).

reading a better man."[72] Therefore we might assume Miranda's literacy, even if deeply patriarchal humanist programs often fractured along the faultline of gender when it came to determining what degree of learning was appropriate to a woman.[73] But overall the play is not concerned too much with Miranda's reading ability: rather, she is fashioned as a spectator, as is apparent from her first scene, when she describes for her father the shipwreck she has witnessed and admits "I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer" (1.2.5-6). Prospero assures her that there's "no harm done" (ll.15), thus making, in the words of Douglas Bruster, "Miranda's relationship to Prospero … that of an idealized spectatorship to what is perhaps an equally idealized playwright."[74] Yet however susceptible to Prospero's illusions Miranda might be, the play shows us time and again his concern that he continue to guide her in parsing them, which suggests the relationship is less than ideal. In fact, Miranda's affective outburst when she runs to tell him of the shipwreck almost seems to overwhelm the pair – he must tell her at least twice more that no one was hurt (ll.15, 28-32) before he can calm her down enough to tell her the story of how they came to the island. And even then, he finds himself surprised at her own memory ("Had I not / Four or five women once, that tended me?" [l.47]) and grows agitated at his sense

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[72] Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 64.

[73] Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986) 33. The second chapter "Women Humanists," cited here, goes into extensive detail about how humanist education (which the authors conceive of as a method by which European cultures began to produce subjects more yielding to bureaucratic and civic authority) when pursued by women tended to undermine humanist pursuits generally: not only did women humanists not receive the respect or authority supposedly conferred by humanist education, they were often imagined as personally or psychologically monstrous in some way – Grafton and Jardine note their proverbial "predatory sexuality" (41), which in Shakespeare's play gets displaced on to the imperfectly matured Caliban (though Miranda's eventual decision to talk with Ferdinand in secret suggests a sanitized version of this). But whereas Grafton and Jardine dispel the notion that humanist education idealized learning "for its own sake," Prospero's education of Miranda puts him in an odd position: he is, on the one hand, training her to rule in some capacity, and thus seems in both her case and his own to prize learning as its own end; on the other hand, his desire for study is what lost him his dukedom and, as his anxiety regarding her actions and attentiveness indicate, he also fears Miranda's potential for waywardness, suggesting her education has done little to make him think she is particularly naturally docile toward his authority.

[74] Douglas Bruster, "Local *Tempest*: Shakespeare and the Work of the Early Modern Playhouse,", in Patrick M. Murphy, ed, *The Tempest; Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2001) 265.

that she is not listening ("Dost thou attend me?" and "Thou attend'st not!" [ll.78, 87]). Just as Miranda insists that no "imprint" of goodness will take on Caliban, Prospero frets continually about what he is able to impress upon his daughter.

But unlike Caliban, whose educational derail puts him in arrested development, Miranda – as her name suggests – presents a stumbling block in terms how one understands what one sees, whether that is spectacle in the theater, perhaps the words on the page, or, in the case of Prospero's remembrances, how well one attends to what one hears. If Caliban represents the trouble that arises in acquiring language both spoken and written, Miranda represents the potential trouble when orality and literacy have become "second nature," when it is unclear what the student can or will do with her mastered faculties (and the concern is by no means mitigated, from the early modern perspective, by these being *her* faculties). Insofar as the plot of *The Tempest* can be broadly construed as Prospero's stage-management of Miranda's continued education and marriage, the entire play demonstrates his inordinate concern with aligning events so that he can predict if not outright control Miranda's response, treating her as both spectator and unwitting company actor.[75] Overall he is successful, though despite his authoritarianism Shakespeare takes care to emphasize that the one element Prospero did not foresee – the one that almost undoes him and his plan – is Caliban himself, since it is his slave's "foul conspiracy" that interrupts his nuptial masque for Miranda and Ferdinand (4.1.139-140). I earlier claimed Caliban and Miranda are in synchronous orbit around "logolatry;" this shared center, I now venture, is

[75] On the play's debts to humanist programs of education, see Jonathan Bate, "The Humanist *Tempest*," in Claude Peltrault, ed*, Shakespeare: La Tempête. Etudes critiques*, (Besançon: Université de France-Gomté, 1994), 5-20; David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999), 185; Neil Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 142; Goran Stanivukovic, "*The Tempest* and the Discontents of Humanism," *Philological Quarterly* 85.1-2 (2006): 91-114, esp. pp. 101-102. Arguments for the play's humanist roots tend to bracket the issue of colonialism, with the exception of Rhodes and Stanivukovic, who acknowledge the issue to greater and lesser degrees; I have not attempted to preserve the dichotomy in my argument. For more on the intertwining of humanism and colonialism, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonialism 1500-1625* (Cambridge UP, 2000), 177.

embodied on the stage by Prospero, whose spirits and illusions are the fantasmatic complement to the books Miranda presumably was tutored from and which Caliban hopes to destroy.[76]

The message *of* the bottle or, drowning *in* books

In arguing that *The Tempest* is a humanist drama, Goran Stanivukovic has claimed that it is not merely an encomium to humanist ideals of politics, memory, and aesthetics, but also showcases "humanism's dark side," which he understands as the "discontent, especially of the humanist political pragmatism, and the abuse of authority and power, brought by the new individualism of the West."[77] The plot's chronological ground zero for this point is, of course, Prospero's logolatrous obsession with his library and his subsequent usurpation by his brother Antonio. As Prospero tells the story to Miranda, Antonio, "whom next thyself / Of all the world I loved," was made Prospero's lieutenant (1.2.68-69). Prospero, "being so reputed / In dignity, for the liberal arts without parallel; and those being all my study" decided to "cast upon" Antonio the business of governance (ll.72-75). Yet as he to his "state grew stranger, being transported / And rapt in secret studies" (ll.76-77), Antonio learned the workings of the duchy, handpicked important officials, and, as Prospero puts it, "new created / The creatures that were mine, I say, or changed'em, / Or else new formed'em" (ll.81-83). Prospero's dedication to the "bettering of [his] mind" through study (l.90), the humanist imperative, results in the what Stanivukovic has labeled humanism's "dark side," Antonio's Machiavellian politicking; what's more, Prospero sees himself as complicit in this transformation:

[76] As Stanivukovic puts it, "When Caliban suggests burning Prospero's books, he destroys not only the core of Prospero's power to subjugate him, but also the book's function as a tool for the education of youth" (103).
[77] Stanivukovic, 96. In Stanivukovic's formulation, humanism is essentially divided at its origins between a heady idealism and faith in the powers of learning and art for human betterment, and a cynical pragmatism and worldly approach to human affairs (the latter of which being best exemplified by the work and political legacy of Machiavelli).

> I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
> To closeness and the bettering of my mind
> With that which, but by being so retired,
> O'er-prized all popular rate, in my false brother
> Awaked an evil nature, and my trust,
> Like a good parent, did beget of him
> A falsehood in its contrary as great
> As my trust was, which indeed had no limit,
> A confidence sans bound. (1.2.89-97)

Whereas the traditional notion of humanist study, as Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine put it, is that "*educatio* … is the inspiring and transforming initiation into the mysteries which really does make a student a born-again 'new man,'"[78] Prospero's studious cloistering "awakes" evil in his beloved Antonio, who proceeds to "change," "form," and otherwise "new create" the state from the top down. By indicating he was like a "parent" who "begat" in Antonio "falsehood in its contrary as great / As my trust was," Prospero emphasizes his complicity in his own usurpation, the transformations in Antonio and the state and Prospero's language anticipates the bitter barbs of cultivation and reproduction that he and Miranda will exchange with Caliban later in this scene.

Prospero's humanist studies have resulted in personal failure and political discord, suggesting that something has gone off track when the humanist ruler finds his "library" to be "dukedom large enough" (1.2.109-110). And yet in his exile, he brings with him (thanks to Gonzalo's charity) a few of those "volumes" that he "prize[d] above [his] dukedom" (ll.167-168). Along with the various other small comforts and necessities that come with Prospero and

[78] Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to Humanities*, 3. The idea of the "new man" (evidenced earlier in Erasmus's call for the prince to come away from his books a "better man") is, of course, borrowed from Christianity's language of spiritual rebirth, which gained a particular edge during the Reformation. See Martin Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty" (1520), trans. W. A. Lambert and Harold J. Grimm. < https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/165luther.html>. Ian Green has traced the overlaps (and contradictions) between humanism and Protestantism in their specifically English formulations, finding that English humanism was warier of adopting religious language than its continental counterparts; see *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (London: Ashgate, 2009).

his infant daughter to the island, the inclusion of the books plants the seed for Prospero's continued studies and his eventual education of Miranda. It also anticipates the failed education of Caliban that echoes in startling ways Prospero's accidental miseducation of his brother. He admits that he at first offered Caliban "humane care and lodged [him] in [Prospero's] own cell" (ll.347-348). And yet despite all that, like Antonio's awakened lust for Milan, Caliban's proximity to Prospero and his daughter apparently awakened a lust for Miranda. The primary difference is that while Prospero partly blames himself in the case of Antonio, he is more than happy to chalk Caliban's actions up to an innate evil, rather than one that had to be "awakened." Prospero can easily trace Caliban's bad character back to his body (whatever physical difference he may or may not have) or to his mother, the witch Sycorax, thus deflecting his own role in Caliban's development (and hence the fact that Caliban's desire to control Miranda mirrors his own patriarchal concerns).

Moreover, Prospero's policing and manipulation of Miranda show how deeply Prospero fears that the moral certitude supposedly bestowed by his schooling is nothing more than a desperate wish, and in the process he overlooks his continued complicity in Caliban's actions. That Ariel must overhear and inform Prospero of Caliban's rebellious plot, for instance, demonstrates how Prospero's seemingly immaculately planned day on the island is not totally under his control; he made no special warrant for Stephano and Trinculo's separation from the rest of the Neapolitan party, but it happens anyway. And later in the play, Prospero risks repeating (with a difference) his earlier mistakes, allowing himself to become distracted by the wedding masque and forgetting "that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life" (4.1.139-141) – that is, he very nearly becomes the naïve and easily distracted auditor he initially accuses Miranda of being.

Thus, when Caliban urges Stephano and Trinculo to first "possess" and then "burn" Prospero's books (3.2.89, 95), he is not simply arguing for the destruction of the objects he believes give the Duke magical control of the island (though he does evidently believe this); he is proposing a gesture that obliquely reveals how for all its claims of moral and spiritual betterment, humanist education is a fragile system, a discourse network reliant on immensely vulnerable material objects and their relationship to equally vulnerable, material bodies. Caliban seems to find an escape from being perpetually unread by aligning himself with Stephano, Trinculo, and another type of book entirely: Stephano's "bottle," which, as the butler explains, "I made of the bark of a tree with mine own hands since I was cast ashore" (2.2.120-121). Within ten lines he has offered the bottle to Trinculo with the facetious command to "kiss the book" (l.126). In their Arden edition of the play, Virginia Mason Vaughan and Aldon T. Vaughan annotate this line to explain that kissing the book "is a sign of fealty, akin to kissing the Bible when swearing an oath," and in having others drink from the bottle the Vaughans suggest Stephano "realizes his control of the wine cask determines his authority, a parallel to Prospero's control of a different sort of 'spirits.'"[79] I want to dwell on this comparison a bit longer; it is tempting to see Stephano's bottle as a mere burlesque of Prospero's books, part of a dichotomy in which the book represents sound humanist learning and the bottle signifies moral weakness and rebellion.[80] Indeed, such a conventionally moralizing binary more or less fits with what

[79] *The Tempest*, ed. Vaughan and Vaughan, 2.2.n127

[80] Mark Taylor sees the substitution of bottle and book as allegorizing the essentially colonial nature of the play, with Caliban's naïve misconceptions about the nature of learning and materiality ("Prospero's Books and Stephano's Bottle"). Andrew Gurr, meanwhile, notes that Stephano claims to have fashioned the bottle himself, but is more concerned with the likely staging of the play in Shakespeare's time with a bottle of leather, which "invites a wonderfully comic analogy between the solemn thoughts prompted by the one kind [of book] and the alcoholic idiocies induced by the other. In what was still a strongly oral culture, invitations to read must have stood as a drastic contrary to invitations to imbibe alcohol" (550), "Stephano's Leather Bottle," *Notes and Queries* 257 (2012): 549-550. These are the most extensive treatments of the bottle I have been able to find, and I hope to complicate both, first by troubling the notion that it is only Caliban who fetishizes books, and second by paying more attention to the curious detail that Stephano made the bottle from tree bark.

scholars have identified as the even-handed character of Shakespeare's approach to alcohol.[81] Thus we might see that, in a travesty of the educative goals of humanism, Caliban aims to effect his transformation into a "new man" by way of his "new master" and his parodic bottle-book (2.2.180).

But we should be wary of making the contrast so simple. Early modern English society, as A. Lynn Martin writes, was deeply ambivalent about alcohol: while drinking's excesses did seem to provoke moral laxity and violence, nevertheless the "consumption of alcoholic beverages contributed to social cohesion and integration and fostered community solidarity."[82] What we see in the exchanges between Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban, then, is not merely a challenge to the rule Prospero has imposed on the island, but the possible emergence of an alternative order that parallels Prospero's by different means. It is worth noting that Stephano had to *make* his own bottle from a tree on the island. Andrew Gurr notes that the "most likely real object" the actor playing Stephano carried was probably a leather bottle, which would visually mimic the appearance of a leather-bound book.[83] With that said, it raises the question of why Shakespeare so conspicuously describes the bottle's production – surely Stephano could have carried a leather bottle to shore himself? But by making the bottle from a tree, Stephano

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[81] In the only extended survey on drink in Shakespeare's corpus, Buckner B. Trawick argues, uncontroversially, that Shakespeare believed "alcoholic drinks are good things when used in moderation, and bad things when used to excess" *Shakespeare and Alcohol* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1978) 56. More recently Joan Fitzpatrick has noted that Shakespeare and early moderns generally associate overindulgence with alcohol with a propensity toward violence and sexual excess; see *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the Plays* (London: Ashgate, 2007) 12.

[82] A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 5-6. As Martin argues, the sociability provided by alcohol and taverns was often constructed as competing with religious life in the form of a "devil church" (58-66).

[83] Gurr, "Stephano's Leather Bottle" 549. Stephano's description of the bottle's creation is usually cut entirely in contemporary performances in favor of simply supplying a prop glass bottle. But the production of glass bottles capable of withstanding long episodes of travel (let alone shipwrecks) was not terribly feasible prior to the end of the seventeenth century (Martin 8). Oliver R. Jones notes that sturdy green glass common in English wine bottles was not perfected until the 1630s, when most glassmakers switched from wood to coal furnaces (11). For a more comprehensive overview of the English glass industry, and in particular its transition from a luxury market in the early seventeenth century (at the time *The Tempest* was written) into a more general commodity market, see Eleanor Godfrey, *The Development of English Glassmaking*, 1560-1640

further establishes a parallel with Prospero's book – since the Latin word for book, *liber*, was also used to refer to the supple inner bark of a tree sometimes used as a writing surface.[84] And we must not forget that not too long after Prospero arrived on the island he apparently freed his chief spirit, Ariel, from a "cloven pine" (1.2.277). Moreover, the fact that Stephano "escaped upon a butt of sack, which the sailors heaved o'erboard" (2.2.119-120), which he then had to make usable with the island's resources, strongly indicates his parallels with Prospero (who arrived on "a rotten carcass of a butt" [1.2.146] with his daughter and his books).

Like Prospero, then, Stephano has brought something to the island, but also used what he has found there to create something new – which does *not* mean that either has made something from whole cloth, but rather, that the island as an environment provides a space for a (re)constitution of a social order in much the way Gonzalo earlier fantasized (2.1.148-165). But both situations also undermine Gonzalo's utopian idealism, suggesting the process of creating a world is much more difficult than simply imagining it. If we follow through on Stephano's own description of the bottle as "book," then it is not hard to see why Caliban thinks it sensible to trade Prospero's learning for Stephano's drinking: both are examples of how European interlopers on the island establish networks of command and social production with the aid of particular objects. Fashioned from a tree of the enchanted island yet filled with the "celestial liquor" (2.2.115) of European wine, the wooden bottle encloses the play's whirlpool of material, environmental, and cultural currents, and it becomes a literal medium for transporting the reservoir of spirits Stephano has at his disposal. In other words, the bottle-book hyperbolically

[84] The OED describes the longstanding etymological associations between books and trees in various languages, suggesting that prepared tree bark has historically served as a writing surface (hence the dual meanings of *liber*), while also speculating that the English word *book* derives from the Old Germanic word for the beech tree; furthermore, the Latin word for a book bound along one margin in the modern style, *codex*, is derived from the Latin *caudex*, meaning tree trunk. "book, n.". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/Entry/21412?rskey=OErA9Y&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed November 28, 2016).

represents precisely the type of "factish" Latour describes, an object that mediates agency and provides for subjects an autonomy that, in the modern view, cannot be seen as held by the object itself.[85]

Caliban certainly sees the parallel with his old master – "Here is that which will give language to you," Stephano says before he gives a recalcitrant Caliban his first drink (2.2.80-81), recalling Caliban's incomplete education. But does the bottle best the book? On the contrary, as the characters' own words indicate, the distinction grows muddier as the play goes on. Caliban alleges that without his books Prospero is "but a sot, as I am, nor hath not / One spirit to command" (3.2.93-94). The choice of the word "sot" here is crucial, for it means not only "fool" but has the particular connotation of being drunk.[86] In truthfully calling himself a drunkard, Caliban makes an unknowing play on the fact that it was actually *by* his books that Prospero was rendered a fool to begin with, intoxicated with excessive learning and ousted from Milan. And at that critical point, even with his entire library, he apparently lacked all spiritual aid the island affords. Thus, by emphasizing the bottle *as a medium*, a container or mediator for something else, Shakespeare's parodic subplot also brings us to question the nature of Prospero's books: not only what they contain, but what they do. It is difficult to discern, but just as the wine cannot be drunk without the bottle, Prospero's rule on the island is somehow materially underpinned by his books.

In arguing for the island's importance as an active, agential entity in the play, a ground of possibility and the true wellspring of Prospero's powers, Linda Charnes has written that "too much is attributed to Prospero's books" despite the their relatively scant presence, but while

[85] Latour, *Factish* 61. Latour goes so far as to say the true fetish of "the moderns" is that "they deny to the objects they fabricate the autonomy they have given them" (61).
[86] *The Tempest*, eds Vaughan and Vaughan, 3.2.n93, which references OED A 2, "One who dulls or stupefies himself with drinking; one who commonly or habitually drinks to excess; a soaker."

"[t]here is not a Shakespeare scholar alive who knows what is in those books" we, like Caliban, obsess over them because they function as "Shakespeare's precursor to Alfred Hitchcock's famous MacGuffin – that element in the story that everyone believes is 'the key,' but that is really just a constitutive distraction, a deflective catalyst for something else."[87] Just as the tree bark provides Stephano with the means to make his wine potable, so does the island seem to provide Prospero with a locale wherein his books and learning aren't utterly useless. But while I think Charnes is correct in her surmise that the island plays a bigger role in Prospero's magic than he might admit, I quibble with the notion that the books are *merely* a distraction, or even if they are, we might wonder why they're such a startlingly effective one. In addition to Caliban's fixation on them, the books have proven to be a point of obsession for numerous Shakespeare readers.[88] As Barbara K. Mowat says, within the context of the play, where the books represent potentially dangerous magical powers, Prospero's eventual decision to destroy his book is "only

[87] Linda Charnes, "Extraordinary Renditions: Toward an Agency of Place," 72 in Douglas Brooks, Matthew Biberman and Julia Reinhard Lupton, eds., *Shakespeare After 9/11: How a Social Trauma Reshapes Interpretation* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011) 57-80.

[88] James Kearney writes, regarding the wide variety of readings the island library has afforded, that these books "are all things to all critics" and he further alleges that "the critical tradition's need to allegorize Prospero's books are symptomatic of the fact that the books never materialize within the pages of Shakespeare's play" ("The Book and the Fetish" 433-434). This aligns well with Charnes's point about the books as Shakespeare's MacGuffin, a trope theorized by Slavoj Zizek as analogous to Jacques Lacan's notion of *objet petit a*: "the Hitchcockian object, the pure pretext whose sole role is to set the story in motion but which is in itself 'nothing at all' … the only significance of the MacGuffin is that it has some significance for the characters … [It is] the purest case of what Lacan calls *objet petit a*: a pure void which functions as the object-cause of desire" (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* [1989: repr., New York: Verso, 2008] 183-184). Yet insofar as the *objet petit a* covers a void, we can at least suppose that not all forms of papering over a void are equal, and at the very least, they are not neutral; indeed, the scholarly obsession with Prospero's books suggest that they don't have significance only "for the characters," as Zizek says. On this point, and following through on Kearney's argument, I propose the books are indeed fetishes, not just for the supposedly naïve Caliban, but for Prospero himself, and for us as scholars and readers. As Zizek elsewhere elucidates: "Crucial for the fetish-object is that it emerges at the intersection of the two lacks: the subject's own lack as well as the lack of his big Other. … The fetish functions simultaneously as the representative of the Other's inaccessible depth *and* as its exact opposite, as the stand-in for what the Other itself lacks ('mother's phallus')" (*The Plague of Fantasies* [New York: Verso, 1997] 103). That the fetish can materialize as a dematerialized book warrants closer attention, which I offer here by way of media theory. If fetishism, as Zizek argues, "objectivizes" the subject's "'true belief' … although [we] never actually experience them this way," our lack of Prospero's books suggest something about the *form of the book itself* that is utterly important to the play's reception (*The Plague of Fantasies* 120).

prudent" as he returns to Milan; on the other hand, she acknowledges, within "the frame of literacy as civilization and power" the vow "seems, to lovers of books and admirers of Western civilization, both problematic and poignant."[89] The crux is, unlike Stephano's "book," we don't really know what Prospero's tomes contain and how, exactly, they work on the island. Sycorax, it seemed, had no books; is this why Prospero claims she "[c]ould not again undo" the "torment" to which she subjected Ariel (1.2.289-291)? But we should be wary of trusting Prospero's insistence that it was his "art" alone that brought Ariel into his service (ll.291), since until he came to the island he was quite artless.

So whereas it's quite clear what Stephano brought to the island and what the island has given him, Prospero's situation is harder to parse; it's not even particularly obvious how many books he has, since Caliban always mentions multiple books, Prospero does so once, and twice refers only to "my book" (3.1.84, 5.1.57). The effect of this, as Mowat's comments above indicate, is that we as readers – and as scholars – are forced to think about Prospero's books not as specific titles, but as just books, or by then end just as a *book* – the *idea* of a book.[90] Moreover the books offer – like Caliban – a pointed example of Shakespeare's intermediate art, poised at the crossroads of theater and print: the play deals not with books themselves so much as it is a dramatic performance grounded in the active but unseen presence of books (or, if we are to follow the lead of the First Folio, where *The Tempest* is afforded pride of place as the first play in the compilation, a book that reproduces and remediates past performances). And, to revisit

[89] Barbara K. Mowat, "Prospero's Book," 31, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.1 (2001) 1-33.

[90] I am indebted for this phrase from the title of Charlotte Scott's *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007). Arguing that book is not simply a material object but a hermeneutic frame for early modern understanding of the world, Scott writes of *The Tempest* that "the theatrical presence of the book begins to harness the drama to processes of signification: processes … that challenge the very foundations upon which they are built." In *The Tempest* we "notice the ubiquitous power of Prospero's books," but the play leads us to wonder "upon what basis, through what indications and contra-indications, contingencies, prisms, and performances does the book achieve such a status?" (24).

McLuhan's maxim again, the medium here is the message: the medium of the book is rendered contentless, and by thus giving us only the idea of the book, untitled and unread and (with a conservative view of the text) wholly unstaged, Shakespeare draws our attention to how *important* the book is, how important it *feels*, not only for Caliban and Prospero, but for his audience, even as the play demands we also recognize the book's absence and imagine its end.[91]

This, then, in the final resonance of the "unread" I wish to consider in this chapter: what are we to make of Prospero's book(s)? As Charnes says, we do not and cannot know what is in them; what Shakespeare emphasizes is not so much what these particular books are, but what books seem to do: they draw attention and they distract, certainly, but they also (like Stephano's bottle of alcohol) operate as nonhuman mediators that create and sustain the relationships constituting the nominally human community. They offer power, or at least the illusion of power, but in unpredictable ways and in unpredictable circumstances. And, as the play's end suggests, they can be sacrificed.

Prospero's phantom limb: Life, death, books, and Ovid's Medea

I want to consider why the number of books discussed throughout the play varies before moving on. First, it is clear from Prospero's relation of his history to Miranda that he took multiple books to the island; Caliban's comments corroborate this. However, in Act 3, after Miranda and Ferdinand meet in secret (so they think), Prospero finds himself "rejoicing" at their mutual attraction, but then adds: "I'll to my book, / For yet ere suppertime must I perform / Much business appertaining" (3.1.93-96). Apart from his eventual vow to destroy the book (more

[91] Sarah Wall-Randall makes an adjacent point, studying the metaphysical conceits attributed to reading in the early modern period, when books "might be imagined not only as an object to be used in one's study or private space but, indeed, as itself a private space where the mind can go, a little room for contemplation," with a bounded beginning and end in between the covers of the codex (*The Immaterial Book: Reading and Romance in Early Modern England* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013] 77).

on which soon), this is the only point where we come close to seeing what Prospero actually *does* with his books, and it seems to amount to nothing more revelatory than "study them." Yet it is the subsequent scene where Caliban urges Stephano and Trinculo to seize and destroy the "books," and the scene after that is when the spirits of the isle, at Prospero's direction, prepare a banquet for Alonso's party. Again, while Caliban thinks the books grant Prospero magical power, the history the play provides suggests otherwise. But if the spirits are in fact, as Gonzalo remarks, the "people of this island" (3.3.30),[92] then perhaps they are what was missing in Milan: in a manner analogous to how the island's trees provide Stephano with the bark to decant his wine, Prospero's opening of Ariel's pine allowed him to form what Charnes calls a "symbiotic relationship with the mysterious will of the island" and its powers, which Caliban (and generations of critics) have misrecognized as Prospero's own will.[93]

But the question remains: why "my book" as opposed to "my books"? Why should Shakespeare make it clear that many were brought to the island, but one is of premier importance to Prospero? A possibility here is that when Prospero refers to "my book" he is referencing what Barbara Mowat has identified as a "grimoire," not a printed volume at all but a private manuscript created by a magician for his own personal use. However, as Mowat notes there is "an insouciance and arrogance" in Prospero's dealing with the spirit world that seems at odds with the highly deferential character of extant grimoires.[94] To that end, Mowat describes how Prospero's command of magic seems to be marked, metatextually, as fictional, especially in his "instantly recognizable" quotation of Golding's translation of Ovid's Medea when he promises to drown his book.[95] If we press upon this thought, remembering that Prospero's learning in

[92] My thanks to Linda Charnes for pointing out this strange detail during a seminar discussion.
[93] Charnes, "Extraordinary Renditions" 73.
[94] Mowat, "Prospero's Book" 27.
[95] Mowat, "Prospero's Book" 28.

Milan made him renowned for "liberal arts," we find another possibility for the book as Prospero's manuscript: a scholar's commonplace book, which "record[s] extracts from a person's reading with some form of organization."[96] In the same way the grimoire compiles obscure and magical knowledge for the early modern magician, the commonplace book is a technology by which knowledge is collected from personal research and organized by the scholar's assignation of various "commonplace" topical headings, themes such as governance, love, and so on. As Charlotte Scott has written, commonplace books exemplify the ways that human minds, books, and the world interact.[97] Thus, when Jonathan Bate says Prospero's invocation of Ovid is a callback to "witchcraft's great set-piece," referenced and remixed by multiple playwrights in the context of supernatural stage business, he calls our attention to how Shakespeare marks Prospero's magic and his book's destruction as quite literally the deployment of a commonplace.[98] But curiously, the use of a commonplace is immediately followed by a promise to destroy the sort of book in which one might write it.

What I am suggesting is that Prospero's book – the volume he calls "my book" – is a record of his own scholarship, whether it is magical or humanist, or perhaps both. Following Charnes's point that we be wary of approaching the book in such a way that "lures us into fetishizing the autonomy of Prospero's character and the power of his 'intellect,'"[99] I want to draw attention to the fact that Prospero's great invocation of magic is not really his own, but a conspicuously Ovidian quotation. Shakespeare here challenges a later notion – anticipating, in a

[96] Fred Schurink, "Manuscript Commonplace Books, Literature, and Reading in Early Modern England," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73.3 (2010) 454. For more scholarship on commonplace books, see the reference essay by Victoria E. Burke, "Recent Studies in Commonplace Books," *English Literary Renaissance* 43.1 (2013): 153-177.
[97] Scott, *The Idea of the Book*, 2-4.
[98] Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 252. For more on the way *The Tempest* echoes classical poetry, see Barbara K. Mowat, "'Knowing I loved my books': Reading *The Tempest* Intertextually" in Hulme and Sherman, eds, *The Tempest and Its Travels* (27-36).
[99] Charnes, "Extraordinary Renditions" 72.

way, theories of intertextuality and poststructuralism – that books are pure expressions of individual subjectivities. Historian of the book Roger Chartier has traced the development of the Foucauldian author-function throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, describing how the "text … is invested with an aesthetic of originality" that comes to "transcend[] the circumstantial materiality of the book," and it is this "transcendence that distinguishes it from a technological invention and it acquires an identity immediately referable to the subjectivity of its author rather than to divine presence, tradition, or genre."[100] That is to say, historically speaking, logolatry wins: the text becomes unanchored from its material and local production to represent the timeless, disembodied mind of the author.

Indeed, a few decades after Shakespeare, John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644) repeatedly imbues books with a type or life, if not outright human life:

> For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. (342)[101]

Here and elsewhere in Milton's argument there's certainly a whiff of an astringent Protestantism: if every person is free and in fact mandated to read the Bible (which is the Word of God), then it follows that a mundane book could contain the essential truth of the human author. Books are likened to creatures, not just made but born – and like other human births, they may "prove[to be] monster[s]" and be "justly burnt, or sunk into the sea" (346). There is also a humanist

[100] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Linda G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994), 36-37.
[101] John Milton, *Areopagitica* in *Paradise Lost: An Authoritative Text, Sources and Backgrounds, Criticism* (New York: Norton Critical Editions, 2005) 339-374.

component to Milton's argument, in that he believes the rediscovery and restoration of classical authors and their learning via ancient texts has strengthened and enlightened the Reformation spirit. Reminding his readers that there was a time when Christians were by pagan rulers banned altogether from teaching or learning, Milton quickly slips in the fact that "all the seven liberal sciences [were coined] out of the Bible" and so the general basis for learning is still deeply Christian (349); after this foundation, one should be free to study whatever one likes in the hopes of procuring knowledge, suggesting that the individual exists (or through liberal study, is brought into existence) prior to the wider learning it undertakes.

More contemporary to Shakespeare, however, and of direct relevance to *The Tempest,* are the words of Michel Montaigne (1603): "I have no more made my booke, then my book hath made me: A book consubstantiall to his Author: Of a peculiar and fit occupation. A member of my life. Not of an occupation and end, strange and forraine, as all other books" (384).[102] Obviously there are parallels with Milton's later defense, wherein every book is apparently "consubstantial with the author." Yet Montaigne's statement is qualified. His book's aim is not, strictly speaking, the "strange and forraine" hands of his readers, but rather his ruminations upon himself. He cops to its deeply personal nature, in other words, and as the author he manages to blur Milton's later distinctions: whereas Milton sees the book as a preservative "vial" holding the author's essence – like Stephano's bottle of wine – Montaigne playfully implies that in writing, his character becomes visible retroactively, that only in processing his book's "peculiar and fit

[102] Michel Montaigne, *The essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (London: Val. Sims, 1603) < http://gateway.proquest.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99847104 > The quotation I deal with here is from Montaigne's essay "On giving the lie," in his second volume. However, Shakespeare's indebtedness to Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" has been remarked in the characterization of Caliban and the description of an ideal society given by Gonzalo after the shipwreck. See Arthur Kirsch, "Virtue, Vice, and Compassion in Montaigne and *The Tempest*" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 37.2 (1997): 337-352; more recently, see also Kenji Go, "Montaigne's 'Cannibals' and The Tempest Revisited," *Studies in Philology* 109.4 (2012):455-473.

occupation" has Montaigne become himself, emphasizing the book as an extension, an organic "member" of his life. So too we might understand Prospero's dedication to "his" book – a personal project, a product of his studies, a handwritten account, perhaps, encompassing all his time on the island: a diary, a grimoire, and a commonplace book – as indicating his own recognition that he can only "fashion" himself with the help of discursive, material technologies that exist outside of and prior to him.[103] And just as he claims that upon returning to Milan his "[e]very third thought shall be [his] grave" (5.1.312), the pledge to drown the book symbolizes, for Prospero, his separation from the island, the forces it allowed him to command and the studies he carried out there, and thus amounts to a very literal type of self-sacrifice.[104]

Returning to Ovid, we can ponder the additional context supplied by Prospero's choice of quotation. In Book 7 of the *Metamorphoses*, Medea provides the model for Prospero's speech after Jason has asked her to save his father Aeson from "deathes door" (VII.225).[105] Medea heads out to the wilderness to invoke Hecate and various earth spirits in providing her with "herbes that can by virtue of their juice / To flowring prime of lustie youth old withred age reduce" (VII.284-285). She follows up on her invocation by gathering the necessary herbs and, quite surprisingly to the reader and, presumably, her gathered onlookers, slitting the throat of the old man she is supposedly saving: "and letting all his old bloud go / Supplies it with the boyled juice," and in a second surprise, this transfusion heals his wound and restores his youth, a wondrous and "monstrous act" (VII.371-382). What looks like murder ends up being magical

[103] I echo Stephen Greenblatt's notion of "Renaissance self-fashioning" as an adaptation of the cultural "control mechanisms" described by sociologist Clifford Geertz: "the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment" *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980) 3.

[104] Combining the theories of Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida, Burt and Yates write that "…the play, we think, discloses an awareness of the ways in which the 'life' and 'death' of books, technology, and media cohabit with the lives of persons and animals— 'life' lived, read, stored, and archived in the form of some proliferating, hybrid, dead-alive zoë/bio/bibliography or writing machine" (*What's the Worst Thing* 80).

[105] All citations from Ovid's Metamorphoses, trans. Arthur Golding, ed. John Frederick Nims (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2000).

resuscitation – though of course, what looks like murder *also* ends up being murder, since Medea shortly hereafter tricks the daughters of Jason's uncle Pelias into exsanguinating their own father while she pours a placebo youth potion into his wounds (VII.446-450). Medea's magic and treachery show that apparent death might result in renewed life – but then again, it might not. There's no real way to know until one makes the cut. When Shakespeare adapts Medea's initial speech for Prospero, however, there is no apparent promise of renewal: his speech ends only in a promise to "abjure" the "rough magic" that he is even at the moment enacting after this last charm has succeeded, and of course, concomitantly, to "drown [his] book" (5.1.50-51, 57). The cut is promised, though not yet made; in Prospero's future lingers a divestment of uncertain consequence.

Steve Mentz writes that in Shakespeare, when "the sea-bed gets invoked … it represents the impossible fantasy of knowing the unknowable, reaching the bottom of a bottomless place."[106] Dan Brayton concurs, arguing that for Shakespeare "[t]he sea is a space of invisibility and unknowing, where the limitations of sight undermine epistemological certainty; its reaches belong to the epistemological limits, lying beyond the conceptual pale but exercising a powerful influence on human life."[107] It is therefore no accident, I think, that Prospero's unstaged, unreadable book, whose absent presence so acutely determines the course of the play, is what is finally relegated to the sea-bottom's epistemological limit. Burt and Yates, noting Caliban's desire to burn the books, write the act would result in Derridean "ash … evidence of the madness and the violence of the archive fever, the arson at work. Likewise, burial, however deep, however many fathoms down," as Prospero promises to do with his staff, "comes with the

[106] Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (New York: Continuum, 2009) xiii. It is worth noting that this notion of an epistemological limit in the ocean has some consonance with my discussion of the books' function as a fetish/*objet petit a* in n88.

[107] Dan Brayton, *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012) 67.

possibility of exhumation and retrieval – the coming back of the thing that's buried."[108] But "book drowning," they continue, "manifests as an act of disposal and storage allied to what seems an impossible retrieval … a strange mode of archiving, mind you, storage predicated on irretrievability, living on as a mode of blocked access."[109]

Even in its irretrievability the book holds fascinating power, a prime example of what affect theorist Lisa Blackman has called "those registers of experience that are at work in objects, artifacts and practices," rather than being the sole domain of bounded and autonomous subjects.[110] In Blackman's affect theory, "bodies are not considered stable things or entities, but rather are processes which extend into and are immersed in worlds," in much the way Montaigne suggests when he calls his book a "member" of his life.[111] Thus, we might liken the diegetic and receptive obsession with Prospero's unseen book(s) to the sensation of a collective phantom limb. So what do we do with Prospero's vow to autoamputate – to "drown" his book?[112] His description of his magic as "rough" suggests, first of all, his awareness that it is a thing that is potentially violent, crude, or imperfect – indeed, many connotations of "rough" in early modernity pertain to the texture or quality of an explicitly *made* or manufactured thing, a *created* thing.[113] Prospero conspicuously calls attention to the quality of his art shortly after we see the metatextual crack that aligns his magic with Medea's witchcraft and Ovid's poetry, pointing to a

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[108] Burt and Yates, 94.
[109] Burt and Yates, 95-97.
[110] Lisa Blackman, *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (London: SAGE, 2012) 4.
[111] Blackman, 2.
[112] See Vivian Sobchack , "Living a phantom limb: On the phenomenology of bodily integrity," *Body & Society* 16.3 (2010): 51–68. Sobchack uses the medical phenomenon of the phantom limb – often experienced by amputee patients – to articulate her idea of a "morphological imagination" as an affective conceptualization of the body and its incorporation. While the book is not, obviously, a literal part of Prospero, I intend to play on Blackman's notion of the extensions of affect through artifacts, as well as McLuhan's notion of media as extensions of the human body; as he argues, media can operate as a form of "autoamputation" by materializing and localizing certain affective or psychological states (*Understanding Media* 63-64).
[113] "rough, adj. (and int.)". OED Online. September 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/view/Entry/167845?rskey=SyqwjK&result=3&isAdvanced=false (accessed December 01, 2016).

visible seam in Shakespeare's own creative process. Prospero's autoamputation, therefore, suggests he will rip this very seam: his abjuration speech is a promise to the spirits of the island that he will destroy his record of learning and his connection to the island in exchange for the "airy music" to charm the frantic Neapolitan party and see his plan to fruition (5.1.54). We see this happen almost immediately; we do not, however, see the destruction of the book, and the question remains of what is left of Prospero once severed from it.

Curiously, though, Prospero's vow suggests that the book will go where no human character in the play goes, though it is often threatened. That is to say, Prospero's vow seems to make good on the constant fear throughout the play of *humans* drowning. Miranda's first scene has her lamenting the souls aboard the ship she saw sink, and Ferdinand and Alonso each spend the majority of the play thinking the other has drowned. Apart from the book, Ariel is the only thing in the play to "tread the ooze / Of the salt deep" (1.2.252) and return, and he fully admits to not being human (5.1.20). The eerie picture he paints for Ferdinand of the Alonso's body immersed in saltwater is rightly famous:

> Full fathom five thy father lies,
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes,
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange. (1.2.397-402)

Alonso, thinking it is son who has drowned, later wishes he was instead "mudded in that oozy bed" (5.1.151). For both Ferdinand and his father, being at the bottom of the sea signifies irretrievability, a sorrowful loss; yet, as Ariel indicates, this loss triggers a peculiar metamorphosis. McLuhan writes of Ariel's song that it demonstrates how the powers of storage and preservation are also a means of "transformation."[114] By being submerged in the ocean, the

[114] McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 88

body is not annihilated but analogized: bones to coral, eyes to pearls. From the slimy ooze emerges something else. "Human bodies plunge into hostile seas," Mentz writes of Ariel's song, "and poetic forms attempt their salvage."[115] But Prospero's drowning of the book, in a sense, effects the opposite, submerging a materialized embodiment of poetic and literary form, leaving it to an unknown transformation. The threat to the human body throughout the play is finally promised to be enacted upon the body of the book, yet as in the case of Medea's magic, the effect is uncertain.

But the transformations the human body is imagined to undergo in the ocean's metamorphic ooze, from flesh to mineral, only emphasize the metamorphic potential inherent in the early modern book, which already emerged from the water once, when the paper of its pages was made from repurposed rags, soaked in vats and pressed dry.[116] In this sense Michael Witmore is correct in his heavily Spinozist reading of *The Tempest* as an "extended tutorial … in the ethical and emotional consequences of our immanent immersion in a world."[117] Shakespeare demonstrates with stunning acuity the final implications of both the fetishistic literary humanist idea that books can substitute their authors, as well as the media studies perspective that the "human" is an agglomeration of material and ideological media-effects. If a book can make a person, or replace a person, it can also die, or appear to die, in their place. Opposed to the idea that the book is somehow permanent, enduring, and timeless, Prospero's book helps us envision the tomes of Shakespeare's age as they were: always already salvaged material, prone to

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[115] Mentz, 18.

[116] Peter Stallybrass and Margreta de Grazia, "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44.3 (1993) 280. In addition to the methods of papermaking in Shakespeare's time, Stallybrass and de Grazia collate a selection of references from early modern authors who were aware of the materiality of their pages and their potential fate as repurposed wrapping or waste paper. Their facts on the technical side of paper production are drawn from Dard Hunter's *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft* (New York: Knopf, 1947).

[117] Michael Witmore, *Shakespearean Metaphysics* (New York: Continuum, 2008) 30.

destruction and repurposing.[118] Such contingency echoes the proverbial fragility of the human body, but also allows the idea of "the human" to exist in a mediated network where it is not left a "bare forked animal," (*King Lear* 3.4.106) because it is always already constituted through its fellowship with the various technologies, materials, and creatures that surround and sustain it.[119] And as Stephano's bottle tells us, and as Sycorax's mysterious, bookless past intimates, the volumes that we prize are not the only nonhumans around which life might constellate.

"What's past is prologue": Shakespeare's media apocalypse

"The world of humanism that Shakespeare evokes in *The Tempest*," writes Goran Stanivukovic, "is the world of yesterday, its glory gone. The usurpations of power of Milan and Naples, two city-states at the peak of their glory, suggest, in historical terms, the anticlimax of their power."[120] Just as the political decline and unexpected union of the city-states suggests that an era has ended even as another begins, so too does the loss of Prospero's book – and the multitudinous failures of books throughout the play, from Prospero's initial usurpation to Caliban's cruelly imposed ignorance – suggest the potential failures of books and literacy as tools for human improvement, even as, outside Shakespeare's theater, the book trade was only growing in power. As a matter of fact, the hope for Shakespeare's theater is equally melancholic:

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[118] Contrary to the permanence and stability traditionally ascribed to books, Francis X. Connor has written that this notion was not so settled in early modernity, especially with regards to the folio format, whose size and cost meant not only was it difficult and financially risky to produce, but meant that more often than not folio books were remaindered and repurposed as scraps (*Literary Folios and Ideas of the Book*, 127-128).

[119] Citation from the Arden edition of *King Lear*, ed. R.A. Foakes (London: Thomson, 2005 [1997]). Even in this scene, where Lear famously laments the "uncovered body" that "ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume" (ll.100-103), the human can only be conceptualized by its relationship to animals and the materials they provide. Lear's subsequent stripping of his own garments therefore enacts a kind of fantasy of radical divestment in an attempt to reach "the thing itself" (ll.104), but which nevertheless relies on its enmeshment in a world (and attempted extrication from that world) in order to achieve definition. For more on the anthropocentric limits of this scene, see Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), especially chapter 3, "Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Happiness and the Zoographic Critique of Humanity."

[120] Stanivukovic, 11

Prospero's dramatic masterpiece, the wedding masque for Ferdinand and Miranda, never receives a proper conclusion, instead ending "*to a strange hollow and confused noise*" when Prospero remembers the encroaching threat of Caliban. Despite this, Prospero inveighs Ferdinand to

> …Be cheerful, sir.
> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And – like the baseless fabric of this vision –
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.147-158)

What begins as an attempt to calm Ferdinand and Miranda by insisting the performance ended all according to plan ("as I foretold you") suddenly veers into a darker rumination, jumping from the abrupt dissolution of the masque to the loss of all known reality. Prospero starts by telling Ferdinand the play is over; he ends by reminding his son-in-law that everyone will die someday.[121] Scott Maisano has compellingly argued that, given the Lucretian influence on the natural science of Shakespeare's day, Prospero's reference to the loss of the "great globe itself" does not simply mean the earth (as it is traditionally read) but rather, grounded in scientific atomism, indicates the contingency and eventual decay of the entire cosmos.[122]

But as Maisano reads Lucretius, Prospero's talk of death is not entirely pessimistic:

> No one should fear the prospect of 'eternal death' because the eternity that follows from the end of our life is no different from the eternity that preceded it: in both cases, the transient atomic configurations that make possible the sensitive,

[121] Ellen MacKay's piquant, and I think accurate, gloss on this speech is that "life imitates its theatrical imitation by following it headlong into the abyss" (*Persecution, Plague, and Fire,* 15).
[122] Scott Maisano, "Shakespeare's Revolution – *The Tempest* as Scientific Romance" in Virginia Mason Vaughan and Aldon T. Vaughan, eds, *The Tempest: A Critical Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) 171.

> perceptive and rational creatures that we are simply do not exist. The endless afterlife is merely a return to endless pre-life[.][123]

We might also think again of Marshall McLuhan, who wrote, "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist. I am an apocalyptic only."[124] As B.H. Powe explains, McLuhan's apocalypse is not a religious Armageddon, rather:

> Apocalypse is heightened awareness, the moment of epiphany, where an individual sees into, or acutely apprehends, his or her time and place. An apocalypse could seem violent, a heart- and mind-wrenching experience. It can be dislocating, surely a subversion of the status quo for the one who experiences that shattering moment. Apocalypse spells the end of the ideas and opinions that we have so far held. The usurping moment proclaims: reality is not settled.[125]

In other words, McLuhan's apocalypse is the obvious result of his belief that media innovations are constantly reconfiguring human life in ways that we cannot, for the most part, immediately understand: "We are on the verge of the apocalypse," McLuhan wrote, "In fact, we are living it."[126]

Shakespeare, I think, intuits a similar media apocalypse in early modernity.[127] Ends and beginnings, as in the case of the drowned book, or Medea's (media's?) treacherous magic, begin

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[123] Maisano, 179.

[124] Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion*, Eric McLuhan and Jacek Szklarek (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999) 59.

[125] B.W. Powe, *Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye: Apocalypse and Alchemy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014) 16.

[126] McLuhan, *The Medium and the Light*, 56. Or, as he put it in his 1960 *Report on Project in Understanding New Media* for the National Association of Education Broadcasters and Toronto's Ryserson Polytechnic Institute, "Our educational, political and legal establishments are scarcely contrived to cope with such change [as new media incite]. There is no mercy for culture-lag in our new technology. There is no possibility of human adaptation. Yet in all these situations we confront only ourselves and extensions of our own senses. There is always the possibility of escape into understanding. We can live around these new situations, even if we cannot live with them" (512). See "Appendix: Ryerson Media Experiment" in *Understanding Media*, ed. Gordon. The experiment, which was the culmination of extended research, interviews, and seminars McLuhan led about new technologies in education, was the basis for what was to come in *Understanding Media*.

[127] As Stefan Herbrechter writes, Shakespeare's texts "anticipate the impending disappearance and displacement of their world, and they solicit the reciprocal recognition that our world, likewise, conceals the evolving past of a prospective present" ("Shakespeare Ever After: Posthumanism and Shakespeare" (*Humankinds: The Renaissance and Its Anthropologies*, eds. Andreas Hofele and Stephan Laqué, [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011] 261). I add that the "disappearance and displace" Shakespeare and his texts so uncannily foresee is, at least partly, an awareness of the finitude of media and the relations they instantiate.

to run together. Drowning a book – which, again, is akin to reversing the process by which its pages were made – suggests a process of remaking or recycling, a transformation into something else. Drowning the book is relegating it to neither archive nor ash. In the ooze of the ocean, books and bodies undergo material changes, suspended between life and death. And in the theater, too, Prospero describes the emergence and return of dreams and ourselves to some vague and indeterminate "stuff."[128] The play ends on just such a transition, a "moment of epiphany" engineered for a spectator to "acutely apprehend[] … his or her time and place," to become aware of themselves as living through an ending that is also a new beginning, where reality is not settled. In the epilogue, Prospero turns to the audience to inform them that he "must be here confined by you" unless the spectators "release" him with their applause (Ep.4, 9). As the text indicates, this is "spoken by Prospero" – he does not break character, though he addresses the audience directly, asking if their "gentle breath" (Ep.11) will aid Ariel in providing the "calm seas" and "auspicious gales" he has just promised the other characters for the journey home (5.1.315). The play thus concludes with a question, a note of uncertainty: will the spectators grant Prospero's request? They cannot be stage-managed to the extent Miranda is. Prospero has no choice but to allow them to do what they will. The play has dissolved, or is in the process of dissolution; the audience decides what will come next.

The boundary between the audience and the dramatic medium they observe is rendered nonexistent, for a moment linking both the real and play-world so that neither can be fully separated from the other. The theater, as something separate from everyday life, is not sustained until the audience makes a decision to applaud and break (or reinforce, perhaps) the spell. And of course, in attending a performance, who would not comply with the actor's request? But

[128] As Maisano argues, this "stuff" is not merely the substance of people but, by way of Lucretian thought, suggests a conspecific "stuff" at root in all creation ("Shakespeare's Revolution" 176).

textually, as readers, things are still suspended – who applauds at the end of a book? Or its beginning? If this play is Shakespeare's last solo effort as a dramatist, if this epilogue is, as many sentimental critics have read it, his farewell to the theater, we must acknowledge that it also the first play in the 1623 Folio. The end of the theater, after the applause has died down, becomes the beginning of a book – whose drowning is scheduled, its end foretold, but which for the moment remains unstaged and unreadable.[129]

Media are not forever. This was Shakespeare's insight, poised between performance and print, recognizing the uses and shortcomings of either. Plays end and books are lost. He was haunted, as I've said, by a later media theory which would be able to articulate this insight, and this anxiety: that "man" is, in the end, not much more than "his" extensions. Thus, if media are neither total nor forever, then neither – if the recent "posthumanist" turn in theory means anything – are humans.[130] Whatever humanism is, scholars long have argued it came into being along with its necessary corollary – the autonomous human subject – in the Renaissance.[131] In

[129] "The epilogue," write Burt and Yates, "serves then as a kind of guarantee or placeholder for the drowning of a book and the burial of a staff that fail to appear even as they serve also as a remainder or conservation of the voice that Prospero now should be felt to lack" (*What's the Worst* 89). By catching the moment of intermediation, the epilogue thus paradoxically makes us feel the power of Shakespeare's theater and Prospero's book even as they are set to conclude.

[130] See Richard Grusin, "Introduction" in *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 1-18. I have used here the term "posthuman," which Grusin stoutly rejects for its "claim about teleology or progress in which we begin with the human and see a transformation from the human to the posthuman, after or beyond the human" (ix). Nevertheless, his goals are in deep agreement with mine insofar as he paraphrases Latour: "'we have never been human'" or rather, what is human "has always coevolved, coexisted, or collaborated with the nonhuman," and so human definition always results, in part, from a fuzzy, mediated relationship between human and nonhuman (ix-x). I use the term "posthuman," however, as it is articulated by two theorists who have greatly informed my own work, N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).

[131] Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) a foundational text in this regard; however, the idea has been challenged by poststructuralist criticism such as Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy* (1984); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985); Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980); more recently, Cynthia Marshall in *The Shattering of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002) has accused the Foucauldian bent of many New Historicist accounts for essentially endorsing a triumphalist view of an emerging "modern" individuality and subjectivity that picks and chooses its social ties (ie, it literally self-fashions).

the midst of this, one playwright in particular is held up as our exemplar: as Harold Bloom has so infamously claimed, in an incredibly brassy deployment of the Shakespeare-medium, it was Shakespeare who "invented the human as we know it."[132] Shakespeare has persisted as *the* textual corpus that delivers us our "humanity" in much the same way classical authors delivered a historical tradition to him and his contemporaries.[133] Whatever our view of that, I have been arguing that he in fact delivers to us our end.

Shakespeare's legacy rests not on a singular invention, but rather a layered media event: humanist school to commercial theater to circulating text, and thence to "the great variety of readers" and the tradition of solitary and classroom reading, to professional criticism and the continuous successive reprints and media adaptations that have occurred from 1623 to now. Bloom writes that "the representation of human character and personality remains always the supreme literary value," and it is because Shakespeare's texts represent so great a variety of characters to so great a variety of readers that he is an unmatched master.[134] It seems to me that

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[132] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead, 1998) xx. What Bloom seems to mean here, specifically, is not that human nature changed at Shakespeare's advent, but rather that Shakespeare provided us with a language to describe the variety and complexity that was *already there*, that Shakespeare "taught us to understand human nature" (2). Much abler critics than I have already rebutted Bloom's ostentatiously contrarian sally against critical theory's use of the Shakespeare-medium. Suffice it to say, though I am only lightly engaging with his work here, I do not take for granted a human stability that Bloom supposes. For more in-depth considerations of Bloom's book, see Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer, eds, *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001).

[133] Aside from Bloom's book, Emrys Jones's *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) proves illustrative here, if only because Jones takes the opposite tack from Bloom's claims of Shakespeare's expansiveness and originality. The volume is a collection of essays looking over the state of literary humanism prior to and contemporary with Shakespeare, speculating about his learning and how he internalized it. As Jones alleges, Shakespeare emerges as "a transmitter—he lets others speak through him. He lacks egoism and self-assertiveness, and is all the more original for seeming not to seek after originality" (18). While Jones reads Shakespeare as transparent, however, I have argued the Shakespeare-medium is anything but, and instead deeply inflects the meanings we attempt to pass through it. As Jones continues: "There is in Shakespeare ... an astonishing ease and rapidity of commerce between literature and life, between literary texts and the life of spontaneous feeling. It is often as if, at some deep level of his mind, Shakespeare thought and felt in quotations" (21). Jones is arguing that Shakespeare as a transmitter clearly delivered to modernity the wisdom of others by means of his own poetry; again, my point diverges in that, as I see it, Shakespeare does not seamlessly meld life and art but operates as a testing ground for discerning how life and art are always already in co-creative, co-constitutive tension.

[134] Bloom, *Invention* 3-4.

this is a profoundly limited approach to Shakespeare, and to literature in general; to anticipate only our own "human" faces in the texts we encounter means we are destined to always dismiss the voices that are never quite what we expect them to be. By taking Shakespeare, humanity, and reality as settled, we ignore McLuhan's call to recognize literature's prophetic potential. Yet while Shakespeare's textual presence makes him more amenable to a certain conceptually humanist educational program (as Bloom might indicate) I believe these texts preserve traces of early modernity's media anxieties, and thus, part of our legacy in Shakespeare is not the literary humanism of timeless values, or universal "character," but an understanding of the process by which humanity and its characters are constructed and mediated through particular, historically contingent sets of circumstances and technologies.[135]

The "invention" of humanity implies a time when humanity *was not*; Bloom's argument that Shakespeare invented us attempts to erase the fact that humanity must not only be *invented* but consistently maintained, extended into the future, as Latour might say, "in the passing" between mediators. The human, that is, exists only between mediators – it is intermediate. Shakespeare's power, in this light, is not that he represents timeless values, but that the Shakespeare-medium, founded on the animating tensions inherent in early modernity's media revolutions, make visible the precarious relations we rely upon to construct humanity-as-such. In the final moments of *The Tempest* Shakespeare connects the play and its spectatorship, having revealed how media are destined to dissolve, to fail us, to change, to end, to become outmoded, to be forgotten; but the afterlives of repeat performances and reread texts beckon, drawing us

[135] Arguing against what she calls "the fetish of character" Linda Charnes writes: "In an environment that is not merely background for one's will, in conditions in which there is only minimal negotiation between persons and places, the truth of character is found only in its *situation*" ("Extraordinary Renditions," 75). By way of Latour, I have suggested that rather than seeing character as timeless and self-sustaining, it is more of a *factish* entity – a supposition that may allow us to consider how character, despite inhering in a situation, despite its artifice and construction, is not somehow more or less important than the environment that produces it, but a part of it.

into the world of intermediation. Shakespeare did not "invent" humanity so much as his works operate as vectors by which we might articulate its intensely intermediate nature, its place at the intersection of various ideological, material, and technological supports: what humanity looks or looked like, and what, in the rapidly approaching and unreadable time to come, it may be.

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Ziyad, Hari. "Playing "Outside' in the Dark: Blackness in a Postwhite World." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3.1 (Spring 2017): 143-161.
Zizek, Slavoj. *The Plague of Fantasies.* New York: Verso, 1997.
—. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. 1989: repr., New York: Verso, 2008.

J. Michael Lutz

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in English literature, 2017.
Dissertation: "Unhuman Encounters in Early Modern English Drama"
Committee: Linda Charnes (chair), Ellen MacKay, Joan Pong Linton, Justin Hodgson.
M.A. in English literature, Indiana University, 2013.
B.A. in English, Earlham College, Phi Beta Kappa, 2011.

PUBLICATIONS

"South of Elsinore: Actions that a Man Might Play," coauthored with Matthew Harrison, in *The Shakespeare User*, ed. Louise Geddes and Valerie Fazel, Palgrave-Macmillan, October 2017.
"Strange Intelligence and Understood Relations: Prophecy, British Union, and the Agency of Landscape in *Macbeth*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, revise and resubmit.
"Poisoned Sight: Race and the Material Phantasm in *Othello.*" *Journal of Narrative Theory*, under review.
"Beyond Gamification: Playing with Verbs in the Online Classroom." *Research in Online Literacy Education*, under review.

HONORS, GRANTS, & AWARDS

James A. Work Prize for Distinguished Graduate Student in English, Indiana University-Bloomington, 2017.
Graduate Conference Travel Award, College Arts and Humanities Institute, Indiana University, 2017.
Sanders-Weber Fellowship in English, Indiana University, 2017.
Mary Gaither Prize for Outstanding Graduate Student Essay in British Literature, Indiana University, 2014.
Roy Battenhouse Fellowship, Department of English, Indiana University, 2011.
Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Scholar for First-Generation Undergraduates, Earlham College, 2010.
Eli Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship, Randolph County, IN, 2007.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

"'Play the Cur': *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the Performing Animal," as panelist for "Thinking of Difference: Critical Approaches to Narratives of the Non-human" at the North Eastern Modern Language Association, forthcoming, April 2018.
"The Message *of* the Bottle: On the Absence of Leather in *The Tempest*,"

"Shakespeare and the Creaturely World" seminar, Shakespeare Association of America Conference, April 2017.

"Beyond Gamification: What Can Game Design Teach Us about the Online Class Classroom?" Conference on College Composition and Communication, March 2017.

"The Once and Future Kingdom: *Macbeth*, Prophecy, and the Problem of British Union," the Medieval Studies Institute Symposium, Indiana University, April 2015.

INVITED TALKS

"Think.Play with Michael Lutz." Think.Play Videogame Studies Work Group, University of Oregon, January 2016.

"Brabantio's Dream: Imagining Blackness in *Othello*." Renaissance Studies Department Graduate Student Roundtable, Indiana University, December 2015.

"Game and Narrative Design in Twine." Professor Lydia Wilkes's Class in Digital Rhetoric, Idaho State University, November 2015.

"Digital Humanities and the Digital Classroom." Indiana University Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference Roundtable, April 2015.

"Introduction to Twine and the Classroom." Faculty Digital Humanities Workshop, Earlham College, May 2015.

"Cognitive Dissonance: A Scholarly Roundtable on GamerGate," FirstPersonScholar, May 2015.

"Introduction to Twine and the Classroom." English Department Digital Humanities Pedagogy Work Group, Indiana University, March 2015.

TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

Associate Instructor, English Department, Indiana University, 2012-Present.

COURSES TAUGHT

Online ENG-W 131: Elementary Composition. An online composition course for 23 first-year students. Introduces students from a wide array of majors to the fundamentals of college level writing and research through the analysis of popular culture. Planned and developed a multitude of asynchronous activities and assignments for students to complete on their own, including the production of multimedia modules and supplemental videos, as well as assignments for synchronous teleconference lectures. Instructor of record for 6 sections.

ENG-W 231: Professional Writing. An elective course for 25 mid-level undergraduates from assorted majors focusing on professional genres. Focused on rhetorical strategies in memos, professional correspondence, resumes, cover letters, and recommendation reports, as well as visual and

multimodal rhetoric in charts, graphs, and videos. Instructor of record for 1 section.

ENG-W 131: Elementary Composition. A composition course for 23 students. Introduced students from a wide array of majors to the fundamentals of college level writing and research through the analysis of popular culture. Revised syllabus to introduce more collaborative work and multimodal assignment elements, including collectively written papers, research projects, and presentations. Instructor of record for 5 sections.

PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Editorial Assistant, Reed Elsevier Publishing. Cambridge, MA. Present.

Senior Designer/Developer for Online ENG-W131: Elementary Composition, Indiana University, 2014 – Present.

Communications Advisor, Fresh Meadow Farms, LLC (nonprofit), Plympton, MA. 2016-2017.

Graduate Employee Organization Steward, Indiana University English Department, 2014.

Graduate Student Mentor, Indiana University McNair Program, 2014.

Logistics Committee, Indiana University English Department Graduate Student Conference, 2014.

"What Do You Need to Know About Grad School?" McNair Program Alumni Presentation and Workshop, Earlham College, invited panelist, 2013.

AFFILIATIONS

Modern Language Association.

Shakespeare Association of America.

National Council of Teachers of English.

SELECTED GAMES AND PUBLIC HUMANITIES WORKS

"Malevolent Magic Realism." Podcast interview, *No Cartridge Audio*, 2017.

"Horror Games with Michael Lutz." Interview, *First Person Scholar,* 2016.

"The Games People Replay: Toward a Performative Account of 'Replayability'." Middle-state publication for *First Person Scholar*, 2014.

The Uncle Who Works for Nintendo (videogame), selected as *Paste* Magazine's Indie Game of the Year, 2014.