A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH:

SPECTRES OF SPECTATORSHIP IN *RICHARD III* AND *CYMBELINE*

By Chelsea Pratt

Department of English
McGill University, Montreal

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ghostly collectives in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Cymbeline.* It brings together two fields of research: the study of death as a religious experience in early modernity and more recent theories of audience response that are predicated on the very liveliness of playgoers. Although these fields may seem disparate, I argue that Shakespeare appears to have seen something productive in the death state – something that, if learned by the living, would make for a more engaged audience in the playhouse. By putting crowds of spectres onstage, Shakespeare explores the experience of mass spectatorship, presenting it as a kind of collective witnessing that becomes necessary to the creation of moving art. I argue that both *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* privilege a Catholic model of mourning and mortality, despite the presence of characters that espouse a Protestant view of the same issue. Rather than reading this as Shakespeare's religious bias, I suggest that the unorthodox portrayal of death in these plays allows the spectral spirits onstage to more closely resemble Shakespeare's spirited spectators. Transgressive though these onstage crowds may be, they bring about each play's happy ending. As a result, they put in question much of the work done on Shakespeare's opinion of crowds, scholarship that has primarily relied on scenes taken from *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*. In contrast to these plays, *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* mount a mirror onstage that positively reflects the audience's role back to them. That mirror also expands their role. A throng of spectral beings, these plays suggest, has interpretive agency and creative potential, and as such, it is integral to the construction of compelling stories.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse examine les représentations spectrales dans « Richard III » et « Cymbeline » de William Shakespeare. Elle rassemble deux champs d'études distincts : l'exploration de la mort comme expérience religieuse et les théories de l'engagement des auditoires. Dans ces œuvres, l'expérience du spectateur est représentée sur scène par des ensembles spectraux. Cette illustration décrit le phénomène d'observation collective ; un élément nécessaire pour la création de l'oeuvre artistique. Cette thèse propose que « Richard III » et « Cymbeline » privilégient l'exemplaire catholique au sein des notions du deuil et de la mortalité, malgré la présence des personnages qui soutient des perspectives protestantes. Contrairement aux critiques qui attribuent son interprétation peu orthodoxe de la mort aux préjugés religieux, cette thèse suggère que l'intention de Shakespeare était d'incarner l'esprit de son public dans ces représentations spectrales. Bien qu'ils soient fauteurs de troubles, les spectres suscitent un dénouement heureux auprès de l'histoire. Ces évènements, par conséquent remettent en question beaucoup des théories concernant la représentation des foules – notamment les théories qui s'inspirent de « Julius Caesar » et « Coriolanus ». Contrairement à ces œuvres, « Richard III » et « Cymbeline » dépeignent une image positive des spectateurs et leur reflète ce rôle d'auditoire, tout en l'approfondissant. L'évidence suggère que les spectateurs, avec leur esprit imaginatif et leur pouvoir d'interprétation, jouent un rôle essentiel dans la création des histoires.

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1. Introduction: Apocalypse Now, Early Modern Editions

I begin with the end of the world. Educated Protestants at performances of William Shakespeare's *Richard III* or *Cymbeline* might very well have been put in mind of doomsday when, in Act Five, a throng of ghosts filed onstage. According to the official religion of early modern England, apparitions indicated the apocalypse and spectres signaled end times. When the sins of humanity necessitated the total destruction of this world, a crowd of spirits would rise from their graves and begin their ascent heavenwards, a portent of the coming end (Cohen 20). Historically, that doctrine comes straight from the locus of the Reformation, Wittenberg – and dramatically, it does as well. Returning from university there, *Hamlet's* Horatio describes the collapse of the Roman Empire as a kind of diminutive doomsday. It is heralded by – what else? – a mob of ghosts:

> A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
> The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
> Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets,
> As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
> Disasters in the sun, and the moist star
> Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands
> Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse. (*Ham.* 1.1.114-20)

Having learned from history, Horatio now interprets his own spectral sighting as a "precurse of fierce events" (*Ham.* 1.1.121), a "prologue to the omen coming on" (*Ham.* 1.1.123). He is not wrong: the young Fortinbras is coming, and by the close of the play, Denmark will be something drastically different from what it once was. The ghost of

Hamlet Senior does in fact herald the end of an era. For those who inhabit the Danish kingdom (or, in Horatio's anecdotal evidence, the Roman Empire), this moment marks the end of the world as they know it. Little wonder, then, that each tale includes a haunting, the very thing that foretold the termination of the earthly epoch in early modern Protestant orthodoxy. Despite internal disagreement over the corporeal nature of the final resurrection, a dogmatic tenet of this Church was that ghosts existed only at the end of days – until then, spirits were spurious and dead bodies remained firmly in their resting places (Cohen 46).

Understood in this religious framework, *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* are both apocalyptic in their endings: as each play approaches its finale, the stage crowds with multiple revenants whose return heralds a satisfying conclusion that has been, like the biblical apocalypse, foretold. In *Cymbeline*, a tablet serves as a makeshift Book of Revelation:

> Whenas a lion's whelp shall, to himself unknown, without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of tender air; and when from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches, which being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow, then shall Posthumus end his miseries, Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and plenty. (5.3.232-8)

In its forward-looking complexity, the difficult imagery of this prophecy certainly resembles that found in the Book of Revelation. Familiar too is the discussion of resurrection – indeed, the 'revival' of that pair of cedar branches, Guiderius and Arviragus, resonates with the heavenly ascent of the two witnesses (*Geneva Bible,* Rev. 11). In Revelation, the description of the reward allotted to these (and all) Christian

believers follows an in-depth chronicle of the earth's destruction. Echoing this trajectory, Britain is promised "peace and plenty" (*Cym.* 5.3.8) only after a period of intense struggle, separation, and warfare has been endured.[1] That prophecy is mediated by the ghostly Leonati in *Cymbeline*, and is in turn interpreted by the Roman soothsayer (5.3.204; 5.4.443-59). Likewise, the biblical vision of the world's end comes down from God Himself in Revelation, but is filtered through His angel and then disseminated by John, who is charged as follows: "that which thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches" (1.11). Furthering this connection is the fact that *Cymbeline*'s last scene is chock full of revelations for characters onstage. As Ros King notes in passing, it contains around thirty different denouements (1, 3).[2]

There is no corresponding tablet in *Richard III*, but the genre itself ensures there is no need of one. As a romance, *Cymbeline* teeters towards tragedy, only to be pulled back from the brink with a literal *deus ex machina*. The entrance of Jupiter astride an eagle (*Cym.* 5.3.186) is unexpected; an audience cannot anticipate this divine arrival. But *Richard III*, which announces itself as a historical tragedy (or tragic history, depending on the scholarly interpretation), makes spectators into the equivalent of *Cymbeline*'s

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[1] For some scholars, the resumption of Roman tribute marks the end of the play as a return to the status quo (Parolin 201 and Puljcan Juric 448). Lea Puljcan Juric, for example, insists that "Britain's revival will come when the cruel winter of Cymbeline's rule gives way to the spring of his sons' dominion" (448). But the prophecy has been fulfilled; spring has already sprung. Peace and plenty are to arrive at the same moment that Posthumus's miseries end, when Guiderius and Arviragus are "jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow" (*Cym.* 5.4.440-1). The brothers have been reunited with their family and Posthumus's miseries are quite clearly at an end. It seems to me inarguable that the promised harmony has arrived.

[2] Additional resonances with the Book of Revelation have been noted elsewhere. Donna Hamilton observes that early modern Protestants read *Cymbeline* in the same way that they did Revelation: as an allegory for the battle between their Church and Catholicism (137). She persuasively suggests that the Queen, Cloten, and Iachimo represent either the Whore of Babylon or the Antichrist (141).

tablet.[3] Here, the ghosts' prophetic vision of the Battle of Bosworth's outcome is already inscribed on the cultural imagination by tragic convention and common knowledge of what was, at the time, the not so distant past. In that sense, this ghostly message almost seems to come down from spectators – like the all-seeing God, those in the audience always know what awaits characters onstage. As such, the ghosts' repetitive prophecy is never news to spectators, even if the sudden arrival of these spirits is. From their privileged position in the yard and the galleries, playgoers watch characters spiral towards doom in the same way that God, from His vantage point in heaven, foresees the apocalyptic ruin of the world. And just as the Book of Revelation describes destruction before offering up the image of heaven, *Richard III* dramatizes a horrific reign that precedes a supposedly glorious one – that of the Tudors.

Both *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*, then, share an apocalyptic underpinning, one that most blatantly manifests itself with the appearance of multiple bodily spirits whose presence signals the termination of an era within the play world, as well as the approaching end of the theatrical event itself. It is my contention, however, that these ghostly collectives serve a far greater purpose. Conventionally, the term 'apocalypse' suggests doom, but it actually denotes the epiphanic disclosure of knowledge (*OED Online*) – that is why it appears in the Book of *Revelation*. In *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*, ghostly crowds are a harbinger of nearing conclusions, but also an intimation of each play's revelatory quality.

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[3] Stephen Marche notes that *Richard III* has always been "notoriously difficult…to categorize" (38) in this regard, while Phyllis Rackin argues that it occupies a liminal space between the trend of the history play and the new rise of the tragic genre (43).

Scholarly discussion of Shakespearean crowds has generally focused on living, breathing mobs, such as those found in *Julius Caesar, Coriolanus,* or *Titus Andronicus* (see Doty, Hadfield, Munro, Stirling, Thaler, and Weigandt, among others). In the field of reception studies, scholars have considered another assembly – one whose presence in the playhouse could never be scripted, but depended on weather, travel time, ticket prices, and various other everyday concerns. Playgoers, of course, form a constant offstage crowd in Shakespeare's theatre. Perhaps guided by plays like *Julius Caesar*, in which a staged crowd is easily acted upon by rhetorical performances, much of the work done in reception studies has privileged the question of how theatre affects the audience. That tendency is readily evident in the title of Jean Howard's formative monograph, *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration,* for example. It can also be seen in the work of scholars like Tom Bishop and Bridget Escolme, who helpfully speculate on how the collapse of illusion impacts playgoers. Elsewhere, Cynthia Marshall, Jennifer Low, and Jeremy Lopez have focused on the body in their exploration of theatre's affective capabilities: Marshall asks in what ways performances can physically influence spectators, Low considers how various plays exclude their audiences, and Lopez explores the actor's form as the site where humour and meaning is readily inscribed for spectators ("Imagining"). As of late, reception studies have turned to consider the audience as an interactive, responsive entity, one at least partially responsible for making meaning in a play and therefore part of the creation of drama (see Bennett, Low and Myhill, or Pangallo). In other words, these scholars have emphasized the *liveliness* of spectators as a group; an audience always has vital creative force.

I share this emerging sense that spectators are integral to crafting a play in performance, and agree that the interaction characteristic of the early modern playhouse – with its raucous, lively crowds – complicates any neat divide we might make between the realms of aesthetic production and reception. It perhaps seems counterintuitive, then, to draw a parallel between Shakespeare's spirited spectators and the spectral spirits found in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline.* And yet that is precisely what this thesis proposes. I here examine the ghostly collective as it appears in both plays, considering how each is designed to involve Shakespeare's contemporary spectators, the corporeal crowd watching from the yard and the galleries. In so doing, I seek to unite two areas of research that may at first appear disparate: the study of death as a religious experience in early modernity and more recent theories of audience engagement that are predicated, paradoxically enough, on the very liveliness of spectators.

If that parallel seems impossible on the surface, it is unavoidable on a linguistic level. The terms 'spectator' and 'spectre' both derive from a latinate root meaning "to look" or "to see" (*OED Online*), suggesting a shared role or responsibility – that of bearing witness.[4] Playgoers and phantoms alike are observers: they behold the events played out before them, albeit on stages of varying sizes. Indeed, as *Cymbeline* draws to a close, we learn that the ghostly spectres of Posthumus's family have been spectators all along. Just like Shakespeare's assembled crowd, they have witnessed the action onstage and know of Posthumus's marriage and exile, as well as of Iachimo's subsequent

[4] Although the term 'spectre' did not come into popular, vernacular use until the nineteenth century, the term was clearly in circulation – it appears in numerous early modern texts and was used by James I himself (Davies 3).

treachery (*Cym.* 5.3.146-62).[5] The prophetic ghosts of *Richard III*, meanwhile, bear witness to the future. These phantoms know how events will end for the eponymous protagonist and his military rival: "God and good angels fight on Richmond's side, / And Richard falls in height of all his pride" (*R3* 5.5.129-30). That foresight is the same kind gifted to any playgoer who purchases entry to a tragedy, and to every audience member at least somewhat familiar with English history.

It is often said that in crafting the mobs of *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare offers a direct and disdainful representation of his rowdy playgoers, a connection reinforced by the long tradition of making the actual audience into extras for these scenes (Dobson 19). Ian Munro, for example, argues that "[i]n the figure of the giddy, many-headed multitude we can see the theater's urban audience, who misinterpret, who continually judge by emotion, who are wayward, who make demands, who gape for innovation, who show no reason in their theatrical appreciation" (131). In the same way, Shakespeare's portrayal of unruly spectators onstage (at the Pageant of the Nine Worthies or *Pyramus and Thisbe*) can be seen to critique less agreeable audience behaviour.[6] I argue that the ghostly collectives of *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* complicate this dominant interpretation of Shakespearean crowds. Though unmanageable and transgressive, these

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[5] The Oxford editors replace the name 'Iachimo' with the more modern 'Giacomo,' but I have chosen to use the original throughout this thesis. More compelling evidence exists for their decision to call the heroine 'Innogen,' but I likewise retain the First Folio's 'Imogen.'

[6] See *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.2.539-707) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (5.1.108-345). In both cases, the audience's conduct partially results from the inexpert performances they view, but the plays themselves suggest that such behavior is still inexcusable. "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (*LLL* 5.2.617), Holofernes complains. As with his earlier critique of Biron's sonnet, that assessment appears on point. Likewise, Theseus's proposed model of magnanimous spectatorship – in which "[n]oble respect takes it in might, not merit" (*MND* 5.1.92) – seems more appealing than his actual behaviour does later.

spectral throngs nevertheless bring about a gratifying conclusion to their respective works. Their interference is, in other words, theatrically sanctioned.

While *Hamlet, Macbeth,* and *Julius Caesar* all contain an individual ghost, *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* are unique in how they present a ghostly *collective*. Because of that, they provide a much more compelling reflection of Shakespeare's own audience, that diverse crowd momentarily united by spectacle – for as scholars like Andrew Gurr, Anthony Dawson, and Lopez have ably argued, early modern playgoers are best understood as a collective; and indeed, they understood themselves as one (Gurr 1; Dawson and Yachnin 97; Lopez, *Theatrical Convention* 17). Shakespeare himself seems to have seen something transformative and empowering about shared experiences, an idea that Hippolyta points to in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Theseus might dismiss the lovers' tale as mere fancy, but for this woman, the fact that "all their minds [were] transfigured so together" (*MND* 5.1.24), makes the story far more meaningful and worthy of thorough contemplation. I argue that similar support for the experience and potential of the collective can be seen in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*. By putting crowds of spectres onstage, Shakespeare explores mass spectatorship, illustrating the responsibilities of playgoing as a communal enterprise. These works are apocalyptic – that is, revelatory – in that each speaks to the necessity of seeing, looking, and witnessing in order to make the art that moves us *together*. Both plays dramatize an experience of spectatorship as collective witnessing, mounting a mirror onstage that reflects the audience's role back to them. As with any looking glass, that reflection is insubstantial and immaterial in nature – in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*, it is quite literally phantasmal.

2. Dearly Departed? Death's Re-Reformation

Faced with what appears to be Fidele's lifeless body in Act Four of *Cymbeline*, Arviragus proposes an indefinite project of mourning: for as long as he lives in this place, he will "sweeten [the boy's] sad grave" (*Cym.* 4.2.221) with seasonal foliage. The image becomes one of constant reburial, as first summer's blooms and then winter's mosses form a protective shroud over the corpse. Not everyone, however, is so keen on this plan for prolonged obsequies. Grief-stricken as well, Guiderius nevertheless curtails his younger brother's lengthy lament:

> Prithee have done,
> And do not play in wench-like words with that
> Which is so serious. Let us bury him,
> And not protract with admiration what
> Is now due debt. To th' grave. (*Cym.* 4.2.230-4)

Perhaps Guiderius is worried about overextending himself. The brothers, after all, already have one onerous grieving commitment to uphold: as Belarius reveals, they visit Euriphile's resting place "every day [to] do honour to her grave" (*Cym.* 3.3.105). This moment in the play, only the brothers' second experience of a loved one's death, therefore seems to present an opportunity to ritualize the process of grieving, to create funerary traditions for their small community to follow. Indeed, this project is one to which Arviragus is devoted. Apparently having taken to heart Fidele's directive that "the breach of custom / Is breach of all" (*Cym.* 4.2.10-1), Arviragus uses precedent as procedure when it comes to grief: he heralds the loss with a musical instrument that has gone unplayed "since death of [his] dear'st mother" (*Cym.* 4.2.191) and insists that the

same dirge be sung as was then, changing only Euriphile's name for Fidele's (*Cym.* 4.2.236-9). When it comes to grieving, Arviragus aspires towards continuity with the past and also with nature – his plans to bedeck the body with foliage, he says, are learned from how the robin behaves (*Cym.* 4.2.225-30).

Rather than becoming ritualistic fodder, however, Fidele's death in fact ushers in a new era of mourning. Guiderius, as we have seen, resists the rote model of bereavement suggested by his brother. While not wholly oblivious to funerary custom – Fidele's head must be laid to the east, as per Belarius's practice (*Cym.* 4.2.256-7) – Guiderius does have a novel approach to the actual process of grieving. Notably, Arviragus's imagined mode of mourning tethers the corpse to this living world. The prince's own existence becomes, in part, dedicated to the dead: he imagines ritualistically returning to pay tribute and envisions, through the strewing of flowers or moss, reburying the body time and time again. Roger Warren identifies a similar aesthetic of incorporation between the living and the dead in Arviragus's speech, when he notes how "the language and rhythms convey a haunting impression that the body is itself becoming part of the natural world evoked" (24). By contrast, Guiderius refuses to let the dead dwell, denying them any place on this earth or among its living inhabitants. "[W]orms will not come to thee" (*Cym.* 4.2.219), he promises Fidele's corpse, for what is putrefaction but the process of going back to ground, of dead matter becoming somehow reanimated in nature's life cycles? While his brother imagines humans and animals alike attending to the grave, Guiderius is willing to admit only supernatural visitations: "With female fairies will his tomb be haunted" (*Cym.* 4.2.218). Otherworldly guests are fitting company for what Guiderius seems to see as the unearthly corpse.

Put simply, the future Briton king insists on a fixed and impermeable boundary between this world and the next, while his younger brother incorporates the dead into the realm of the living. Although set in a pagan past, the scene thus distils a central debate in early modern England – that is, the question of how to deal properly with the dead. Certainly, the Reformation changed the face of religious life. But it also transformed the religious understanding of death. Given Christ's liminal status as both a God and a man, the body was central to Catholic worship, and that reverence had, for a long time, extended to the corpse (Zimmerman 7, 25). Since the ascent to heaven was seen as a bodily one, the corporeal presence of a dead person suggested that the transformation was as yet incomplete. Every corpse was, in other words, still partially alive. Perhaps counter intuitively, decay was the process by which spiritual elevation occurred – a person had not fully passed on until his body had putrefied (Zimmerman 27, 34-5). Mourners would ring bells and perform various other rites so that a corpse remained in its grave long enough for this decay to occur, thereby preventing the frightful occurrence of revenants (P. Marshall 15). Later, those left behind were expected to shorten a departed soul's period of purgation through prayer or the purchase of indulgences. For Catholic mourners, burying a body clearly did not equal laying it to rest.

It was not just stubborn Catholics who found themselves assailed by England's Reformation. The long deceased suffered an attack of sorts as well: charnel houses were demolished, brass tomb markers melted down, and bodies unceremoniously disposed of in marshes (Mullaney 75-7). These "assaults on collective memory" (Mullaney 77) were essentially an attempt to relegate the dead to a world beyond this one, where they would no longer be the concern of the living. After all, it is difficult to win converts when

apostasizing simultaneously condemns one's Catholic ancestors to hell. By renouncing the doctrine of purgatory, which the Church of England had done by 1563 (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 235), Reformers furthered this divide between the living and the dead. They also attacked the lifelike quality given to the corpse, stripping spiritual ascendancy of any physical element in order that a lifeless body come to be seen as incontrovertibly dead (Zimmerman 8).

This boundary between the dead and the living was never fully demarcated in Shakespeare's England (Zimmerman 9, 129). Without reliable methods to verify death, the phenomenon of 'passing on' retained its indeterminate quality, even onstage. Lear, for example, holds a mirror before his daughter's mouth since if "her breath will mist or stain the stone, / Why then, she lives" (*Lr.* 24.258-9). Deceived in part by his own wishful thinking, he mistakes Cordelia for a breathing body several times (*Lr. 2*4.261, 267-8). Despite the best attempts of Reformers to mark death as indisputable and immediate, the converted masses, like Lear, still clung to Catholic notions of death as a gradual, indefinite process. Indeed, popular reluctance to accept its immediate definitiveness provided ample theatrical capital. Although Desdemona technically still lives at this moment, Othello's uncertainty over her body – "Not dead? Not yet quite dead?" (*Oth.* 5.2.85) – encapsulates what remained a prevailing attitude towards the corpse in early modern England. That cultural atmosphere allowed the theatre to include such miraculous occurrences as both Desdemona's and Roderigo's momentary revivals. The woman wakes to claim she took her own life, while Cassio reports that "even but now he [Roderigo] spake – / After long seeming dead – Iago hurt him, / Iago set him on" (*Oth.* 5.2.124-5, 326-8). Similar instances abound in early modern drama, and

particularly in Shakespeare. Declared dead, Cleopatra stirs and lives on for almost an entire act (*Ant.* 4.16.71-3). The pronounced time of death is also inaccurate for Hermione, who suddenly reappears in Act Five of *The Winter's Tale*, whole and healthy, if slightly aged (5.3.20-103). Elsewhere on the Renaissance stage, Middleton's comic lovers rise from their coffins so that they can be wed (*Chaste Maid* 5.4.29). It is not surprising that kind of morbid curiosity abounds in the early modern theatre, with character after character asking, "Is s/he dead?"

Clearly, a distinct divide between life and death was not easily won in Reformation England. By contrast, the Protestant advocate in *Cymbeline*, Guiderius, finds converts rather quickly – or so it would appear. Arviragus's ritualistic devotion to tradition and the corpse aligns him with a more Catholic experience of mourning, yet he ultimately submits to the approach offered by his older brother.[7] The pair's eulogy undoes Arviragus's previous image of earthly integration. No longer is Fidele's body lovingly "winter-ground[ed]" (*Cym.* 4.2.30). Instead, the boy is beyond the "heat o'th' sun" (*Cym.* 4.2.259) and removed from "furious winter's rages" (*Cym.* 4.2.260), needing none of this world's comforts – be it shelter, sustenance, or knowledge (*Cym.* 4.2.267-70). In the grave, Fidele finds "[q]uiet consummation" (*Cym.* 4.2.281), a phrase that suggests both finality and completion. Here, the page is irreversibly wedded to the reaper and the conventional 'little death' of such a union is replaced by the big one.

Of course, this dirge was also spoken over Euriphile's dead body and, as Belarius's offhand comment shows, mourning her is still very much a part of the

[7] King also locates this whiff of Catholicism around Arviragus, noting that his sense of burial as a charitable act aligns him with Catholic theology, in particular the Seven Works of Mercy (132).

brothers' lives. With Fidele, however, the suggestion of separation is followed through on. Recall, for example, Guiderius's simple command: "Let us bury him" (*Cym.* 4.2.232). The directive seems non-descript enough, until we realize that Fidele is never actually interred. This body, along with Cloten's, is left exposed, and seemingly just off the side of the road. In the midst of their military planning, Lucius and his men stumble upon both Fidele and the bloody trunk (*Cym.* 4.2.354). Guiderius thus uses 'bury' in the figurative sense of the word: "To consign to oblivion, put out of the way, abandon and forget" (*OED Online*).[8] This idea is borne out by Belarius and the princes' subsequent actions. Seeming to ignore Guiderius's decree that, "[w]e have done our obsequies" (*Cym.* 4.2.283), Belarius promises to return at midnight to bedeck the body with more frosted flowers (*Cym.* 4.2.284-6). But the distraction of the impending war means that the family never makes a return visit. Had they done so, they would have noticed Fidele's body missing and later not have been so surprised to encounter "[t]he same dead thing alive" (*Cym.* 5.4.123).

Given *Cymbeline*'s repeated insistence on the lost princes' innate goodness and nobility, Guiderius's preoccupation with placing a fixed boundary between the dead and the living should strike us as the right thing to do – he is, after all, of the "noble strain" (4.2.24), part of that "breed of greatness" (4.2.25), vested with all of the authority automatically granted to any royal heir. Certainly, insisting on this border is the Protestant thing to do, and therefore morally upright according to the official religion of early modern England. But while Arviragus might submit to Guiderius's view of death, the play itself consistently works to undo any such concrete divisions. Generically,

[8] This less common use of the word was earlier employed by Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus* (5.1.68), as well as in *Julius Caesar* (4.2.209).

Cymbeline is almost impossible to position, as evidenced by the scholars who label it, by turns, a tragedy, tragi-comedy, romance, realistic romance, or history (Tambling 36; King 158-9; Griffiths 357; Hill 172; Crumley 297-312). Critics like Huw Griffiths and Lea Puljcan Juric have also noted how its physical geography seems undefined: Wales is somehow both beyond and within the borders of Britain, and Cymbeline himself is a vassal king, attempting to throw off the influence of the Romans (Griffiths 342-52; Puljcan Juric 450-1). Contributing to *Cymbeline*'s murky sense of place, I argue, is its odd integration of this world with the next. Even as Arviragus and Belarius assent to the divisive model of death Guiderius advances, the play itself seems to undermine him at every turn. The dead *cannot* be buried and forgotten – because they are all around.

Most of the brothers' eulogy is dedicated to warding off the possibility that Fidele's raised spirit will one day walk the confines of this world again. The plea that the page remains undisturbed in his resting place is reiterated no less than five times (*Cym.* 4.2.277-81). As much as this family might miss their adopted member, they clearly have no desire to see him again – at least, not in this lifetime. Though their initial approaches towards grieving appear opposite (one brother imagines obsessively attending to the gravesite, the other thinks it best to "have done" with the burial), Guiderius and Arviragus mobilize those discrete methods for the same end: to forestall the possibility of a haunting. As we have seen, Arviragus's ritualized mourning process aligns with Catholic customs in place to ward off revenants. Meanwhile, Guiderius, as a Reformer, recognizes the haunting potential of memory and therefore refuses to live in service to the dead.

And yet the play itself is haunted. From the moment it begins, *Cymbeline* appears half populated by spirits. It has a protagonist called Posthumus, a man whose sounded name always evokes the ghost of his deceased father. 'Reborn' after the poison has passed, Imogen/Fidele seems nothing less than the revenant so feared by Catholic mourners. And in the final Act, the stage fills with spirits, as Posthumus's lost family arrives to intercede on his behalf. Scolding these ghostly interlopers, Jupiter echoes Guiderius's earlier insistence on a strict divide between the dead and the living: "Be not with mortal accidents oppressed; / No care of yours it is" (*Cym.* 5.3.193-4). In Catholic theology, ghosts required divine permission to visit the mortal realm (Davies 7). As such, Jupiter's wrath here marks the appearance of these spirits as doubly transgressive. Not only do the ghosts signal vestigial pre-Reformation beliefs, they are insurrectionary even within that older context – for these spirits clearly do not have divine permission to visit Posthumus. Put quite simply, the play rehearses the very thing that some of its noblest and most divine characters speak against: the earthly return of those who have supposedly 'passed on.'

Richard III, meanwhile, undercuts ideas of death espoused by one of Shakespeare's most loathsome of villains. *Cymbeline*'s princes might appear anxious over the potential of the dead to haunt the living, either literally or figuratively, but Richard is confident that a spectral return is impossible: "all the clouds that loured upon our house / In the deep bosom of the ocean [are] buried" (*R3* 1.1.3-4). Time and time again, he speaks of 'dispatching' with his victims, a phrase that, at first, seems uncharacteristically euphemistic. This is the same man who says of his nephews, "Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead" (*R3* 4.2.19). Euphemistic stylization makes sense

when speaking to someone like Lady Anne. Yet Richard also employs the term 'dispatch' while addressing his followers, men who are as steeped in blood as he is. It seems that in such company, euphemism could itself be dispatched with. Indeed, Shakespeare uses the word a total of seven times in this play and only ever in the mouths of Richard and his immediate supporters (*R3* 1.2.169; 1.3.339, 353; 1.4.259; 3.3.4; 3.4.94, 102). That is because this multivalent term best encapsulates Richard's idea of death. To 'dispatch' with someone can mean either to send him away or to kill him – but for Richard and his underlings, it always means both. This usurper does not even consider the possibility that souls might linger on earth, believing instead that they are "packed with post-haste up to heaven" (*R3* 1.2.146). Although anxious about his own upward mobility, Richard is confident that the dead are secure in theirs. The Second Murderer echoes his benefactor's sense of an absolute death divide: once slain, Clarence "shall never wake until the great judgement day" (*R3* 1.4.99-100) – that is, when the earth is itself destroyed and everyone joins a community of the dead in either heaven or hell.

Even more interesting is the fact that 'dispatch' is used as an imperative command for silence. When Hastings proves a bit long-winded with his last words, an unsympathetic Catesby tries to hurry him along: "Come come, dispatch: the Duke would be at dinner. … Come, come, dispatch. 'Tis bootless to exclaim" (*R3* 3.4.94-102). This moment points to the way in which Richard uses the actual act of dispatching (i.e. murder) to muzzle those who would otherwise speak against him. No longer part of "this breathing world" (*R3* 1.1.21), his victims cannot give voice to his crimes. As Stephen Marche has argued, this usurping King sees death as a place of silence: his murderous drive is not propelled by bloodlust, but rather by a desire to control the stories others

might share (40). Murder is a means of gagging, and one that Richard believes in wholeheartedly. For him, death kills both the person and his influence; a victim can never cling to the living's collective memory for long. At least initially, why would he think otherwise? The funeral of the former King has just one dedicated attendant, despite the fact that Henry VI once commanded many: as Rivers says, "[I]n those busy days … We followed then our lord, our sovereign king" (*R3* 1.3.145-7). But neither Rivers, nor any other former ally, attend the body with Anne now.

At this scantly populated funeral, two very different methods of managing death are showcased. While Shakespeare has medieval characters like Richard or the Second Murderer anachronistically adopt a Protestant-like view, in which death is complete at the mortal moment and hauntings are always impossible, Anne is given a greater semblance of historical accuracy: she is partially aligned with a Catholic model of mourning. Her earlier invocation of Henry VI's ghost (*R3* 1.2.9) works against Richard's sense that when it comes to this world and the next, only a singular crossing is possible. Since ghosts were not part of the Reformers' conception of death, the request that Henry VI return is decidedly Catholic.[9] So too are the tears Anne lets fall, balm-like, into the corpse's wounds. As Katharine Goodland rightly notes, this image is evocative of the Virgin Mary, weeping over the bleeding body of Christ, her son (46).

Simultaneously, however, Anne has Reformist leanings, so that the tension between Guiderius and Arviragus in *Cymbeline* is here embodied within her solitary figure. She uses language in precisely the opposite way that Arviragus does, to inscribe, rather than blur, the boundary between life and death:

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[9] Recall that in Protestant orthodoxy, spirits were only raised at the end of days.

RICHARD: Say that I slew them not.

LADY ANNE: Then say they were not slain.

But dead they are – and, devilish slave, by thee.

RICHARD: I did not kill your husband.

LADY ANNE: Why, then he is alive.

(*R3* 1.2.89-91)

Sarcastic and biting, Anne draws attention to the slippery, unstable quality of language that, as we have seen, Arviragus uses to his own advantage. Through an aesthetic of incorporation, Arviragus crafts a liminal space for the dead to occupy; Anne instead shows how a liminal space can be *fabricated* through language – she draws attention to its very fictiousness. Interestingly, Anne mirrors Reformers in that regard. Language forges: it creates, but also counterfeits. It is in this latter capacity that Catholic officials used language – or so went the accusations of Reformers, in discussing what they saw as the Catholic invention of purgatory (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 38). Anne's language marks her as a Reformer elsewhere as well. "Be it *lawful* that I invocate thy ghost" (*R3* 1.2.8, emphasis added), she declares, thus acknowledging the illicit nature of summoning Henry VI's spirit (Goodland 47). She also pays lip service to the Protestant notion that a corpse is just a dead thing, unworthy of reverence, when she instructs the halberdiers to "[s]et down, set down your honourable load, / *If* honour may be shrouded in a hearse" (*R3* 1.2.1-2, emphasis added). Anne even describes her tears as "helpless" (*R3* 1.2.13), unproductive as prayers in easing the suffering of the departed (Goodland 48). This woman therefore seems primed for a conversion of sorts. In terms of her religious

understanding of bereavement, she is already on the verge of apostasizing when Richard arrives to convert her.

Like Arviragus, Anne finds her lengthy requiem interrupted by a self-appointed funeral director who values brevity and efficiency, one adamant that the indisputable boundary between life and death be upheld. The trajectory of this fifteenth-century London funeral, then, proves not so very different from one taking place in Wales under the Roman Empire. Richard is as quick to dispatch with Henry VI in death as he was in life, and his request of Anne – "leave these sad designs" (*R3* 1.2.198) – resonates with Guiderius's injunction to "[p]rithee have done" (*Cym.* 4.2.230). As we have seen, out of sight equals out of mind for Belarius and his adopted sons. Once Fidele is 'buried' – that is, left by the side of the road – they are able to forget him. No one so much as mentions the page again until he reappears before their eyes, an omission that seems quite deliberate on Shakespeares's part. Fidele's story would serve as the perfect *carpe diem* argument when, in their very next scene, the princes demand to join the war – and yet neither brother mobilizes it (*Cym.* 4.4.2-47).

Richard is similarly negligent with interment, sending the corpse off unsupervised (*R3* 1.2.214). But in the sense of consigning the deceased to oblivion, he here seems able to bury a body even better than Guiderius can. With the corpse still on display, Richard is nevertheless confident that Henry VI can be forgotten. That belief appears justified: the dead body bleeds beside him, but Richard wins the hand of the dead King's daughter-in-law and transforms the attendants into his own. Indeed, this moment presents Richard's earliest usurpation of a royal position, as he reconfigures the locus of this former King's funeral ceremony. No longer do the halberdiers attend the body – instead, they wait on

him: Richard decrees, "to Blackfriars; there *attend* my coming" (*R3* 1.2.214, emphasis added).

Diminishing the hold of memory and rejecting liminality, Shakespeare's medieval villain in some ways anticipates the project of the Reformation. It might seem odd, then, that Richard, and only Richard, swears by Saint Paul – not just once, but time and time again (*R3* 1.1.139; 1.2.37, 41; 1.3.45; 3.4.76; 5.5.170). Rather than marking the man as a Catholic believer, these oaths instead seem designed to emphasize the conversion Shakespeare has anachronistically made him undergo. Risking persecution, Saul rejected Judaism and embraced Christianity in order to become Paul the Apostle. Richard preempts the Reformation and likewise discovers a new dogma, one that pertains specifically to death. His connection to Saint Paul comes through a shared experience of religious conversion and not through Catholicism itself. In a way, Richard's Protestant-like orientation towards death makes a certain amount of sense: the usurper aligns himself with religious ideas that would unseat or depose reigning Catholic ones in early modern England. But despite his refusal to let the dead linger, Richard is also anything but admirable. That the play undoes his conception of death's absolute divisiveness, then, is perhaps less surprising than the same subversion is in *Cymbeline*, where it is the most meritorious figures who are given a Reformist perspective.

Richard might insist that his victims are all dead and gone, but he is proven wrong when those spirits return to visit him and Richmond. "Methought the souls of all that I had murdered / Came to my tent, and every one did threat / Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard" (*R3* 5.5.158-60), the King says, convinced, as are Richmond and Posthumus, that the visitation has been nothing more than a dream vision. On a

subconscious level, however, Richard seems aware that his victims have returned and that his understanding of death has been confounded. This is suggested by his weather report, the last he will ever offer: "The sky doth frown and lour upon our army" (*R3* 5.6.13). All those clouds that in Act One, scene one were said to have "*lour*ed" (*R3* 1.1.3, emphasis added) upon the House of York have risen up from their burial place at the bottom of the ocean. At the level of metaphor, Richard describes the dead as mobile: they have moved from sky to sea and back again.

Even before this moment, however, the play works to subvert the doctrine anachronistically espoused by its protagonist. Interestingly, *Richard III* leaves open the possibility that Anne's ghostly summoning has been successful. "Dead Henry's wounds / Ope their congealed mouths and bleed afresh" (*R3* 1.2.55-6), implicating Richard in the crime and suggesting that the corpse has been momentarily revived by a vengeful spirit. It is, after all, a "deluge *supernatural*" (*R3* 1.2.61, emphasis added). Alternatively, that repressed sentience has been present all along if, as Catholics believe, one must putrefy in order to fully die. Either way, these bleeding wounds speak to more than just Richard's guilt. They suggest a degree of sentience, rage, and *liveliness* in this dead body that Richard cannot undo. Unwilling or unable to answer the accusations of this bleeding corpse, he ignores the body's signification (like any good Reformer would) and instead only feigns distress at Anne's 'uncharitable' allegations (*R3* 1.2.68-9).

Henry VI might speak through blood, but Richard's other victims live on in those left behind. The dead prove to have a kind of lingering hold that allows them incriminatory narrative power. Despite the Reformist leanings evident in Anne's speech, Richard finds a less ready convert in her than Guiderius does with the pliable Arviragus.

When she reappears in Act Four, the woman confesses that she has not been sleeping well. Haunted by memories of her "other angel husband" (*R3* 4.1.68) and the "dear saint" (*R3* 4.1.69) that was her father-in-law, she regrets the marriage that now makes her England's Queen. In other words, the past still has a grip on her. The other women are similarly tortured by memory, wailing their dead in a very Catholic Act Four, scene four (Goodland 31).

Memory also manifests itself in the odd figure of Queen Margaret, whose presence always evokes the previous reign and those lost with the rise of the new one. She expresses her purpose with confidence: "Here in these confines slyly have I lurked / To watch the waning of mine enemies" (*R3* 4.4.3-4). A kind of living phantom, Margaret comments on the actions of those she surveils, serving a choric function not unlike Don Andrea's ghost in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* or the Leonati in *Cymbeline*. The prophetic words she offers in Act One, scene three are borne out by the action of the play, in much the same way that the ghosts will later foresee how the Battle of Bosworth ends. Her presence in this courtly world can also never be comfortably explained – as Richard asks, "Wert thou not banished on pain of death?" (*R3* 1.3.166.1). From the onset, then, Margaret is marked as one close to her own end. She lives, but the law may change that at any moment. Adding to this phantasmal quality is her transgressive wandering: as the ghosts will later do, she has traversed a boundary meant to remain uncrossed – in this case, the English Channel. Stephen Greenblatt implicitly recognizes the ghostly ambience surrounding this character when, in his introduction to the play, he describes the role she plays onstage: Shakespeare "has old Queen Margaret … *haunting* the royal court like a bitter, half-crazed Greek tragic chorus" (540, emphasis added).

But it is Richard himself that becomes the play's most interesting living spirit, an embodiment of the very life/death hybridity he repudiates for most of the play. Waking on the eve of battle, Richard notes that "[t]he lights turn blue" (*R3* 5.5.134), signifying a phantasmal presence in the area. Strangely enough, this happens only after the ghosts have apparently departed; the flour-faced actors are absent onstage. The fact that "[i]t is now dead midnight" (*R3* 5.5.134) – the witching hour – suggests another temporal disparity: perhaps these spirits arrived a bit prematurely. They seem to have preempted "the season / Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk" (*Ham.* 1.4.5-6), to borrow Horatio's words.[10] On one hand, the tardiness of the cues can be explained by theatrical necessity. Shakespeare's theatre was obviously not outfitted with the equipment to cast a blue light and as such, a character's speech is necessary to signal this change. In the sunlit space of the open-air theatre, it is also needed to alert an audience to a given scene's time of day – here, the pitch-black hour of midnight. In this instance, however, those cues are completely redundant. Spectators need no further ghostly indications, since just moments ago the phantoms announced themselves as "the wronged souls / Of butchered princes" (*R3* 5.5.75-6) and "[g]ood angels" (*R3* 5.5.92). Surely, there can be little doubt that these visitors are not strictly of this world. Blue light and the break of midnight: such details are superfluous if they are meant only to attest to the fact that apparitions were just here.

Richard's speech therefore seems designed not as a delayed signal, but rather as an indication of a continued ghostly presence, one now invisible to spectators. In the nebulous state between sleep and waking, this singular, earthly man somehow comes to

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[10] *Hamlet*, by contrast, is often at pains to show that the ghost will appear only post-midnight. "'Tis now struck twelve" (*Ham.* 1.1.7), Barnardo announces, just before the phantom of Hamlet Senior arrives. Later, Marcellus assures Horatio that it is past midnight – "it is struck" (*Ham.* 1.4.4) – a moment before the ghost enters.

resemble the ghostly collective that just left him alone on the battlefield. The dead are now within him. That is why, for the first time ever, his "conscience hath a thousand several tongues" (*R3* 5.5.147). The boundaries of selfhood have collapsed, as evidenced by the fragmentation of Richard's own sense of identity: "I am a villain. Yet I lie: I am not. / Fool, of thyself speak well. – Fool, do not flatter" (*R3* 5.5.145-6). His desperate claim to selfhood heightens this sense of internal dissolution:

> What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
>
> Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
>
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
>
> Then fly! What, from myself? Great reason. Why?
>
> Lest I revenge. Myself upon myself?
>
> Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
>
> That I myself have done unto myself?
>
> O no, alas, I rather hate myself
>
> For hateful deeds committed by myself. (*R3* 5.5.136-44)

Here, the increasing repetition of the word 'myself' takes on a kind of frantic quality. Its use illustrates Richard's last-ditch attempt to delineate the boundaries of his own personhood; it insists, grammatically, that this self is his alone, possessed by no other. Ironically, the very language employed to inscribe individuality in fact undoes it. On one hand, this is an internal debate, showing how even a single self can be divided by competing voices within. More importantly, the repetition of one word, 'myself,' lends the entire speech an echoic quality similar to that seen with the crowd of ghosts. Recall that just moments prior, the stage was filled with spirits that, one after the other,

commanded Richard to despair and die (*R3* 5.5.74, 80-1, 89, 94-5, 97, 103, 110, 117). Penetrated by these spectres, Richard now takes on their repetitious speech pattern – it, along with the apparitions, has been internalized. Adding to this ghostly aura is the fact that suddenly, the protagonist exists outside of time. Richard announces the arrival of midnight, but speaks less than thirty lines before Ratcliffe enters to inform him that "[t]he village cock / Hath twice done salutation to the morn" (*R3* 5.5.163-4). In other words, seconds have spanned several hours. Richard has somehow been removed from the worldly dimension of time, the very thing that his victims ran out of. In Act Five, scene five, all signs point to the fact that Richard has been possessed.

The play seems to have been building towards this ghostly moment all along. Early on, Margaret derides Richard as a kingly "cacodemon" (*R3* 1.3.144) – that is, an evil spirit that reigns over others of its ilk. By making him monarchical even before he has taken the throne, Margaret undoes Richard's singularity through her speech. He now forms a kind of body politic, a linguistic move that anticipates the ghostly colonization occurring in Act Five. Also of note is Richard's jocular suggestion that his shadow offers the truest representation of himself: "I do mistake my person all this while. … Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass" (*R3* 1.2.239-50). In the same way that 'dispatch' does, the word 'shadow' takes on additional valences as the play progresses, coming to mean illusions or spectres (*R3* 1.4.53; 5.5.170-2). Through language then, Richard unknowingly self-identifies as a partial spirit and destabilizes the binary opposition he has created between dead and alive. Once he has been possessed in Act Five, scene five, that binary opposition collapses entirely. Richard becomes an amalgamation of living flesh and deceased shades.

"The times has been / That when the brains were out the man would die, / And there an end; but now they rise again … This is more strange" (*Mac.* 3.4.79-83): so declares Macbeth, in a speech that marks the Protestant orientation towards death as the normative one. But while the spirit of Banquo might very well be illusory, just like Macbeth's dagger is earlier (*Mac.* 2.1.34-50), the ghostly crowds in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* are undeniably real. The spectral assembly found at the close of *Richard III* is set up in stark contrast to the ghosts Clarence only dreamed of earlier. Visiting Richard, the dead have a physical presence on stage, "and that materialization seems to confirm them as something more than psychic projections" (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 176). This visitation is obviously not a "fearful dream" (*R3* 5.5.166), however much Richard might wish that were the case. It is likewise impossible to support Posthumus's belief that the appearance of his lost family has been nothing more than wistful fantasy: the ghosts leave proof of their visit through the tablet (*Cym.* 5.3.203, 217-21). While Posthumus does not appear overly concerned about the provenance of this "book" (*Cym.* 5.3.227), an audience would be hard pressed to find an explanation that does not include the ghosts. In these plays, then, death undergoes a re-Reformation that cannot be excused as mere dreaming or mental disturbance. To paraphrase Macbeth, this is *most* strange.

It is not just that Shakespeare dramatizes the occurrence of revenants in a religious climate that insisted on an impermeable divide between the dead and the living. After all, he similarly summons back the deceased in *Hamlet, Julius Caesar,* and perhaps *Macbeth*.[11] In some arguments, even *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains a cast of

[11] Admittedly, Brutus, like Macbeth, is the only human character who sees his ghostly visitor. But as Greenblatt points out, Shakespeare seems determined to mark this phantom as real: the sleeping attendants cry out unconsciously, suggesting that "the apparition was not merely a figment of Brutus's imagination" (*Purgatory* 183).

ghostly characters (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 162-3). This fondness for phantoms aligns Shakespeare with the vogue of the time. Ghosts were a popular figure on the early modern stage (Davies 5, 216; Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 151), and not a particularly anxiety-inducing one. Though they usually came in the form of dark, vengeful spirits (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 152), they were evidently seen as somewhat innocuous. After all, these bloodthirsty ghosts made it past the censorious Master of the Revels again and again. Greenblatt argues that while antitheatrical critics might have decried the motivations of these ghosts as unchristian, they "did not seem to arouse a specifically theological anxiety" (*Purgatory* 152-3). Seen as more classical than Catholic, staged ghosts escaped the censure shown to anything deemed 'Papist' – put quite simply, these spirits came down from Seneca, not purgatory (Davies 217; Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 153). In *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*, that changes.[12] As I have argued, these plays proffer and then subvert a Protestant model of death, all the while positioning it alongside a Catholic frame of reference for the corpse. Shakespeare actually imports orthodox cultural values into the plays themselves, so that *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* both come to self-reflexively point toward their own illicitness.[13]

I am not here interested in making a case for Shakespeare as a closeted Catholic, or even as a surreptitious Catholic sympathizer. Such theories have experienced a revival in the last decade or so, perhaps provoked by new historical work arguing for an entrenched Catholic subculture that persisted after the Reformation (Graham 2). Author

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[12] It also changes in *Hamlet*, where the ghost explicitly announces he has been "confined to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purged away" (1.5.11-3). Since *Hamlet* does not contain a ghostly collective, it does not concern us here.

[13] That the plays are set in a Catholic and pagan past respectively perhaps licensed Shakespeare's heterodoxy.

of *Secret Shakespeare* and co-editor of *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, Richard Wilson has been a major proponent of this Shakespeare as Catholic school of thought. Similar theories are found in the work of Clare Asquith, David Beauregard, E.A.J. Honigmann, Arthur Marotti, Peter Milward, Velma Bougeois Richmond, and Gary Taylor, to name just a few. Perhaps the most notable contributor is Greenblatt: *Will in the World* and *Hamlet in Purgatory* have been seminal for this broader argument. A speculative biography, *Will in the World* aligns with Wilson's sense of Shakespeare as a moderate Catholic whose religion informed his plays. Meanwhile, *Hamlet in Purgatory* associates Shakespeare with a sort of Catholic wistfulness, an idea that has spurred later work like Marotti's.

Despite this vast scholarly outpouring, there has been little consensus when it comes to the question of Shakespeare's possible Catholicism (Graham 2). In fact, an equal number of critics have argued that Shakespeare's plays actually serve a Reformist agenda. Donna Hamilton suggests that *Cymbeline* allegorizes the struggle between the two Churches, with Imogen standing for Protestantism and the more dubious characters of Belarius, Cloten, Iachimo, and the Queen all tied to Catholicism (129-59). She reads many of Shakespeare's other plays as comparably propagandistic, though always remains careful not to make a case for the playwright's own beliefs (Hamilton 4). For her, Shakespeare's works evidence the outlooks of his patrons over his own. Also arguing in support of the playwright's Protestant agenda, Huston Diehl suggests that early modern plays, Shakespeare's included, evoke Catholic rituals and ceremonies in order to subvert them. Elsewhere, Bryan Crockett, Martha Tuck Rozett, and Paul Whitfield White have likewise assigned either Shakespeare or his work a Protestant orientation.

The interest in Shakespeare's religious affiliation is tied to larger arguments surrounding the role of the Reformation in theatre's overall development. On one hand, this religious revolution is understood as causing a vast cultural loss. Scholars like Greenblatt have argued that in the face of this void, theatre became a substitute for the previous emotional space offered by Catholicism: the Globe replaced purgatory as the place where the dead remained accessible to the living. As noted above, Marotti continues with this line of thought: "the English Renaissance theatre captured some of the power of the old religion in absorbing some of the very features purged from it by Protestant Reformers" (230). But equally forceful arguments exist in which Protestantism was not subtractive but additive. Theatre did not compensate for the Reformation – rather it was *enriched* by it. The religious revolution provided theatrical capital because in this increasingly secularized society, it was possible for other things to accrue sacredness (Dawson, "Secular Theater" 243-4).[14] As Shakespeare's plays appropriated devotional language for their own uses, the theatre became its own "kind of religion" (Dawson, "Secular Theater" 243-4). In Anthony Dawson's words, "maybe [Shakespeare is] neither Catholic nor Protestant because his fidelity is to the sweaty transcendence offered by the theater" ("Secular Theater" 244).

When we disregard the question of Shakespeare's personal religious beliefs, neither Greenblatt nor Dawson need be discredited. These equally convincing theories can coexist rather than compete, as evidenced by the trajectory recent scholarship has taken. It is not so much that Protestantism reinvented theatre, or that drama had to compensate for all that was lost with Catholicism. Rather, it was the circulating tensions

[14] John Sommerville argues that Protestantism was a secularizing faith: in order to ensure spiritual purity, religion disengaged from other areas of life (8, 11).

between these modes of belief that provided such rich theatrical resources. What is ample fodder for scholarly debate today was ample fodder for theatrical exploration then. As Steven Mullaney argues, early modern theatre might have resulted from religious trauma, but it was also the means of thinking it through. On all its various stages, theatre was a tool of cultural self-reflection. That is why, Mullaney concludes, revenge tragedy was so popular in this period: these are social self-portraits, "stories about societies … that cannot fix themselves anymore, in which the desire to put things right is inseparable from the desire to violate what's right" (83). I likewise see imaginative possibilities, rather than personal bias, in the religious tensions of *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*. What the playwright's own spiritual politics were seems to me an unanswerable, and also somewhat unimportant, question. Far more compelling is how these tensions are imported into the works at hand in order to speak to the concerns of the culture – in this case, a specific culture of playgoing and the question of what it means to be a spectator.

3. Stiffs, Of the Living and Dead Variety: *Rigor Mortis* and the Question of Crowd Control

Obviously not arguing from extensive personal experience, the living decided what it meant to be dead in early modern England. With a kind of parallel presumption, antitheatricalists told anyone who would listen what it meant to be a public playgoer, despite not frequenting the theatres themselves.[15] William Prynne, for example, admitted

[15] There are a few notable exceptions. Stephen Gosson actually began his career as a playwright before experiencing an abrupt – and rather severe – change of heart. Anthony Munday, the likely author of *A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters*, wrote for and acted on the stage – both before and after his antitheatrical tract was published.

to seeing only four performances in his lifetime (Pollard 280) and yet always remains assured in his vitriolic criticism of playgoers. He, and antitheatricalists like him, write of audience members as somehow both dangerously deadened and perilously vital. That rhetoric should ring a very specific bell – namely, the one that pealed over gravesites in the days before the Reformation. The antitheatrical discourse linguistically positions playgoers on the exact same divide that the Catholic corpse once occupied. An individual's remains and an audience: both are between life and death in early modern Catholic doctrine and the antitheatricalists' polemical rhetoric.

Unable to "withstand the insidiously overwhelming powers of theatrical spectacle" (C. Marshall 51), audience members are made vulnerable by any public playhouse, at least according to the antitheatricalists. In discussing these polemical critics, I turn to another sort of stiff entirely – not corpses, but those rigid, uptight, and somewhat tedious people who exist among the living. Virulent and self-righteous, antitheatrical writers describe playgoers as passive beings, mastered by reprobate sights onstage. John Rainolds declares that "men are made adulterers and enemies of all chastity by coming to such plays … hearts though strong and constant are vanquished by such players" (174). Stephen Gosson concurs: "vice is learned with beholding, sense is tickled, desire pricked, and those impressions of mind are secretly conveyed over to the gazers … we are taught by other men's examples how to fall" (108). Even at the level of sentence construction, playgoers are inactive and their agency muffled; the use of the passive voice ensures we see them only as acted upon. A body controlled by performance: this antitheatrical idea of the spectator might be seen to align in part with Catholic views of the corpse, in which a cadaver's residual sentience and agency is suppressed by ritual

shows like the ringing of bells. Performance keeps an audience enraptured and performance keeps corpses interred.

At the same time, it is the *liveliness* of spectators that renders them so vulnerable to theatre's corrupting properties. In antitheatrical rhetoric, spectacle excites the passions, upsetting the balance of humours within the vital body and making it ill (C. Marshall 52). Rainolds certainly shared this concern. Though his spectators initially appear deadened through their passivity, they are rejuvenated by a description of the playhouse that figures it as a den of pestilence. In early modern England, only living flesh was seen to be susceptible to sickly miasmas – dead bodies spread disease, they did not catch it (Zimmerman 9).[16] It is notable, then, that Rainolds describes spectacle as a literal fever infecting the audience. Consider the alleged effects of seeing *Andromeda*: "many brought home a burning ague from the theater … as soon as they were abroad and out of their beds, [they] did fall into a strange distemper and passion of a light frenzy. … they grew all to tragedy-playing" (176). To paint theatre as sickening enlivens people who have thus far seemed so inactive as to be almost dead. Gosson and Henry Crosse similarly believe in theatre's contagious properties: the illness is immorality, the vector is the play, and the victim is the spectator, made susceptible by virtue of his very liveliness. If "a play is like a bile in the body, that draweth all the ill humors unto it" (Crosse 193), then those immersed in this cesspool are sure to grow sicker: as Crosse asks, "Is not this the way to make men ripe in all kind of villainy and corrupt the manner of the whole world?" (189).

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[16] This idea is articulated in *Henry V*, when the king declares that deceased English soliders will leave behind "their earthly parts to choke your clime, / The smell whereof shall breed a plague in France" (4.3.103-4). Strangely, a corpse's secretions (known as *mummia)* were also thought to have healthful effects in early modernity – these fluids could reinvigorate the living on occasion (Zimmerman 9).

To avoid committing the same trespasses as the playhouse, Prynne even refuses to fully catalogue theatrical infractions "for fear it should *infect*" (290, emphasis added) his reader. Meanwhile, Gosson writes of the "mischief *bred* by plays" (87, emphasis added), so that the disease almost seems to be sexually transmitted.

Contributing to this eroticized discourse, Prynne condemns a theatre's ability to "ravish" (293) spectators. Apparently, plays are masterful lovers: an audience is "transported by them into a Mahometan paradise, or ecstasy of uncleanness" (Prynne 293). The applause that ends any play, it would seem, is always orgasmic. Indeed, one of the great risks associated with playgoing is lustiness, surely a sin of living flesh. Consider the warning offered by John Northbrooke. The sensuality of the playhouse, he asserts, will lead both men and women astray:

> what safeguard of chastity can there be, where the woman is desired with so many eyes, where so many faces look upon her, and again she upon so many? She must needs fire some, and herself also fired again, and she be not a stone; for what mind can be pure and whole among such a rabblement, and not spotted with any lust? (Northbrooke 5)

Desired and gazed upon, this female audience member is first a torpid object, a kind of spectacle in and of herself. But abruptly, she turns threateningly vital. Her body becomes a portal to sin as she is enflamed by the lustiness surrounding her in the playhouse. Passive though she may be, this spectator has some dangerous life force left within her – just like the Catholic corpse.

The unorthodox portrayal of death in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* therefore allows spectators to see themselves staged. In straddling the mortal divide, the ghosts not only

embody an older model of death, but also reflect a dominant contemporary discourse that told playgoers in no uncertain terms what they were. As a result, the spectres in both plays function like the bejewelled skulls found in Clarence's dream. Recounting the terrible vision, Richard's doomed brother says,

> Methoughts I saw … Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels
> All scattered in the bottom of the sea.
> Some lay in dead men's skulls; and in those holes
> Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept –
> As 'twere in scorn of eyes – *reflecting* gems[.]
>
> (*R3* 1.4.24-31, emphasis added)

Mirrored, "reflecting," jewels occupy the eye sockets of these skulls, and so, it is implied, Clarence looks at the dead and sees himself. By evoking a Catholic model of death reminiscent of the antitheatricalists' sense of the spectator, *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* likewise ask their audiences to see themselves in the dead.

It perhaps seems counterintuitive to claim that a piece of theatre would purposefully evoke the doctrine of its greatest opponents. But in fact, plays perform this work all the time. Studying the character of dramatized living crowds, Munro notes a "paradoxical alignment of theatrical and antitheatrical views of the distracted multitude" (135) – in each, the crowd is figured as a "many-headed monster" (105). For antitheatricalists, the playhouse is dangerous not only because of its staged displays, but also because it brings individuals together in a "Gordian knot of disorder" (Gosson 86). "[P]eople in heaps" (Rankins 126) pose a threat since the many is more impressionable than the one and because a crowd mutually reinforces unsavoury, morally bankrupt

behaviour (Munro 119-20). Such a view can be seen in the works of Shakespeare himself – in *Julius Caesar*, for example, it is a mob of plebians who murder Cinna the poet. "Tear him to pieces! He's a conspirator" (*JC* 3.3.27), one asserts, only to have his cry picked up by those around him. "Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses" (*JC* 3.3.29-30), another plebian clamors, while a third insists again, "Tear him, tear him!" (*JC* 3.3.34). What this moment demonstrates is the crowd's diminishing need for rational justification. First, Cinna deserves to die because of the role he supposedly played in Caesar's murder. Then it is his shoddy poetry – which the plebians are presumably unfamiliar with – that earns him a death sentence. In the final cry, all attempts to rationalize the impending violence disappear. Mutually reinforcing as it is, the mob becomes justification enough. Violent energy spreads and contaminates all those in the area. In the same way, antitheatricalists feared that an audience would disseminate the insidious effect of plays, since spectators leave the playhouse and relay what they have seen to family, friends, and neighbours (Munro 121).

Munro concludes that by dramatically replicating the antitheatricalists' anxieties over mob mentality and influence, early modern playwrights reveal their own misgivings regarding the role of mass spectatorship (135). On one hand, theatre companies relied on the crowds they drew to perform this act of dissemination, in order that they could *continue* to draw crowds. What antitheatricalists viewed as moral pollution was, for these troupes, a very real form of advertising (Munro 135). Unpaid employees, however, are also unmanageable ones, prone to distraction, unruliness, and misinterpretation. Aligning himself with Dawson (*Culture of Playgoing* 102), Munro suggests that portrayals of mobs onstage often demonstrate a playwright's own ambivalence over the role of the

audience (131, 135, 220). They are a necessary evil, consuming but also corrupting the intended meaning of art. As such, playwrights betray in their work a deep, and nevertheless futile, desire for crowd control.[17]

That may be true when it comes to Shakespeare's dramatic representation of living multitudes. It is not the case, however, with his ghostly collectives. Munro never discusses these spectral throngs, yet surely they also qualify as a crowd on the early modern stage. I have already shown that the ghosts in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* embody a sort of transgressive energy, similar to the seditious potential early moderns located in any large gathering (Harbage 14; Munro 41). They also act as a collective: the Leonati together summon Jupiter and stand for Posthumus, while Richard's victims unite in order to curse him and guard Richmond. And at the most essential level of their numbers, both groups add up to enough. Due to the limited size of early modern theatre companies, mobs might be made up of maybe a dozen bodies onstage (Munro 50). Eleven ghosts visit Richard, inarguably a sizable gathering. *Cymbeline*, on the other hand, stages just four phantoms. Even this comparatively small group, however, can constitute a crowd. Recall that in *Julius Caesar*, Cassius leads several of the plebians off (3.2.10-1). If Munro is correct that an onstage crowd is composed of about twelve actors, then Cassius presumably leaves Brutus with an audience of around six. It seems that an overwhelming physical presence is not critical to creating the effect of a crowd on the early modern stage.

And yet, these spectral throngs are not the *same* kind of crowd. In that sense, Munro is right to ignore them. Through their life/death hybridity, the ghosts in *Richard*

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[17] Eric Dunnam makes a similar argument, reading the metadrama of the period as a manifesto demanding silence and obedience from spectators.

III and *Cymbeline* evoke the antitheatricalists' portrayal of spectators, but they do not embody specific antitheatrical anxieties in the way that living mobs do. This fact becomes readily apparent when we compare these ghostly crowds to the standard provided by *Julius Caesar*, a play I return to because it offers no less than three non-militaristic mob scenes (see 1.2; 3.2; 3.3). Caesar's murder is honourable and just, then despicable and traitorous, depending on which solitary voice is steering the mob's conscience at that moment (*JC* 3.2.1-252). In *Richard III*, the reverse is true: a ghostly collective controls individual compunctions. Colonized by the spectral presence, Richard's conscience revolts against his Machiavellian worldview and he instead adopts, for a time, a more humane way of understanding people and events. The same man who playfully portrayed his victims as gifts sent up to God (*R3* 1.1.120-1) is now stricken by the true import of what he has done: "Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree!" (*R3* 5.5.151). Here, in his first staged moment of genuine self-condemnation, Richard actually heeds the dead Hastings' command to "guiltily awake" (*R3* 5.5.108).[18] The ghosts have transmitted the terror they once felt themselves, so that when Richard rises "[c]old fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh" (*R3* 5.5.135). Forceful and commanding, this throng of visitors sweeps Richard up along with them, controlling his emotional and physiological responses for a time. This crowd is not malleable or pliant, as its living counterpart is in Shakespeare's other plays. Instead, the ghosts hold steadfast in their

[18] Anne relays that due to "timorous dreams" (*R3* 4.1.84), her husband has not been sleeping well for the entire duration of their marriage – that is, from the moment he embarked on his treasonous, murderous designs. At first glance, then, it might seem that this "coward conscience" (*R3* 5.5.133) has previously been acting up. But elsewhere, Richard explains those unsettling dreams are of the still living princes, "my sweet sleep's disturbers" (*R3* 4.2.74).

shared convictions: Richard is guilty and Richmond is righteous; the former must suffer and the latter will succeed.

Death seems to confer a kind of internal *rigor mortis*, for the ghostly gathering is similarly staunch in *Cymbeline*. Unlike the vacillating citizens in *Julius Caesar*, who are controlled by theatrical speeches, the Leonati prove resistant to histrionic shows of strength. Jupiter's arrival is, above all else, spectacular. Yet interestingly, it fails to move its onstage audience, or penetrate them, in the way that the antitheatricalists always feared spectacle would. Sicilius might remark on the thunderclaps and sulphurous stench that herald Jupiter's entrance (*Cym.* 5.3.208-10), but the Leonati's actions suggest that this display leaves them far short of awestruck. On bent knee (*Cym.* 5.3.186), they threaten the god they summoned hither. Notably, Sicilius and his sons do so by calling on the power imbued on them by the spectator role – that is, their ability to stand witness:

> help,
> Or we poor ghosts will cry
> To th' shining synod of the rest
> Against thy deity. (*Cym.* 5.3.181-4)

These spectators are actors, in every sense of the word. Not only do they perform as sycophants, costuming themselves in the guise of submission, they also effect change. Certainly, it is Jupiter who ultimately intercedes on Posthumus's behalf. But the play suggests he does so only at these onlookers' behest. Jupiter's explanation that, "Whom best I love, I cross, to make my gift, / The more delayed, delighted" (*Cym.* 5.3.195-6), strikes me as rather unsatisfactory, and evidently the Leonati feel similarly uneasy with it. When Jupiter orders them to absent themselves (*Cym.* 5.3.200), they ignore him, seeming

to wait for a more substantial promise. His second command is similarly disregarded (*Cym.* 5.3.205).[19] Jupiter is forced to depart first, his show of strength having been completely undone. There remains just one creature still responding to his authority and the god quickly transfers his orders over to it: "Mount eagle, to my palace crystalline" (*Cym.* 5.3.207). Apprehensive about the ability of these witnesses to "appeal" (*Cym.* 5.3.185) his verdict, this god finds himself in a placatory position and ends up following the crowd. Like Richard, he fears the tales others may tell of him. In this case, however, murder cannot act as even a temporary muzzle – for how do you silence those who are already dead or keep a ghost from undercutting the story you wish to script? The allegedly omnipotent Jupiter can do nothing other than acquiesce: "Be content. / Your low-laid son our godhead will uplift" (*Cym.* 5.3.196-7).

Clearly, the Leonati are not passive recipients struck dumb by spectacle, as the antitheatricalists feared any audience would be. They also undermine Munro's image of Shakespeare as an authoritative playwright who jealously guards the meaning of art, certain that spectators will get it wrong. The King of the Roman pantheon, Jupiter is associated with individual creationism, credited with the genesis of nothing less than the entire world. In this scene, he is also a kind of dramatist, arriving with a performance scripted to show strength and coming complete with his own set of foul papers – that is, the tablet. Like the playwright of Munro's imagining, he does not take kindly to interpretations from below: "How dare you ghosts / Accuse the thunderer, whose bolt,

[19] Jupiter's second order, "And so away" (*Cym.* 5.3.205), might alternatively be read as an injunctive to the eagle, as the god prepares to depart himself. That the address is made to the Leonati is suggested by the fact that the lines immediately preceding and following this one are said to the ghosts. Jupiter has offered further reassurance and given the ghosts a tablet to lay across their sleeping family member – as such, there is no further reason, in his eyes, for the Leonati to remain.

you know, / Sky-planted, batters all rebelling coasts?" (*Cym.* 5.3.188-90). But Jupiter's agenda is not Shakespeare's own. The playwright does not allow the god to be a solitary genius, creating in isolation. Instead, it is the ghosts who make a narrative out of the spectacle he provides, and they do so by reading against the grain and subverting the authorized interpretation. In fact, Jupiter is not omnipotent: threatened by the ability of spectators to bear witness, he quickly backs down. Here, then, is a creator kept in line by his audience. It seems unlikely that the jealous playwright of Munro's imagining would craft such a self-defeating scene.

Indeed, the play itself seems to celebrate this spirit of collaboration – for in revising Jupiter's image of absolute authority and power, the ghosts enable *Cymbeline*'s happy ending. The Leonati are involved in the creation of art, and thus become active participants in the production of drama, rather than just passive recipients to the sight of spectacle. That creative capacity is suggested even within this short scene. It is the ghosts' interpolation that rescues the deity's display and makes the creaking show of Jupiter seem mighty once more. "The marble pavement closes, he is entered / His radiant roof" (*Cym.* 5.3.214-5), Sicilius declares, and so renders the theatre's own painted roof opulent and palatial. Having attained what they demanded from Jupiter (essentially, the promise of an uplifting Act Five), these ghosts can afford to be generous. Perhaps the splendor of Jupiter's home will, in some small way, come to reflect on him. The Leonati, then, have interpretive agency and, from that, gain creative potential.

To argue for the Leonati's artistic ability is to write against much of the scholarly discourse surrounding the play. This scene is habitually viewed as an outside interpolation, specifically because the Leonati's verse, written almost entirely in rhyming

lines of fourteen syllables, is so very amateurish (Warren 54). However, this would not be the first time that Shakespeare deliberately crafted poor poetry for the stage. It seems highly unlikely, for example, that the lords' verses in *Love's Labour's Lost* are meant to be taken seriously. Also countering these claims of textual corruption, Warren has made a compelling case for Shakespearean authorship: he suggests that the poetry is purposefully antiquated in order to emphasize the distant world from which the ghosts arrive (54-5). This argument seems right to me, particularly given that fourteeners appear in *Love and Fortune*, one of the source materials for *Cymbeline* (Warren 55). When we read the scene as a parallel for the relationship between the playwright and his playgoers, as I have suggested we do, additional reasons for the use of the shoddy fourteeners emerge. The Leonati can be creative without being eloquent; they are artists if not necessarily poets. By staging their own creative ability in such a way, Shakespeare adds an earthy quality to art: there is more to a story than simply how it is relayed. And because of that, even the inarticulate and the illiterate can come to be involved in its production. Just as the boundary between the dead and the living appears indistinct in this play, so too is the line between artistic production and reception. *Cymbeline* figures playwright and playgoers as co-authors.

Lacking an avian mode of travel, Richard nevertheless mobilizes spectacle for the same end as Jupiter: to inscribe his own divinely sanctioned authority before a viewing audience. As the armies line up on either end of Bosworth Field, Richard's numbers make an impressive martial show: the battalion "trebles" (*R3* 5.3.11) their opponents, or so we are told. This usurper uses rhetoric to cast the battle in very specific terms. The challenging army is composed of nothing more than "traitors" (*R3* 5.3.9) and Richard's

followers need not worry, since "the King's name is a tower of strength, / Which they upon the adverse faction want" (*R3* 5.3.12-3). The implication is clear: Richard's battalion is made up of the righteous, and as such, God is on their side. That role – one of the Lord's elite – is familiar to Richard. He has performed it earlier, to great success, before the mayor and aldermen. Received exactly as planned, that 'skit' concluded with Richard lauded as "England's worthy king" (*R3* 3.7.230). Now, the majority of Richard's audience, his assembled soldiers, seems similarly receptive – or at least more so than the skeptical Leonati Jupiter finds himself faced with.

Perhaps these subjects are just outwardly obsequious. As the scrivener asks in regards to another one of Richard's ploys, "Who is so gross / That cannot see this palpable device? Yet who so bold but says he sees it not?" (*R3* 3.6.10-2). We discover the answer in Act Five: it is the dead who are daring enough. Removed from this world, the ghosts are able to undercut the King's spectacle in a way that the living cannot or will not. The dead therefore become the unintended audience that revises Richard's script. After all, Richmond and his army do not want for royal backing. They have the names of several deceased kings and potential kings behind them, specifically, Henry VI and his son Edward, as well as Richard's two royal nephews. Multiple towers of strength bolster this faction, as opposed to Richard's own army, which is gathered around one rather precarious center. This royal support undoes any sense of Richmond and his followers as treasonous – the usurpation is, in a strange way, politically endorsed. More than that, it is divinely sanctioned: "God and good angels fight on Richmond's side" (*R3* 5.5.130), claim those who have come straight from heaven. So much for Richard's claims of righteousness – the ghosts deflate them all.

Of course, this spectral reading should align with that of Shakespeare's own audience. While the Leonati's interpretation of Jupiter seems somewhat radical and unexpected, there is little that is surprising in these ghosts' condemnation of Richard. In fact, however, their subversion is two-fold. Even as they deconstruct the authorized narrative espoused by the current King of England, they indirectly complicate the image of Richard that the play itself has thus far offered up. Not even the highest earthly authority can morally elevate this man: recall King Edward IV's dying attempts to make "peace of enmity, fair love of hate" (*R3* 2.1.51) and this becomes clear. It is only under the ghostly influence that Richard changes for the better, coming to know guilt, regret, and self-doubt. "O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me?" (*R3* 5.5.133), he cries out, and for the first and only time, perhaps seems worthy of pity in the eyes of the audience. By colonizing Richard, the ghosts make this man more than what the rest of the play (and indeed, the dominant discourse in Shakespeare's England) has said he is; they illuminate another aspect of the spectacle.

If these phantoms are responsible for that unsettling complication, they are also responsible for the play's satisfying conclusion. Because Shakespeare revises his source material to have Richard dream of ghosts instead of demons (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 176-7), Richmond's victory cannot be attributed solely to him. The story therefore becomes more than "simply the triumph of the stronger army or the tragedy of a king without a horse" (Greenblatt, *Purgatory* 179). Like Posthumus's ancestors, these ghosts intercede on their chosen one's behalf and make the ending what they want it to be. They too have creative potential. "Good angels guard thy battle" (*R3* 5.5.92), Clarence promises Richmond and soon after, this man is crowned in the field (*R3* 5.8.4-7).

The ability of this particular crowd to intervene is contrasted by an earlier throng's torpor. When Buckingham informs a mob of Londoners of their new monarch, the declaration does not go as planned:

> BUCKINGHAM: I bid them that did love their country's good
>
> Cry 'God save Richard, England's royal king!'
>
> RICHARD: And did they so?
>
> BUCKINGHAM: No, so God help me. They spake not a word,
>
> But, like dumb statues or breathing stones,
>
> Stared each on other and looked deadly pale. (*R3* 3.7.21-6)

Spectacle here fails to evoke the authorized response. Just as Jupiter's show of power rings false, Richard's pageantry, mediated by Buckingham, is unable to fabricate the desired illusion of righteousness. The crowd is unconvinced. But in contrast to the dead Leonati, they cannot rewrite that spectacle, cannot make it mean something else – that is left up to the ghostly collective who arrives in Act Five. *Cymbeline* also opens with the tale of a crowd paralyzed by authoritative spectacle. Cymbeline's subjects conceal their inward emotions better than Richard's "breathing stones" (*R3* 3.7.25). But while the courtiers "wear their faces to the bent / of the King's looks" (*Cym.* 1.1.13-4), they still do not speak out in favour of the story they prefer, the one Cymbeline himself seeks to silence – that is, the love story of Posthumus and Imogen. Again, it is up to the ghostly collective to do that in Act Five.

Although not receptive in the same way that the Romans are in *Coriolanus* or *Julius Caesar*, both of these living crowds – Cymbeline's courtiers and Buckingham's assembly – are painfully helpless. In fact, their contribution to each story is so minor that

they are not even worthy of being staged. We only hear of each stunt secondhand. So while these living crowds have keen agency and insight, refusing to accept the authorized interpretation they are being spoon fed, they also lack the creative power of either the ghostly Leonati or Richard's dead visitors. Put quite simply, these living crowds are unable to turn spectacle around to make it mean something else. Buckingham's audience cannot speak out against Richard and Cymbeline's courtiers cannot reveal their own reservations regarding Cloten. These living crowds' narrative power is naught and as such, they are actually more immaterial than the ghosts themselves. Still as "[d]umb statues" (*R3* 3.7.25), with faces frozen into disingenuous scowls, these paralyzed assemblies seem far more incapacitated than the dead do – as if it is the former, not the latter, who suffer from physical *rigor mortis*. Because of that, the living can be easily controlled by performance. When it is the internal convictions that stiffen up, however, the crowd becomes the controlling force – something we can see with both of the unwavering, assured, and endlessly creative ghostly collectives found in these same two plays.

Munro's claim that playwrights feared their audience's interpolation in art, then, seems to here have little grounding with Shakespeare. Both *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* contain an unmanageable and transgressive crowd whose very disorderliness nevertheless expedites a satisfying conclusion. As noted, that portrayal is distinct from his dramatic representations of living crowds, within these plays and also elsewhere. It would therefore seem that their spectrality is what enables these particular collectives to be so constructive. Early on in *Richard III*, the plotting protagonist jokes that by examining his shadow, he will finally see himself as the "marv'lous proper man" (1.3.241) that others,

namely Anne, do. Well aware of his physical deformities, the idea is laughable to Richard. But both *Cymbeline* and *Richard III* support the idea that something can be seen in shadows, that certain parts of life are best revealed under a blue, phantasmal light. Souls never "fleet" (*Cym.* 5.3.25) to total darkness and death, very obviously, is not "the blind cave of eternal night" (*R3* 5.5.15) some say it is. In *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*, there is something about this state that actually makes us more expert interpreters and more involved spectators.

4. Wanted, Dead or Alive: Spectral Spectators

The question, of course, is what exactly that something is. As I have argued, Shakespeare resurrects a more Catholic understanding of death in these plays so that spectators can see themselves reflected in the ghostly gatherings onstage and, as a result, *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* seem to expand the role typically assigned to an audience – in terms of the aesthetic relationship, spectating apparitions are shown to be part of the production of art, rather than just the reception of it. But what is characteristic of the death state that it allows for such creative contributions? Put differently, what phantasmal quality in particular makes one a more involved spectator? The answer, I argue, has to do with the unique nature of the spectral presence, diffuse in a way that the strictly material body cannot usually be.

Come Act Five, scene five, *Richard III*'s stage splits, offering a rare moment of multilocality in Shakespeare. The audience sees into Richard's tent at the exact same moment that they behold Richmond's camp, as men at opposite ends of Bosworth Field share the same stage. Since every other scene of military preparation is separated in order

to delineate Richard's and Richmond's distinct spaces (compare *R3* 5.3; 5.4; and 5.6), the choice to suddenly shrink Bosworth Field relates directly to the appearance of the ghosts. *Richard III* therefore emphasizes how spectral beings can occupy several places at one time. Obviously, the ghosts are part of both the afterlife and this life, but they have a diffuse presence in the play world too. Able to encompass both ends of the battleground, they stand between King and challenger and speak to each in turn (*R3* 5.5.70-130). Mullaney envisions the moment as inverting the moral tug of war found in medieval mystery plays – namely, that stock scene in which a good angel and an evil demon flank the protagonist they seek to persuade (85). Now, it is the ghosts themselves who occupy the middle ground, and they are certainly not divided in their loyalties.

If *Richard III* is a play that speaks to the necessity of creative collaboration, as I have argued, it is fitting that Shakespeare here revises a preceding theatrical tradition and makes it mean something else. The ghosts' new preeminence is signified by the fact that they have literally taken center stage. At the same time, they are somehow dispersed, penetrating the sleeping minds of Richard and Richmond. These ghosts, then, are both phantasmagorical and not: they exist within the unconscious minds of these men, but also outside of them. The same is true of Posthumus's visitors. An odd stage direction dictates that the ghosts enter "*as in an apparition*" (*Cym.* 5.3.123.1), reinforcing the idea that *Cymbeline*'s spectres occupy several planes simultaneously. While the note may be a scribal intervention, it is a telling one: as Warren writes, "it usefully focuses the nature of this episode … It is on one level an externalization of Posthumus' dream … But it is also an 'objective' ghostly visitation" (232).

Richard III's Stanley illustrates that to be present in this diffuse or diasporic way is a particular privilege of the spectral among us; they alone can inhabit multiple realms simultaneously. Living flesh is literally the impediment to Stanley's ready movement between two distinct worlds: should he desert Richard and join Richmond, his son will be executed (*R3* 4.4.425-7). Stanley must instead send furtive messages to Richmond via Sir Christopher (*R3* 4.5.1-5) and himself manages only one clandestine visit to the camp (*R3* 5.5.32-60), before his defection is realized on the morn of battle (*R3* 5.6.73). But while *Richard III*'s living characters may not be able to diffuse their essential presence through multiple worlds or across many planes, they *can* engage in a kind of self-accretion, forging alternative versions of who they are in public. In this splintering of selfhood, person becomes persona. It is a kind of auto-mutilation, paradoxically undertaken in the name of self-preservation. Stanley is a different man before Richard than he is in his heart because he wants to survive this political fray, and he wants his son to do so as well.

Richard is similarly deceptive. The pretender makes his way to the throne by outwardly projecting a counterfeited version of himself: "Dive, thoughts, down to my soul" (*R3* 1.1.41), he orders, and through this repression manages to convince Clarence, Anne, Edward IV, and the mayor, among others, of his benevolence. *Cymbeline*'s Queen attempts the same feat, publicly purporting to cherish her husband and Imogen, even as she struggles to place Cloten on the throne. As performances go, she could learn a lot from Stanley or Richard. When the Queen's deathbed confession is relayed, Cymbeline describes her duplicity as covert. "She alone knew this" (*Cym.* 5.4.40), the King declares, and then laments the artifice of all his wife's gender: "Who is't can read a woman?" (*Cym.* 5.4.48). The answer, in this case, is basically everyone else. Despite the Queen's

claim to be Posthumus's "advocate" (*Cym.* 1.1.77), even the First Gentleman knows that she "most desired the match" (*Cym.* 1.1.12) between her son and stepdaughter. Imogen herself punctures the Queen's fictional identity in her very first line, labeling the other woman's performance nothing more than "dissembling courtesy" (*Cym.* 1.1.85). And of course, Pisanio and Cornelius are resistant to the story the Queen tells of herself. The former remains fiercely loyal to Posthumus in the face of a bribe (*Cym.* 1.5.68-74, 86-7), while the latter withholds true poisons for fear of the Queen's intentions: as he says, "I do know her spirit, / And will not trust one of her malice with / A drug of such damned nature" (*Cym.* 1.5.34-6). Try as the Queen might to conceal her real character, no one but Cymbeline is willing to enter into the fictional identity she crafts. Her audience refuses to suspend their disbelief and enter into this story with her. While Richard and Stanley initially find more success in narrating new versions of themselves, their efforts are eventually thwarted as well. Even Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus cannot continue as Morgan, Polydore, and Cadwal indefinitely. In every instance, the second selves these characters counterfeit are unveiled as illusions, nothing more.

And then there is *Cymbeline*'s Posthumus. Before this man ever appears as flesh and blood onstage, he is narratively constructed. The two gentlemen introduce a worthy hero the audience has yet to see, in more ways than one – not only has Posthumus thus far been absent onstage, his equal, we are told, cannot be found through all "the regions of the earth" (*Cym.* 1.1.20). The odd language surrounding Posthumus strengthens the idea that he is a fiction of sorts, even within the make-believe world of the play: the First Gentleman refers to him as "our theme" (*Cym.* 1.1.39) and Philario ask his guests to leave off discussing Posthumus, lest they "*story* him in his own hearing" (*Cym.* 1.4.30-1,

emphasis added). Certainly, Posthumus is not the "basest thing" (*Cym.* 1.1.126) that his father-in-law labels him. But as the play progresses, spectators see that the First Gentleman has indeed spoke this 'hero' too far. Posthumus is all too willing to enter into Iachimo's wager, far too ready to accept allegations of Imogen's infidelity, and much too prepared to have his beloved killed off. Those onstage might enter into the fiction that is Posthumus's heroic identity, but the offstage assembly is asked to be more skeptical of it, by virtue of *Cymbeline*'s very design.

In fact, the most perplexing aspect of this play is why exactly "this jewel in the world" (*Cym.* 1.1.92) has the reputation he does – because somehow, despite all of his misdeeds, Posthumus retains his "lustre" (*Cym.* 1.1.144) in the eyes of those onstage. The earlier criticisms offered by Iachimo, the Frenchman, Imogen, and Pisanio are theatrically retracted by the play's close, as Posthumus is the one selected to moralize. "Live" (*Cym.* 5.4.420), the would-be murderer pronounces on Iachimo, "And deal with others better" (*Cym.* 5.4.421). It is Posthumus himself, however, who seems most deserving of that admonition. Who is the greater villain? Given the opportunity to rape a stranger, Iachimo retreats to his trunk (*Cym.* 2.2.46-51) – but nothing holds Posthumus back from planning the slaughter of the woman he wed. And yet it is this latter man, proven to be vengeful, murderous, and despairing, that is once again held up as the individual to emulate by the close of the play. Even Posthumus's greatest skeptic has been converted, so that Cymbeline's previously subversive reading of him is now in line with the dominant discourse found within the fictional world: after watching Posthumus absolve Iachimo, the King declares, "We'll learn our freeness of a son-in-law. / Pardon's the word to all" (*Cym.* 5.4.422-3). Posthumus's fictional self seems to be so canonical that any conflicting

story of him is eventually rejected. As a result, the raw materials of this man are often woefully misread. Philario, for example, is certain that Posthumus's uncharacteristic rage at Imogen is really inwardly directed: "Let's follow him and pervert the present wrath / He hath against himself" (*Cym.* 2.4.151-2). This interpretation follows Posthumus's rather straightforward threat "to tear her [Imogen] limb-meal" (*Cym.* 2.4.147). It would seem the man has something quite different from self-mutilation on his mind – unless, of course, we wish to take literally the metaphor of marriage making one flesh.

The inwardly directed wrath that Philario sees in Posthumus only manifests itself in Act Five. Counterintuitive though this claim may sound, Posthumus's sudden self-flagellation actually works in service of the fictional identity he has been assigned. Like everyone else, he has accepted the story others tell of him. After all, he still presents himself as a hero – the difference is just that now, he is a fallen one. No ordinary man, Posthumus is also no ordinary villain. Who else has plummeted from such great height? Once again, this man is presented as being beyond parallel, except these days, it is his sinfulness that is without rival. "It is I" (*Cym.* 5.4.215), he announces to Cymbeline's court, "That all th'abhorrèd things o'th' earth amend / By being worse than they. I am Posthumus" (*Cym.* 5.4.216-7). He even finds for himself a new kind of fame: "Every villain / Be called Posthumus Leonatus, and / Be villainy less than 'twas!" (*Cym.* 5.4.223-5). Posthumus still sees himself as story, and in some strange way, the success of that story absolves him of his sins. In his own words, "[I]f I prove a good repast to the spectators, the dish pays the shot" (*Cym.* 5.3.249-50).

The people who populate *Cymbeline* support one another's misreading of Posthumus; these characters err in league. They would therefore seem to embody the

problems of the living multitude addressed above. But the ghosts – beings who I am arguing serve as superior spectators – actually offer the same misinterpretation. "Hath my poor boy done aught but well, / Whose face I never saw?" (*Cym.* 5.3.129-30), demands Sicilius, and his wife, speaking of a would-be murderer, insists, "Jupiter, our son is good" (*Cym.* 5.3.179). Meanwhile, Posthumus's brother situates the man as beyond compare once again, just as the First Gentleman's introduction and Posthumus's own self-condemnation do: "When once he [Posthumus] was mature for man, / In Britain where was he / That could stand up his parallel?" (*Cym.* 5.3.146-8). It is a rhetorical question that Iachimo will answer just one scene later: "a nobler sir ne'er lived / 'Twixt sky and ground" (*Cym.* 5.4.145-6). When it comes to this last Leonatus, the Jailor's heartfelt wish – "I would we were all of one mind, and one mind good" (*Cym.* 5.4.295-6) – comes true: by the close of the play, Posthumus is an unimpeachable hero in the eyes of everyone onstage. In contrast to Stanley, Richard, and the Queen, he has a fictional self that fully succeeds within the play world. Here is a story that is compelling and irresistible, one that captivates those he shares the stage with, even though it is blatantly false and obviously fictional.

The answer for why this narrative has such resiliency within the play world brings us back to the diffuse presence of the ghosts in *Cymbeline*, those unseen spectators who have collaborated in the fiction that is their descendent. *Richard III*'s protagonist might find himself momentarily colonized by a spectral presence, but *Cymbeline*'s ghosts have taken up permanent residence in Posthumus. In the eyes of those onstage, this man is made up of those who have passed on. That point is evidenced early on, when the Second

Gentleman asks after Posthumus's "name and birth" (*Cym.* 1.1.27), and the First Gentleman details everyone else's lineage in response:

> His father
> Was called Sicilius, who did join his honour
> Against the Romans with Cassibelan
> But had his titles by Tenantius, whom
> He served with glory and admired success,
> So gained the sur-additon 'Leonatus';
> And had, besides this gentleman in question,
> Two other sons who in the wars o'th' time
> Died with their swords in hand; for which their father,
> Then old and fond of issue, took such sorrow
> That he quit being. (*Cym.* 1.1.28-38)

Only after discussing the travails of Sicilius's wife does the First Gentleman directly answer the actual question being asked: "The King … calls him Posthumus Leonatus" (*Cym.* 1.1.40-1). Later, we learn that the youngest of the Leonati has military accolades to rival those of his father – "[l]ike hardiment Posthumus hath / To Cymbeline performed" (*Cym.* 5.3.169-70). But in explaining what kind of man Imogen has wed, the First Gentleman deems it best to describe Sicilius's deeds, rather than Posthumus's own. To know Posthumus, apparently one must first understand his father and indeed, the entire Leonati clan. If Posthumus deserves "the praise o'th' world" (*Cym.* 5.3.144), it is only "[a]s great Sicilius's heir" (*Cym.* 5.3.145).

In the same way, the ghosts' former triumphs can atone for Posthumus's misdeeds. After all, if the sins of the father are to be visited on the son, why not then his laurels? The Leonati are careful to assign Posthumus's crimes to Iachimo: in their version of events, an innocent man has "become the geck and scorn / *O'th' other's villainy*" (*Cym.* 5.3.161-2, emphasis added). The motivation for Posthumus's murderous feelings towards Imogen becomes criminal, and not the violent designs themselves – in fact, Sicilius's rhetoric casts Posthumus as a victim of sorts. But in order to absolve Posthumus still further, another Leonatus evokes the family's illustrious history, so that their former heroic deeds seem to compensate for Posthumus now being duped in this way:

> For this from stiller seats we came,
> Our parents and us twain,
> That striking in our country's cause
> Fell bravely and were slain,
> Our fealty and Tenantius' right
> With honour to maintain. (*Cym*. 5.3.163-8)

Posthumus may have recently strayed, but he has also done a lot of good – or rather, his family has. For Posthumus's brother, who delivers this speech, there does not seem to be a distinction. Diffuse in a different way, these ghosts have permanently imbued their descendent with their own essence and as such, they claim complete authorship over this, their finest creation: "Great nature like his ancestry / Moulded the stuff so fair" (*Cym.* 5.3.142-3). As we shall see, that claim of total artistic authority is one that the play itself ultimately complicates. But within the staged world of *Cymbeline*, it rings true. Though

others retell the story of Posthumus, they do not revise it to reflect what the man really is, or at least they do not do so in an enduring way. All of Posthumus's critics, save for the rather unimportant Frenchman (who has disappeared), accept this man as the voice of morality come Act Five. "Gods, put the strength o'th' Leonati in me" (*Cym.* 5.1.31), Posthumus prays, but in reality, that strength has bolstered him since birth. His phantasmal family members are the reason why the fictional version of Posthumus is so compelling to the onstage audience.

It must be the Leonati's very spectrality that confers that creative power on them – for in accepting the fictional identity they bestow, Posthumus sharply juxtaposes two other sons. Guiderius and Arviragus always chafe against what their adopted father has told them they are: Belarius laments that "their thoughts do hit / The roofs of palaces" (*Cym.* 3.3.84), even though they have been "trained up thus meanly" (*Cym.* 3.3.82). Despite the fact that it is "*nature* [which] prompts them / In simple and low things to prince it much / Beyond the trick of others" (*Cym.* 3.3.84-6, emphasis added), the biological father also struggles to have his idea of the pair accepted. Come Act Five, scene four, Cymbeline narrates a jubilant reconciliation that conflicts with what can be seen onstage. Not everyone is as "o'erjoyed" (*Cym.* 5.4.402) about the family reunion as the King claims. While Cymbeline might be elated, his sons remain curiously silent – in fact, they only ever express gladness that Posthumus is now their sibling. Reflecting on the other man's feats in battle, Arviragus says, "You holp us, sir, / As you did mean indeed to be our brother. / Joyed are we that you are" (*Cym.* 5.4.423-5). A similar admission is never made to their royal father, and the two men even seem to brush off their sister. Arviragus and Guiderius's affection was for Fidele, and as such, an

undercurrent of resentment exists in their acknowledgment of Imogen. This is apparent in their resolute choice to continue with the use of the masculine pronoun. Of the woman formerly known as Fidele, Guiderius says, "at first meeting [we] loved, / Continued so until we thought *he* died" (*Cym.* 5.4.380-1, emphasis added). This scene is full of troublesome realizations for Cymbeline's sons: the same man who just threatened their lives turns out to be their true father, and their beloved Fidele was a fraud all along. No wonder they seem less than thrilled and far from "o'erjoyed" (*Cym.* 5.4.402), whatever the King might claim. In contrast to Posthumus, Guiderius and Arviragus do not allow a father – any father – to dictate the stories of their lives. Sicilius differs from Cymbeline and Belarius in one simple regard: he is dead and therefore able to instill himself, along with the rest of the phantasmal Leonati, within his last surviving son. The ability of this ghostly presence to diffuse itself means that Posthumus is made up, in part, of a spectral collective.

Richard portrays himself in a similar way to how I have considered Posthumus: the story of the man trumps the reality of him. Outside of a socially determined ideal of beauty and told that he is ugly, even by the barks of dogs (*R3* 1.1.23), Richard declares that he will become what he has forever been treated as: a misshapen monster. "[S]ince I cannot prove a lover / To entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determinèd to prove a villain" (*R3* 1.1.28-30), he announces in his opening soliloquy. If that claim were entirely truthful, then *Richard III*'s sense of fiction's power would be even greater than *Cymbeline*'s – for Posthumus, as we have seen, never actually becomes the hero others say he is. But Richard's explanation of his villainy is flawed. Though "not shaped for sportive tricks" (*R3* 1.1.14), he does seem to have some erotic capital. After all, he woos

Anne easily enough, and even convinces Elizabeth to give him one of her last surviving children in wedlock. As Joel Elliot Slotkin writes, "the play present an alternative poetics in which Richard is attractive *because* he is evil – and even because he is ugly. The play treats its evil and horrible elements as aesthetic objects capable of arousing erotic desire" (7). Greenblatt offers a similar reading: this rewriting of history "has allowed Richard to be a perverse erotic champion" (Introduction 544). But given the opportunity to engage in love-play with Anne, Richard still chooses villainy. "I'll have her" (*R3* 1.2.217), he muses, "but I will not keep her long" (*R3* 1.2.217). Whatever his opening soliloquy might imply, Richard is very clearly a self-made man when we first meet him, and not just the result of his social conditioning.

In Shakespeare's England, the historical Richard III was, in fact, the stuff of story. The dead King's evil was legendary, and it was that fiction which Tudor supporters propagated, eager to legitimate a current reign that descended from Richmond. But just as *Cymbeline* asks its audience to question the story they see espoused onstage, *Richard III* disrupts the standard tale of this King, "[t]he wretched, bloody, and usurping boar" (5.2.7). On All-Souls' day, Richard benefits from the spectral infusion Posthumus has lived with his whole life. When the ghosts colonize the King, he, like Posthumus, becomes a better person in the eyes of an audience – this time, Shakespeare's own assembly. As noted above, the ghosts give Richard a conscience and so the play asks its own spectators to see him as pitiable for the first time. *Richard III* becomes the tragedy promised in its full title, as spectators watch Richard realize the veracity of the ghosts' message: "There is no creature loves me, / And if I die no soul will pity me" (5.5.154-5). Ironically, the moment when Richard realizes his total contemptibility is the same one

where he might win some sympathy. The ghostly intervention in *Cymbeline*, by contrast, benefits the onstage audience – these characters can believe in their own happy ending because the Leonati's blood and backing somehow makes Posthumus permanently palatable. In each instance, then, this spectral diffusion leads to a story that is more complex, meaningful, and ultimately moving. This, it seems, is the true gift of a diffuse presence – its ability to deepen and complicate the story being shared. What do the spectres in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* resemble but playgoers, people who also have an inexplicably diffuse presence in that they occupy both the world of the play and the theatre itself – that is, both fantastical and everyday planes? Spectral beings – be they spectres or spectators – can put themselves into the characters they behold to make that spectacle better. Indeed, it is impossible to craft compelling stories, absorbing narratives, or stirring art *unless* spectators are willing to see something of themselves in that work, to here have a presence in the play.

That point is reinforced by Posthumus's poetry. Literary ability is apparently genetic, for his verse is as shoddy as the Leonati's later fourteeners – but interestingly, it is nowhere near as affective. Recall that the words of Sicilius and the others induce anxiety in Jupiter, an anxiety that moves him to step in on Posthumus's behalf. The spectral audience onstage, collaborating on the ending of this story, produces an emotional response in the creator. When Posthumus tries his hand at poetry earlier, he finds far less success. Recounting the battle to a lord that fled, Posthumus turns hostile at the same moment that he turns to rhyme:

POSTHUMUS: Nay, do not wonder at it: you are made

Rather to wonder at the things you hear

Than to work any. Will you rhyme upon't,
And vent it for mock'ry? Here is one:
'Two boys, an old man – twice a boy – a lane
Preserved the Britons, was the Romans' bane.'

LORD: Nay, be not angry sir.

POSTHUMUS: 'Lack, to what end?
Who dares not stand his foe, I'll be his friend,
For if he'll do as he is made to do,
I know he'll quickly fly my friendship too.
You have put me into rhyme.

LORD: Farewell, you're angry.

(*Cym.* 5.3.53-63)

As the subject of this spontaneous poetry, the lord can clearly see himself in the verse. But it is an unflattering reflection, and one he ultimately rejects. Posthumus might try to make this audience of one collaborate in the creation of art, using the lord's request – "be not angry sir" (*Cym.* 5.3.59) – to spur the next bout of rhyme. But the lord is an unwilling participant and as such, the only movement this art results in is physical: the lord flees such condemnation, unwilling to hear himself slandered any longer. In order for art to be emotionally moving, the play suggests, collaboration must be mutually entered into; a reader, listener, or spectator must be willing to see at least part of himself in the story at hand. Diffusing themselves across people, places, and planes, the ghosts in *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* model that spectral behaviour. No wonder they become the best metaphor for an ideal kind of spectatorship – beyond the body, they are unbound and can fully

enter into alternative realms. Infusing themselves into the people they see before them, these spectral audiences transform mere spectacle into meaningful art – for in that moment, it becomes something that can inwardly move those gathered in the yard and galleries of Shakespeare's theatre.

That emotional involvement takes a slightly different form in each play. We have already seen how the ghosts transform Richard so that he becomes pitiable for the first and only time. When Richard expels the ghostly presence that has colonized him, declaring that, "Conscience is but a word that cowards use" (*R3* 5.6.39), Shakespeare's audience is asked to stand in for the spectres – that is, to take on the role of making Richard sympathetic. Can they forget the sight of this man, shaken and guilt-stricken, so easily? Will they still see the tragedy in this tale? Long after the ghosts have left him, Richard insists, "A thousand hearts are great within my bosom" (*R3* 5.6.77). If the play succeeds, then he is right. Where once the ghosts stood, spectators now do, and though they certainly do not cheer for this broken King, they might feel for him – their sympathies extended and hearts diffuse.

Short-lived though Richard's moral awakening may be, he does seem momentarily improved by his ghostly visitation. This is in contrast to Posthumus, whose image is overhauled by the Leonati, and *not* his essential being. "Spit and throw stones, cast mire upon me, set / The dogs o'th' street to bay me" (*Cym.* 5.4.222-3), Posthumus wails, but the repentance, like Jupiter's own show of strength, rings false. Posthumus here asks to be humiliated, but then grows angry when he believes himself to be mocked: "Shall's have a play of this? Thou *scornful* page, / There lie thy part" (*Cym.* 5.4.228-9, emphasis added), he hisses and then hits his disguised wife so hard that she falls to the

floor, unconscious. Still volatile and violent, Posthumus seems relatively unchanged by his experience. So while the onstage audience may be willing to embrace a happy ending, Shakespeare's own spectators should have a few reservations about the man their heroine has married. That inane question of Sicilius's – "Hath my poor boy done aught but well[?]" (*Cym.* 5.3.129) – is actually not demanded of empty air. There are hundreds of ears that receive it in the theatre. Given the not insubstantial list of Posthumus's sins – risking Imogen's virtue, ordering her murder, and courting his own death – we can imagine that the answer from Shakespeare's own unruly and vocal crowd would have been an emphatic and resounding 'yes.'

Cymbeline compels its spectators to criticize, to be the corrective to the tale being told of Posthumus. In effect, it asks them to make use of their own diffuse spectral presence, to spread a different story as they cross the Thames and once again enter the city proper. Recall Posthumus's oddly metatheatrical line, contemplating his impending execution: "if I prove a good repast to the spectators, the dish pays the shot" (*Cym.* 5.3.249-50). The moment seems to be a direct nod to the audience gathered in the theatre, a moment in which they are charged with the final judgement of this man. For Shakespeare's spectators, the story of Posthumus should not be easily swallowed – and therefore, the dish cannot pay the shot. Justice might miscarry onstage, but those in the yard and the galleries can reclaim it, if, in their eyes, the 'hero' remains far from total exoneration and *Cymbeline*'s happy ending seems somewhat suspect.

One caveat must be made regarding this idea of spectrality as somehow enabling. In both *Richard III* and *Cymbeline*, a singular person straddling the boundary between life and death does not have the same interpretive capacity and creative potential as a

ghostly collective. Consider, for example, the problematic character of Posthumus. While this man is made up of living flesh, he nevertheless possesses a kind of hybridity that is akin to that of the deceased Leonati. Posthumus's name alone marks him as something existing after death. More than that, he was actually borne by a corpse. His mother died in the midst of labour and as a result, the infant Leonatus was removed from the cadaver by Caesarean section: the spectre explains, "Lucina lent not me her aid, / But took me in my throes … from me was Posthumus ripped" (*Cym.* 5.3.137-9). Here, a corpse delivers new life into the world – and so, in her mortal moment, this woman becomes a strange amalgamation of living and dead flesh. Like mother, like son: Posthumus arrives in this world with a kind of cadaverous taint. Stricken with guilt over the role he believes he has played in another woman's demise, Posthumus furthers these associations with the dead, assigning himself a corpse-like quality: "my life / Is every breath a death" (*Cym.* 5.1.26-7). Similar to Queen Margaret in *Richard III*, this man has crossed a forbidden boundary, lending him the transgressive edge that we have already seen accompanies any early modern haunting. Both Posthumus and Margaret return to the very country from which they were banished. She lurks around the margins of *Richard III*, while Posthumus takes center stage in *Cymbeline*, but each character nevertheless serves as a sort of living phantom.

Unlike the actual ghostly collective who visits him, however, Posthumus has no interpretive prowess. It takes just a "slight thing of Italy" (*Cym.* 5.3.158) to convince him that Imogen is unfaithful, a mere bloody cloth to assure him that she has been slain (*Cym.* 5.1.1-2). Indeed, Posthumus's inability to understand events, let alone have a lasting impact on the story at hand, would almost be comical – if not for the fact that his

incompetence inevitably endangers Imogen. Overjoyed at her husband's remorseful return, this woman finds herself literally floored by his violent response. Admittedly, Posthumus is not alone in his inability to see through Imogen's disguise – but few others make quite so many misreadings. His clumsy interpretive skills are further evidenced by the fact that he confuses comfort for contempt. Imogen's exclamation – "Peace, my lord, hear, hear" (*Cym.* 5.4.227) – falls far short of mocking, even if spoken by a lowly page. Despite Imogen's plea, the audience knows that Posthumus is a man who cannot rightly "hear" (*Cym.* 5.4.227) much of anything. Time and time again, his interpretive skills prove wanting.

Deafened but not dumb, it is Posthumus's boasts that spur the wager and his orders that lead to Imogen's endangerment. This man is listened to far more than we might like. That group of rapt listeners, however, does not include Shakespeare. Happily, the playwright does not gift Posthumus with ultimate control of the story – for with him at the helm, *Cymbeline* would have been a tragedy, its allegedly unfaithful heroine murdered by a misguided hero who then kills himself. In other words, it would have been *Othello* restaged, a suggestion reinforced by the eerie character resonances between 'Iago' and 'Iachimo,' and both Othello and Posthumus's obsession with a handkerchief-like cloth. Posthumus might seek capture and execution rather than turning a sword on himself, but otherwise, the tale he struggles to script is virtually the same as the one that Othello lives. Fortunately, Posthumus proves nowhere near as capable as Iago when it comes to telling tales. Inculcated with his ensign's lies, Othello easily discards any alternative view: in response to Emilia's impassioned pledge of her mistress's innocence, for example, he derisively declares Emilia " a simple bawd / That cannot say as much"

(*Oth.* 4.2.20-1, emphasis added) as Iago. To an audience's great relief, Posthumus also cannot say as much as this villain. His role is akin to Iago's in that he must convince another man to do away with a troublesome woman, but Pisanio proves far more difficult to persuade than Othello himself. When we understand Posthumus as a failed author, Act Five's puzzling scene three, in which Posthumus essentially summarizes a battle that the audience has just seen, starts to make sense.[20] Like Warren, I dismiss the idea that Posthumus's synopsis was written to replace the actual battle (74). The doubleness of this scene serves to reinforce the fact that this man is incapable of adding to narrative in any substantial way. The most he can do is repeat it.

Initially, Posthumus may appear to differ from Margaret in that regard. This woman possesses an eerie ability to prophesize the future, so much so that she almost seems to have a hand in creating it. Yet importantly, the curses she calls down on Edward IV, Elizabeth, and their sons, as well as on Rivers, Dorset, Hastings, and Richard, are preceded by a plea for assistance: "Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven? / Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!" (*R3* 1.3.192-3). As we have seen, clouds equate to the dead in the metaphorical landscape of this play. Because of that, Margaret seems to act in a kind of phantasmal alliance. Ghostly though both her and Posthumus might be, neither can act alone. His attempts to do so all fail, while her curses need spectral backing – they demand the power of the collective to come to fruition.

We have already seen how spectrality metaphorically captures an ideal, engaged model of spectatorship. The dead are diffuse, able to enter another world in the same way

[20] Admittedly, Posthumus does not describe the part he played in bringing about this triumph (Warren 53), but this relatively inconsequential revision is the only change he makes to the content of the story.

that spectators must be willing to see themselves in story. But one question remains: why is that boundary crossing best undertaken as a collective? Andrew Gurr argues that a sense of togetherness was characteristic of Shakespeare's crowd: "Modern playgoers are set up, by their physical and mental conditioning, to be solitary spectators … In fundamental contrast the early modern playgoers were audiences, people gathered as crowds, forming what they called assemblies, gatherings, or companies" (1). In choosing to stage several ghosts, then, Shakespeare can be seen to appeal to contemporary understandings of the audience's role. Spectral beings – whether clustered in the yard, seated in the galleries, or roaming the stage itself – observe and understand in tandem, not alone. The spectators of Shakespeare's day were much more likely to see themselves reflected in a group of ghosts onstage than in a solitary spectre.

But privileging the collective in these two plays serves a purpose beyond the audience's ease of self-recognition. Assemblies possess a kind of latent power, and the very thing that makes them dangerous in a work like *Julius Caesar* gives them value in *Richard III*. Speaking as one voice – the voice of the lower class mob – *Julius Caesar*'s plebians shout down reason and independent thought. In *Richard III*, the spectres also speak as one, and despite the presence of both royals and traitors, there does not seem to be any hierarchical gradient in this crowd. Rather than arriving by rank, the spectres show up in the order that they died. No stage directions mark their entrances or exits, so the ghost of Henry VI passes through with as little ceremony as the morally dubious Buckingham. We do not know if the ghosts exited all together, or if they filed across the stage in one continuous line in Shakespeare's day. Either way, any distinctions based on an earthly hierarchy seem to have collapsed. Like the mob in *Julius Caesar,* these ghosts

are of one mind: Richard must perish while Richmond will ascend to the throne. As noted above, the play seems to suggest that it is the alliance of these phantoms that give their words such weight. Their blessing and curse are realized because they speak all together, and so a collective determines the ending that results, the "peace [that] lives again" (*Cym.* 5.8.40).

Cymbeline considers the value of the collective in another light. It leaves its audience with the sense that different perspectives are required to gain the whole picture, that the process of making meaning is a communal endeavour, one of mutual exchange. Here, a crowd does not speak with one voice – instead, it is made up of many, sometimes competing, ones. We have already seen how the play invites 'talk-back' from and between its spectators, particularly in relation to Posthumus. Even onstage, however it takes several characters to piece together an understanding of the events that have occurred. Notably, these informants are from every class: Iachimo, Pisanio and Cornelius reveal facts right alongside Belarius, Posthumus, and Cymbeline himself. And interestingly, people must be allowed to speak out of turn in order for the truth to be arrived at. "Take him hence, / The whole world shall not save him" (*Cym.* 5.4.321-2), Cymbeline orders, upon learning that the accomplished soldier before him is really Belarius, a convicted traitor. But Belarius does not need the whole world to save him – he requires only himself, and the piece of the story that he can share. By talking out of turn, Belarius saves himself – and clarifies the story as a whole. Cymbeline, for example, begins to understand how three unknown peasants could have shown such military prowess: "The service that you three have done is more / Unlike than this thou tell'st" (*Cym.* 5.4.354-5). It is harder to believe that such fighters are rabble than that his long

lost sons have returned to him. Once the lowest of the low, Belarius is raised up by the contribution he can make to narrative understanding: Cymbeline tells him, "Thou art my brother; so we'll hold thee ever" (*Cym*. 5.4.400). Interpretation and storytelling, it seems, are acts that eclipse difference – like death, they are the great levelers.

Richard III closes as a prayer does: its final word is "Amen" (*R3*. 5.8.41). Tellingly, that prayer, offered by Richmond, asks that a collective identity be restored. For years, "[t]he brother blindly shed the brother's blood / The father rashly slaughtered his own son; / The son, compelled, been butcher to the sire" (*R3* 5.8.24-6), but by the grace of God, these internal divisions will exist no longer. Marrying Elizabeth and pardoning those soldiers who fought against him, Richmond seeks to recreate a unified English identity and restore national harmony. The man who this play has held up as a moral beacon very clearly favours the idea of a collective. Richard also believes that marrying Elizabeth will stabilize his reign, but he is far less concerned with the fate of the collective. He has a very different way of managing threats. "So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin" (*R3* 4.2.66), Richard murders those he merely suspects might one day turn perilous. As the play progresses, he folds further and further into himself, becoming more mistrustful of those around him. He even severs ties with Buckingham, his greatest ally. Richmond, on the other hand, pardons all those who have already proved adversarial (*R3* 5.8.16-7). Crowned by the power of a faction, Richmond nevertheless knows he must rule with the assent of the collective and he is confident he can acquire it.

Whereas Richard's rule is isolationist, Richmond's is inclusive. This is evidenced even at the level of pronouns. Presumptuous and brazen though he undoubtedly is, Richard nevertheless seems reluctant to use the royal 'we' after his coronation and

employs the majestic pronoun only sporadically. "[S]hall we wear these glories for a day? / Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?" (*R3* 4.2.6-7), he asks his ally, but then immediately reverts to the singular pronoun: "Buckingham, I say I would be king. … But Edward lives" (*R3* 4.2.13-5). This vacillation is seen in the remainder of the play. King for almost an entire two acts, Richard nevertheless uses the royal 'we' infrequently and erratically. "Here pitch our tent" (*R3* 5.3.1), he orders, but just a few lines later, a key word has changed: "Up with *my* tent!" (*R3* 5.3.7, emphasis added).

Given that Richard has no qualms about appropriating any other aspect of kingship, this irregularity seems significant. His inconstant us of the royal 'we' signifies his larger dismissal of the collective: remember that first and foremost, "Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I" (*R3* 5.5.137). Since Richmond rules with regard for the collective, he is far more comfortable with nosism. He employs the royal 'we' before ever being crowned (*R3* 5.2.5, 12; 5.5.35) and immediately assumes royal pluralization on the bloodstained field of Bosworth: "Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled / That in submission will return to *us*" (*R3* 5.8.16-7, emphasis added). Richmond shows far more constancy than Richard in this regard – after being crowned, he refers to himself as a singular subject only once (*R3* 5.8.22). Indeed, his identification with the collective is so strong that he actually speaks of himself as his subjects would – in third person: "O now let Richmond and Elizabeth … conjoin together, / And let their heirs … Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace" (*R3* 5.8.29-33). Richmond believes in his role as the body politic. He recognizes that while a king may rule alone, the collective has a power that needs to be considered – lest its creative ability turns destructive. For much too long already, "England hath … been mad, and scarred herself" (*R3* 5.8.23). Understood

metatheatrically, both *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* offer a prayer similar to Richmond's own – that is, for a kind of collective to be restored and its creative power respected. In Shakespeare's theatre, playwright and playgoers are artists alike, making meaning out of spectacle.

5. The End (And the Afterlife)

Seeing as I began with the end of the world, it seems fitting to close there as well. Recall that in the Book of Revelation, John is called upon to behold a kind of divine spectacle – one far more compelling than Jupiter's own – and after testify to his brethren about what he has witnessed. But importantly, there is no room for individual interpretation here. Neither John, nor any other future audience, is permitted artistic license:

> If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall diminish of the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy City, and from those things which are written in this book. (Rev. 22.18-9)

I have argued that *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* engage in a kind of textual collaboration with the Book of Revelation. These plays evoke it in order to draw attention to the revelation they themselves contain – specifically, the suggestion that moving art is created in collaboration between artist and audience, playwright and playgoers. *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* are plays that champion interpretive license, and they do so by drawing

on the apocalyptic atmosphere of a text that forbids that very thing. This is the true value of collaboration: with many minds comes complexity and conflict, and therefore, depth.

In early modern England, creative collaborations were widespread. We know that Shakespeare drew on source materials to find the stories he would then revise and dramatize, and of course he co-wrote several works. Shakespeare's plays also comment on those of his contemporaries: the Spurio in *All's Well That Ends Well*, for example, might take the Spurio of Thomas Middleton's *Revenger's Tragedy* as his namesake (Maguire and Smith n.p.). As with Shakespeare's use of Revelation, this kind of intertextuality is collaborative. It draws on the imaginative landscape of another piece of art in order to add to its own humour, poignancy, or overall theme. Other dramatists entered into similar types of collaborations – the practice was commonplace in the period (Stern 1-3). Collaborating with an audience, however, was another question altogether. Shakespeare's apparent belief in spectators' interpretive ability and creative potential sets him apart from many of his contemporaries. For other playwrights, the reasons to eschew audience involvement were manifold. Those general "[s]tinkards" (Dekker 53) were dim-witted, after all, and to appeal to them one had to lower himself: such was the idea espoused by Ben Jonson, Samuel Drayton, and Thomas Dekker (Cook 260-2). Early moderns were more inclined to look to the heavens for a creative partner – specifically, to God Himself. Shakespeare's audience would have seen *all* artistic endeavours as collaborative – for every painter, musician, or playwright was assisted by the ultimate creator of heaven and earth. Rob Pope captures this idea rather succinctly: "'creating' was something that could only properly be done by people with divine support and otherwise had better not be done at all" (38).

It is interesting, then, that the Leonati's creative contributions to *Cymbeline* lack genuine divine backing. Certainly, Jupiter supports their wishes for Posthumus – but he has been coerced into doing so: should he ignore the spectres' behest, he may very well be dethroned. By challenging the "thunder-master" (*Cym.* 5.3.124), Sicilius and the other Leonati draw the god nearer to their level. "[P]etty spirits of region low" (*Cym.* 5.3.187) prove to have their own kind of power. In *Richard III*, the ghosts speak poignantly regardless of rank, and high and low alike seem to deserve equal credit for the curse they call down on Richard's head. Indeed, it appears to be the union of these voices that lends the words their prophetic weight. Both plays, then, showcase a power that derives from a more equal collaboration, a true partnership – and not one that comes with in-built differences of authority or rank. In *Cymbeline*, the high are brought low, while in *Richard III*, hierarchical distinctions are erased by death. As a result of that leveling, the spectres' creative potential, their ability to contribute to the story at hand, is realized.

For obvious reasons, the 'partnership' early moderns saw between God and artist was never equal – and therefore, it seems, not as productive. *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* harrow heaven in order to find a different creative partner than God Himself, and thus create a new form of creative collaboration – on and offstage. The ghosts, arriving from the afterlife, model the kind of spectral behavior an audience in Shakespeare's theatre should take on: one where they engage in the story at hand and help to make meaning out of it. Indirectly, then, Shakespeare challenges the idea of ultimate artistic authority implicit in Revelation. With these plays, he opens himself, and his society, up to the same interrogation, so that playgoers are asked to challenge the scripts of *Cymbeline* and *Richard III*. In the first instance, that script is the one they see enacted onstage: is

Posthumus really a good man? Can *Cymbeline*'s ending truly be called happy? Elsewhere, it is an established script they have long been comfortable with, one accepted as incontestable truth during the Tudor reign. There is nothing redeeming about Richard … or is there? Raising spectres becomes the way to raise spectators, as *Richard III* and *Cymbeline* use their ghosts to model a new kind of spectatorship – one where the ability to bear witness simultaneously confers a kind of creative potential.

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