

*Maimed Rites, Wand'ring Ghosts, and a Slave to Memory:
Elizabethan Dramatic Responses to the Reformation*

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Abstract

This thesis maps how tragic drama's engagement with post-Reformation issues, particularly those stemming from the reform of mortuary culture, altered during the Elizabethan period. To track these changes, I focus on the representation of death, the supernatural and commemorative culture in a selection of plays produced between 1558 and 1603. I analyse these plays using historicist and anthropological techniques. Ultimately, I demonstrate that Elizabethan tragic drama produced three distinct responses to the Reformation. The Inns of Court dramas of the 1560s – namely, *Gorboduc*, *Cambises*, *Gismond of Salerne*, and *Horestes* – constitute a *political response*. These plays address the schism's political ramifications: namely, the need for Elizabeth to prevent a Counter-Reformation by naming or producing a Protestant successor, and by neutralising the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots. These tragedies overlook the theological controversies of the Reformation, sidestepping debates regarding the abolition of Purgatory or the existence of ghosts. Later in the reign, dramatic responses alter significantly, partly due to the advent of the professional theatre, but also due to the clarification of England's religious identity. This shift in the Elizabethan dramatic landscape is evident in *Doctor Faustus*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Hamlet*, which produce *psychological* and *theological responses*. Examining the negative impact of the Protestants' reform of mortuary culture, as well as the reform of specific doctrines, such as that of salvation, these plays define the Reformation as a psychologically traumatic event. Late Elizabethan tragedy also produces an *indirect response* to the schism. *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar* do not address the Reformation's impact of sixteenth-century society; they demonstrate the pervasiveness of this impact by converting its language and imagery into a semiotic system. This system is then used to signpost socio-political concerns. Overall, the thesis demonstrates that Elizabethan tragedy's engagement with post-schismatic issues was sustained, but multi-faceted.

Dedication

In loving memory of
my brother
Christopher David Crow
1969-2010

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Undertaking this research project has been, for the most part, a rather solitary pursuit. In spite and, indeed, because of this, completing my thesis would have been impossible without the help and support of the following people.

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Introduction

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away.¹

The ghost of a murdered father confronts his son, claiming to have returned from Purgatory and demanding vengeance and remembrance. The spectre's appearance at once challenges the validity of the Protestants' interrogation of Catholic doctrine. The son is forced to weigh his father's testimony against the clamour of those who insist that Purgatory does not exist, that 'neither the soules of the faithfull, nor of infidels, do walke upon the earth after they are once parted from their bodies'.² This is not the first time the play has touched upon the implications of the Protestants' denial of Purgatory, and of their reform of mortuary culture in general. Prior to his encounter with his father's spirit, the son is shown to be tormented by his memories of the deceased: 'Heaven and earth,/Must I remember?' (*Ham*, I. 3. 142-3). Though set in Denmark, the play reflects the issues confronting its audience members in Elizabethan England. The societies inhabited by those on stage and off are twinned. In both communities, the collapse of the intercessory culture that underpinned late medieval Catholicism has robbed the survivor of important means of assuaging their grief. Moreover, ritualised remembrance had previously enabled survivors to manage, recover and move on from their loss by providing them with the opportunity to fulfil their obligations to the dead and, in doing so, separate themselves from the departed. The abolition of the rituals previously relied upon to enforce this separation has rendered survivors unable to fulfil the obligations they feel towards their dead, making it more difficult for them to detach themselves and recover from their loss. Hence, the grieving son in this instance has no method of relieving the burden of remembrance and obligation.

Reformers have also implemented new ideas regarding appropriate ways of mourning and

¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Cengage, 2006), I. 5. 9-13. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *Ham*, in the text.

² Lewes Lavater, *Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking by Night*, ed. by J. Dover Wilson and May Yardley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), pp. 111; 114.

commemorating the dead. The son thus becomes embroiled in a debate with his mother and uncle, in which he is accused of behaving in a disproportionate and ‘vulgar’ manner (*Ham*, I. 2. 99). During this exchange, the bereaved son defends his ostentatious displays of grief against allegations that such rituals are empty and meaningless:

’Tis not alone my inky cloak, cold mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruited river in the eye,
Nor the dejected havior of the visage;
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed ‘seem’,
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passes show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (*Ham*, I. 2. 76-86)

Elsewhere, anxiety is expressed over the newly reduced rites of burial granted to the dead; the ‘obscure funeral[s]’ (*Ham*, IV. 5. 205), ‘hugger-mugger’ interments (*Ham*, IV. 5. 84), and ‘maimed rites’ (*Ham*, V. 1. 208).

The above outlines just some of the ways in which Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (c.1600-1) reflects and comments on the changes the Protestant Reformation wrought to ghost beliefs, perceptions of the afterlife, responses to death, and commemorative culture. The play embodies Elizabethan tragedy’s most sustained and explicit engagement with post-schismatic issues, but is by no means the sole example of the genre’s concern with the aftermath of the Reformation. This thesis will show that responses to the schism can be found in many of the tragedies produced throughout the reign of Elizabeth I. The canonical tragedies produced during the latter half of the reign – from the 1580s to the turn of the seventeenth century – will be the main focus of the project. Specifically, I will consider how these plays examine the impact of Protestant reforms to mortuary culture. Later Elizabethan tragedies are the central focus of this project because, as I will demonstrate, the reform of mortuary culture did not become a dramatic concern until the 1580s.

In addition to *Hamlet*, I will examine the representation of death, the supernatural, and commemorative culture in *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1582 -1592), *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1593), and *Julius Caesar* (c. 1599). My analysis of these plays will demonstrate that late Elizabethan tragedy reflects the impact of the Reformation in two different ways. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* suggest a contemporary preoccupation with the impact of Protestant reforms on survivors. By focusing on the potentially damaging and harmful effects of the reform of mortuary culture, these plays define the Reformation as a psychologically traumatic event. The impact of the Reformation is also intrinsic to the dramatic landscapes of *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*. In these plays, however, the ramifications of the schism are not a thematic concern. Issues pertaining to the English Reformation can be perceived in the Roman world of these plays. However, the impact of the schism on Elizabethan society is not examined or evaluated, it is merely a referent. Both plays use the language and imagery of the schism to signpost and frame unrelated, socio-political concerns. In doing so, they demonstrate the pervasiveness of the Reformation's impact, and indicate its assimilation into collective, cultural knowledge.

Before discussing the ways in which late Elizabethan tragedy reflects and confronts the Reformation's metamorphosis of mortuary culture, it is important to delineate these changes and to explore their implications. In this respect, the thesis is informed by the work of several historians. Existing research into the social history of death illuminates the ways in which the representation of death and commemorative culture in Elizabethan tragedy addresses contemporary concerns regarding the impact of the Reformation. The majority of these historians are indebted to the pioneering work undertaken by a trio of Frenchmen: Phillippe Ariès, Pierre Chanu, and Michel Vouelle.³ The former's *The Hour of Our Death* is a seminal text in this field.⁴ Published in the original French as *L'Homme devant la mort*, the purpose of this ambitious work is to map changing attitudes and responses to death and dying from ancient to modern

³ See Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1.

⁴ Phillippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death Over the Last One Thousand Years*, trans. by Helen Weaver (New York; Toronto: Vintage, 1981).

times. Its significance to this thesis derives, in part, from its concern with drawing attention to periods and events, such as the Reformation, during which significant social shifts altered approaches to death. However, the influence of Ariès' work on this project is, for the most part, indirect, largely notable because it mapped the way for later scholars who concentrated more specifically on late medieval and early modern mortuary culture.⁵ Of the greatest importance to this project is the work of Keith Thomas, Ralph Houlbrooke, Clare Gittings, David Cressy, Nigel Llewellyn, Eamon Duffy, Natalie Zemon Davis, and Peter Marshall. This body of historical research elucidates how the Protestant Reformation transformed the ways in which the people of early modern England mourned their dead. These historians thus provide a key to understanding the contemporary significance of late Elizabethan tragedy's representation of death, ghosts, mourning, funerals, and funerary monuments. This introductory chapter will utilise existing research in order to provide an overview of medieval Catholic mortuary culture, and to discuss the consequences of the changes wrought by the religious schism. It will also engage with contemporary non-dramatic sources in order to define what this schism really meant for the Catholics and Protestants of Elizabethan England. The insights provided will underpin and illuminate my readings of the late Elizabethan tragedies considered in this thesis.

By characterising the Reformation as a psychologically harmful event, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* highlight the traumatic implications of the abolition of the Catholic intercessory system. It is, therefore, crucial to understand how this system worked, particularly how it benefitted survivors. The 'cult of intercession', was underpinned by a belief in Purgatory.⁶ Ariès suggests that this belief took hold in the Early Middle Ages when people first began to doubt and question the '[assurance] of divine mercy'.⁷ As the likelihood of salvation became less certain, the possibility of eternal damnation became even more so. The solution to this crisis of faith was the existence of Purgatory, a 'middle way' between salvation and damnation. This

⁵ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p.1.

⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England: 1400-1580* (New Haven; London: York University Press, 1997), p. 303.

⁷ Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 151.

doctrine underpinned medieval Catholic approaches to death by giving rise to the notion that, in order to escape Purgatory and ensure salvation, the dead were entirely dependent upon the ministrations of the living.

The existence of Purgatory ensured that links between the living and the departed were maintained. The doctrine thus established the dead as an 'age group' in medieval society;⁸ their dependence upon the living meant that they remained part of the community.⁹ This relationship between the living and the dead played a central role in late medieval society, as evidenced by a sermon preached on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1493 by the Augustinian canon John Mirk:

Good frendis ye shall understonde that this daye is an hye And solempne feste in holy chirche in the feste of Corpus cristi. it is the feste of oure lordis owne body. the whiche is offred to the hye [father] of heven atte the [altar] in remyssion of oure synnes for all Crysten people that lyve here in parfyte lyf and charyte and grete socour and help in releuyng hem that ben in peynes of purgatory.¹⁰

Here, 'releuyng hem that ben in peynes of purgatory' is one of the main purposes of this gathering; indeed, Mirk devotes swathes of his sermon to it. In doing so, he illustrates the emphasis placed on the needs of the dead in pre-Reformation communities. Furthermore, in stressing that this service is not just for the benefit of 'all Crysten people that lyve here in parfyte lyf' but also those who languish in purgatory, Mirk enfolds the dead into the community. This is a society that, instead of confining its dead to the realm of memory, makes addressing their needs the main function of a communal gathering. That the dead retain a presence in pre-Reformation society is also apparent in this sermon from 1498, delivered by John Alcock:

⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Ghosts, Kin and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France', *Daedalus*, 106 (1977), 87-114, (p. 92).

⁹ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 301.

¹⁰ John Mirk, 'The help and grace of almighty god...', 1493, *Early English Books Online*, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:832> [accessed 3 March 2014].

In the seconde partye ye shall praye for the welle and peas of all Crysten reames/specyally for the reame of Englonde. Our souerayne lorde the kyng. Our souerayne lady the queen. My lord the prynce. My lady the lynes moder. My lorde her husbonde/with all the lords of the Realme. The welfare of this Cyte. For my right worshypful broder and loue the Mayer with all the Aldermen and Shyrefs. In the thirde partye all the soules lyenge in the paynes of purgatory. Specyally for the soule of the reuerende fader my lorde Thomas kempfe late bysshop And for the soules of all benefactours of this chirche of Pules/with all Crysten soules/for the whiche and for the entent premysed. I praye you devoutly saye a Pater noster and an Ave.¹¹

Alcock's emphasis is on the collective, the various strata that form the 'reame', the 'Cyte', the community. Significantly, 'all the soules lyenge in the paynes of purgatory' are part of this community; the realm of the dead is another strata in this society.

Additionally, by highlighting the 'paynes of purgatory' Alcock, like Mirk, engenders a sense of obligation: these souls are suffering and are in urgent need of 'soccour'. This sense of obligation characterised the relationship between the living and the dead. Once the existence of Purgatory had been established, the chief preoccupation of medieval mortuary culture came to be with 'shortening and easing' the suffering of the dead. An anonymous source from 1505 assures the faithful that 'who ever shall vesyte' the church of 'saynt Laurence' 'evry wednesday in one yere delyuereth a soule frome purgatorye'. This source also reiterates Pope Alexander VI's promise 'that who so ever shulde do say v. masses shulde delyuer a soule frome purgatorye'.¹²

These assurances forge a definite link between action and consequence: regular church attendance and the performance of mass *do* liberate souls from purgatory. It is the definite nature of this link, couple with the writer's matter-of-fact tone, that fosters such a strong sense of duty:

¹¹ John Alcock, 'In die Innocencium sermo pro episcopo puerorum', 1498, *Early English Books Online* <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:6854> [accessed 3 March 2014].

¹² Anon, 'Hereaft[er] foloweth the abreuiacon of the graces/idulgeces & staciōs which our moste holy fad[er] Pope Alexander vi. grauteth to all true beleuige people: of euery sexe or kynde wyllige to entre into the fraternite of the great hospytall of saynt Iames i Cōpostell: lately edifyed & bylded: as is cōteined i his lett[er]s apostolykes/grauted to euerlastige memory/& cōfermed by our holy fad[er] nowe beige Pope Iuli[us]', 1505 <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:174725> [accessed 5 March 2014].

it would be wicked to neglect such an obligation if its fulfilment is so straightforward, its effects so profound. Mirk's sermon functions in a similar way, stressing the suffering of the dead and presenting as indisputable the notion that this suffering can be alleviated by the living:

Good frendis suche a daye ye shall haue all soules daye the daye of the soules in purgatory there abydyng the mercy of god and haue moche nede to helpe. And right as holy chirche worshyppeth all sayntes to be holpen by the prayers of hem ryght soo holy chirche ordeynyth this daye to synge and rede. And to do almysdedes. hauynge full byleve to relese them that ben in purgatori of their peines. wherefor god wyll that crysten people to theyr power this daye releue hem. For the lest prayer or almysdede that is done gretly releueth theym. ye shall understnde that there ben foure thynges that gretly helpen soules ben in purgatory & y'be these [...] That is prayer of frendes devoutly sayd and almysdede doynge. And masses syngyng. & anstynence in fastynge. prayers helpen moche a soule. For lyke as a lord that hath a man in pryson or in ony dystresse and atte the prayers of hym that he loueth. he rele seth in party or all. And that is shewed by ensample.¹³

Here, Mirk urges his parishioners to remember the dead, to be mindful of the fact that the deceased are not beyond the reach of the living. Moreover, the dead are present, rather than at peace; they are restless rather than resting. They cannot be consigned to the realm of memory because they still have needs that must be fulfilled: they continue to require assistance from the community, they are in urgent need of the 'prayer of frendes'. These examples demonstrate that one of the central tenets of late medieval Catholicism was the belief that 'the living had the ability (and the duty) to ease the dead's sufferings'.¹⁴

This belief is reflected in the pre-Reformation functions of the funeral and funerary monument. The purpose of both was to promote the needs of the dead to the living in order to secure frequent and plentiful intercessory prayers.¹⁵ Consequently, the main aim of the initial funeral service was to reach the widest possible audience to ensure that the dead benefitted

¹³ Mirk, 'The helpe and grace of almighty god ...'

¹⁴ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p.7.

¹⁵ The information regarding the pre-Reformation function of the funeral and funerary monument provided in this paragraph is taken from Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 19-21.

from the maximum amount of assistance. That the dead retained a considerable presence in late medieval society is further reflected in the fact that their needs were repeatedly brought to the attention of survivors. To this end, the funeral service was repeated in its entirety a month later, a practice known as the ‘month’s mind’, and again a year later, in a practice known as an obit or ‘year’s mind’. In both instances, the aim was, again, to attract a large audience and secure intercessory prayer. The chantry system was established to the same end; this practice saw the clergy delivering a ‘daily stream of masses for specified dead individuals’ following burial.¹⁶ The funerary monument or tomb functioned as a more permanent reminder of the needs of the dead and their dependence upon the living. Before the Reformation, funerary monuments served to issue silent, yet insistent, demands for intercessory prayer.

Pre-Reformation preachers were keen to stress that meeting these demands was beneficial to the living as well as to the dead. John Mirk peppers his Corpus Christi sermon with tales from *The Golden Legend* (c. 1260), a medieval compendium of hagiographies. The first of these concerns a man in the habit of praying for the dead on a regular basis who finds himself with several unlikely allies after being attacked in a churchyard:

We find wreten in legenda aurea how that there was a man yt hadde his house fast by a chircheyarde syde And that his dore opened to the chirche and he used by custome as ofte as he come or went to say every tyme [Deprofundis] for all christen soules. Thenne it happed soo on a tyme yt he was pursued with enemyes as he went home wardes: But whan he come in to the chirche yarde he kneled downe and ... saye Deprofundis. And this ... come after. Anone the dede bodyes rose everychone wyth suche Instrumentis as they wrought wyth by her lyves and anone they drove awaye his enemyes. But whan they sawe that they cryed god mercy and this man and ever after prayed and dede almesdedes for theym that were in peine. Thus ye may well prove that devoute prayers helpen maye a soule yt ben in purgatory. Also almesdedes helpen many a soule.¹⁷

Mirk’s appeal to the congregation is twofold. Firstly, he suggests that the souls of the departed

¹⁶ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Mirk, ‘The helpe and grace of almighty god ...’

can make powerful allies. Secondly, he highlights the power of intercessory prayer itself, with the gratitude of the dead in this instance ‘[proving] that devoute prayers helpen may a soule yt ben in purgatory’. These two strands unite to communicate a single message: the dead retain a presence in late medieval society. This belief is implied in the above image of the deceased rising from their graves to defend their benefactor. It is also conveyed in the image of the dead ‘in peine’ and in need of assistance. The dead of Pre-Reformation communities were peculiarly animated, with needs and desires as strong as those of the living. Moreover, texts like *The Golden Legend* served to fix the dead within the community by promoting their needs and fuelling the living’s sense of obligation to the deceased. By stressing the mutual benefits of intercessory prayer, these tales urge the living to maintain a connection with the departed.

Modern historians agree that maintaining this connection had very real, psychological benefits for the living, providing them with various methods of managing and assuaging their grief. For example, Clare Gittings suggests that the ‘long, drawn-out’ process of the pre-Reformation funeral ritual ‘reduced the emotional intensity for the bereaved’.¹⁸ Ritualised mourning, founded on the belief in the existence of Purgatory, also ‘allowed the living a sense of contact with the dead through prayer’.¹⁹ By thus ‘prolonging the presence of the dead within the community of the living’,²⁰ survivors avoided the trauma of having their relationship with the deceased abruptly severed. Medieval intercessory culture thereby ensured that the dead remained within reach of the living, and that survivors could actively channel their grief into assisting the departed. Crucially, these intercessory practices had another significant function: to loosen and eventually sever ties between the living and the dead, rather than to maintain them. This ‘remembrance paradox’ is identified by Jean-Claude Schmitt, whose work examines socio-cultural aspects of medieval history in Western Europe. Schmitt observes that the word ‘remembrance’ is misleading because the aim of intercessory and commemorative practices was

¹⁸ Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 23.

¹⁹ Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c. 1500 – c. 1800* (London: Reaktion, 1991), p. 27.

²⁰ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 303.

to forget.²¹ These practices were, therefore, instrumental in enabling survivors to overcome their grief and recover from their loss. Ritualised mourning provided survivors with a means of discharging their duties to the dead, thereby relieving them of the burden of guilt and obligation.²² Although intercessory culture prolonged the relationship between the living and the dead, permanently severing this connection was its ultimate aim. Medieval Catholics believed that, if, through negligence or any other reason, the dead were deprived of the appropriate rites of burial or the required intercessory assistance, their souls could return from Purgatory to trouble survivors.²³ Indeed, *The Golden Legend* suggests that the sense of obligation to the deceased that fuelled intercessory culture was driven by a fear of reprisals. This text implies that, when appeased, the dead make powerful allies; when neglected, they make sinister enemies. Mirk recounts the tale of a knight who fails to carry out the wishes of his late cousin:

we fynde in legenda aurea of a knight that shold goo to a batayle and had a cosyn that he loved passing well. And said to hym thus if he were sleyn in the batayle he shold selle his horse & deale the valure to pour people in almesse to praye for all christen soules. Soo it happed that he was slayne and his cosyn loved well the horse: and toke hym to his owne use. Thenne soone after this knyght appred to his cosyn and said thus to hym thise viii dayes for my horse thou haste made me to brenne in purgatory. And therefore god wyll take vengeance on the. Forsothe quod he this daye thy soule shal be in helle wyth the fende [...] And I am purged & shal go to the kingedom of heven and anone an horrible noyse was herde in thayre of fendes.²⁴

The slain cousin is a wrathful, vengeful presence who illustrates the dangers of neglecting the dead. This passage thus implies that pre-Reformation commemorative culture was driven by an anxiety to appease the deceased and avoid provoking their ire. Further evidence of this can be found in a 1493 sermon by Henry Parker:

²¹ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5.

²² Ralph Houlbroke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England: 1480-1750*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 290.

²³ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, p. 6.

²⁴ Mirk, 'The helpe and grace of almighty god ...'

Though men burie their frendes priuely or ayertly it is no harme to the dede ne to the liuyng But if the worship of god be withdrawen. and the almesse of the pore nedye and the holy prayers and suffrages of holy churche whiche ben ordeyned to be praied and done for the dede and the quicke that haue nede therof But it is a grete foly and also a grete synne to forsake solempne buriynges y^t be done principally for the worship of god and for the proufynt of the dede spendyng his godes to nedeful releuyng of holy chirche and the pore nedye people y^t been of no power to helpe them self. for that is a custome of fals executoures that wolden make themself riche with dede menys godes and nat dele to the pore. after dedes wyll as nowe alle false executoures vse by custome. And so they that forsake worshipful buriynge as I haue rehersed bfore lette the prisynge the worshippe and the sacrifice and offryng that shulde be done to god. They do also dispyte to holy churche in that that they forsake the prayer. and the suffrages of holy mynistres of holy churche. Also they offende all the soules of purgatory that shulde be releuyd by messes syngynge hooly prayer and suffrages of holy churche whiche ben ordeynede in buriynge to helpe alle cristen soules.²⁵

Again, the dead are depicted as a demanding collective, wholly dependent upon the ministrations of the living. Moreover, the living's neglect of these duties will 'offend' the deceased, incurring their wrath. Contemporary sources thus demonstrate that the dead of pre-Reformation communities were 'conceived of as anxious about the neglect of the living, and on occasion menacing towards those they feared would neglect them [...] The neglected dead could be angry and dangerous'.²⁶ The underlying purpose of commemorative practices was to keep the dead at bay by fulfilling their demands and avoiding repercussions. Ostensibly, such practices fixed the dead within the community, making them an age group within late medieval society. In truth, intercessory culture served to secure the boundaries, and prevent slippage, between the realms of the living and the dead. The actual function of ritualised mourning was to sever contact with the dead, not to maintain it.²⁷

Understanding the ultimate purpose of Catholic intercessory practices makes it possible to recognise why the abolition of these rituals had such negative psychological repercussions, as

²⁵ Henry Parker, 'Here endith a compendious treetise dyalogue. of Diues [and] paup[er]. that is to say. the riche [and] the pore fructuously tetryng vpon the x. co[m]manmentes ...', 1493, *Early English Books Online* <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:10325> [accessed 5 March 2014].

²⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 350.

²⁷ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 17.

illustrated by the plays I discuss here. The relationship between the living and the dead that had defined late medieval Catholicism was changed irrevocably by the Protestant Reformation. Intercessory culture was effectively dismantled by the Reformers' denial of Purgatory. As the writings of Thomas Becon indicate, by the early Elizabethan period, English Protestant Reformers were condemning intercessory prayer as obsolete:

After the Papistes had thus fained Purgatory and the moste horrible & dreadful paynes therof they thought it also good to devise some thing to relieve these paynes and to ease the bitter tormentes which the sely soules suffer in that most grievous fyre of purgatorye: by this their devise nothing doubting but that no small advauntage shoulde ryse unto them, whiche in dede hath had hitherto fortunate successe. Diverse invented remedies against these fyry tormentes which thyng hath bene brought to passé by yt constitutions & ordinances of men partly, as we may see in yt Councils *Florentine* and *Constantantiense* and partly by the books and writings of the Sophisticall Papistes.²⁸

For pre-Reformation preachers like John Mirk, Purgatory is an objective reality, as is the idea that the living can alleviate the suffering of the dead. Mirk's language is definite: 'almesdedes *helpen* many a soule.'²⁹ In contrast, Becon uses the language of fabrication to represent Purgatory as a construct and intercessory prayer as a means of perpetuating the myth: one is 'fained', the other 'invented'. Reformers deconstruct Catholic 'realities', reframing them as superstitions designed to hoodwink the ignorant. This approach also underpins Calvin's *Institutes*. In the following extract, Calvin suggests that St. Augustine's intercession for the soul of his mother, Monica, set a precedent for praying for the dead. However, according to Calvin, Augustine's actions had no Scriptural basis and the saint was acting merely out of sentiment:

²⁸ Thomas Becon, 'The reliques of Rome The reliques of Rome contayning all such matters of religion, as haue in times past bene brought into the Church by the Pope and his adherentes: faithfully gathered out of the moste faithful writers of chronicles and histories, and nowe newly both diligently corrected & greatly augmented, to the singuler profit of the readers, by Thomas Becon', 1563, *Early English Books Online*, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:1499> [accessed 5 March 2014].

²⁹ Mirk, 'The helpe and grace of almighty god ...', *my emphasis*.

Truely he that hathe but meane wysdome dothe sone perceiue that all that is red hereof in the olde wryters was done to beare with the common usage, and the ignorance of the people. They them selues also, I graunte were carried away into errour: even as unadvised lightnesse of belefe is wont to rob mens wittes of judgement. But in the meane tyme the very redyng of them doth shew howe doutyungly they commende prayers for the dead. Augustine in his booke of confessions reporteth that Monica his mother did earnestly desire that she might be remembred in celebrating the misteries at the Altar. An old wyues request, whiche the sonne never examined by the rule of the Sceipture, but according to his affection of nature wold have it allowed of other.³⁰

In addition to attacking the basis upon which intercessory prayer is founded, Calvin argues that the belief that the living can assist the dead is blasphemous:

But though I grant to the olde wryters of the church that it is a charitable use to help the dead yet we must styll holde one rule whiche can not deceive: that it is not lawfull for us in our prayers to use any thyng of our owne, but our requestes must be made subject to the worde of God: because it is in his wyll to apoynte what he wyll have to be asked.³¹

Calvin's arguments reflect the differences between pre- and post-Reformation attitudes to prayer, as outlined by Keith Thomas.³² Prior to the schism, it was believed that prayers worked automatically when spoken, hence the notion that intercessory prayer provided immediate relief to the dead. Calvin's insistence that 'our requestes must be made subject to the worde of God' espouses the pre-Reformation approach to prayer. Namely, all prayers are mediated by God who may then choose to heed them or not. In accordance with such a belief, the idea that the living can automatically alleviate the suffering of the dead usurps divine authority.

Calvin's critique of intercessory prayer demonstrates that post-Reformation society

³⁰ John Calvin, 'The institution of Christian religion, vvyrtten in Latine by maister Ihon Caluin, and translated into Englysh according to the authors last edition. Seen and allowed according to the order appointed in the Quenes maiesties iniunctions', 1561, *Early English Books Online* < http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7550 > [accessed 8 March 2014].

³¹ Calvin, 'The institution of Christian religion'.

³² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 32.

placed the dead beyond the reach of their survivors, rendering the gulf between them impassable. As David Cressy notes:

One of the most profound effects of the Protestant elimination of purgatory was to shrink the community of souls and to sever the relationship between the dead and the living. Though their bodies remained in the churchyard, the souls of departed Protestants were now thought to be beyond the reach of intercessory prayer.³³

Contemporary evidence of the dead's displacement as an age group in Protestant society³⁴ can be found in the revised *Book of Common Prayer* (1552). In the funeral service set out in this text, the minister refers to the corpse in the third person:

Forasmuche as it hath pleased almightie God of his great mercy to take unto himselfe the soule of our dere brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ...³⁵

The deceased are no longer referred to directly, as they were in the 1549 service when addressed in the second person: 'I commande thy soule to God the father almighty, and thy body to the ground'.³⁶ This ostensibly subtle change demonstrates that, rather than maintaining a presence within the community of the living, the souls of the dead have now been 'incorporated into a realm of memory'.³⁷

The Protestants' reconfiguration of the afterlife, following their denial of Purgatory, was responsible for the displacement of the dead. Evidence can be found in a funeral sermon for the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I preached by Edmund Grindal in 1564. Grindal, then Bishop

³³ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 396.

³⁴ Davis, 'Ghosts, Kin and Progeny', p. 92

³⁵ Church of England, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1552, <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1552/Burial_1552.htm> [accessed 1 March 2014]

³⁶ Brian Cummings ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 83.

³⁷ Houlbroke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 374.

of London, uses the opportunity to condemn intercessory prayer:

For it is manifest, that those holy fathers ment nothyne lesse then by praying for those yt were departed, to establish Purgatorie or thirde place without the whiche neither the Pope hym selfe nor any of his clergy woulde any thyng at al contend for praying for the dead. For yt terror of Purgatorie beyng taken awaye, their gayne would cease: and withal their prayer for the dead, invented for filthy lucre, were at an ende. For it is confessed of all men, that if there be no thirde place, prayer for the dead is in vayne, for those that be in heaven nede it not: those that be in hell, cannot be holpen by it: so that it nedeth not or boteth not, as the olde proverbe goeth.³⁸

Grindal's sermon demonstrates how post-Reformation society severed the connection between the living and the dead. With the denial of the 'thirde place', souls proceeded directly to Heaven or to Hell. Souls in Heaven had no need of intercessory prayer; those in Hell were beyond help. The futility of intercessory prayer was also emphasised later in Elizabeth's reign by the Calvinist clergyman William Burton, who wrote that 'prayer for the dead & prayer for the reprobate are much alike, the one hath as good warrant as the other, and the one shall bee heard as soon as the other'.³⁹ Earlier, during the reign of Edward VI, the dramatist and churchman John Bale expressed a similar review when recounting his time as Bishop of Ossory. Bale recalls how his parishioners

wawled [...] over ye dead with prodigyouse howlynges and patterynges as though their sowles had not bene quyeted in Christe and redemed by hys passion but

³⁸ Edmund Grindal, 'A sermon, at the funeral solemnitie of the most high and mighty Prince Ferdinandus, the late Emperour of most famous memorye holden in the Cathedrall Church of saint Paule in London, the third of October. 1564. Made by the reuerend father in God, Edmund Grindall, bishop of London', 1564, *Early English Books Online* <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:3604> [accessed 14 March 2014].

³⁹ William Burton, 'An exposition of the Lords Prayer made in diuers lectures, and now drawne into questions and answers for the greater benefite of the simpler sort: whereunto is prefixed a briefe treatise of prayer for all men. Published at the request of diuers godly and well disposed: by W. B. minister of the Word at Reading in Barkshire', 1594, *Early English Books Online*, <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99851886> [accessed 14 March 2014].

that they must come after and helped at a pinche with Requiem Eternam to delyver them out of helle by their sorrowfull sorceryes.⁴⁰

In late medieval Catholic societies, the dead remained present; their need for assistance tethered them to the world of the living. In stark contrast, the dead of post-Reformation societies are sealed off permanently from their survivors. Those proceeding to Heaven are instantly ‘quyeted’, with this word connoting remoteness. For those descending to Hell, ‘the prestes with all their masses & funeral exequies coulde nothinge adde to their redemption’.⁴¹ Either way, the connection between the living and the dead was abruptly, and irrevocably, severed.

This abrupt severance robbed survivors of the ‘ritual framework’, in which they had previously been able to ‘[veil], [channel], even to some extent [sublimate] personal grief’, leaving them, as Houlbroke suggests, with ‘much-diminished ritual support’.⁴² Survivors were not just traumatised by the widening of the gulf separating them from their dead. Somewhat paradoxically, they were as profoundly affected by the loss of the rituals they had once relied upon to effect this separation. Natalie Zemon Davis suggests that the abolition of intercessory culture was particularly traumatic for survivors because it robbed them of the ritual apparatus necessary to fulfil their obligations to the dead and, in doing so, detach themselves from them.⁴³

As well as providing insights into medieval intercessory culture, historical research illuminates why the abolition of these commemorative practices had a negative impact upon survivors. Furthermore, by underlining the ways in which the schism ‘caused grievous psychological damage,’ these historians enhance understanding of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd’s depiction of the reforms’ negative effects.⁴⁴ Late Elizabethan drama suggests a

⁴⁰ John Bale, ‘The vocacyon of Ioha[n] Bale to the bishprick of Ossorie in Irela[n]de his persecucio[n]s in ye same, & finall delyueraunce ...’, 1553, *Early English Books Online* <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:736> [accessed 14 March 2014].

⁴¹ Bale, ‘The vocacyon of Ioha[n] Bale to the bishprick of Ossorie in Irela[n]de’.

⁴² Houlbroke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 374. See also Davis, ‘Ghosts, Kin and Progeny’, p. 96.

⁴³ Davis, ‘Ghosts, Kin and Progeny’, p. 96.

⁴⁴ Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, p. 27.

contemporary concern with the psychological impact of the collapse of intercessory culture. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* provide topical responses to post-Reformation issues. Both plays utilise the revenge framework in order to examine the reforms' negative implications, thereby demonstrating that the damaging effects identified by historians were also noted by sixteenth-century dramatists. The representation of death, mourning and commemoration in these plays can, therefore, be historicised. For example, the displacement of the dead as an age group in Protestant society identified by Davis is reflected by the gradual marginalisation and eventual effacement of the Ghost in *Hamlet*. Similarly, *The Spanish Tragedy* focuses on the impact of the abolition of intercessory practices on survivors. Kyd, like Houlbrooke, considers whether, by losing the rituals they had previously relied upon to negate their grief, survivors have been robbed of the 'medicine [...] for [their] disease'.⁴⁵

Titus Andronicus and *Julius Caesar* also demonstrate how the Elizabethan stage acknowledges and reflects the Reformation's redefinition of socio-cultural norms. Their approach is quite different to *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet's*, however. Neither of these Roman plays is concerned with the schism's impact on society as a whole, or on the individual psyche in particular. Instead, these plays utilise the language and imagery of the Reformation to convey important information to their audiences, thereby signposting and framing their thematic concerns. *Titus* and *Caesar* draw upon their contemporary audiences' awareness of the schism's impact, both to aid their understanding of the plays and to communicate key ideas. The visual language and rhetoric of the schism thus functions as a semiotic system. To provide a full explanation of the ways in which these plays utilise such a system, it is necessary to begin with a general definition of semiotic theory. The theory has come to be applied to various fields of enquiry, but originated within the field of linguistics. Pioneered by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, semiotics addressed the overlapping concerns regarding the artificiality of language,

⁴⁵ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. by David Bevington, Revels Student Editions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), III. 7. 4. All subsequent references from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *ST*, in the text.

and the development and conveyance of meaning. De Saussure advocated that the relationship between a word and its meaning is not intrinsic but arbitrary: meaning is merely attached to a particular word by way of a collectively agreed, cultural understanding. A word, according to de Saussure, is actually a 'sign' with two distinct components. Firstly, there is the signifier, which can be oral (a verbal utterance), or visual (a written configuration). The signifier, then, is physical; it is present. Secondly, there is the signified, which is always absent and relates to the collectively agreed, mutually accepted meaning of the word.⁴⁶

The de Saussurean method can be adapted and applied to the study of theatrical performances. As outlined above, in de Saussurean theory, signs are conventional linguistic units: written or spoken words. On stage, signs are conventional dramatic units, a term that may refer to any of the components used to enact a play text and communicate a set of meanings to an audience: an actor, a speech, a dramatic action. Like de Saussure's linguistic units, dramatic units have two components: a signifier and a signified. A theatrical performance comprises a mutually dependent collection of signs, signifiers and signified. To illustrate this, I will refer to Gregory Doran's 2012 production of *Julius Caesar*.⁴⁷ In Act III, Scene i, the stage direction '*They stab Caesar*' contains three conventional dramatic units, three signs.⁴⁸ Firstly, there is 'they': a group of men on a stage. The signifier, real and present like the verbal utterance or written configuration of a conventional linguistic unit, is a group of actors in Roman costume. Some of these actors are well-known to, and readily identified by, the audience. The signified, in this instance, is the characters Marcus Brutus, Caius Cassius, Caska, Decius Brutus, Metellus Cimber, Trebonius and Caius Ligarius, collectively known as the conspirators. As identified by de Saussure, the signified is always physically absent. These characters are physically absent; they do not physically exist on stage, only the actors portraying them do. The meaning of a written or spoken word is

⁴⁶ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin, ed. by Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ *Julius Caesar*, dir. by Gregory Doran (Illuminations, 2012).

⁴⁸ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series*, ed. by David Daniell (London: Cengage, 1998), III. 1. 76. All subsequent references from this work will be from this edition will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *JC*, in the text.

communicated by way of a collective, mutually agreed association between the signifier and the signified. Similarly, within the context of this performance, the audience mutually agree that this group of actors represents, or signifies, the conspirators.

The second sign or conventional dramatic unit is 'Caesar,' a man surrounded by the actors representing the conspirators. The signifier in this case is Jeffrey Kissoon, a well-known actor. As with the conspirators, the audience recognises and accepts the fact that, within this particular set of circumstances, Kissoon signifies Julius Caesar. The third sign is the physical, dramatic action, the stabbing. This is the point at which the mutual dependence of the three signs is most apparent: it is necessary to identify the other two signified in order to identify the third. The audience needs to establish that Kissoon signifies Caesar and the other actors represent the conspirators. They are then able to establish that the action being performed on stage signifies an event from Roman history, the assassination of Julius Caesar.

Crucial to this project is the fact that the signified can become signifiers themselves. This system adds multiple layers of meaning to theatrical performances, and offers the possibility of multiple interpretations. Doran's production of *Julius Caesar* provides a working example of this process. My analysis of the production's various dramatic units has demonstrated how actors and dramatic actions combine to communicate the text's most straightforward purpose: the dramatic representation of a particular episode from Roman history, interpreted by Shakespeare via the works of Plutarch. However, Doran presents an allegorical reading of the play, inviting audiences to equate Caesar's assassination with the overthrow of a modern-day African dictatorship.⁴⁹ Each of the signified previously identified must signify again in order to convey this meaning, in order to transmute a dramatic unit into an allegorical unit. Doran invites audiences to view the play as an allegory by casting black actors and having these actors speak in African-accented

⁴⁹ Teju Cole, 'An African Caesar', rev. of *Julius Caesar*, dir. by Gregory Doran, *New Yorker*, 22 April 2013 <<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2013/04/julius-caesar-gregory-doran-brooklyn-academy-music.html>> [accessed 1 August 2013].

English. He also utilises traditional African costumes and music, thereby introducing a new collection of signs to the play. These directorial choices add another step to the semiotic process. The play's various dramatic units signify characters and episodes from Roman history. The signified then signify again: Jeffrey Kissoon signifies Caesar who, in this instance, signifies an African dictator. The audience thus enter into two collective agreements. Firstly, that they are witnessing a production of *Julius Caesar*. Secondly, that this production emphasises and exploits particular aspects of the text to comment on an issue of contemporary significance; namely, the political situation in certain African countries.

When observing a theatrical performance, then, the words and actions of the players can have various levels of meaning, and can signify more than one thing at any given time. This can also be observed in the Inns of Court tragedies of the 1560s, which, like Doran's production of *Caesar*, function as topical allegories. In Act V, Scene 1 of *Gorboduc*, for instance, one of the key signs is, again, a man appearing on a stage. The signifier is an actor with a Scottish accent in appropriate national dress; the signified is the character of Fergus, Duke of Albany. It is highly likely that a sixteenth century audience would have detected another interpretive possibility here. Consequently, the signified would signify again as these audiences connected the Duke of Albany with Mary, Queen of Scots. In Fergus' speech of Act V, Scene i, lines 124-162, every signified signifies again to produce an allegorical meaning:

Sign/Conventional dramatic unit	Signifier	First Signified	Second Signified
A man appearing on stage	An actor with a Scottish accent in appropriate national dress	Fergus, Duke of Albany	Mary, Queen of Scots
The stage	The platform on which the action is performed	The kingdom of Brittain	Elizabethan England
The speech	The lines spoken by the actor: 'Shall I that am the duke of <i>Albany</i> /Discended from that line of noble blood,/Which hath so long flourished in worthy fame,/Of valiaunt hartes, such as in noble brestes/Of right should rest above the baser sort,/Refuse to venture life to winne a crowne?' ⁵⁰	Fergus's threat to invade Brittain and seize the throne	The possibility that Mary will invade England and seize the throne

This semiotic system exploits sixteenth-century audiences' awareness of the current political situation. In doing so, it establishes *Gorboduc* as a topical allegory, a play that comments and calls for action on this issue. In Chapter Three, I address the possibility that, when first performed, *Julius Caesar* functioned in a similar way, as an allegory of the Reformation. From the opening scene to Antony's funeral oration, the play is awash with allusions to the schism. The play's first scene depicts an event from Roman history, as relayed by Plutarch. A sixteenth-century audience, however, may well have drawn parallels between certain elements of this scene and England's recent religious upheaval. For instance, Flavius's line – 'Disrobe the images,/If you do find them decked with ceremonies' – evokes the Protestants' attack on the perceived idolatry of the Catholic Church (*JC*, I. 1. 65-66). This analogy raises the possibility that *Julius Caesar* functions as a Reformation allegory, an idea that gains credence when the main players, Brutus, Antony, and Caesar himself, first appear. These characters immediately separate themselves into two distinct factions, with Antony and Caesar on one side and Brutus on the other. Significantly, the line dividing these factions is not delineated by opposing political views, but by conflicting attitudes

⁵⁰ Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex*, in *Early English Classical Tragedies*, ed. by John W. Cunliffe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), V. 1. 136-141. All subsequent references from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *Gorb*, in the text.

towards ritual practice. This segregation mirrors one of the Reformation's key doctrinal conflicts. Antony and Caesar demonstrate a shared conviction in the efficacy of ritual practice, echoing the Catholic viewpoint. Brutus' disdain for such customs allies him with the Reformers. At this point, then, it seems possible that *Julius Caesar* allegorises the events immediately preceding and following the Protestant Reformation, utilising the semiotic system outlined below:

Sign/Conventional dramatic unit	Signifier	First Signified	Second Signified
Caesar's speech of I. 2. 6-9: 'Forget not in your speed, Antonio/To touch Calphurnia; for our elders say,/The barren touched in this holy chase/Shake off their sterile curse.'	Verbal utterance by actor representing Caesar	Caesar is drawn to ritual and superstition in his desperation for an heir	Superstition, tradition, ritualism and folk belief strongly evoke Catholicism (as seen through the eyes of the Reformers)
Brutus' speech of II. 1. 113-139: 'No, not an oath [...]/What need we any spur but our own cause/To prick us to redress?' (<i>JC</i> , II. 1. 113-123)	Verbal utterance by actor representing Brutus	Brutus' attitude towards ritual practice opposes that of Caesar; he scorns its use	This attitude evokes the doctrine of <i>sola fides</i> ⁵¹ and equates Brutus with a Protestant Reformer

However, this system does not work because it has been quite deliberately designed to result in an interpretive short circuit. In political terms, it is Brutus who is the reformer and Caesar and Antony who are the traditionalists. Brutus wants Rome to remain a republic and believes that Caesar, bolstered by Antony's support, aspires to be emperor. Addressing the crowds at Caesar's funeral, Brutus demands: 'Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen?' (*JC*, III. 2. 22-24). The fact that Brutus desires to preserve the *status quo* prevents this particular semiotic system from working, and precludes an allegorical interpretation of the play as a whole. As I have previously stated, the schism itself is not a thematic concern here. Nevertheless, it was still necessary for contemporary audiences to identify

⁵¹ 'Justification by faith alone'. '*Fides sola justificat, ut oculus solus videt*' ('Faith only justifies as the eye only sees'). Martin Luther, 'An abstract of a commentarie by Dr. Martyn Luther, u[pon] the Galathians. Wherein the difference betweene the law, the gossell, and the strength of faith is declared. Whereunto is added divine and morall Latine sentences, taken out of the fathers, and other authors, which are cited i[n] the] margent of the Practise of piety, but not E[ng]lished there; which for their excellency, and benefit of those who understand not Latine, are here translated', 1642, *Early English Books Online* <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:156676> [accessed 1 March 2014].

allusions to the Reformation to aid their understanding of the play's politics. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare utilises a widely recognisable image of ideological conflict to communicate the fact that the dispute between Brutus and Caesar is also ideological. Allusions to the schism are, therefore, used to indicate that Brutus is not just an ambitious political rival who desires power for its own sake. Shakespeare uses elements of Catholic and Protestant doctrine in order to define the rival politicians' ideas, and to signpost the nature of this rivalry to the audience. However, the playwright deliberately 'crosses the wires' to preclude a straightforward allegorical reading, allying the political traditionalist with the religious reformers, and the political reformer with those who opposed doctrinal change. As a result, the 'second signified' becomes a 'false signified': Brutus does not equate to a Protestant Reformer and Caesar does not signify the Pope. The audience is encouraged to 'loop back' from the second, false signified to an enhanced, deeper understanding of the first: Brutus and Caesar's opposing attitudes towards ritual practice signify the ideological conflict between them.

The Reformation's impact is, therefore, a point of reference in *Julius Caesar*, rather than a thematic concern, as it is in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. *Titus* can be grouped with *Caesar* in this regard. The funeral of the protagonist's fallen sons and the depiction of the Andronici monument demonstrate the reformed functions of the funeral ceremony and tomb. The Protestants' insistence that the dead proceeded directly to either Heaven or Hell stripped both the funeral service and the tomb of their intercessory functions. This resulted in a process of secularisation whereby the purpose of the funeral service and monument became to proclaim the importance, and emphasise the exemplary reputation of, the deceased.⁵² The reformed function of the tomb in particular was to demarcate social boundaries.⁵³ Thus, those of noble birth were honoured with monuments that celebrated and reflected their status, regardless of the deceased's conduct in life. The desire was to preserve the social hierarchy from the threat posed by death's universality. *Titus Andronicus* reflects the secularisation of commemorative culture by endowing

⁵² Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 270-271.

⁵³ See Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*.

the funeral and the funerary monument with post-Reformation functions. The play utilises aspects of post-Reformation commemoration culture, stressing the propagandist nature of Titus's funeral for his slain sons and the Andronici monument. The secularisation of English commemorative culture is also reflected in the Romans' attempt to underline their perceived superiority to the Barbarians by using burial practices as a form of cultural demarcation. In the closing scene, for example, the newly crowned emperor Lucius denies the Goth Tamora burial, but grants the Roman Saturninus rest amongst his ancestors.⁵⁴ However, *Titus Andronicus* does not provide a topical examination of the impact of secularisation on Elizabethan society. The Romans' secularisation of commemorative practice is a device used to highlight the flawed and corrupt ideology underpinning their society. The Reformation itself is not a thematic concern; however, its imagery illuminates the play's socio-political themes. The original audiences' awareness of the schism renders it a useful metaphor of division and conflict. In the case of *Titus* and *Caesar*, this conflict is cultural and political rather than theological. Thus, whilst these plays do not engage directly with post-Reformation issues, they do highlight the assimilation of the schism's impact into collective, cultural knowledge.

This thesis contributes to historicist and anthropological criticism of Elizabethan drama. Michael Neill also uses a combination of historicist and anthropological methods in *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*.⁵⁵ Neill employs historicist techniques to examine the representation of death and commemoration in a selection of tragedies, including *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. In doing so, he utilises the work of historians such as Llewellyn, Zemon Davis, and Ariès to examine how the depiction of mortuary culture in these plays reflects and responds to the changes imposed by the Protestant Reformation. The main difference to my work is that Neill does not just explore these plays' representation of death and remembrance in light of the religious schism; he also examines their approach to ritual from a non-theological

⁵⁴ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Cengage, 2004), V. 3. 191; 195-197. All subsequent references from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *TA*, in the text.

⁵⁵ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

standpoint. This anthropological approach to tragedy maintains that the genre is partly defined by its representation of the poisoning, inversion, or absence of ritual. One of the key anthropological studies of Shakespearean tragedy is Naomi Conn Liebler's *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The ritual foundations of genre*.⁵⁶ In this text, the author observes that, in tragedy, 'ritual is always present in a perverted, inverted, or aborted form, or is suggested to the audience's mind by a reminder of its absence'.⁵⁷ Neill identifies this depiction of ritual in *Titus Andronicus*, in which he observes a series of mock funerals.⁵⁸ The perversion of this particular ritual indicates Rome's descent from civility to barbarism, a process that precipitates every tragic action in the play. This perversion of burial rituals invokes the Reformation, namely the Protestants' secularisation of commemorative culture. However, the play does not examine the negative implications of secularisation of commemorative culture: the perversion of burial rituals instead reflects the corruption of the Roman value system. *Titus* thus draws upon topical issues of death and commemoration to frame its examination of cultural and political tension. Liebler's theory can also be applied to *Hamlet*, but with contrasting results. In this play, too, the reduction and defilement of ritual mourning and commemorative practice reflects the corruption of the court and is one of the main indications that 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark' (*Ham*, I. 4. 90). In this instance, though, the fact that ritual is a site of conflict provides further evidence of its engagement with post-Reformation issues. In late Elizabethan tragedy, then, evocations of the schism do not always signify critical engagement with topical theological concerns. *Doctor Faustus*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* engage directly with post-Reformation issues. *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*, on the other hand, utilise Reformation imagery to signpost and examine unrelated themes.

My research also intersects with other post-Reformation approaches to Elizabethan tragedy, of which the most notable is Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory*.⁵⁹ Greenblatt

⁵⁶ Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The ritual foundations of genre* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁵⁷ Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy*, p. 27

⁵⁸ Neill, *Issues of Death*, pp. 294-296.

presents a similar central argument by asserting that the play's representation of death, the afterlife, the supernatural and commemorative culture reflects, and interrogates the impact of, the changes wrought by the religious schism. Thomas Rist adopts a similar approach in his study, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England*.⁶⁰ Rist's work, like my own, examines how Elizabethan tragedies' depictions of death and commemoration often '[draw] attention to the period's change in religious practices and [derive] significance from them thereby'.⁶¹ This thesis, then, fits quite comfortably into this area of research; however, it also furthers it by comparing late Elizabethan responses to the schism with those found in earlier, pre-Shakespearean tragedies. This approach is untypical of post-Reformation studies: Neill, Greenblatt, and Rist, as well as Robert N. Watson,⁶² all focus on the canonical tragedies produced from the 1580s onwards. The opening chapter of this thesis will focus on four Inns of Court tragedies from the 1560s – *Gorboduc* (c.1561), *Cambises* (c.1560-1), *Horestes* (c.1567), and *Gismond of Salerne* (c. 1567) – as well as on a later example, *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (c. 1587). Focusing on the plays' approaches to issues of death, I will compare the ways in which late and early examples of Elizabethan tragedy respond to the Reformation. In doing so, I will demonstrate that post-schismatic issues were a central concern for tragic dramatists throughout Elizabeth's reign. However, the nature of playwrights' engagement with these issues altered during the mid-point of the reign, meaning that the late and early Elizabethan tragedy produced contrasting responses to the Reformation. As I have already outlined, later examples of the genre respond to the schism as a psychologically traumatic event. The following chapter will show that earlier dramatists are chiefly concerned with the political implications of religious reform; namely the need to prevent a counter-Reformation by persuading the monarch to name, or produce, a Protestant successor, and to deal with the threat posed by the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots.

⁵⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Thomas Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

⁶¹ Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration*, p. 6.

⁶² Robert N. Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (California; London: University of California Press, 1994).

As well as looking at early Elizabethan tragedies, the first chapter will also analyse *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592). In this play, Marlowe uses a medieval setting and morality play tropes to disguise the fact that he has twinned the world of the play with Elizabethan England in order to interrogate the negative impact of recent religious upheaval upon the latter. He uses the same devices – namely the Good and Evil Angels – to elucidate his concerns about the traumatic effects of the schism. None of these post-schismatic concerns are apparent in the Inns of Court tragedies of the 1560s, which concentrate upon contemporary political matters and do not demonstrate a reflective or evaluative approach to the Reformation. The purpose of analysing *Faustus* in this chapter is twofold. Firstly, the play provides an illuminating point of comparison to the Inns of Court tragedies considered alongside it. Instead of focusing on the political ramifications of the schism, Marlowe examines the theological and psychological implications. *Doctor Faustus* thereby illustrates that a considerable shift has taken place in the post-Reformation dramatic landscape. Secondly, *Faustus* provides a useful introduction to my discussion of late Elizabethan tragedy, as it addresses many of the concerns also raised in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. However, *Faustus* remains distinct from the other late Elizabethan plays considered here, as it focuses on post-Reformation doctrinal conflict, rather than issues of death and commemoration.

As well as demonstrating how dramatic responses to the Reformation changed throughout Elizabeth's reign, the first chapter will consider the factors that may have instigated these changes. I will use historicist techniques to discuss why early and late Elizabethan responses to the schism differ so greatly. I consider how the opening of the first professional theatre in 1576 altered the role of the dramatist and the function of drama. The Inns of Court tragedians of the 1560s were, primarily, lawyers and courtiers who were writing for their peers or superiors. Those who wrote for the stage from the 1580s onwards were, for the most part, professional dramatists writing for wider audiences. This partially explains why responses to the Reformation became less political in the 1580s: the dramatists' priorities shifted, and they were

required to find more universal themes with which to entertain playgoers. The impact of the Reformation was one of these themes. I will also examine why responses to the Reformation became more explicit and controversial in the 1580s and 90s. To do this, I will map the evolution of Elizabethan England's religious identity. This identity was in a state of flux throughout the 1560s: the direction of the new queen's religious policy was unclear. This uncertainty and lack of clarity is a plausible explanation for early playwrights' reticence in discussing the theological conflicts: they were hedging their bets, unwilling to confront the issue too explicitly in case they found themselves immediately at odds with the queen's latest policies. Similarly, the Reformation was arguably on-going during the 1560s: Catholicism was not eradicated fully until the decade was out. Early dramatists may have been biding their time, waiting to see the eventual outcome before commenting on it. Late Elizabethan dramatists were able to take a more explicit and evaluative approach because the Reformation was more or less over by the time they began writing for the stage. England's religious identity, and Elizabeth's religious policy, had stabilised by this point, becoming recognisable anti-Catholic in response to the Jesuit mission and, later, the Spanish Armada. Late Elizabethan dramatists were thus better placed to evaluate the impact of the schism.

This thesis will now continue to map how dramatic responses to the Reformation altered throughout the Elizabethan period. The second chapter will analyse *The Spanish Tragedy*. In doing so, it will build on my comparison of *Doctor Faustus* with the Inns of Court plays, further demonstrating how dramatic responses to the schism changed from the 1580s onwards. Like *Faustus*, *The Spanish Tragedy* does not define the Reformation as a political event. However, Kyd focuses on a different post-schismatic issue to Marlowe, demonstrating Elizabethan tragedy's emerging concern with the reform of commemorative culture and its possible psychological impact. Kyd dramatises one of the schism's central debates, that regarding appropriate styles of mourning. The play examines this debate from both sides, without adopting a clear stance. *The Spanish Tragedy*'s depictions of mourning stress the survivors' need to assuage

their grief by performing a particular action, or via a display of excessive emotion. The play thus explores the possible consequences of the abolition of ritualised mourning. Through Hieronimo in particular, Kyd examines the possibility that violent revenge could replace consoling rituals and practices as the method through which grief is contained. The abolition of ritualised mourning could, the play suggests, result in psychological trauma and violence. However, Kyd also considers whether the root of the problem lies in the fact that survivors have been conditioned to respond to bereavement performatively and extravagantly. The play thus debates whether it is the endorsement or the abolition of ritualised mourning that is most problematic.

The third chapter of this thesis will continue to chart the evolution of late Elizabethan dramatists' responses to the Reformation. This chapter will focus on two plays, *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*. These plays are highly significant as they demonstrate the extent to which the impact of the schism was absorbed into Elizabethan cultural knowledge. Unlike *The Spanish Tragedy*, these dramas are not concerned with the ramifications of the schism. Instead, they use the language and imagery of the Reformation to frame socio-political themes. In *Julius Caesar*, for example, the schism is evoked as a recognisable image of sectarian conflict in order to communicate the fact that the dispute between Caesar and Brutus is ideological. The play thereby implies how pervasive the Reformation's impact has become by this point, and suggests the assimilation of its language and imagery into collective cultural knowledge. *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar* show that allusions to the Reformation do not always equate to topical, in-depth discussions of post-schismatic issues.

The fourth, and final, chapter will discuss *Hamlet*, observing how this play returns to the territory first explored by *The Spanish Tragedy*: the psychological impact of the Reformation. *Hamlet* does not merely revisit these themes, however, but develops them, marking another turning point in dramatic responses to the schism. *The Spanish Tragedy*'s approach to theological controversy is covert; for instance, Kyd merely raises the possibility that Andrea is a Purgatorial

spirit. *Hamlet*, on the other hand, confronts post-Reformation issues explicitly: his ghost is presented unambiguously as a Purgatorial soul. Consequently, this thesis maps the development of Elizabethan tragedy's engagement with post-schismatic concerns from evasion, to allusion and, ultimately, to confrontation.

Chapter 1. A Shift in Emphasis: Comparing Early and Late Elizabethan Responses to the Reformation

1.1 Early Elizabethan Responses to the Reformation

Tragic drama's engagement with post-Reformation concerns did not begin but rather altered in the 1580s. Previous studies by Greg Walker and Paul Whitfield White have shown that drama's reaction to the break with Rome was almost immediate, observing that Henrician plays adopted a highly politicised, topical, approach to the schism.¹ These initial responses functioned as propaganda and were aimed at encouraging mass conversion to Protestantism and stamping out Catholicism. Thus, during the late 1530s and early 1540s, the Reformation was a political matter requiring comment and intervention from dramatists, rather than a psychologically traumatic event requiring examination and reflection. As such, drama became one of the most powerful weapons in the Reformers' arsenal during the reign of Henry VIII; something that can be exemplified by the fact that John Bale and his company were sponsored by none other than Thomas Cromwell from 1538 to 1541.² Of Bale's five extant plays, *King Joban* (c. 1538) is perhaps the most notable, though all five function as anti-Papal propaganda. The fact that *King Joban* was revived and revised upon Elizabeth's accession in order to encourage more extreme religious reforms³ suggests that early Elizabethan responses to the schism continued in much the same vein as Henrician responses, and that the most significant change – that shift from political to psychological concerns – occurred later in the reign. Although separated by almost three decades, both Henrician and some examples of early Elizabethan drama are concerned with cementing Protestantism as England's official religion and preventing a counter-Reformation. Whitfield White and Walker, following the lead of David Bevington,⁴ have shown how this concern is reflected in the propagandist plays of the 1560s and 70s, which were often aimed at

¹ See Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Paul Whitfield White, 'Theatre and Religious Culture', in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. by John D. Cox and David Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 133-152.

² Whitfield White, 'Theatre and Religious Culture', pp. 135-136.

³ Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, p. 46.

⁴ David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

enlightening the nation's youth regarding the follies of the Catholic Church and encouraging them to embrace the 'true' religion.⁵ Examples of early Elizabethan anti-Catholic propaganda identified by these scholars include William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* (1560) and the anonymous *King Darius* (1565). The former functions as a scathing attack on parents who raise their children in the Catholic faith, and urges the children themselves to encourage their parents to convert to Protestantism.⁶ The latter is suffused with the fear of 'backsliding', or counter-Reformation.⁷

Bevington, Whitfield White and Walker demonstrate that a small proportion of dramatic literature produced during the early years of Elizabeth's reign was dedicated to commenting on, and campaigning for, religious reform. Another, quite disparate, response to the Reformation was produced by the Inns of Court tragedies *Gorboduc* and *Horestes*. Like *King Darius* and *The Longer Thou Livest*, these plays promote the need to consolidate Protestantism as England's official religion, as well as to stabilise the realm by diffusing theological conflict. The plays' engagement with the Reformation is, however, obscured by their confrontation of two indirect, political consequences of the schism. *Horestes* addresses the dilemma posed by the continued existence of Mary, Queen of Scots, presenting legal and moral arguments to support the deposition and execution of a divinely appointed, yet wicked and troublesome, monarch. *Gorboduc* confronts the dual threat posed by the Catholic queen and by the unresolved succession. In this play, one of the consequences of *Brittayne's* unresolved succession is the opportunistic attempt of Fergus, Duke of Albany, to seize the throne:

If ever time to gaine a kingdome here
Were offred man, now it is offred mee.
This realme is reft both of their king and queene,
The offspring of the prince is slaine and dead,
No issue now remains, the heire unknowen,
The people are in armes and mutinies,

⁵ Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, pp. 20-21; Whitfield White, 'Theatre and Religious Culture', pp. 137-138.

⁶ Whitfield White, 'Theatre and Religious Culture', p. 137.

⁷ Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, p. 792.

The nobles they are busied how to ceases
 These great rebellious tumults and uproares,
 And *Brittayne* land now desert left alone
 Amyd these broyles uncertayne where to rest,
 Offers her selfe unto that noble hart
 That will or dare pursue to beare her crowne.
 Shall I that am the duke of *Albanye*
 Descended from that line of noble bloud,
 Which hath so long flourished in worthy fame,
 Of valiaunt hartes, such as in noble brestes
 Of right should rest aboue the baser sort,
 Refuse to venture life to winne a crowne? (*Gorb*, V. 1. 124-141)

Fergus's name, origins and 'noble bloud' identify him as a fictional representation of Mary, Queen of Scots. This passage does not acknowledge the fact that Mary's accession would trigger yet another Counter-Reformation. At this time, however, the threats posed by Mary and by Elizabeth's lack of haste to secure the succession were inextricably tied to the religious question, and can clearly be identified as 'Protestant' concerns. Elizabeth's reluctance to dispatch Mary and to produce, or name, a Protestant successor increased the likelihood of the nation reverting back to Catholicism. Both the marriage question and the Mary, Queen of Scots dilemma are underpinned by Protestant anxiety regarding a Counter-Reformation.⁸ This anxiety stems from the fact that England's religious identity had been fairly nebulous, and in a state of flux, for some time. Henry VIII's religious policy lacked clarity and repeatedly communicated mixed signals. At the time of the monarch's death in 1547, the mass was being performed in Latin, but prayers to the Pope had been abolished. Moreover, not every church used the English Bible and some continued to display plaster casts of saints.⁹ The accession of Edward VI ushered in an era of more wide-ranging religious reforms. The five years that Edward reigned, however, were not enough to secure Protestantism as the official state religion. There was insufficient time for Protestantism to 'take hold as a cultural and social reality' and for England's religious identity to be clearly established.¹⁰ The country's religious identity was remoulded again

⁸ See Richard Rex, *Elizabeth: Fortune's Bastard?* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), pp. 103-104.

⁹ Lori Anne Ferrell, 'Religious Persuasions', in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 40-49 (p. 42).

¹⁰ Ferrell, 'Religious Persuasions', p. 42.

when Edward's successor, Mary I, restored Catholicism. At the dawn of Elizabeth's reign, Protestants were undoubtedly concerned that recent history would repeat itself. Like her half-brother, the new queen was known to incline towards Protestantism;¹¹ moreover, she had a Catholic successor waiting in the wings. For those with Protestant sympathies, the most pressing issue arising from the Reformation was to establish their creed as the official religion. Neutralising the threat posed by the Scottish queen and securing the succession were two vital steps in preventing a further Counter-Reformation. *Gorboduc* and *Horestes* reflect the climate of the 1560s by demonstrating that religious and political issues are indistinguishable. These plays' engagement with post-schismatic issues also reflects the fact that they are being written at a time when England is still reforming, and the country's religious identity is being consolidated. At such a time it is natural that commentators focus on providing solutions to the most urgent, and topical, problems arising from the Reformation, rather reflecting upon the less pressing, non-political implications.

It can, therefore, be said that early and late Elizabethan playwrights have separate priorities, resulting in their contrasting approaches to the Reformation. Early writers focus on the political consequences of the schism for two reasons. Firstly, as previously mentioned, they are writing at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign when the need to consolidate England's religious identity and prevent a Counter-Reformation was at its most pressing. Secondly, the Inns of Court dramas were not written by professional playwrights but by lawyers, courtiers and politicians. For example, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, the co-authors of *Gorboduc*, became Members of Parliament in 1558 and 1562 respectively. The former was also a lawyer, and the latter eventually served as Lord High Treasurer from 1599 to 1608. Additionally, James E. Phillips provides convincing evidence to support his claim that the author of *Horestes* was also a prominent politician, one John Pikerling, who served as Speaker of the House and Lord Keeper

¹¹ Ferrell, 'Religious Persuasions', p. 43. For further discussions of Elizabeth I's religious persuasion, see David Starkey, *Elizabeth* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003); Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion: 1558 – 1603*, Lancaster Pamphlets (London: Routledge, 1994).

in Elizabeth's government.¹² For these dramatists, writing plays was a form of political lobbying, an opportunity to outline and advance their various agendas. These plays also have a greater specificity than those written from the late 1580s onwards because they have a more narrowly defined purpose, and are aimed at a particular audience. As Walker states: 'plays such as *Gorboduc*, and the genre of courtly plays of counsel to which they belong, were precisely aimed at a given issue, and at a given audience for whom that issue had relevance'.¹³ It is significant that the shift in emphasis from the political to the psychological impact of the Reformation occurs after the opening of the first public theatre in 1576. This event led to a modification of the role of the playwright and the function of drama. The development of public theatre in turn led to the advent of the professional playwright. For the most part, these dramatists demonstrated a very different approach to their predecessors. One of the most marked differences is that their work is not politically topical; these plays are not intended to further a particular political agenda by commenting on a pressing matter of state and calling for appropriate action. They are thus at liberty to engage with other issues that, whilst still of contemporary significance, are not politically urgent; issues such as the psychological impact of the Protestants' reform of mortuary culture. The interest of later playwrights in the non-political ramifications of the religious schism also stems from the fact that they were no longer writing for select bands of courtiers, but for much wider audiences. In order to entertain these audiences, plays needed to engage with more universal themes. To summarise then, the basic function and approach of drama had to be reconsidered upon the advent of the professional theatre in the mid-1570s. This period can be marked out as something of a watershed in early modern theatre; a time of transition and reconsideration that, amongst other things, resulted in contemporary drama's re-evaluation of the Reformation's impact.

Early Elizabethan dramatists' greater concern with the political, rather than the psychological, fallout of the religious schism, can, therefore, be attributed to three factors. Firstly,

¹² James E. Phillips, 'A Revaluation of *Horestes* (1567)', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 18.3 (1955), 227-244.

¹³ Walker, *The Politics of Performance*, p. 218.

as I shall elaborate, plays like *Gorboduc* were written at the dawn of a new reign, following decades of religious conflict and instability. Defining and securing England's Protestant identity – which, amongst other things, would involve naming a suitable successor and eliminating the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots – was one of the new government's highest priorities. At this point, then, the most pressing issues arising from the Reformation were political in nature, and this is apparent in the tragedies of the period. Secondly, another explanation for the greater prominence of the political ramifications of schism is the fact that these early tragedies were written by lawyers, courtiers and politicians, who used their dramatic works to comment on matters of state. Thirdly, these dramatists were not writing for the general public, but for a more select, courtly audience, for whom these political issues had a particular relevance.

However, whilst this political focus can be thus explained and understood, it is still noteworthy that early Elizabethan tragedies, particular *Gorboduc* and *Cambyses*, do not demonstrate more direct engagement with post-schismatic issues. Neither play adopts the approach of *King Darius* and *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, both of which urge the Queen and her government to instigate more rigorous religious reforms. This is particularly surprising given the fervent beliefs of the plays' authors. *Cambyses'* author, Thomas Preston, was also the author of the anti-Catholic ballad 'A Lamentation from Rome how the Pope doth bewayle the Rebelles in England cannot prevayle' (1570), yet his beliefs only lightly colour aspects of his play. Eugene D. Hill convincingly argues that contemporary audiences would have identified the tyrannical Persian ruler with Mary I, and that Protestants in particular would have identified themselves with the Jews, prohibited by Cambyses from building a temple.¹⁴ Aside from a populist, and rather throwaway, deriding of Bishop Bonner by the crowd-pleasing Vice, *Ambidexter*, there is no overt reference to – and no sustained analysis of – issues surrounding the Reformation, making it impossible to view the play as Protestant propaganda.¹⁵ Thomas

¹⁴ Eugene D. Hill, 'The First Elizabethan Tragedy: A Contextual Reading of *Cambyses*', *Studies in Philology*, 89.4 (1992), 404-433 (p. 413; p. 419).

Norton, the co-author of *Gorboduc*, became so notorious for his torture of Catholics that he earned the nickname Norton the Rackmaster. His translation of Calvin's *Institutes* appeared in 1561, the same year as *Gorboduc*, and, in 1581, he became the Catholics' Official Censor.¹⁶ The play itself, as this chapter will highlight, demonstrates a neutral, cautious approach to issues of death and the afterlife, as well as to representations of the divine. Such an approach is highly suggestive of the authors' desire to avoid engaging with religious controversies. Both *Gorboduc* and *Cambyses* concern themselves with contemporary political, rather than doctrinal, debates, using the same blend of didacticism and propaganda identified in *The Longer Thou Livest* and *King Darius* to comment, and call for action on, issues such as the succession and to stress the need for good rulership in general. Thus, whilst these plays are topical politically, they are not so theologically.

In the 1580s, dramatists began to approach the religious schism with less caution and more specificity. They focused on a very particular, non-political aspect of the Reformation: the Protestants' reform of mortuary culture. Unlike Sackville and Norton, the likes of Shakespeare and Kyd subjected these new approaches to death, mourning, commemoration and the afterlife to sustained and probing scrutiny, rather than dealing with such issues in a neutral manner or side-stepping them entirely. A plausible explanation for this change in approach to post-Reformation issues can be found in historical research into Elizabeth's religious policy. As I have previously noted, England's religious identity was still under construction in the early 1560s. Elizabeth's aim upon her accession was to stabilise the realm by unifying the country's disparate religious sects. Her attempts to appease both Catholics and Protestants resulted in mixed signals and, consequently, her religious policy lacked both clarity and consistency in the early years of the reign. At the time of her succession Elizabeth was recognised as a Protestant, and, although she had dutifully attended mass, had been a suspected heretic during the reign of her Catholic

¹⁵ Thomas Preston, *Cambyses*, in *Minor Elizabethan Tragedies*, ed. by T. W. Craik (London: Dent & Sons, 1974), l. 1142. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated to *Camb*, in the text.

¹⁶ Patrick Collinson, 'Puritans, Men of Business and Elizabethan Parliaments', *Parliamentary History*, 7.2 (1988): 187-211.

half-sister Mary.¹⁷ To begin with, the new queen proceeded as expected, clearly indicating her intentions to restore Protestantism as the ‘true’ religion. As Susan Doran notes, one of the clearest indications of Elizabeth’s religious direction was the ‘decidedly Protestant complexion’ of her Privy Council. Indeed, the most important member of this Council, Secretary William Cecil, had withdrawn from public life upon Mary’s succession in 1553 so that he would not be forced to make a public endorsement of Catholicism.¹⁸ Similarly, Protestants who had been marginalised or exiled during the previous reign were restored to favour and invited to preach in public, while Catholic preachers were either subjected to harassment or arrested.¹⁹ Elizabeth also made pointed, public declarations of intent, such as walking out of the service at the Chapel Royal on Christmas Day 1558 when it was time for her to carry out the Catholic custom of making an offering at the altar.²⁰ Her coronation in January 1559 followed in a similar vein; there was no elevation of the host, and the bread and wine were not consecrated by the priest.²¹ On Easter Sunday that same year, the English, rather than the Latin, communion service was used at the Chapel Royal, and the wooden communion table was utilised instead of the stone.²² That August, during the opening of Bartholomew Fair, confiscated church items such as crucifixes, missals, and images of the crucified Christ, were burned at strategically chosen sites across London.²³

In 1560, however, Elizabeth abruptly halted her programme of Protestant reforms and about-turned. This change of direction was prompted by the queen’s awareness that the majority of her subjects fell between the two extremes, and that pushing too far in one direction could have disastrous consequences. Thus, during Lent in 1560, the bishops’ attire was that of a pre-Reformation Catholic bishop. The diarist Henry Machyn also observes that, at evensong on Sunday 24 March, there was a further nod to Catholic tradition in the form of two candlesticks

¹⁷ Ferrell, ‘Religious Persuasions’, p. 43; Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁸ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 6.

²⁰ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 7; Starkey, *Elizabeth*, p. 264.

²¹ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 7.

²² Starkey, *Elizabeth*, p. 292.

²³ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, p. 292.

and two tapers burning on the altar.²⁴ This ‘most consciously traditional of Lents’ was ‘the sort of superstitious ritual which rigorous Protestants were keen to abolish’.²⁵ Catholic tradition was also upheld on St. George’s Day 1560. The liturgy of the service in honour of St. George contained prayers for the repose of the soul of order’s founder, Edward III, and the previous knights; a practice that had become particularly contentious during the Reformation. These prayers were omitted by Edward VI, restored by Mary I and, somewhat at odds with her erstwhile image as the Protestant Princess, retained by Elizabeth I.²⁶ These moves were not only designed to reconcile and appease England’s Catholic population; they were also indicative of the ‘theological flimsiness of Elizabeth’s Protestantism’, and of her penchant for some traditional religious customs and practices.²⁷ For example, Elizabeth disapproved of married clergy, refused to subscribe to the notion that all images were idolatrous, and had a passion for elaborate church music.²⁸ The often contradictory nature and unclear direction of Elizabeth’s religious policy helps to explain why early Elizabethan dramatists like Sackville and Norton avoided explicit engagement with theologically contentious issues, such as the nature of the afterlife. *Gorboduc* was written at the dawn of the 1560s, just as Elizabeth’s religious policy was changing direction and at its most ambiguous. The neutrality of their representation of death and the afterlife reflects their uncertainty over their monarch’s stance on such issues. The dramatists’ theological nonalignment also implies caution: they do not want to risk displaying their allegiances in case Elizabeth imposes a contrary doctrine and they find themselves disenfranchised and out of favour.

Elizabethan tragedians do not begin to engage with post-Reformation theology until the 1580s. Significantly, historians suggest that by then both England’s religious identity and

²⁴ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, p. 295.

²⁵ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, p. 297.

²⁶ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, p. xx.

²⁷ Rex, *Elizabeth: Fortune’s Bastard?*, p. 66.

²⁸ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 8.

Elizabeth's religious direction were much clearer. As previously detailed, the queen's religious policy was poorly defined, and frequently changed direction, during the first five years of her reign. However, as the 1560s progressed, England began to forge a more cohesive, clearly-defined Protestant identity and religious policy became more consistent. Doran suggests that this process began with the publication of the first edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* or *Book of Martyrs* in 1563. She argues that this text was instrumental in refashioning England as a Protestant nation.²⁹ That Foxe is forging a new narrative for England is apparent as he begins his account of Mary I and the Counter-Reformation:

The causes laid against Lady Mary, were as well for that it was feared shee woulde marrye with a Straunger, and thereby entangle the Crowne: as also that shee would cleane alter Religion, used both in kyng Henry her father, and also in king Edwarde her brothers dayes, and so bring the Pope, to the utter destruction of the Realme³⁰

The reference to the religion used during the days of Henry VIII and Edward VI suggests a faith that is long established, not newly created. In this narrative, Protestantism is the official state religion and Catholicism is outmoded, foreign, other. Moreover, if Mary succeeded her brother, Foxe suggests, this established narrative would be disrupted. Mary herself is a potential source of corruption: her Popish leanings, coupled with the possibility of marriage with a 'Straunger' or foreigner, render her 'other'. This is a queen who would pollute and distort England's national identity by reintroducing the outmoded, foreign influence of Catholicism. Foxe goes on to discuss Thomas Wyatt's fear that Mary's marriage with Phillip of Spain would 'bryng upon this Realme most miserable servitude, and establish Popish Religion'.³¹ Again, Catholicism is depicted as a foreign influence or import that could enslave the nation.

Foxe goes on to catalogue Mary's persecution of Protestants and lists the many victims:

²⁹ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, pp. 4-5.

³⁰ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1576, *The Acts and Monuments Online* <<http://www.johnfoxe.org/index.php?realm=text&edition=1576&gototype=modern>> [accessed 5 April 2014], p. 1361.

³¹ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1576, p. 1372.

To proceede further in this story of persecuted Martyrs, next in order follow fiue other burned at Lōdon in Smithfield in the foresaid yeare of the Lord. 1557. Aprill 12. whose names were these:

Thomas Loseby.
Henry Ramsey.
Thomas Thyrtell.
Margaret Hyde.
Agnes Stanley.³²

Foxe also makes a martyr of Lady Jane Grey, whom he depicts as a Protestant heroine who upholds the new faith until her death. Prior to her execution, ordered by Mary, Foxe has Lady Jane challenge the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and espouse that of *sola fides*:

I grounde my fayth on Gods worde, and not vpon the Churche. For if the Churche be a good Churche, the fayth of the Churche must bee tryed by Gods worde, and not Gods woorde by the Churche, either yet my fayth. Shall I beleue the Churche because of antiquitie? or shall I geue credite to the Churche that taketh away from me the halfe parte of the Lordes Supper, and will not let any lay man receiue it in both kyndes? Whiche thyng if they denye to vs, then denye they to vs parte of our saluation. I say that is an euill Churche, and not the Spouse of Christ, but the Spouse of the Deuill that altereth the Lordes supper, and both taketh frō it, and addeth to it. To that Church (say I) God will adde plagues, and from that Churche will hee take their parte out of the booke of lyfe. Do they learne that of S. Paule, when hee ministred to the Corinthians in both kyndes? Shall I beleue this Churche? God forbyd.³³

In his account of Mary's reign, Foxe provides the Protestant faith with a history, a history of persecution under a merciless, tyrannical Catholic queen. By detailing Mary's victims and eulogising Lady Jane, Foxe also provides the faith with its own martyrs to rival the likes of Thomas More. Protestantism is thus reframed: it is no longer the new faith but the established one, with its own history. Therefore, Foxe helps to restore and establish England as a Protestant nation by providing it with a Protestant narrative.

³² Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1576, p. 1892.

³³ Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1576, p. 1874.

Other events contributed to England's establishment as a Protestant nation. In the late 1550s and early 1560s, Elizabeth's religious policy had been designed to reconcile Catholics and Protestants; it had thus combined elements of both faiths. As the decade wore on, these attempts at appeasement, reconciliation and unification were abandoned and England's religious identity was increasingly underpinned by anti-Catholic sentiment. Catholics, particularly in light of a deteriorating diplomatic relationship with Spain and Mary Queen of Scots' flight to England, began to be viewed as a serious threat to the country's security. Events that forged the Catholics' image as a constant threat to security included the election of Pope Pius V in 1566. His public denunciation of Elizabeth as a pretender to the throne raised fears that he would incite a rebellion or crusade that would result in the monarch being overthrown.³⁴ Three years later, there was a rebellion in the North of England in reaction to Mary Queen of Scots' presence there. The aim of this uprising, which was eventually crushed, was to instigate a Counter-Reformation by marrying Mary to the Duke of Norfolk and proclaiming the couple heirs to Elizabeth. The Pope responded to these events in England by issuing the Papal bull, *Regnans in Excelsis* ('reigning on high'), which branded the queen a heretic, announced her deposition, and released her subjects from their allegiance to her. In 1571 came the discovery of the Florentine banker Roberto Ridolfi's plot to assassinate Elizabeth and establish Mary on the English throne. The following year witnessed the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which constituted a series of targeted assassinations, followed by mob violence as a band of Roman Catholics slaughtered French Huguenots (French Calvinists).³⁵ Elizabeth's response to these events was to implement stricter measures against English Catholics and to pursue a more aggressively Protestant policy abroad.³⁶ As a consequence, England was established as a Protestant nation.

England's religious identity was consolidated further in the 1580s, again in response to events that characterised the Catholics as dangerous troublemakers. The most prominent

³⁴ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 53.

³⁵ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 53.

³⁶ Starkey, *Elizabeth I*, p. 322.

example of this was the Jesuit Mission. This band of Jesuit priests, who had been trained at the English College in Rome established in 1578, was led by Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion. The Jesuits toured England and evaded capture for months; in doing so, they ‘revivified the Catholic community, struck fear into their dedicated Protestant opponents, and astounded the nation in general’.³⁷ The wave of panic that followed the mission led to the multiplication and enforcement of even stricter measures against Catholics. The result of such measures was that Catholics were defined as the ‘enemy’ or ‘other’ and Protestantism became more clearly established as the official religion. As Lori Anne Ferrell suggests, by the 1580s, ‘England now knew what it wasn’t – Catholic’.³⁸ Religion was no less of a contentious issue in the 1580s than it was in the 1560s. However, the fact that England’s religious identity had been clearly established and was no longer in a state of flux triggered a period of reflection, which is evident in the works of Shakespeare and Kyd, as well as those of Christopher Marlowe. As they were writing, Catholicism was being eroded. Doran states that the majority of the population was Catholic at the time of Elizabeth’s succession. By the time of the queen’s death in 1603, Catholicism was a small sect, constituting 1 or 2% of the population. Other historians agree that Catholicism was virtually eradicated after the 1560s, though they disagree over the exact date this occurred. John Guy suggests that the erosion of parish Catholicism was largely complete by the end of the 1590s.³⁹ Patrick Collinson states that England’s transition from a Catholic to a Protestant nation was more or less established by the turn of the seventeenth-century: ‘If England in 1600 was not wholly Protestant, it was largely anti-Catholic’.⁴⁰ Having consulted contemporary parish records, Eamon Duffy asserts that by the 1570s, there was ‘a perceptible sense of a changing of the guard, even in many traditionalist parishes’, as well as a ‘decisive shift of attitude’.⁴¹ He further states that:

³⁷ Rex, *Elizabeth: Fortune’s Bastard?*, p. 119.

³⁸ Ferrell, ‘Religious Persuasions’, p. 44.

³⁹ John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 301.

⁴⁰ Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation* (2003. London: Phoenix, 2005), p. 115.

⁴¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England: 1400-1580* (New Haven; London: York University Press, 1997), pp. 585-587.

By the end of the 1570s, whatever the instincts and nostalgia of their seniors, a generation was growing up which had known nothing else, which believed the Pope to be Antichrist, the Mass a mummerly, which did not look back to the Catholic past as their own country but another country, another world.⁴²

Duffy's observations suggest a plausible reason for the contrast between early and late Elizabethan responses to the Reformation. The dramas of the 1560s respond to the need for consolidation at the beginning of a new reign. The dilemmas, both political and theological, surrounding the Reformation were pressing and urgent. In many ways, England was 'reforming' rather than 'reformed' during this period. Those producing plays from the 1580s onwards were doing so when Catholicism was in decline and consigned to the recent past, providing the stimulus for reflection. Furthermore, the Reformation's impact on Elizabethan culture and society would have been clearer at this point, again facilitating critical reflection.

This thesis will explore how late Elizabethan tragedians frequently 'look back to the Catholic Past' in order to evaluate its, often traumatic, impact. The contrast between early Elizabethan tragedy, with its emphasis on the political implications of the schism, and later examples, which focus on the psychological ramifications, will thus become apparent. In order to highlight this contrast, this chapter will focus on four Inns of Court tragedies of the 1560s – *Gorboduc*, *Cambyses*, *Horestes* and *Gismond of Salerne*, – analysing their use of the themes and devices most commonly utilised by later dramatists to stage and examine non-political post-Reformation concerns. These devices are: the use of classical and/or historical settings and sources; depictions and discussions of death and the afterlife; representations of commemorative culture (the funeral and the funerary monument) and discussions of appropriate styles of mourning and commemoration and representations of, or references to, the supernatural. This chapter will also examine the use of such devices in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (c. 1587). Although written in the late Elizabethan period, this play focused on the political ramifications of the schism – namely the recent death of Mary Queen of Scots – rather than the psychological impact. *The Misfortunes of*

⁴² Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 593.

Arthur's engagement with post-Reformation issues thus has more in common with earlier Elizabethan tragedies than it does with its contemporaries. This demonstrates that Elizabethan dramatic responses to the schism did not develop in a strictly linear manner. In other words, it does not appear that tragic dramas ceased engaging with the Reformation's political fallout in the late 1560s and began examining the psychological consequences in the 1580s. Rather *The Misfortunes of Arthur* indicates that tragedy's engagement with post-Reformation issues remained multi-faceted throughout Elizabeth's reign.

1.1.2 'A myrrour to Princes all': The use of classical and/or historical settings and sources in early Elizabethan tragedy

Early Elizabethan tragedy uses the above devices to address the political ramifications of the schism. Their chief concern is with stabilising the realm by resolving the succession debate and dealing with the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots. Resolving both of these issues would prevent a Counter-Reformation. Classical and/or historical settings and sources are thus appropriated to simultaneously frame and camouflage the dramatists' engagement with contemporary political issues. The playwrights use of these devices is, therefore, allegorically and topically precise. Bevington notes the early Elizabethans' fondness for allegory when considering their relationship with history, be it actual or literary:

The habit of analogizing in drama [...] was universal [...] history was studied and restudied for the light it cast on contemporary events [...] The commonest sources for such analogies were the Bible, English history and legendary history and classical mythology and history.⁴³

This 'habit of analogizing, or allegorising', gave rise to the 1560s 'mirror play,' in which the world depicted on stage is twinned with the real world beyond.⁴⁴ From this implied relationship, it becomes clear that the actions represented on stage reflect and comment upon the most

⁴³ Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ See Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, p. 156.

pressing matters of state. This creates something of a paradox since the use of classical and historical settings and sources acts as camouflage on the one hand, distancing the world of the play from the courtly environment, thereby disguising the extent to which the plays reflect upon topical issues. Conversely, these settings and sources are also used to stage, discuss and draw attention to contemporary political concerns. The Inns of Court drama heavily relies upon this paradoxical device to convey and veil simultaneously its views on controversial topical issues. For example, Sackville and Norton employ a historical setting in *Gorboduc* - the Britain of the distant past - but use the narrative to comment on the contemporary succession debate, urging Elizabeth to either produce or name her heir in order to ensure the continued stability of her country.

Similarly, John Piker's *Horestes* (c.1567) utilises a specific classical source - the myth of Orestes - in order to advise the queen of the need to eliminate the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots. As James E. Phillips and Robert S. Knapp have noted, the play functions as a dramatized *roman à clef* in which the murder of Agamemnon represents that of Henry Darnley, the slain consort of Mary, Queen of Scots.⁴⁵ Mary herself is thus assigned the role of Clytemnestra and her second husband, James, Earl of Bothwell, the chief suspect in Darnley's murder, is doubled with Egistus. Horestes is representative of Queen Elizabeth I herself: both she and her dramatic double must consider the legal, moral and political arguments surrounding the deposition and execution of a divinely ordained ruler who also happens to be their kin. The character of Nature represents the 'laws' of humanity rather than the natural world. She thus outlines one of the arguments that may well have been tormenting Elizabeth; that dispatching one's own kin is a sin:

The cruel beasts that raung in felde, whose jause to blod ar whet,
Do not consent their mothers paunch in cruell wise to eate:
The tiger fierse doth not desiare the ruine of his kinde;

⁴⁵ Phillips, 'A Revaluation of *Horestes*', pp. 227-244; Robert S. Knapp, '*Horestes*: The Uses of Revenge', *ELH*, 40.2 (1973), 205-220.

And shall Dame Nature now in the such tyranny once finde
As not the cruell bestes voutsafe to do in aney case?
Leve now, I say, Horestes myne, and to my words give place,
Lest that of men this facte of thine may judged for to be
Ne lawe, in south, ne justys eke, but cruell tyranny.⁴⁶

Nature's insistence that desiring the 'ruine' of one's own 'kinde' is a bestial, sub-human impulse is offset against other, more practical concerns. The play invites Elizabeth to view the dilemma more objectively by having Horestes consider 'the lawe of godes and lawe of man' as well as the laws of Nature (*Horestes*, l. 444). The protagonist himself believes that Clytemnestra causes her own death by committing a crime that, in a lawful, well-governed realm, requires punishment:

For thus he sayeth, that cities are well governed in dede,
Where punishment for wycked ones by lawe is do decreed,
And not decrede, byt exersyded in punnyshinge of those
Which law ne pain from waloing still in vice their mind dispose. (*Horestes*, ll. 811-814)

Horestes clearly functions as a call to action for the reigning monarch: the protagonist, as his father's heir, demonstrates his fitness to rule by exhibiting a concern for the realm. Punishing the guilty, regardless of blood ties, is necessary in order to cleanse the state. It is important to note, however, that Horestes's sense of duty to his future subjects is probably feigned in order to disguise his thirst for revenge. Elsewhere in the play, the protagonist appears consumed by thoughts of vengeance, rather than by ensuring the safety and security of the state: 'My hands do thyrst her blod to have; nought can my mind content' (*Horestes*, l. 406). Horestes's moral ambiguity suggests a more nuanced consideration of the issues surrounding revenge than that implied by the play's conclusion. The ending sees the 'Nobelles', who represent Elizabeth's council, declaring that Horestes's actions have brought stability to the realm:

Most regall prynce, we now are voyd of mortall wars vexation,

⁴⁶ John Pikerlyng, *Horestes*, in *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, ed. by Marie Axton (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982), ll. 185-186. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

And through your grace we are joined in love with every nation;
So that your nobelles may now lyve in pleasaunt state, sartaine,
Devoyd of wars and civill stryfes, whyle that your grace doth raine ... (*Horestes*, ll.
1138 – 1141)

The Commons, representing Elizabeth's subjects, have similar praise for Horestes:

Where as such on as you do raine, there nedes must riches gro.
We are, O king, easyd of the yoke, which we have so desiard.
The state of this our common welth nede not to be inquiard;
Peace, welth, joye and felycitie, O kynge, it is we have,
And what thing is their, the which subjects ought more to crave? (*Horestes*, ll.
1149 – 1153)

The play's political argument is resolved more neatly than its moral one. Moreover, the message to Elizabeth is quite clear. Allowing Mary, a Catholic with a strong claim to the English throne, to live is impolitic in a reforming society. Her continued existence will undoubtedly lead to 'ward and civill stryfes'; her demise will result in peace and unity. The political fallout of the Reformation, and the need to stabilise the realm by preventing a Counter-Reformation, thus underpins *Horestes*.

The Mary, Queen of Scots dilemma is revisited in *The Misfortunes of Arthur* in the late 1580s, though this time Arthurian legend is appropriated in order to soothe Elizabeth's conscience in the wake of her cousin's execution by vindicating the English queen's actions. Here, the relationship between Arthur and his rampantly ambitious son, Mordred, is used to reflect and comment upon that between the cousins, Elizabeth and Mary. Of course, during Elizabeth's reign, a play based on Arthurian legend would automatically take on some degree of contemporary relevance due to the Tudor myth that the queen was 'King Arthur reincarnate and that she would restore the golden age because it had been prophesied that Arthur would do so

when he returned'.⁴⁷ The authors of *The Misfortunes of Arthur* draw upon this belief in order to flatter their monarch, and Arthur's final lines make explicit reference to the legend of his return, linking the play to the Tudor myth: 'let my death/Be ay unknowen, so that in every Coast/I still be feard, and lookt for every houre'.⁴⁸ Moreover, in the play's closing scene, Elizabeth – 'That virtuous *Virgo* borne for *Brytaines* blisse' (*MFA*, V. 2. 18) – is clearly depicted as Arthur reincarnate and her reign represented as the New Golden Age: 'Let her reduce the golden age againe,/Religion, ease, and wealth of former world' (*MFA*, V. 2. 23-24).

Arthur also doubles for Elizabeth in a manner that comments more directly, and slightly less flatteringly, on recent political developments. The play was performed at Greenwich on 28 February 1588, just over a year after the execution of Mary Queen of Scots and references to this event are thinly veiled. The play's chief author, Thomas Hughes, develops the analogy between Arthur and Mordred and Mary and Elizabeth, in order to vindicate Elizabeth and show support for her actions. He does this by making it clear that Arthur is foolish to consider Mordred a son first and a traitor second: 'But as for warres,/insooth my flesh abhorres,/To bid the battayle to my proper blood' (*MFA*, III. 1. 39-40). As Armstrong has observed, Hughes makes Arthur guilty of indulgence and, thereby, compliments Elizabeth for putting the safety of the realm before familial loyalty, reassuring her that these were the actions of a worthy ruler: 'A King ought always to preferre his Realme,/Before the love he beares to kin or sonne' (*MFA*, III. 1. 45-46).⁴⁹ The play thus seeks to flatter Elizabeth by soothing her conscience.

Flattery is not the play's sole intention, however, and a distinct warning note is also sounded regarding the unresolved issue of the succession. This categorises the drama as a contributor to the succession debate that had been raging since the accession, but had become a

⁴⁷ William A. Armstrong, 'Elizabethan Themes in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', *The Review of English Studies*, 27.7 (1956), 238-249 (p. 247).

⁴⁸ Thomas Hughes, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, in *Early English Classical Tragedies*, ed. by John W. Cunliffe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), V. 1. 176-178. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated to *MFA*, in the text.

⁴⁹ Armstrong, 'Elizabethan Themes in *The Misfortunes of Arthur*', p. 248.

less prominent dramatic theme in the 1580s. Again, this message is conveyed via the doubling of Elizabeth and Arthur. The latter's reign ends after twenty-six years and this play was staged as the former was entering into her twentieth year as queen. The end of Arthur's reign anticipates the end of Elizabeth's. *The Misfortunes of Arthur* concludes in a similar way to *Gorboduc*, by predicting the ruin of a rudderless, defenceless Britain, now prey to foreign invasion (*MFA*, IV.3. 36-48). The contemporary allusion is clearly apparent in these lines: the end of Elizabeth's reign will, like the end of Arthur's, mark the passing of a golden age. Furthermore, if a worthy successor is not found for this queen, 'the joy, and hope and hap of all' (*MFA*, IV. 3. 36), England will be 'A Nation hurt, and ne'r in case to heale' (*MFA*, IV. 3. 48). The play's dramatic impetus, like that of *Gorboduc*, thus takes the form of an externalised, conditional prolepsis, whereby a grim future is foretold for England if the queen ignores the playwrights' advice and fails to take appropriate action – i.e. to produce an heir or name a successor.

The Misfortunes of Arthur's use of this device to pass comment on contemporary politics may be atypical for a late Elizabethan tragedy. What this play shows, however, is that Elizabethan drama did not develop in a strictly linear pattern. One form or trend did not necessarily replace another; instead, they co-existed. This is evidenced by the mirror play, a genre that remained relevant throughout the period, though its precise meaning and function broadened. As Shakespeare implies, the purpose of drama remains to 'hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature' and show 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (*Ham*, III. 2. 21-24). Key to understanding the difference between mirror plays like *The Misfortunes of Arthur* and *Gorboduc* and those like *Hamlet* is the greater social inclusivity implicit in the phrase 'the very age and body of the time': this is no longer a mirror solely for magistrates, or 'Princes' (*Gorb*, Ch. I. 19-24). Late Elizabethan drama thus encompasses two different dramatic cultures: those of the Inns of Court and the public theatres. Those writing for the latter are no longer writing on particular themes for specific people; more universal themes and approaches are thus required for the new, popular drama. One of the most prominent of these emergent universal themes is

the traumatic psychological impact of the Reformation. At the same time, more ‘traditional’ mirror plays like *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, written for the Inns of Court rather than the public theatre, remain focused on the schism’s political consequences.

1.1.3 Greedie wormes and lingering spirits: Representations of death and the afterlife in early Elizabethan tragedy

This chapter has so far demonstrated early Elizabethan tragedy’s preoccupation with matters of state, namely the need to secure the succession and to deal with the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots. This fixation not only dictates what these early Elizabethan dramatists do – for instance, using classical/historical settings and sources to air their political views – but also determines what they exclude. For example, there are no extended discussions of death and the afterlife in these early tragedies, and the focus remains very much on the Reformation’s political ramifications. The impact of Protestant reforms on attitudes towards death and representations of the afterlife does not emerge fully as a theme until the late 1580s, when dramatists first begin to take stock of this particular aspect of the recent past. As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, this shift can be attributed to the fact that Elizabeth’s religious policy and, consequently, England’s religious identity were more clearly defined by the 1580s.

There are few examples to consider when analysing the treatment of death and the possibility of an existence beyond it in early Elizabethan tragedy, which is, of course, significant in itself. However, *Gorboduc* and *Gismond of Salerne* provide interesting points of comparison in this regard. The former demonstrates a neutral approach to the theme that is suggestive of a desire on the part of the authors to avoid engaging in religious controversy. This in turn implies that whilst the earlier tragedies are politically topical, they are not so theologically as, unlike later examples, they do not frame their portrayals of death and the afterlife within a post-schismatic context. In Act Four, Scene I of *Gorboduc*, the tormented queen, Videna, anticipates death as a blessed release from the anguish of living:

So had my bones possessed now in peace,
 Their happie grave within the closed ground,
 And greedie wormes had gnawen this pyned hart
 Without my feeling payne: so should not now
 This lyving brest remayne the ruthefull tombe,
 Wherein my hart yelden to death is graved:
 Nor driery thoughts with panges of pining grieffe
 My dolefull minde had not afflicted thus. (*Gorb*, V. 1. 15-22)

By focusing on the interment and decay of the body, this passage emphasises physical death without alluding to the spiritual afterlife, which is a way of avoiding controversy at a time when the ultimate direction of Elizabeth's religious policy, as well as its specifics, was unclear. Videna anticipates death as a peaceful and unbroken sleep and does not share Hamlet's anxiety over 'what dreams may come' (*Ham*, III. 1. 65): the emphasis is on the repose of the body rather than the fate of the soul. *Hamlet* thus invites reflection and debate whilst *Gorboduc* precludes it.

In contrast, *Gismond of Salerne* makes it impossible to rule that early Elizabethan tragedy avoids religious controversy *per se* by representing the afterlife in a manner that is highly evocative of Purgatory. Towards the beginning of the play, the recently widowed heroine imagines that her late husband 'doth linger hereabout'.⁵⁰ She later uses similar terms to address her slain lover, Counte Palurine: 'Thy soule abideth me to be thy fere,/And lingreth in this place for me, I know' (*Gismond*, V. 2.56-7). That Palurine and the unnamed husband are imagined 'lingering' about the places they frequented in life, haunting their former lover, suggests a state of limbo. This implication also underpins Tancred's desire to journey to 'the shadoes dark to seke [Gismond's] ghost/and wander there wth her' (*Gismond*, V. 4. 7-10). *Gismond* thus alludes to Purgatory by featuring three evocative images of wandering ghosts and lingering spirits, in addition to containing very little suggestion that the dead proceed directly to either Heaven or Hell.

⁵⁰ The Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, *Gismond of Salerne*, in *Early English Classical Tragedies*, ed. by John W. Cunliffe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), I. 2. 30-31. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *Gismond*, in the text.

Although there is little material to go on, that *Gorboduc* and *Gismond of Salerne* take such disparate approaches to the representation of death and the afterlife suggests that neutrality was not the 'default mode' for early Elizabethan tragedy. This disparity implies that, although some dramatists demonstrate a conscious desire to avoid controversy during this period, it is also the case that the need to examine the psychological impact of the religious schism had not yet fully taken hold or developed as a dramatic preoccupation. Moreover, that *Gismond* anticipates *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* by referring to England's Catholic past in its depiction of the afterlife indicates that late Elizabethan tragedy doesn't entirely deviate or reject what has gone before, but develops from these preceding ideas in certain ways.

1.1.4 'Oh heavy day and doleful time': Representations of grief, mourning and commemorative culture in early Elizabethan tragedy

In the body of work discussed in this thesis, the staging of funerals and the representation of funerary monuments as a means of acknowledging and examining the sociological and psychological impact of reforms to commemorative culture appear specific to the works of William Shakespeare. There are no enactments of funerals or depictions of monuments in *The Spanish Tragedy* or *Doctor Faustus*, as there are in *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. It would thus be misleading to suggest that such representations of commemorative culture are unique to late Elizabethan tragedy. This 'trend' is just one of the many things that characterise the tragedies of Shakespeare in particular, rather than something that distinguishes the tragedies of the late Elizabethan period from those written earlier in the reign. Any claims that a major shift took place between the two periods regarding the representation of funerals and funerary monuments would, therefore, be inordinate.

That said, it is still a matter of interest, and significance, that there are so few depictions of funerals and monuments in the early plays. There are none, for example, in any of the Inns of Court tragedies with which this chapter is chiefly concerned. There are two possible reasons for

this absence: firstly a desire to avoid religious controversy, detected in *Gorboduc*'s discussion of the afterlife, by steering clear of such a contentious issue. Secondly, there is the issue of staging: plays written prior to the establishment of the public theatre had different priorities – as well as less space, props and so on – than those written for the professional stage. Later playwrights were undoubtedly more attuned to the idea of stage spectacle; the funeral and funerary monument provide much in the way of striking visuals, as well as being a platform on which to base an examination of post-Reformation trauma.

I have only been able to find one example of an early Elizabethan tragedy that depicts a funeral and presents a funerary monument on stage: *A new Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia*, written by 'R. B'⁵¹ and printed in 1575. The play was first entered into the Stationer's Register in 1567-8, though there are suggestions that it was performed much earlier, possibly around 1563.⁵² Although not overtly political, the play bears the hallmark of an Inns of Court entertainment in the manner in which it seeks to flatter the queen by doubling her with Virginia, 'a rare example of the vertue of Chastitie'.⁵³ It is the presentation of Virginia as a paragon, in conjunction with the notion that her life is in some way exemplary, that underpins the depiction of her burial and her tomb in the play's closing movements. The representation of Virginia as an exemplar is indicated by the fact that her burial and commemoration is led by Fame, accompanied by Memorie, Doctrina, Justice and Rewarde. As with Videna in *Gorboduc*, the emphasis is placed on the fate of the physical body rather than the soul: 'We Ladies three have brought ye Corse in earth that must be plaste' (*AV*, 973). The only afterlife suggested for Virginia is that granted by her unblemished reputation and enduring 'Fame'. Virginia's status as an exemplar, her image as a paragon of virtue, will be secured and propagated by her monument, which is brought onto stage at line 973. Although Memorie writes on this tomb at line 978, it is clear that this act is not a

⁵¹ 'R. B' is often identified as Richard Bower, but this identification continues to be disputed.

⁵² See W. Carew Hazlitt, *The Manual for the Collector and Amateur of Old English Plays* (Ayer Publishing, 1966), p. 16; Robert Dodsley, Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, and John Payne Collier, *A Select Collection of Old English Plays* (S. Prowett, 1827).

⁵³ Anon. *A new Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia*. Old English Drama (Students Facsimile Edition, 1908), title page. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *AV*, in the text.

form of ritualised remembrance and that the monument does not have an intercessory purpose. Instead, it is apparent that the purpose of the ceremony is to commemorate Virginia's chastity and idealise her as a perfect embodiment of womanhood. The underlying tone is one of didacticism: the overall aim is to promote Virginia as an example to be followed. The ceremony thereby seeks to commemorate the achievements of the individual in order to establish, or reinforce, society's core moral values; in this case the virtue of chastity in women.

It is important to contextualise this depiction of Virginia's funeral in order to demonstrate the extent to which the play's representation of commemorative culture unambiguously upholds Protestant doctrines. The exemplary, didactic function of the heroine's funeral ceremony and tomb reflects the changes wrought by the Reformation: namely that the purpose of commemorative practices is no longer to secure intercessory prayer for the deceased. Instead, the play demonstrates the reformed function of the funerary monument, which was to '[uphold] the importance of the individual, and the 'fame' he or she would leave behind'.⁵⁴ *Apilus and Virginia* thus reflects the abolition of ritualised remembrance and the secularisation of commemorative practices. This theme resurfaces much later in *Titus Andronicus*; in this play, though, the notion that commemoration – in the form of the idealisation of individuals like Virginia – is becoming propagandist is not unquestioningly presented but problematized and interrogated. This suggests that later dramas take a less cautious, more reflective and analytical approach to issues of death and commemoration than the earlier tragedies do.

There is, however, the faintest suggestion that this more critical approach to contemporary commemorative practices is at an embryonic stage in the 1560s. Although Thomas Preston was known for his anti-Catholic views, an ironic, disdainful note of social criticism, directed towards Protestant burial practices, creeps into the final scene of *Cambises*. In the play's closing movements, two of the king's counsellors discuss the bizarrely sudden death of

⁵⁴ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 270-271.

the tyrannical monarch:

First Lord: A just reward for his misdeeds the gods above hath wrought,
For certainly the life he led was to be counted nought.
Second Lord: Yet a princely burial he shall have, according his estate;
And more of him here at this time we have not to dilate. (*Camb*, ll. 1187-1190)

Preston creates a deliberately jarring effect by juxtaposing Cambises' villainy, references to divine providence and the First Lord's moralising tone with the Second Lord's undisputed insistence that the late despot should have a princely burial'. Shakespeare does something similar in *Titus* when Lucius declares that the abominable Saturninus, the Andronici's erstwhile enemy, should be given 'burial in his fathers' grave' (*TA*, V. 3. 191). Both plays, to varying extents, thus pass negative comment on aspects of reformed commemorative practice; namely the process of secularisation that rendered the funeral and the funerary monument means to 'display and reinforce the social distinctions of the dead' so that those of noble birth were honoured and distinguished in death regardless of their conduct in life.⁵⁵

For the most part, though, the representation of commemorative culture, grief and mourning in early Elizabethan tragedy is similar to that of death and the afterlife in *Gorboduc*: a neutral, non-analytical approach is adopted; contemporary religious policies are not probed, questioned or dissected in any way, and these themes are not considered in an explicitly post-Reformation context. Moreover, analysing the ways in which the theme of grief and mourning is treated in *Cambises* reinforces the idea that early and late Elizabethan tragedies approach this matter quite differently. In later examples, like *Hamlet*, representations of grief and mourning are used to examine the psychological impact of the abolition of ritualised mourning on survivors. In *Cambises*, such scenes are used to exemplify the play's topical, political concerns.

Cambises' central interest is in the potentially corruptive effects of monarchical power; the

⁵⁵ Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c. 1500 – c. 1800* (London: Reaktion, 1991), p. 60

drama thus seeks to warn Elizabeth of what she could so easily become if she were to abuse her position.⁵⁶ Preston highlights this central theme by inviting Elizabeth to see herself in Cambises. Consequently, unlike the majority of stage tyrants, the Persian ruler is not a usurper but a legitimate, divinely appointed monarch, like the English queen herself: 'As heir due to take the crown, Cambises did proceed' (*Camb*, Prologue. 18). The play stresses that Cambises is the product of a 'virtuous bringing-up' (*Camb*, ll. 347-348), and reinforces this by demonstrating that he does not begin his reign in a tyrannical manner. Indeed, his actions at the very beginning of the play are anything but autocratic: the decision to appoint Sisamnes to govern in the king's absence during the war with Egypt, for example, is a collective one and is taken after some deliberation. Cambises's legitimacy as a monarch, his 'virtuous bringing-up' and the fact that he begins his reign by consulting his counsel in the manner of a fair and noble sovereign, forces the audience to question the cause of the monarch's descent into tyranny. Herodotus, in his account of the reign of the historical Cambyses, 'assures the readers regularly' that the king's wickedness was 'the result of insanity'.⁵⁷ Don Cameron Allen argues that 'Preston as a moralist assumes that all of Cambises's deeds are the result of drink and an evil nature'.⁵⁸ As I have already stated, Cambises does not begin as a tyrant and this suggests that he is not inherently 'evil' but, instead, something corrupts him. I am not convinced that this 'something' is alcohol either, but the nature of power itself, which has a potentially degenerative effect. For instance, there is no suggestion of Sisamnes having a similar fondness for drink, yet as soon as he is appointed as the king's deputy, he recognises the opportunity to abuse his position: 'Now may I abrogate the law as I shall think it good;/If any one me now offend I may demand his blood' (*Camb*, ll. 117-8). Sisamnes manages to suppress this urge – 'I fear unto the king that some complaint will make' (*Camb*, 310) – until he is tempted by the Vice Ambidexter. However, since little is known of Sisamnes's character before his appointment, it is possible to see power itself as a Vice – a force which draws out, though does not engender, negative traits.

⁵⁶ Suggestions that the play was performed at court during the Christmas season of 1560 – 61 can be found in the following sources: E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), iv, p. 79; Yoskiko Kowachi, *Calendar of English Renaissance Drama 1558 – 1642* (New York: Garland, 1986), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁷ Don Cameron Allen, 'A Source for *Cambises*', *Modern Language Notes*, 49.6 (1934), 384-387 (p. 385).

⁵⁸ Allen, 'A Source for *Cambises*', p. 385

The play's representation of grief and mourning illustrates and complements its portrayal of monarchical power as a morally corrosive force. *Cambises* anticipates Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (c. 1587-1588), not just in the similarly sudden and puzzling circumstances of their protagonists' deaths, but also in the fact that, unusually amongst tragic protagonists, *Tamburlaine* and *Cambises* inflict more suffering than they themselves endure. As Dermot Cavanagh has noted, there is a series of tragic 'laments' throughout the play, the majority of which are responses to *Cambises*' acts of cruelty: Otian laments the death of his father Sisamnes (*Camb*, ll. 451-454); Praxapses' wife expresses her grief over the king's senseless murder of her son (*Camb*, ll. 579-599); and the ill-fated and short-lived queen movingly bids farewell to the court prior to her death (*Camb*, ll. 1121-1126).⁵⁹ The sole exception is the lament of Common's Cry (*Camb*, ll. 357-364), which is a response to the cruelty of Sisamnes', thus identifying the origin of the peoples' suffering, not as *Cambises* himself, but as the abuse of monarchical power in general. This is the conclusion reached by Cavanagh, who compares *Cambises* with mourning plays, defined by Walter Benjamin as works which focus on the 'suffering human body' in order to 'stress the violent and arbitrary capacity of sovereign power'.⁶⁰ This definition is pertinent to *Cambises*, in which Preston uses depictions of loss and suffering to remind the English queen of her potential to harm her subjects. Grief and mourning are not explored as themes in their own right, then, as they are in later Elizabethan tragedies. Instead, they are merely illustrative of the play's key political concerns and, as such, are entirely supplementary.

Grief and mourning are more prominent thematic concerns in *Gismond of Salerne*, which touches upon appropriate responses to bereavement and appropriate styles of mourning. In doing so, however, the play is indicative of early Elizabethan tragedy's theological neutrality. Ruminations upon these issues are contained within the universe of the play and do not comment upon the theological matters prevalent in the world beyond. The play's consideration

⁵⁹ Dermot Cavanagh, 'Political Tragedy in the 1560s: *Cambises* and *Gorboduc*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature 1485 – 1603*, ed. by Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 488-503.

⁶⁰ Cavanagh, 'Political Tragedy in the 1560s', p. 497.

of grief and mourning does not, like later tragedies, address, reflect or comment upon the ways in which the Reformation has impacted upon commemorative culture. This is apparent during Gismond's confrontation with her father, a scene that bears more than a passing resemblance to Hamlet's dispute with Claudius and Gertrude. All three parental figures accuse their children of indulging in excessive and futile displays of grief. Tancred and Claudius even couch their arguments in similar terms; both berate their children's stubborn refusals to accept the fate of the departed and suggest that this 'obstinate condolment' (*Ham*, I. 2. 93) is an insult to nature:

His date that Nature sett was come: lett be
these vain complaintes: small good to him yow doe,
mutch hurt unto yourself, most grefe to me,
greatest wrong to nature to withstand her soe. (*Gismond*, I. 3. 9-12)

Fie, `tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried
From the first corpse till he that died today
'This must be so.' (*Ham*, I. 2. 101-106)

Tancred's distaste for 'complaintes' and 'bootlesse plaint' (*Gismond*, I. 3. 3) is merely suggestive of a Protestant's contempt for extended periods of ritualised mourning; it marks the faintest allusion to the Reformation rather than a contribution to contemporary theological debate. In *Hamlet*, however, the fact that Shakespeare devotes the opening scene to signalling his engagement with post-Reformation theology, by establishing Elsinore as a reforming society, denotes the religious schism as the specific frame of reference for the rest of the play. The conflict between Gismond and Tancred is more obviously domestic and appears to be generational: the latter simply becomes the wise father long since schooled in the ways of the world, berating the daughter he perceives to be self-indulgent and emotionally incontinent. In *Hamlet*, the conflict is doctrinal: less a tussle between children and elders than it is a clash between Catholics and Protestants. Once again, Elsinore functions as a microcosm of post-Reformation England; the glass which reflects the impact of the reform of ritualised mourning on Elizabethan society.

1.1.5 The representation of the supernatural in early Elizabethan tragedy

Later plays use suggestive themes and tropes, such as the representation of the supernatural, to stage post-Reformation concerns, whilst earlier examples either omit such themes or frame them in a theologically neutral way. The function of the supernatural characters in *Faustus* and *Hamlet*, for instance, is to signal engagement with post-schismatic issues, and to act as the medium through which these themes are explored. In the latter, the Ghost is the means by which debates into the nature of the afterlife and rites of remembrance are initiated, and the apolitical ramifications of the schism evaluated. Similarly, in *Faustus*, the Good and Evil Angels function as a mechanism for the examination of post-schismatic trauma. The Good Angel espouses a combination of late medieval Catholic and moderate Anglican doctrines; the Evil Angel counters this reassurance with the less forgiving Calvinist dogma. Marlowe thus utilises supernatural machinery in order to highlight the psychologically traumatic effects of the doctrinal conflict and ambiguity that followed the Reformation.

Comparing *Faustus* with *Gorboduc* goes some way towards highlighting the contrasting uses of supernatural tropes in early and late Elizabethan tragedy. *Gorboduc*, written almost three decades earlier, also interrogates man's relationship with the divine by presenting contrasting images of God. The first, the wrathful, punitive God characterised by images of fire, destruction and chaos, is similar to that presented by the Evil Angel in *Faustus*. This image is evoked by Philander, the king's counsellor, and is used to create a sense of impending doom following his exchange with Porrex and Tyndar:

the mindful wrath of wrekefull Gods,
Since mightie *Ilioms* fall not yet appeased
With these poore remnants of the Trojan name,
Have ... determined by unmoved fate
Out of this realme to rase the Brittishe line. (*Gorb*, II. 2. 75-9)

Here, though, the emphasis is political rather than theological; the play's chief concern is with

the health of the state, not the human psyche. This image of a vengeful, destructive God is not being evoked in order to evaluate the psychological impact of Calvinist doctrines. Instead, the motif serves the play's political agenda by urging the queen to secure the stability of her realm or else risk divine punishment.

This threatening image of the divine is sandwiched between two other speeches by Philander, directed at Gorboduc, in which he uses a markedly more benign image of the Gods; in the first instance to support his own arguments and in the second to reassure his monarch. In the second scene, Philander endeavours to dissuade Gorboduc from dividing the kingdom by suggesting that '[The Gods] when they see [Ferrex and Porrex] ripe to rule/Will make them rourke, and will remove [Gorboduc] hence' (*Gorb*, I. 2. 243-4). In Act Three, scene i, he employs a similar divine motif when attempting to pour oil on the troubled waters resulting from the brothers' developing feud:

[...] sith the Gods, that have the care for kings,
Of things and times, dispose the order so,
That in your life this kindled flame breakes forth,
While yet your lyfe, your wisdom, and your power
May stay the growing mischiefes and repressse
The fiery blaze of their inkindled heate.
It seems [...]
That loving Jove hath tempered so the time
Of this debate to happen in your days. (*Gorb*, III. 1. 112-120)

Here, Philanderer depicts a significantly more benevolent author, one who ensures that each event occurs at the most convenient and auspicious time. These contrasting images of the divine show that, within the world of the play, there is no God but rather interpretations of God. The notion of a divine controlling force is a political and rhetorical device, which can be remodelled at will in order to consolidate arguments or justify actions. Philander may depict the Gods as the authors of the universe but, paradoxically, in doing so, he shows mankind to be the authors of the Gods.

Once again, it is political rather than theological themes that are served by this disparity. Instead of using contrasting images of the divine to denote doctrinal conflict, as Marlowe does, Sackville and Norton have Philander evoke such disparate images in order to interrogate the notion of political counsel. This assertion supports that of Dermot Cavanagh, who argues that the play is less ‘an instance of counsel’ than it is a ‘critical meditation upon it’.⁶¹ It is clear from the way in which Philander deploys the divine image as a rhetorical device, and remoulds this image whenever it is expedient for him to do so, that the play ‘takes an inordinately pessimistic view of counsel’.⁶² Once again, multiple images of the divine are used to communicate a warning to Elizabeth: this time of the threat posed by the hollowness, fluidity and instability of political rhetoric.

Comparing *Gorboduc* and *Faustus*’s contrasting uses of the divine image reinforces this chapter’s claim that early Elizabethan dramatists were less concerned with theological issues than their late Elizabethan counterparts. This claim can be strengthened by analysing the ways in which *Cambises* and *Horestes* follow *Gorboduc*’s lead in using supernatural tropes to supplement political themes and comment on matters of state. Both plays borrow the character of the Vice from the native morality tradition; a character whose role it was to ‘take part in the moral conflict by acting against the hero, tempting and deceiving him along the way to damnation’.⁶³ Pyckeryng introduces such a character into *Horestes* in order to demonstrate, in an attempt to convince Elizabeth to dispatch Mary, Queen of Scots, how a lawful ruler might be disposed of and the killer absolved. Furthering this political cause is undoubtedly Pickering’s reason for the inclusion of the Vice, despite the fact that the dubious extent of this character’s influence over the protagonist threatens to undermine it. Despite this ambiguity, it is clearly the playwright’s intention to establish the Vice as the external embodiment of Horestes’ negative qualities. Then, once the Vice has been driven away and the protagonist is under the influence of Dewtey and

⁶¹ Dermot Cavanagh, *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* (New York: Macmillan, 2003), p. 43

⁶² Cavanagh, *Language and Politics*, p. 44.

⁶³ P. Happé, ‘Tragic Themes in Three Tudor Moralities’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900*, 5.2 (1965), 207-227 (p. 208).

Truth, Horestes can be presented ‘as a worthy monarch, free from the stigma of tyranny’.⁶⁴ Puckering thereby attempts to cleanse his protagonist, and his political argument, of moral dubiousness by emphasising that Horestes has been acting under the influence of the Vice all along.

In *Cambises*, Preston’s central argument that monarchical power is a source of moral corruption dictates that he must modify the character of the Vice in order to avoid the contradictions that hamper Pukering. Depicting Ambidexter as a duplicitous tempter who leads the protagonist astray would have compromised the play’s political agenda and tempered its argument regarding the morally corrosive effects of power. Thus, when the Vice tries to manipulate Cambises into executing his brother, Smerdis, for treason, the protagonist fails to succumb to Ambidexter’s machinations and sees through his lies: ‘Thou play’st with both hands, now I perceive well!’ (*Camb*, 687). In spite of his awareness of Ambidexter’s deceit, Cambises decrees that Smerdis shall ‘die by dint of sword or else by choking rope’ in order to ‘put all doubts aside’ (*Camb*, ll. 688-689). Preston stresses Ambidexter’s lack of influence over Cambises in order to emphasise the speed with which he moves from brotherly devotion - ‘my brother Smerdis is of youth and manly might,/And in his sweet and pleasant face my heart doth take delight’ (*Camb*, ll. 670-671) – to fratricide. Thus, the Vice’s function is not to lead the king astray but to demonstrate Cambises’ inhumanity and tyranny. This is also apparent later on in the play when, instead of boasting in a Vice-like manner of his own role in Smerdis’ demise, Ambidexter announces that ‘The king through his *cruelty* hath made [Smerdis] away’, and states that Cambises ‘consented’ to the killing because ‘His heart [is] wicked’ (*Camb*, 745; ll. 750-751; my emphasis).

Supernatural characters are also used to emphasise the protagonist’s agency and inhumanity during the queen’s death scene. Although the queen dies at the hands of Cruelty and

⁶⁴ Happé, ‘Tragic Themes in Three Tudor Moralities’, p. 220.

Murder as opposed to her husband's, it is clear that these abstractions are not acting independently of Cambises. Instead, the language of the play indicates that these characters are operating under the king's direction, and that they are manifestations of his malice: 'Come, Murder, come; let us go forth with might;/Once again the king's *commandment* we must fulfil' (*Camb*, ll. 1101-1102; my emphasis). This is further evidence of the early Elizabethan trend of utilising supernatural tropes to embellish and convey political themes and messages. Again, the notion that the monarch can easily become a source of cruelty, suffering and sorrow is emphasised. The phrase 'once again', with its implicit sense of weariness, underlines the fact that this killing is just one in a series of crimes perpetrated, directly or indirectly, by the king. Moreover, by using the words 'commandment', with its connotations of godlike power, and 'must', with its sense of non-negotiable obligation, Cruelty and Murder imply how difficult it can be to defy a despot and avoid becoming implicit in their brutality. These scenes thus provide a warning, not just to Elizabeth, but to her counsel.

This section has shown that, whilst later Elizabethan tragedies use the supernatural to examine the impact of the Reformation, earlier examples of the genre are more likely to use such tropes to stage political concerns. This can be attributed in part to early and late dramatists' contrasting priorities: early playwrights are more concerned with responding to current matters of state than with evaluating the past. However, the greater neutrality of the supernatural machinery typically found in earlier tragedies is indicative of the playwrights' desire to avoid religious controversy. The neo-Senecan stage ghost, far more of an affront to Protestant theology than the native English Vice, is entirely absent from the Inns of Court dramas studied here. This absence is, of course, partly attributable to the fact that these earlier plays follow trends – such as the medieval morality tradition – that had become outmoded by the 1580s. There is, nevertheless, still the possibility that earlier playwrights felt a greater need to conform at a time when Elizabeth's religious policy remained ambiguous. Also significant in this respect is the fact that *Gismond of Salerne*, despite its provocative references to wandering ghosts and

lingering spirits, does not utilise a stage ghost, or develop these allusions into a consideration of the nature of the afterlife in the manner of the later plays. Again, this lack of debate or exploration implies a certain reticence and signals that, for whatever reason, early Elizabethan playwrights were simply not ready to begin examining the impact of the religious schism. In contrast, later Elizabethan dramatists do so in detail, often focusing on the psychological implications of religious reform as opposed to the political ramifications. This shift in emphasis will be demonstrated in the following section with reference to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

1.2 'I do repent, and yet I do despair': Post-Reformation Conflict in *Doctor Faustus*

Having discussed early Elizabethan responses to the schism, I now turn my attention to *Doctor Faustus*. It is useful to consider this play here as it exemplifies late Elizabethan responses to the Reformation. In doing so, *Faustus* prefigures the concerns evident in the plays I will discuss in subsequent chapters: *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*. Regarding its position in this thesis, *Faustus* sits slightly apart from these other tragedies as, unlike them, it does not address the Reformation's potentially traumatic alteration of mourning and commemorative rituals. On a broader scale, however, Marlowe's tragedy can be grouped with the others; all are part of the same cultural movement that altered dramatic responses to the schism in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign. *Faustus* provides an exemplary instance of this new approach, highlighting the tendency, also apparent in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, to address the Reformation as a psychologically traumatic event. Here, then, I will use *Faustus* as a template to outline late Elizabethan approaches to the Reformation. The play lends itself readily to this as it demonstrates how these later tragedies will use classical and/or historical settings and sources, and representations of the supernatural to allude to the religious schism and evaluate its impact. In doing so, *Faustus* also anticipates how other plays will use representations of grief, mourning, and commemorative culture to address post-schismatic concerns.

As I shall illustrate, *Doctor Faustus* adopts a critical, confrontational approach to post-Reformation issues, in direct contrast to the neutrality demonstrated by the Inns of Court tragedies previously discussed. Before examining the nature of Marlowe's engagement with contemporary theology, it is necessary to note that this interrogative approach to the schism is part of a wider movement. Indeed, the play's treatment of religious matters in general is highly subversive, and its consideration of the schism's impact is just one aspect of this.

Critics of *Doctor Faustus* often fall into one of two camps: those who favour an orthodox reading and those who argue that the play is subversive. Joseph Westlund, an example of the former, remarks on the 'powerful and consistent Christian outlook of the play' and believes that it is 'really very orthodox in its treatment of the limits placed upon man in the universe'.⁶⁵ He goes on to suggest that Faustus's 'limited gains, and the degrading nature of many of the episodes, make the middle of the play serve as a commentary on the vanity of aspiring pride'.⁶⁶ However, as John D. Cox warns, 'the appearance of conformity does not necessarily point to the reality',⁶⁷ and everything Westlund uses to support his claims can be used to endorse a heterodox reading of the play as a meditation on the 'limits' that the gods impose on 'human will'.⁶⁸ Artfully, Marlowe has produced a dual-layered text that is carefully designed to yield these two possible readings. The play's subversive message is subtly interwoven with, and lightly camouflaged by, an orthodox commentary on the dangers of pride and aspiration. As Cox observes, open dissent was impossible for Marlowe.⁶⁹ This method allows the playwright to challenge the accepted views of man's limitations whilst providing himself with insurance: in this play, heterodoxy and the defence against heterodoxy are purposely inseparable.

⁶⁵ Joseph Westlund, 'The Orthodox Christian Framework of Marlowe's *Faustus*', *Studies in English Literature 1500 – 1900*, 3.2 (1963), 191-205 (p. 191; p. 199).

⁶⁶ Westlund p. 200

⁶⁷ John D. Cox, 'Devils and Power in Marlowe and Shakespeare', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 23 (1993), 46-64 (p. 47).

⁶⁸ David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Introduction to *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* by Christopher Marlowe, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), vii – xxx (p. xii).

⁶⁹ Cox, 'Devils and Power in Marlowe and Shakespeare', p. 47.

Westlund's argument can, as I have already indicated, be challenged by the notion that every single part of this play has been constructed in order that it can be read in two ways. Bevington and Rasmussen demonstrate this with reference to the Icarus motif, to which Marlowe refers in the Prologue: 'Till, swoll'n with cunning of a self-conceit,/His waxen wings did mount above his reach,/And melting heavens conspired his overthrow'.⁷⁰ (*DF*, Prologue, 20-22). Both critics note the prevalence of two conflicting interpretations of this myth during the Renaissance. On the one hand, Icarus's fate provides 'an instance of foolish human aspiration' and can thus be used to endorse an orthodox reading of *Faustus* as 'an abject lesson of hubris'.⁷¹ The language of the play also appears to support such a reading, with the phrases 'swoll'n with cunning' and 'self-conceit' inviting condemnation of Faustus and sustaining a hubristic image of him. However, on the other hand Renaissance scholars also interpreted the Icarus myth 'as proof that the gods will not tolerate Promethan challenge of their authority' and there is just as much textual evidence to support a similar understanding of *Faustus*.⁷² The line 'heavens conspired his overthrow' establishes an 'adversarial relationship between humanity and the gods'.⁷³ The implication here is that the gods are trying to protect their position and preserve their superiority by restricting humanity's progression and keeping man in his place. As Cox has observed, this intimation of God's punitive wrath and jealousy of His power also underpins Mephistopheles' description of Lucifer's exclusion from paradise:

Faustus: How comes it then that [Lucifer] is prince of devils?
Mephistopheles: O, by aspiring pride and insolence,
For which God threw him from the face of heaven. (*DF*, I. 3. 67-69)

Again, the implication of these lines, particularly of the violence implicit in the word 'threw', is

⁷⁰ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Prologue: 20-22. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *DF*, in the text. All quotations from *Doctor Faustus* are taken from the A-text in light of Bevington and Rasmussen's claims that the B-text 'represents a version of the play that had been extensively revised more than a decade after Marlowe's death' (p. xxvii).

⁷¹ Bevington and Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, p. xii.

⁷² Bevington and Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, p. xii.

⁷³ Bevington and Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, p. xii.

that God will severely punish those who seek to rise above their accepted positions and attempt to challenge His authority.

Similarly, the illusory and insubstantial nature of Faustus's power and achievements, his 'limited gains' as Westlund terms them, and the relationship between the main plot and the comic sub-plot can all be used to support both conformist and non-conformist readings. Faustus is reduced to playing tricks on the Pope and his Cardinals, to performing his party piece for a pregnant Duchess, whilst his loftiest aspirations – 'All things that move between the quiet poles/Shall be at my command' (*DF*, I. 1. 58-59) – go unfulfilled. This narrows the gap between Faustus and his supposed inferiors, Robin, Rafe and Wagner; there is often little to distinguish the protagonist's exploits from the slapstick antics of his servants. These details can support an orthodox interpretation of the play as a warning against the folly of pride and the hollowness of human ambition. They can also endorse a heterodox reading that seeks to demonstrate the ways in which God attempts to humiliate Faustus, to restrict his progress, to keep him 'in his place'. The protagonist's final line – 'I'll burn my books. Ah, Mephostopheles!' (*DF*, V. 2. 115) – reflects the play's ambiguity. It can be read as an acknowledgement of the role played by intellectual conceit and rampant ambition in Faustus's damnation. It could also be the plaintive, pitiful cry of a man who 'dares to take on heaven itself', in the process falling victim to a 'divine "conspiracy"' in which the gods thwart his ambition in order to protect their own position.⁷⁴ As Bevington and Rasmussen observe, this heterodox reading is more compatible with the view of the play as a tragedy. This interpretation elevates Faustus to the status of tragic protagonist, whereas the orthodox reading weakens his position by 'trivializing his learning' and portraying him 'as a fool'.⁷⁵

Although *Doctor Faustus* is purposely designed to sustain both conformist and radical interpretations, Marlowe's treatment of religious themes is too provocative to suggest that the

⁷⁴ Bevington and Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, p. xv.

⁷⁵ Bevington and Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, p. xv.

orthodox elements of the play are anything more than a subterfuge. The play's portrayal of the relationship between God and man, its interrogation of the rather blurred boundary between the divine and the infernal, is too extreme, too subversive to support a wholly orthodox reading. The fact that, despite the Good Angel's reassurances of God's benevolence, Faustus cannot shake his belief in a wrathful, punitive deity 'cast in an uncompromisingly Calvinist mould' threatens to eradicate any distinction between the representatives of Heaven and Hell.⁷⁶ Lines like 'My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!' (*DF*, V. 2. 112) raise questions about the true source of Faustus's punishment: God, Lucifer, or both of them operating in tandem. The text provides sufficient evidence to support the latter claim, particularly in Act II, scene iii, in which Mephistopheles deliberately frustrates and restricts Faustus's quest for knowledge by responding to enquiries with the most basic information – 'Tush, these are freshmen's suppositions' (*DF*, II. 3. 54-55) – or with flat refusals, such as when the protagonist demands to know 'who made the world' (*DF*, II. 3. 65). Here, Mephistopheles functions as God's enforcer, working to ensure that Faustus is unable to challenge or threaten His authority. This notion of a conspiracy between Heaven and Hell is also implied when Mephistopheles denies that Faustus has any power over him – '*per accidens*' (*DF*, I. 3. 46) – and states that, on the contrary, he merely attended the protagonist because he recognised him as an easy target, a potential 'customer':

when we hear one rack the name of God,
 Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,
 We fly in hope to get his glorious soul,
 Nor will we come unless he use such means
 Whereby he is in danger to be damned. (*DF*, I. 3. 47-51).

To those who argue that the play carries an orthodox Christian message, these lines highlight the gravity of the situation that Faustus's flippant disregard for the 'vain trifles of men's souls' (*DF*, I. 3. 59-61) leads him into. From the heterodox standpoint, these lines imply that Mephistopheles is as much God's henchman as he is Lucifer's; that he executes God's plan to belittle, and ultimately destroy, Faustus by convincing him that any power he appears to have is

⁷⁶ Pauline Honderich, 'John Calvin and *Doctor Faustus*', *The Modern Language Review*, 68.1 (1973), 1-13 (p. 9).

merely illusory.

There is a further suggestion of collaboration between the divine and the infernal in the following passage:

Faustus: Ah, Christ, my Saviour,
Seek to save distressed Faustus' soul!

Enter Lucifer, Beelzebub and Mephistopheles. (DF, II. 3. 81-82)

Whilst it was impossible for Marlowe to represent God or Christ on stage, the appearance of the devils is still a hugely provocative, and highly significant, response to Faustus's plea. That Lucifer responds to Faustus's call to Christ further endorses the view of the two factions as interchangeable, of them working together to humiliate the protagonist and impede his progress. The mildest interpretation of this scene is that it presents God as distant and disinterested: it is the devils who work hardest to gain Faustus's soul, God has abandoned him. This representation of the divine contrasts markedly with the portrayal of Mercy in *Mankind* who, when the eponymous hero is led astray by the devil Titivillus, makes the following vow: 'Mercy shall never be convict of his uncourteous condition;/ With weeping tears, by night and by day, I will go and never cease'.⁷⁷ The God of *Doctor Faustus*, on the other hand, ensures rather than prevents the protagonist's damnation, either by collaborating in Faustus's downfall or by simply failing to intervene. The full extent of Marlowe's subversion thus remains obscured.

Doctor Faustus's generally controversial examination of religious matters branches off into a sustained critique of post-Reformation issues. One of the most defiant aspects of Marlowe's engagement in post-schismatic debates is its topicality. Indeed, *Faustus* indicates that late Elizabethan tragedies were just as topical as the Inns of Court plays previously discussed.

⁷⁷ Anon, *Mankind*, in *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, ed. by G. A. Lester, New Mermaids (London: Methuen, 1981), ll. 477-478. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

However, the play signals a shift away from current *political* issues, or pressing matters of state, towards a preoccupation with contemporary socio-cultural and theological issues. Consequently, *Faustus* demonstrates how, from the 1580s onwards, issues of death and religion were no longer dealt with in neutral terms, as they had been in the Inns of Court plays. Instead, such matters were examined within a contemporary context, addressing how approaches to mourning and, in Faustus' case, to repentance had been transformed and complicated by the schism. The play thus partly supports Robert Hunter West's claim that, as Elizabeth's reign wore on, tragic drama demonstrated an increasingly 'heightened verisimilitude; that is, [an] increased reference [...] to the actual contemporary world'.⁷⁸ As this chapter has demonstrated, this is not the case with matters of state: the tragedy of the 1560s is deeply concerned with the 'actual contemporary world', and is dedicated to the pursuit of political stability. West's assertion is, however, true of later dramatists' approach to issues of death and religion, as the following quotation from *Faustus* suggests:

This word "damnation" terrifies not [Faustus],
 For he confounds hell in Elysium.
 His ghost be with the old philosophers! (*DF*, I. 3. 59-61)

The above quotation provides *Doctor Faustus's* only reference to literary constructions of the afterlife. In contrast, the earlier plays that I have examined in this chapter, the neo-classical tragedies of the 1560s, rely heavily on such devices and conspicuously avoid framing theological issues in contemporary terms. In *Gorboduc*, *Cambises*, and *Gismond of Salerne*, for instance, references to the 'Gods' or to 'Jove' temporally locate the plays in a pre-Christian era. Neo-classical frameworks, for example the Senecan motif in *Gismond*, are also employed to distance the plays further from the contemporary. This practice eliminates any need to reference the Reformation or examine its impact at a time when the new queen's religious policy was not always clear.

⁷⁸ Robert Hunter West, *Invisible World: A Study of Pneumatology in Elizabethan Drama* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1939), pp. 58-59.

In contrast, *Faustus*'s consideration of theological issues has a direct contemporary relevance. As I shall go on to demonstrate, the play examines the psychological impact of doctrinal reforms on the individual. Marlowe's discussion of religion is not confined to the world of the play, but comments on the world beyond. It can thus be seen as a new kind of 'mirror-play,' one whose concern is not the political but the socio-religious. My discussion of *Faustus* therefore anticipates my analyses of the other late Elizabethan tragedies in this thesis. The cosmologies, the mortuary cultures of these plays are all in some way twinned with those of Elizabethan England. In *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, these parallels reflect the changes wrought by the Reformation and evaluate their impact. Unlike the Inns of Courts tragedies, these two plays consider death and bereavement within a contemporary context. This increased contemporary relevance results in both plays' engagement with post-schismatic issues; they are each concerned with the implications of the abolition of ritualised mourning. The development of the 'heightened verisimilitude' apparent in *Faustus* can be traced throughout the tragedies of the 1580s and 90s.⁷⁹ The Ghost of Old Hamlet is the culmination. He is not a literary construct, a Senecan stage ghost or a morality play device. Instead, he is a Purgatorial spirit who demands an immediate reassessment of Protestant doctrines regarding the afterlife and intercession. Thus, whilst the Inns of Court plays call for action on political issues, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* tragedies invite reflection on theological ones.

Titus Andronicus and *Julius Caesar* also utilise references to contemporary theology and commemorative culture, though to a different end. In the former, for instance, the funeral of Titus's sons resembles an Elizabethan heraldic funeral; the Andronici monument is endowed with the reformed function and reflects the secularisation of commemorative culture in the sixteenth-century. These references to contemporary commemorative culture do not frame a discussion of topical, post-Reformation issues of death and remembrance, as they do in *The*

⁷⁹ West, *Invisible World*, p.p. 58-59.

Spanish Tragedy and *Hamlet*. Instead, the visual image of the funerary monument and the enactment of the funeral are ciphers. The connotations contemporary audiences would have associated with these images and actions highlight *Titus*'s thematic concerns. The funeral monument implies secularisation, a growing preoccupation with the reputation of the deceased – and their survivors – rather than the fate of their soul. This, in turn, signposts the Andronici's fixation with image and self-promotion. Similarly, in *Julius Caesar*, references to the conflict between Catholics and Protestants signpost the fact that the enmity between Caesar and Brutus is not merely a rivalry, a result of the latter's own desire for political leadership. The references to contemporary sectarian conflict indicate that the dispute between the two is ideological. *Doctor Faustus* thus prefigures how other tragedies will use the stage to explore topical theological issues. It also anticipates how other dramas will make use of references to contemporary society, most notably the impact of the Reformation, to frame thematic concerns.

Doctor Faustus also reflects late Elizabethan tragedy's increasingly confrontational approach to religious issues. Indeed, even when Marlowe appears to be disguising his engagement with contemporary theological debates, he is doing the opposite. His use of the morality framework distances the play from contemporary reality, and seems designed to mask Marlowe's examination of post-Reformation issues. In actual fact, it is through the use of morality tropes that Marlowe addresses the impact of the schism: the Good and Evil Angels espouse pre- and post-Reformation doctrines of salvation respectively. Together, they dramatise the doctrinal conflict that torments, and ultimately dooms, the protagonist. In *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus*, Kyd and Shakespeare adopt a similar technique, using neo-classical references to frame post-Reformation issues, rather than to distance the plays from contemporary reality. Both of these plays borrow from Virgil's description of the underworld in Book VI of *The Aeneid*, making particular use of the reference to the restless souls who '[flutter] round these shores until they

are at last allowed to return to the pools they have so longed for'.⁸⁰ Each text exploits this line's innate purgatorial allusions to signal its consideration of the recent changes to perceptions of the afterlife and commemorative culture. This appropriation of classical sources, in turn, signals Elizabethan tragedy's shift from avoidance of post-Reformation issues to carefully crafted allusions to the schism.

Such a shift is clearly evident in *Faustus*. Marlowe's replacement of the neo-classical, or neo-Senecan, framework with morality play devices may, at first glance, resemble a playwright replacing one form of camouflage for another. Yet, as I outlined earlier, Marlowe relies upon the morality framework, not to disguise his minute examination of the impact of the Reformation but to emphasise it. This reference to the morality tradition invites consideration of the Catholic doctrine of repentance espoused in these plays, where 'a last-minute murmur of "I do repent" was quite enough to ensure salvation'.⁸¹ *Faustus* illustrates how the possibility of repentance and salvation has been complicated by Reformation, comparing these Catholic doctrines to Protestant, specifically Calvinist teachings. John Calvin outlined the Calvinist doctrine of predestination in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the final edition of which appeared in 1559.⁸² Here, Calvin defined predestination as

the eternal decree of God, by which He hath determined in Himself what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but in eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death.⁸³

According to this doctrine, each individual's destiny is pre-ordained 'without any regard to works'.⁸⁴ In other words, there is nothing the damned can do to avert their fate, in contrast with

⁸⁰ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by David West, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003), VI. 330-331. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated to *Aen*, in the text.

⁸¹ Honderich, 'John Calvin and *Doctor Faustus*', pp. 1-2.

⁸² David Englander, Diana Norman, Rosemary O' Day and W. R. Owens, eds, *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450 – 1600: An Anthology of Sources* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 196.

⁸³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in *Culture and Belief*, 196-201 (pp. 200-1).

⁸⁴ Englander *et al*, *Culture and Belief*, p. 199.

the Catholic belief that one could attain eternal life by performing good deeds.⁸⁵ Additionally, those destined to be damned, the reprobates, remained ignorant of their fate. Those destined to be saved, the elect, were unaware of this fact until their death:

We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be that our salvation flows from the fountain of God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with his eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this comparison, that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to come what He refuses to others.⁸⁶

Doctor Faustus confronts the problematic nature of this doctrine and addresses the complex theological questions, not to mention the anxieties, it generates. As Huston Diehl argues:

While Calvin saw this doctrine as providing comfort to the elect by assuring them of the certainty of their salvation through God's grace, it nevertheless aroused a distinct set of anxieties among the faithful, for how could one be certain that one was among the elect? And what kind of evidence might constitute assurance of salvation? These anxieties were primarily epistemological in nature: they raised questions about how people know and what can be known. The very notion of the reprobate, predestined to do evil, raised troubling ethical questions as well, for if someone is predestined by God to do evil, how then can he be said to exercise moral choice or to be responsible for his actions? And how can a belief in predestination be reconciled with Protestantism's insistence on the importance of repentance, moral reformation, and spiritual regeneration?⁸⁷

Furthermore, Marlowe's concern with the implications of Calvinist doctrine is as topical as the Inns of Court tragedians' anxiety over the succession. Susan Doran's analysis of the development of Elizabeth's religious policy highlights the continued influence of Calvinism from the 1570s onwards. Such was the influence of this branch of Protestantism that the 'Elizabethan Church came to be Calvinist in its mainstream theology after 1570'.⁸⁸ In support of this claim, Doran observes that, between 1570 and the end of Elizabeth's reign in 1603, only one sermon delivered from the open-air pulpit at St Paul's Cross presented anti-Calvinist views. As a

⁸⁵ Huston Diehl, 'Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86-102 (p. 88).

⁸⁶ Englander *et al*, *Culture and Belief*, p. 199.

⁸⁷ Diehl, 'Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy', pp. 90-91.

⁸⁸ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 20.

consequence, the author of the sermon, Samuel Harsnett, was reprimanded by the authorities.⁸⁹ Of greater relevance to Marlowe's central concern is the fact that, by the 1590s, all leading Bishops endorsed the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, including John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1583 to 1604, and Matthew Hatton, Archbishop of York from 1595.⁹⁰ *Doctor Faustus* may not address urgent matters of state as *Gorboduc* and *Horestes* do. Like *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus*, *Caesar* and *Hamlet*, however, it addresses issues of contemporary significance. In *Faustus*' case, these concerns do not relate to the reform of mortuary culture. Instead, the play addresses the Reformation's complication of the doctrine of salvation, and the psychological implications of the doctrine of predestination.

The play engages with these post-schismatic issues from the very beginning. The Prologue states that Faustus was educated in Wittenberg (*DF*, Prologue. 13). This town witnessed the dawn of the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the All Saints' church in 1517. A link is forged immediately between Marlowe's play and the recent religious schism. There is also a great deal of textual evidence to suggest that Faustus has been exposed to a particular branch of the new religion – Calvinism – and that these doctrines shape the protagonist's perceptions of himself, his God and his chances of salvation. The first indication of this comes during Faustus's elliptical reading of the Vulgate Bible, when he overlooks the passages dealing with divine forgiveness:

The reward of sin is death. That's hard.
 [...] If we say that we have no sin,
 We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us.
 Why then belike we must sin,
 And so consequently die.
 Ay, we must die an everlasting death.
 What doctrine call you this? *Che sera, sera*,
 What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu! (*DF*, I. 1. 41-50)

That Calvinism has influenced and shaped Faustus's views of sin and damnation is clear from

⁸⁹ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 19.

⁹⁰ Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion*, p. 20.

these lines. The protagonist's exposure to this branch of Protestantism has rendered him incapable of processing the Bible's teachings about the possibility of the sinner's redemption and subsequent salvation. Instead, his interpretation of these readings from Romans 6: 23 and John I: 8 support, and indicate exposure to, 'a Calvinist view of man as naturally depraved and sinful, and destined to eternal death'.⁹¹ Introducing the doctrine of pre-destination – 'What will be, shall be' – at this early stage provides compelling evidence that Faustus is damned because he believes he is destined to be so. This determinism drives Faustus away from theology – 'Divinity adieu!' – and implies that, with the advent of such uncompromising doctrines, religion no longer offers the comfort it once did. Moreover, as Jonathan Dollimore has suggested, this examination of the effects of these doctrines on Faustus enables Marlowe to question 'whether a tyrannical God is or is not grounds for discontent'.⁹² In other words, the play interrogates the sustainability of such harsh, inflexible doctrines and such uncompromising depictions of God, concluding that their combined effects are more detrimental than positive.

There is further evidence to suggest that Faustus has constructed an indelible image of himself as a Calvinist reprobate. He repeatedly denies the possibility of salvation, instead viewing his damnation as a certainty: 'nothing can rescue me' (*DF*, V. 2. 51). Even more crucial is Faustus's belief that his damnation is predetermined: 'You stars that reigned at my nativity,/Whose influence hath allotted death and hell' (*DF*, V. 2. 81-82). Faustus's self-image is affirmed by the Evil Angel, who, throughout the play, represents the Calvinist viewpoint. This angel presents Faustus with a forbidding and unforgiving image of the divine – 'God cannot pity thee (*DF*, II. 3. 13) – and seeks to convince him that it is 'Too late' to repent (*DF*, II. 3. 77). Marlowe sets these views in opposition to more lenient approaches to repentance and the possibility of salvation. The mouthpiece of these views is the Good Angel who seeks to convince Faustus that he need only repent to be assured of God's forgiveness:

⁹¹ Honderich, 'John Calvin and *Doctor Faustus*', p. 9.

⁹² Jonathan Dollimore, 'Subversion through Transgression: *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592)', in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York; London: Routledge, 1991), 122-132 (p. 130).

Faustus: Contrition, prayer, repentance – what of them?

Good Angel: O, they are means to bring thee unto heaven. (*DF*, II. 1. 16-17)

As Pauline Honderich suggests, the Good and Evil Angels ‘put forward alternative conception[s]’ of God, with the Good Angel, and the Old Man, espousing moderate Anglican ‘even pre-Reformation Catholic’ views of God’s capacity for forgiveness, and the Evil Angel taking up the Calvinist position.⁹³ The Good Angel seeks to counter Faustus’s image of himself as a reprobate, and the Evil Angel’s affirmation of this image, by assuring him that his damnation is not guaranteed, that salvation is still possible: ‘Never too late, if Faustus can repent’ (*DF*, II. 3. 78). Towards the end of the play, the Good Angel is given an ally in the form of the Old Man, who demonstrates a similarly comforting and reassuring approach to the possibility of redemption:

I see an angel hovers o’er thy head,
And with a vial full of precious grace
Offers to pour the same into thy soul.
Then call for mercy and avoid despair. (*DF*, V. 1. 53-56)

The notion of salvation put forward by the Good Angel and the Old Man is uncomplicated. Both strive to convince Faustus that redemption will automatically follow his ‘call for mercy’ and that only ‘Contrition, prayer, [and] repentance’ are required to guarantee God’s forgiveness and eternal life. This view of redemption may have been absorbed into moderate Anglicanism following the break with Rome but its roots lie in Pre-Reformation Catholicism. The words of the Good Angel and the Old Man recall those of the *Ars moriendi* (1497), which instructed the sick in the ‘art of dying’:

Haue euer a good & true byleue and no thynge maye be impossyble vnto you. And ever be ware that ye fal not in dyspayre for that greatly woll displease god & can not be

⁹³ Honderich, John Calvin and *Doctor Faustus*, p. 10.

remedyed. And remembre the synnes that was done a fore tyme shall neuer hurte you as to dampnacyon yf they please you not nowe and that ye be sory for them.⁹⁴

Like the Good Angel and the Old Man, the *Ars moriendi* implied that repentance automatically ensured salvation: if the sinner is 'sory for' their sins, they will not be damned. This late medieval text thus offers comfort to the dying by emphasising God's capacity for forgiveness: readers are reassured by references to their 'mercyfull lorde' and to the 'charyte of Iesu Christe'.⁹⁵

The recognisably Catholic doctrine of salvation preached by the Good Angel and the Old Man is one of Marlowe's most crucial references to the morality tradition. Marlowe's allusions to this tradition open up a dialogue between his play and these earlier works, with the ultimate aim being to illustrate the contrast between pre- and post-Reformation concepts of redemption and divine forgiveness. *The Spanish Tragedy* adopts a similar approach to intertextuality, referring to its own source material in order to highlight its divergence from it. The opening act, for instance, reveals its debt to Seneca's *Thyestes* by utilising the same supernatural framing device. Expectations are thus raised that *The Spanish Tragedy*'s supernatural characters will exert the same amount of authorial control as Megaera and the Ghost of Tantalus. The deliberate engendering of these expectations underlines Revenge and Andrea's apparent lack of influence over events. *The Spanish Tragedy* thus identifies itself with an earlier work in order to highlight its transmutation and development of existing ideas and tropes. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, the play's engagement with early Elizabethan tragedies, like *The Mirror for Magistrates*, illustrates how allusions to the Reformation were now being forged rather than avoided. *Doctor Faustus* adopts a similar approach, its use of the morality framework contributing to an ongoing dramatic debate regarding salvation. Marlowe's contribution stresses the changes wrought by the Reformation and examines their implications. These instances imply the

⁹⁴ Anon, *Here begynneth a lytell treatye called Ars moriendi*, 1497, *Early English Books Online* <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:25036> [accessed 1 March 2014].

⁹⁵ Anon, *Here begynneth a lytell treatye called Ars moriendi*, 1497.

consciousness of late Elizabethan tragedians' of their debt and relationship to, as well as divergence from earlier works. Moreover, these connections were used to indicate and frame later plays' engagement with post-schismatic issues.

The straightforward, comforting views of salvation expressed by the Good Angel and the Old Man punctuate two of the most well-known morality plays from the late medieval period, *Mankind* (c. 1470) and *Everyman* (late fifteenth century). In the latter, for example, Confession thus reassures the protagonist: 'Ask God mercy, and he will grant truly'.⁹⁶ Similarly, Knowledge insists that 'Contrition [...] geteth forgiveness' (*Everyman*, ll. 644 – 645). In *Mankind*, Mercy insists that uttering the words '*Misere mei, Deus*' (*Mankind*, 829) will be enough to ensure the protagonist's salvation.⁹⁷ Indeed, in *Mankind* the emphasis is placed throughout on the possibility and attainability of salvation and divine forgiveness. Mercy, the first character on stage, both embodies and introduces these themes, stressing God's concern for His people and for the sinner in particular: 'For the sinful sinner, to had him revived/And for his redemption, set his own son at nought' (*Mankind*, ll. 7-8). Here, Mercy is reminding the audience that God is benevolent and forgiving, that He sacrificed His own son in order that the sinner might be redeemed and born again. Moreover, in a reference to Ezechiel 33: 11, Mercy evokes an image of a God anxious to avoid the damnation of transgressors:

Mankind: The egal justice of God will not permit such a sinful wretch
To be revived and restored again – it were impossible!
Mercy: The justice of God will as I will, as himself doth preach:
No lo mortem peccatoris, inquit, if he will be reducible.⁹⁸ (*Mankind*, ll. 830-834)

At this point, there is little to separate *Mankind* from *Faustus*: both despair of the possibility of salvation. However, the former is saved and the latter damned because Mercy's assurances of

⁹⁶ Anon, *Everyman*, in *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays*, ed. by G. A. Lester, New Mermaid (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 59-105, l. 569. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

⁹⁷ 'Have mercy on me, O God'.

⁹⁸ 'I do not wish the death of the sinner, he said, if he can be saved'.

God's grace go unchallenged: there are no competing doctrines. In *Doctor Faustus*, on the other hand, the Good Angel is repeatedly challenged and contradicted by the Evil Angel. In the medieval morality play, such a 'conflict between personified abstractions representing good and evil' was used to dramatise the 'spiritual crisis' of the protagonist; to externalise an internal conflict.⁹⁹ Marlowe uses this device, as Kyd and Shakespeare utilise *The Aeneid*, to refer to changes wrought by the Reformation. As I have already discussed, the Angels do not represent good and evil but disparate religious factions: pre-Reformation Catholicism and post-Reformation moderate Anglicanism and Calvinism. Thus, the angels dramatise a division in post-Reformation religious society, rather than simply externalising Faustus's spiritual conflict. It is this fragmentation of religion – specifically, the existence of conflicting views of redemption and of God's capacity for forgiveness – that results in Faustus's spiritual turmoil. The protagonist's internal conflict is both the mirror and the result of the religious schism. This can be illustrated with reference to the following passage:

Now, Faustus, must thou needs be damned,
 And canst thou not be saved.
 What boots it then to think of God or heaven?
 Away with such vain fancies and despair!
 Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub:
 Now go not backward [...]
 Why waverest thou? O, something soundeth in mine ears:
 'Abjure this magic, turn to God again!
 Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again.
 To God? He loves thee not. (*DF*, II. 1. 1-10)

Again, these lines, particularly 1-4 and 10, establish that Faustus's exposure to Calvinism has caused him to construct an identity based on the conviction that he is a reprobate destined for damnation. However, as lines 8 and 9 indicate, his identity has become fractured as the result of his knowledge of competing doctrines that assure him of God's capacity for forgiveness. Faustus is thus torn between Calvinism and a hybrid of moderate Anglicanism combined with the enduring influence of Catholicism.

⁹⁹ Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, p. 792.

The duality of post-Reformation theology leads to Faustus also being torn between two opposing conceptions of the divine; again, one rooted in pre-Reformation Catholicism and the other in Calvinism. During the protagonist's final speech, as he waits for Lucifer to come and collect what is due to him, Faustus claims to have the following vision: 'See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!/One drop would save my soul, half a drop' (*DF*, V. 2. 70-71). This image of the crucifixion epitomises the Catholic notion of divine forgiveness. This notion was prevalent during the late medieval period when it emphasised the Saviour's 'boundless love' and to comforted the dying by reminding them of the 'great sinners who had by reliance on the cross become great saints – Peter, Mary Magdalene, the good thief on Calvary'.¹⁰⁰ Faustus is unable to sustain this vision of God's grace and it is soon replaced by something altogether more forbidding:

Where is it now? 'Tis gone; and see where God
Stretcheth out his arm and bend his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come fall on me;
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God! (*DF*, V. 3. 74-77)

This image of God, heavily influenced by Calvinist doctrines, raises questions about who is actually punishing Faustus – Lucifer or God. The shift between these contrasting embodiments of the divine – one benevolent and forgiving, the other wrathful and punitive – demonstrates that Faustus is unable to repent because he is unable to shake the images, forged by his exposure to Calvinism, of himself as a reprobate and God as his punisher.

As I have previously noted, *Doctor Faustus* focuses on a different aspect of the Reformation to the other late Elizabethan tragedies discussed in this thesis, all of which examine the impact of the reform of mortuary culture. However, Marlowe's play exemplifies late Elizabethan tragedy's acknowledgement of, and anxiety regarding, the ways in which the

¹⁰⁰ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 314.

Reformation affected the lives of sixteenth-century men and women. It just so happens that this play addresses the implications of changes to doctrines of salvation and notions of divine forgiveness, rather than to approaches to death and commemoration. Like these other plays, however, *Faustus* approaches the schism, not as the originator of political dilemmas, but as a culturally-redefining event with psychologically traumatic repercussions. In doing so, the play exposes the contrast between early and late sixteenth-century responses to the Reformation. For instance, both Marlowe and the Henrician dramatist John Bale use morality play conventions to comment on issues surrounding and arising from the Reformation. The latter uses medieval tropes, for example the depiction of Vice characters as priests, to advance the Protestant cause by ridiculing and critiquing Catholicism. The former appears to be following this convention when he lampoons the Pope during Faustus's crowd-pleasing antics at the Vatican (*DF*, III.1). Marlowe's broad comic strokes in this episode are, in fact, an orthodox smokescreen for a heterodox subtext. Ostensibly anti-Papist, this scene is designed to obscure the fact that Faustus is a victim of the damaging psychological effects of the Reformation. Marlowe interrogates Protestant beliefs, as opposed to endorsing them, and attributes Faustus's inner turmoil and eventual demise to post-schismatic complications: namely, competing doctrines of salvation and contradictory images of God. These plays were written almost six decades apart; the differences between them are illustrative of the changes that took place during the intervening decades with regards to dramatic responses to the Reformation. The contrast between Bale and Marlowe is representative of that between Henrician and late Elizabethan reactions to the religious schism, and highlights the shift in emphasis from the political and the propagandist to the psychological and theological.

In addition to delineating late Elizabethan tragedy's general approach to the schism, *Doctor Faustus* also prefigures specific concerns also addressed in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. These concerns indicate late sixteenth-century anxieties regarding the collapse of the intercessory system. The aforementioned plays consider the impact of the

abolition of key intercessory rituals, such as praying for the souls of the dead or dying, and praying for divine assistance or forgiveness. These rituals supposed, and fostered the comforting notion of, a direct relationship between the living and the dead, between an individual and the divine. Intercessory culture also cultivated an image of a merciful, beneficent deity that, as I have already noted, was challenged by Calvinist doctrines. *Faustus*' use of morality tropes deliberately evoke the medieval period so that comparisons might be made between pre-and post-Reformation practices. The play harks back to the medieval period in order to underline the harshness of Calvinist doctrines and expose their negative implications. Marlowe thus expresses concern that the break with Rome, particularly the advent of Calvinism, has robbed religion of its comfort in two ways. First, post-Reformation thought replaces a merciful conception of the divine with a menacing, vindictive one. Secondly, Calvinist doctrine engenders a sense of hopelessness and despair by robbing individuals of the ability to intercede with God on their own behalf, or on the behalf of their loved ones.

The final act of *Doctor Faustus* is imbued with anxiety stemming from the collapse of intercessory culture. Faustus finds that his 'heart's so hardened [he] cannot repent' (*DF*, II. 3. 18) and he tells the scholars that his debtors render him physically incapable of weeping for his sins ('Ah, my God, I would weep, but the devil draws in my tears' (*DF*, V. 2. 27 -28)). The play's reliance upon medieval tropes evokes a period in which a man such as Faustus could look to his family and friends to intercede, and do penance, on his behalf. The *Ars moriendi* stresses the importance of companionship to those in danger of imminent death:

Whan ony of lyklyhode shall deye thenne is moost neccessarye to have a specyall frende the whiche wyll hertly helpe & praye for hym and therwith couseyll the syke for the weele of his soule & more over to se that all other so do about hym or ells quickly for to make hym departe. Thenne is to be remembred the grete benefaytes of god done for hym unto that tyme & specially of the passion of our lord & thenne is to be rede some storye of sayntes or the vij. psalmes with the letanye of our lady sawter in parte or hole with other. And ever the ymage of the crucyfixe is to be had in his syght with other. And holy water is oftymes to be

cast upon & about hym for avoydyng of evyll sprytes yt whiche thenne be full redy to take their avantage of the soule yf they may. And thenne & ever make hym crye for mercy & grace and for the helpe of our blessed lady & of other sayntes in whom afore he had a synguler trust & love & thereupon to make his prayers yf he may. Whan deth cometh or ony grievous panges other grete sykenes thenne prayer or devocy on asswageth wherefore it is wysdome for one to praye afore ony sykenesse come and also whan one may in his sykenesse yf he wyll not be decyved. So he is happy & may be glad that such a tyme of moost nede hath a faythfull frende & yt wyll saye beside the prayers afore rehersed & cause other also to saye devoutly in remembraunce of the charyte of Ihesu Cryste & of his passyon and for to have the rather his mercy & helpe ...¹⁰¹

Marlowe's implied comparison of Faustus's final hours with the late medieval 'ideal' outlined above highlights the extent to which the Reformation robbed the dying of comfort. Prior to the schism, Faustus would have benefitted from the companionship of his friends, whose duty it would have been to provide consolation. Furthermore, he would have enjoyed the succour provided by the belief that his friends were able to play active roles in securing his salvation by offering up their prayers on his behalf. Faustus's suffering would have been alleviated by a belief in the efficacy of such rituals as the sprinkling of holy water to ward off the likes of Mephistopheles. He would also have been promised the assistance of the Virgin Mary and other saints, as well as the charity offered by a merciful Christ. Instead of companionship, however, Faustus finds himself isolated; his friends are unable to comfort or assist him. Indeed, the Second Scholar underlines his own passivity, and Faustus's ensuing abandonment, when announcing his intention to 'pray that God may have mercy upon' his friend (*DF*, V. 2. 52 – 53). The scholar's use of the conditional tense is informed by post-Reformation attitudes towards the efficacy of prayer. Prior to the schism, it was believed that God's response to prayers was automatic and immediate. Reformers, however, insisted that, as the words of the scholar imply, divine intervention was not guaranteed. The Protestant Church decreed that prayers had no power in themselves, and were only effective if God chose to act upon them.¹⁰² Contemporary

¹⁰¹ Anon, *Here begynneeth a bytell treatye called Ars moriendi*, 1497.

¹⁰² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 70.

theology thus informs Marlowe's depiction of Faustus's isolation. Furthermore, instead of offering Faustus the comfort of a merciful and charitable Christ, Calvinist doctrines provide a deity who often appears threatening and sinister and is, at best, merely distant and dispassionate.

This concern over the collapse of intercessory culture is echoed in the other late Elizabethan tragedies discussed in this thesis. The closest comparison can be made between *Faustus* and *Titus Andronicus*. These plays consider the sense of alienation and abandonment created by the reform of intercessory practice in general. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* are concerned with one particular aspect of intercession: the abolition of Purgatory and its impact on the grieving process. Like *Faustus*, *Titus* reflects the greater distance that the Reformation created between humankind and their gods. When the protagonist insists that 'heaven shall hear [his] prayers' (*TA*, III. 1. 211), his brother, Marcus, admonishes him, urging him to 'speak with possibility' (*TA*, III. 1. 215) and 'let reason govern [his] lament' (*TA*, III. 1. 219). Both *Faustus* and *Titus* thus illustrate the extent to which the schism complicated notions of divine intervention, robbing individuals of comfort and solace, and leaving them isolated. In *Titus*, this sense of abandonment is encapsulated by the image of the protagonist telling his 'sorrows to the stones' (*TA*, III. 1.37), whilst disinterested tribunes and senator stream by without regard.

To summarise, then, *Doctor Faustus* focuses on the doctrine of salvation rather on the issues of death and commemoration prioritised in this thesis. However, the play clearly signposts the direction late Elizabethan responses to the Reformation took from the late 1580s onwards. Marlowe anticipates the critically discursive, topical approach to post-schismatic issues adopted in *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. He also indicates how perceptions of the Reformation, and its role in shaping sixteenth-century society, have shifted. The schism is no longer addressed as a political concern, as it is in the Inns of Court dramas of the 1560s, but as a culturally-redefining, and psychologically traumatic, event. On a more specific level, *Doctor Faustus* highlights late Elizabethan tragedy's emerging concern with the impact of the collapse of

intercessory culture, a theme I will now go on to examine in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Chapter 2. *The Spanish Tragedy*

2.1 The Middle Path: Classical sources and supernatural tropes in *The Spanish Tragedy*

Before analysing *The Spanish Tragedy*, it is necessary to note that the play's date of composition has never been clearly established: it may be as early as 1582 or as late as 1592. Thus, although this play is being discussed first, it might not necessarily have signalled the beginning of late Elizabethan tragedy's concern with the impact of the religious schism. The play may shed little light on when dramatic responses to the Reformation became more explicit and less political, but, like *Faustus*, it clearly demonstrates that such a shift has taken place. From the outset *The Spanish Tragedy* adopts a confrontational and controversial approach to the religious schism, which distinguishes it from the more neutral, and less theologically engaged, tragedies of the 1560s. That this play is less cautious, less anxious to sidestep theological controversy is immediately signalled by Kyd's use of the stage ghost, a species conspicuous by its absence from the Inns of Court dramas. As the previous chapter demonstrated, *Gismond of Salerne* is not entirely theologically neutral; however, its appropriation of the supernatural induction of Seneca's *Thyestes* certainly is. Although ghosts and Purgatory are alluded to in the play, the authors choose the less theologically controversial figure of Cupide as their supernatural antagonist. By comparison, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, utilising *Thyestes'* framework in the late Elizabethan period, deploy more contentious ghost figures, Andrea and Gorlois. This contrast further suggests that, in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign, playwrights felt less of a need to demonstrate theological neutrality or conformity. However, Thomas Hughes utilises supernatural tropes in a manner more in line with the methods of early Elizabethan dramatists, using Gorlois to interrogate political, rather than theological, themes. As this chapter will illustrate, Kyd develops a different method of harnessing supernatural tropes by using the figure of Andrea to refer to recent changes in perceptions of the afterlife. *The Spanish Tragedy* thus ushers in a new way of using representations of the supernatural to address post-Reformation concerns.

However, although the play initiates a process of change, it does not complete it. For example, Kyd, like Hughes, confines his ghost to a framework and does not allow him to cross into the material world, or to confront the human characters. Consequently, there is no slippage between the spiritual and material realms, no contact between the living and the dead as there is in *Hamlet*. By containing Andrea in the underworld, *The Spanish Tragedy* represents far less of a challenge to the Protestants' denial of ghosts. The segregation between ghosts and humans also stifles more probing discussions regarding the impact of the Protestant's denial of Purgatory and their reform of commemorative culture. In *Hamlet*, for instance, it is the Ghost's contact with his son which enables Shakespeare's examination of these issues. Kyd's use of the supernatural defines his play as transitional: he develops a method that allows for more explicit confrontation of theological controversies, but these issues are not yet fully explored and analysed.

Kyd's appropriation of Book VI of *The Aeneid* also illustrates that his approach to theological debates is more confrontational than that of the early Elizabethan dramatists, though less probing than Shakespeare and Marlowe's. As the following example shows, Virgil's depiction of the underworld is innately suggestive when considered in light of the Reformation:

The throng you see on this side are the helpless souls of the unburied. The ferryman there is Charon. Those sailing the waters of Styx have all been buried. No man may be ferried from fearful bank of this roaring current until his bones are laid to rest. Instead they wander for a hundred years, fluttering round these shores until they are at last allowed to return to the pools they have so longed for. (*Aen*, VI. ll. 326-331)

These lines illustrate that classical literary depictions of the underworld anticipate pre-Reformation beliefs in the afterlife and the function of the burial ritual. In the above extract, and in late medieval England, the function of the funeral ritual was not to commemorate the achievement of the deceased in order to convey some message or moral to society. In both instances, these rites aid the soul of the departed by granting it rest. Furthermore, Virgil's description of these 'fluttering [souls]' in a state of limbo is evocative of Purgatory and Purgatorial spirits. Peter Marshall also suggests that, during the sixteenth century, there was a

clear association between Virgil and Purgatory. He notes that ‘Homer, Pindar, Plato, Ovid and Virgil were variously described as purgatory’s first begetter’.¹ The fact that Andrea’s introductory speech is so heavily informed by this passage from *The Aeneid* means that these Purgatorial allusions are imported into *The Spanish Tragedy*:

When I was slain, my soul descended straight
To pass the flowing stream of Acheron;
But churlish Charon, only boatman there,
Said that my rites of burial not performed,
I might not sit amongst his passengers.
Ere Sol had slept three nights in Thetis’ lap
And slaked his smoking chariot in her flood,
By Don Horatio, our Knight Marshal’s son,
My funerals and obsequies were done.
Then was the ferryman of hell content
To pass me over to the slimy strand
That leads to fell Avernus’ ugly waves (ST, I. 1. 18-29)

By borrowing from Virgil, Kyd initiates a more explicit, and controversial, representation of the function of ‘rites of burial’ than those typically found in Early Elizabethan tragedies, which tend to focus on the physical rather than the metaphysical. In *Gorboduc*, for instance, Videna’s anticipation of her own eventual burial is underpinned by images of repose: ‘bones possessed [...] in peace’, ‘happie grave with the closed grounde’ (*Gorb*, IV. 1. 15-22). The emphasis is placed on the corporeal not the spiritual; there is no suggestion that the soul of the departed outlives the physical body, or that the burial ritual grants the spirit aid. Similarly, in *Appius and Virginia*, the function of the heroine’s funeral is to benefit the living rather than the departed, by using Virginia’s obsequies to transmute her into a moral exemplar. The fact that Kyd follows Virgil means that Andrea’s funeral rites have more in common with Catholic beliefs than Protestant ones; the ritual aids Andrea’s passage through the underworld. Furthermore, Horatio’s performance of his late friend’s obsequies provides an example of the living in the service of the dead, a relationship that underpinned late medieval commemorative culture.² At this stage, there is no suggestion that Kyd is utilising *The Aeneid* in order to allude to the

¹ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 143.

² See Marshall.

Reformation, or to frame a discussion of post-schismatic issues. Whilst Kyd's appropriation of Virgil inevitably involves the use of some suggestive and theologically contentious imagery, at this point any post-Reformation allusions could be dismissed as accidental by-products of their neo-classical source material.

Yet, this explanation only applies to Kyd's adherence to Virgil; his departure from the source is another matter, suggesting that the play's allusions to the religious schism are anything but accidental. Indeed, at one point, Kyd adapts his source material in order to make more covert reference to results of the religious schism. For instance, there are only two paths in the Virgilian underworld, a feature which harmonises rather neatly with the Protestants' binary view of the afterlife. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, however, Kyd makes it very clear that there are three paths: 'Three ways there were' (*ST*, I. 1. 59). Moreover, Andrea, the 'wand'ring ghost' (*ST*, I. 1. 35), elects to take 'the middle path' (*ST*, I. 1. 72). Kyd thereby eschews the opportunity to stay close to Protestant teaching regarding the afterlife, instead raising the possibility that Andrea is a Purgatorial spirit. Intertextuality underpins Kyd's representation of the afterlife and commemorative culture in *The Spanish Tragedy*; he utilises the expectations engendered by earlier writers' approaches to death, the supernatural and commemoration. These expectations are then artfully contravened in order to frame Kyd's own examination of these topics, and to signal the fact that a new approach will be taken. The play's reliance upon intertextual relationships can be demonstrated with reference to its use of the supernatural framework. By adopting this framework, Kyd implies a relationship between his play and Seneca's *Thyestes*, a play likely to have been familiar to many Elizabethan playgoers on account of the inclusion of Jasper Heywood's translation in Thomas's Newton's *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies, translated into English* in 1581.³ This covert reference engenders the expectation that Andrea and Revenge will perform the same function as Seneca's Megaera and the Ghost of Tantalus, who exert authorial control over the action of the play.⁴ However, shortly after indicating the similarity of these two

³ Joost Daalder, Introduction to *Thyestes* by Seneca, trans. by Jasper Heywood, New Mermaids (London: Ernest Benn, 1982), x-liv (p. xlvi).

plays, Kyd signals their contrast by usurping then subverting the mechanics of Seneca's framing device. As A. J. Boyle has observed, the opening scene of *Thyestes* strikes a 'metatheatrical note', with Megaera inviting the Ghost of Tantalus to serve as the audience to the events she has scripted.⁵ The first scene of *The Spanish Tragedy* strikes a similar note; however, in this play, Senecan parallels signal divergences. Thus, Kyd uses the language and devices of metatheatricality to render Andrea and Revenge's functions in the play ambiguous. This is indicated when the latter assigns himself and his spectral companion the role of 'Chorus' (*ST*, I. 1. 91). The word has connotations of passivity, suggesting that these characters will observe but not participate. Furthermore, 'Chorus' has none of the dramaturgical connotations that define Megaera and the Ghost of Tantalus's roles in *Thyestes*.

Kyd similarly defies expectations engendered by early Elizabethan texts in his appropriation of language and imagery evocative of the Reformation. For instance, his adaptation of his source material demonstrates a contrasting approach to religious controversy to that taken by the writers of *The Mirror for Magistrates*. This brief section of prose follows 'The complaint of Henrye duke of Buckingham' in the 1563 edition of the text:

The tragedy excelleth: the inuencion also of the induction, and the descriptions are notable. But where as he faineth to talke with the princes in hel, that I am sure will be mislyked, because it is moste certayne, that some of their soules be in heaven. And although he herein do follow allowed Poets, in theyr description of Hel, yet it sauoreth so much of Purgatory, which the papistes haue digged thereout, that the ignorant maye therby be deceyued. Not a whit I warrant you (quoth I) For he meaneth not by his Hell the place eyther of damned soules, or of such as lye for their fees, but rather the Graue, wherein the dead bodies of al sortes of people do rest till tyme of the resurrection.⁶

The Spanish Tragedy's relationship to *The Mirror for Magistrates* is not directly signalled, unlike its kinship with *Thyestes*. There is, however, an implicit connection and Kyd relies upon his

⁴ See Seneca, *Thyestes*, trans. by Jasper Heywood, New Mermaids (London: Ernest Benn, 1982).

⁵ A. J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An essay in the theatrical tradition* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 116-7.

⁶ *The Mirror for Magistrates.*, ed. by Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), Prose 22. 1-12.

contemporary audience's familiarity with the text to define his approach to religious controversy. Kyd's appropriation of Virgil thus has the same function as his utilisation of Seneca: to use intertextuality to indicate that his play will approach post-schismatic controversy differently to earlier texts. The above passage functions as an apologia for the way in which neo-classical representations of the afterlife can quite carelessly evoke Catholic beliefs. These beliefs are then derided – 'so much of Purgatory, which the papistes haue digged thereout, that the ignorant maye therby be deceyed' – in order that the keynote sounded clearly supports Protestant dogma. That the authors go to such lengths to do this draws attention to the fact that Kyd does not. Instead of minimising the allusions to pre-Reformation commemorative culture, he maximises them; in addition, he offers no condemnation of the late medieval practices – such as the belief in Purgatory – to which he alludes. At this stage, Kyd's unapologetic appropriation of suggestive imagery represents little more than a desire to brush with controversy. The nature of the opening scene's engagement with post-schismatic debates is superficial. The Purgatorial allusions are theatrical flourishes, rather than devices for framing examinations of contemporary debates regarding the nature of the afterlife.

Kyd's use of classical sources and supernatural tropes define *The Spanish Tragedy* as a transitional play. By utilising the stage ghost and adapting its source material in order to allude to Purgatory, the play demonstrates a more controversial approach to contemporary theological debates than those typically found in Early Elizabethan tragedies. However, *The Spanish Tragedy's* approach to the doctrinal conflicts regarding the existence of ghosts and the denial of Purgatory have more in common with *Gismond of Salerne* than *Hamlet*. Like the authors of *Gismond*, Kyd alludes to Purgatory – and thus to the Reformation – but does not examine the impact of its abolition. *The Spanish Tragedy's* opening scene amounts to a covert acknowledgement of the religious schism, rather than an in-depth analysis of its consequences. More significant than this controversial approach is the fact that Kyd utilises classical material and supernatural machinery to focus on issues of death, as opposed to matters of state. This indicates that Elizabethan

tragedy is now giving more space, and more consideration, to issues like the nature of the afterlife, the existence of ghosts, and the function of the funeral ritual. Thus, although *The Spanish Tragedy* does not examine these subjects in great depth, the fact that it touches upon them at all signals the emergence of late Elizabethan tragedy's concern with death and commemorative culture. As the following section will illustrate, *The Spanish Tragedy* also signals this emergent interest by using representations of grief, mourning and remembrance to examine the psychological implications of Protestant reforms.

2.2 What means this outrage? Representations of grief, mourning, and remembrance in *The Spanish Tragedy*

The Spanish Tragedy's status as a transitional play can be best exemplified by comparing its depiction of the afterlife and the supernatural with its representation of grief, mourning and remembrance. The play begins by following the road paved by the writers of *Gismond of Salerne*, echoing the latter's allusions to Purgatory and adopting a similarly confrontational approach to theological controversies. Yet, these allusions do not develop into sustained meditations upon the implications of the religious schism. The appearance of Andrea, unlike that of the Ghost of Old Hamlet, does not trigger an in-depth examination of the consequences of the Protestants' denial of Purgatory. *The Spanish Tragedy*'s depiction of the afterlife and the supernatural hovers somewhere between early and late Elizabethan approaches to these topics: more controversial and theologically engaged than the former, less probing than the latter. The play's discussion of grief and commemoration, however, completes this transition. As in *Hamlet*, these themes do not merely allude to the Reformation, but are used to evaluate its impact. Consequently, the play's depiction of death and mortuary culture signals Elizabethan tragedy's shift away from the theological neutrality that characterises Inns of Court drama.

There are two key differences between early and late Elizabethan approaches to depicting death. Firstly, early Elizabethan dramatists commonly use representations of grief and mourning

to embellish and underscore unrelated themes and concerns. In *Cambises*, for example, Praxapases' lament for his son communicates the play's main message, which is that, when in placed in the wrong hands, monarchical power causes great suffering. Secondly, early Elizabethan tragedians do not turn their representations of death and commemorative culture outwards, as they often do their political discussions, in order to comment on contemporary theological issues. Even when mourning is a theme in its own right, as it is in *Gismond*, it is not examined in a post-schismatic context. Both Gismond and Hamlet are accused by their elders of exhibiting extravagant and excessive responses to bereavement. In *Hamlet*, Elsinore is depicted as a reforming society. Consequently, the conflict between the protagonist and Claudius is doctrinal, with the former perceived to display a flagrant disregard for the newly Protestant court's demand for reduction and restraint in mourning. In *Gismond*, the conflict is generational and, as such, theologically disengaged. It is Tancred's greater experience that colours his view of Gismond's grief and makes him see her actions as obstinate. The play's authors do not use this conflict to refer to, or comment on, post-schismatic debates regarding proportionate responses to grief. Instead, their depiction of grief is underpinned by medieval *de Casibus* themes and comments on the transience of existence:

Whoe plantes his pleasures here to gather roote,
and hopes his happy life will still endure,
let him behold how death with stealing fote
stepes in when he shall think his joyes most sure. (*Gismond*, Ch.1. 5-8)

Unlike Marlowe, for instance, *Gismond's* authors do not borrow tropes from older literary forms in order to camouflage their engagement with controversial contemporary issues. In this case, the debt to late medieval tragedy indicates that the play's discussion of mourning will not reflect or comment upon sixteenth-century debates regarding this issue.

In contrast, *The Spanish Tragedy's* inauguration of the revenge genre places responses to death at the centre of the play. This new strand of tragedy foregrounds death and remembrance,

themes that have considerably less prominence and significance in the Inns of Court dramas

In these early plays, the impetus of the action is provided by a political event: in *Gorboduc*, the catalyst of the tragedy is the division of a kingdom, in *Cambises*, it is the accession of an unsuitable, tyrannical ruler. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the impetus of the action is provided by death and grief. The plot consists of a chain of responses to bereavement; death provides this play with its rhythm and its structure. The first link in this chain is Andrea's response to his own passing, with which the play opens. This second link is forged by Bel-imperia's reaction to Andrea's death: she embarks upon a relationship with Horatio in order to compound her rejection of Andrea's supposed murderer, Balthazar. The consequence of Bel-imperia's actions is Horatio's murder at the hands of Balthazar and Lorenzo. This establishes the third, and most important, link in the chain: Hieronimo's response to Horatio's death. Thus, as Thomas Rist has observed, 'as an indicator of structure, remembrance of the dead shapes the play'.⁷ Furthermore, remembrance is established as a central theme: Bel-imperia, Horatio and Hieronimo – as well as the Viceroy of Portugal and Hieronimo's wife, Isabella – are driven by their sense of duty to the deceased, and by their need to commemorate them. Death and remembrance thus supplement political issues as the play's central focus.

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, death is more than the impetus of the action; it is a thematic concern in its own right. Again, this is in contrast to early Elizabethan tragedies, which do not assign issues of death a central role or examine the topic in any kind of depth. In *Gorboduc* and *Cambises*, for instance, the didactic nature of both plays ensures that death is merely the outcome of a political blunder or the abuse of monarchical power. Instead of being a key theme in these plays, death is merely a device designed to underscore the plays' warning messages. The disparate approaches to death in early and late Elizabethan tragedy can also be illustrated by comparing *The Spanish Tragedy* to *Horestes*, a play containing the seeds of the revenge genre. The murder of Agamemnon, like that of Horatio, is central to the plot. However, the play focuses on the legal

⁷ Thomas Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 34-35.

and moral arguments associated with the deposition and killing of a divinely-appointed monarch, rather than examining the impact bereavement has on survivors. Instead of becoming a study of the implications of death and vengeance, the play develops into a thinly-veiled allegory; its ultimate aim being to convince Elizabeth to neutralise the threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots. As in *Gorboduc* and *Cambyse*, death serves the play's consideration of political issues and is designed to accomplish its didactic aims. In comparison, the deaths of Andrea and Horatio and the supposed death of Balthazar, instigate sustained examinations of the impact of bereavement, and of rituals of mourning and commemoration. Robert N. Watson argues that the play's 'primary psychological condition is mourning'.⁸ Indeed, the majority of its theatrical set-pieces involve excessive and performative displays of grief. Characters attempt to express and assuage their grief via the performance of such actions as prostrating themselves on the ground (the Viceroy of Portugal), destroying arbours (Isabella), and staging plays (Hieronimo). These episodes are not merely designed to provide moments of high drama and entertainment. Nor is their purpose to reinforce an unrelated point, in the way that the deaths of Praxaptes' son and the Queen serve to underline Cambises' cruelty and denote his descent into tyranny. Instead, these scenes examine the psychological impact of bereavement on the characters, and highlight their inclination to resort to performative action in their quest for catharsis. A similar purpose is achieved by the establishment of the personal relationship, and affection, between Hieronimo and Horatio in Act I, Scene i:

That was my son, my gracious sovereign,
Of whom, though from his tender infancy,
My loving thoughts did never hope but well,
He never pleased his father's eyes till now,
Nor filled my heart with overcloying joys. (*ST*, I. 2. 116-120)

In this extract, as well as throughout the play, Hieronimo uses the emotive language of a devoted father. This is in stark contrast with Horestes, whose language is often that of the wronged son

⁸ Robert N. Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (California; London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 65.

of a murdered king: ‘shall I revenged be/Of good Kynge Agamemnones death?’⁹ *Horestes* emphasises the victim and his avenger’s social positions and importance because the play utilises the embryonic revenge framework to address political concerns. *The Spanish Tragedy* stresses Hieronimo’s personal bond with his son because the play addresses the impact of bereavement on the individual.

That said, it cannot be argued that late Elizabethan tragedy is any less political than the Inns of Court dramas of the 1560s. John D. Ratliff and C. L. Barber, for example, both view the play as a socio-political critique. The latter describes it as a

play of protest, grounded in a demonstration of the ruthless forces latent beneath the ideal of benevolent royalty sustaining a sanctified society – forces ready to destroy at need the new high middle-class servants of the state [...] when their rising fortunes challenged caste interests.¹⁰

The play’s examination of caste is of equal importance to Ratliff, who considers Hieronimo’s status as ‘a retainer who holds his station at the sufferance of his sovereign’ crucial to Kyd’s treatment of the revenge motif: ‘the court does not even know that a crime has taken place, and it is up to Hieronimo to announce the murder and reveal the murderers, if he can overcome the handicap of his inferior rank to do so’.¹¹ In its consideration of these themes, *The Spanish Tragedy* indicates that the nature of Elizabethan dramatists’ engagement with political issues has altered. As demonstrated in the play’s second scene, the scope of this engagement had widened and is no longer specifically topical. In turn, it is clear that the play is not an allegorical exploration of, or comment on, a particularly pressing matter of state. Instead, as Ratliff and Barber observe, Kyd examines the wider socio-political themes of class conflict and social injustice. These intertwined topics are introduced when the King of Spain appoints Lorenzo, rather than Horatio, as the

⁹ John Pikerlyng, *Horestes*, in *Three Tudor Classical Interludes*, ed. by Marie Axton (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982), ll. 185-186. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

¹⁰ C. L. Barber, *Creating Elizabethan Tragedy: The Theater of Marlowe and Kyd* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 159.

¹¹ John D. Ratliff, ‘Hieronimo Explains Himself’, *Studies in Philology*, 54.2 (1957), 112-118 (p. 115).

guardian of the prisoner of war Balthazar, on the grounds that '[Lorenzo's] estate best fitteth such a guest;/Horatio's house were small for all his train' (*ST*, I. 2. 185-187). The implication here is that, no matter how well Horatio distinguishes himself, he will only be able to advance so far. His lowlier birth will ensure that he is always subordinate to the likes of Lorenzo, and his 'superiors' will seek to protect their own social position by restricting Horatio's progress. Similarly, despite their recent enmity, the Spanish and Portuguese nobles are bonded by caste, whilst Horatio and his father, Hieronimo, are excluded from this social circle on account of their class. In Act I, Scene 4, for example, Balthazar, who fought on the opposing side during the recent conflict, is feted as the Spanish court's 'friendly guest', (*ST*, I. 2. 197). Horatio, who distinguished himself in the service of his king, is 'honoured' with the role of cup bearer: 'Signior Horatio, wait thou upon our cup,/For well thou hast deservèd to be honourèd' (*ST*, I. 4. 130-1). In early Elizabethan tragedy, considerations of political themes like social class and injustice often comment on a particular aspect of government policy, or offer a view on a specific, contemporary controversy. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, such a discussion embellishes the play's consideration of revenge. For instance, these hints of class prejudice in the Spanish court are recalled when Hieronimo claims that revenge is the only option open to him. He is unable to seek justice from the nobility because they will band together to protect their own: 'Nor aught avails it me to menace them,/Who, as a wintry storm upon a plain,/Will bear me down with their nobility' (*ST*, III. 13. 36-8). The play's discussion of socio-political themes invites questions regarding Hieronimo's justification for revenge. *The Spanish Tragedy* thus interrogates notions of morality and justice, as opposed to government policy. Peter Sacks's reading of the play also supports this view. He considers revenge tragedies as responses to a contemporary 'lack of faith in the notion of divine justice' and 'a loss of faith in the existence or operation of justice'.¹² The inauguration of the revenge genre coincided with the judiciary system becoming increasingly bureaucratic. Sacks describes the 'proliferation of courts and jurors, a kind of swell of mediations which delayed and made increasingly opaque the actual administration of justice'.¹³

¹² Peter Sacks, 'Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare', *English Literary History*, 49.3 (1982), 576-601 (p. 578).

Late Elizabethan tragedies continue to explore contemporary issues and dilemmas, but the topics they discuss have a greater universality.

The play's second scene also illustrates that, in late Elizabethan tragedy, political issues are now subordinate, or at least equal, to non-political concerns. Unlike *Horestes*, *Cambises*, and *Gorboduc*, *The Spanish Tragedy's* political dimension constitutes its sub, rather than main, plot. Despite a cast of royalty, lawmen and militia, and discussions of the recent conflict between Spain and Portugal, the key issues arising from this scene are non-political. Instead, the scene establishes or embellishes three of the play's universal themes. Firstly, as previously noted, the scene signposts the play's interest in the psychological impact of bereavement by highlighting the bond between Hieronimo and Horatio. Secondly, the King of Spain's espousal of his belief in providence develops the conflict between freewill and determinism, initiated by the introduction of Revenge and Andrea in the opening scene: 'hath fortune given us victory?' (*ST*, I. 2. 6); 'Then blest be heaven and guider of the heavens,/From whose fair influence such justice flows' (*ST*, I. 2. 10-11). Thirdly, the scene highlights the play's concern with the instability and reliability of language when the General provides another of the multiple, and contradictory, accounts of Andrea's death (*ST*, I. 2. 63-72).¹⁴

Furthermore, *The Spanish Tragedy's* representation of grief is as topical as the treatment of political issues in Inns of Court tragedies. The play's examination of this theme is informed by contemporary, post-Reformation debates regarding responses to death. More specifically, the play uses the revenge motif to assess the implications of the abolition of ritualised mourning. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the Protestants' denial of Purgatory and their belief that the souls of the departed proceeded directly to Heaven, resulted in the virtual collapse of intercessory culture. David Cressy notes:

¹³ Sacks, 'Where Words Prevail Not', p. 578.

¹⁴ See Carol McGinnis Kay, 'Deception Through Words: A Reading of the *Spanish Tragedy*', *Studies in Philology*, 74.1 (1977), 20-38.

There was much less sacramental action under the reformed religion, much less commemorative ritual. Most of the ritual precautionary or intercessory activity of traditional Catholic burials was abrogated or undermined in the course of the Reformation. Trentals, masses, dirges, and prayers for the dead were resolutely set aside.¹⁵

Commemorative rituals did not merely aid the souls of the departed; they also provided survivors with a means of assuaging their grief. Moreover, by enabling the living to fulfil the sense of obligation they felt to the deceased, such rituals in turn enabled survivors to detach themselves from the departed and move on. *The Spanish Tragedy* considers the consequences of the abolition of these rituals by depicting a range of characters – Horatio, Bel-imperia, the Viceroy of Portugal, Hieronimo, and Isabella – whose response to grief is to seek solace in the performance of a particular action, or via an excessive display of emotion. The play thus exposes the void left by the abolition of ritualised mourning by highlighting the need for actions and practices that enable survivors to channel and assuage their grief. The actions of Hieronimo in particular serve as a warning that bloody vengeance could replace ameliorative rituals and practices as the method by which grief is contained and managed. The play thereby suggests that the abolition of ritualised mourning may result in psychological trauma and, ultimately violence.

However, this is not the play's final word on the matter. Using the same method of underlining the innate similarities between ritualised mourning and vengeance, Kyd proffers the alternative solution that the Protestants' insistence on 'propriety and decency in social and religious rituals' is entirely valid.¹⁶ If 'outrage fits' (*ST*, 1. 5. 45) and excess is considered the appropriate response to death, then violence and bloodshed will follow. The play thus examines the possibility that the Reformers are right to insist upon modesty and restraint in mourning. From this vantage point, then, it is the endorsement of ritualised mourning, rather than its

¹⁵ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (1997; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 396.

¹⁶ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 412.

abolition, that is potentially problematic. Kyd does not offer a clear-cut conclusion on the subject of proportionate responses to grief. Instead, he dramatizes the whole debate, examining it from both sides. Both Cressy and Eamon Duffy provide evidence to support the claim that this debate would have been directly relevant to *The Spanish Tragedy's* contemporary audiences. Duffy, for instance, suggests that, in the aftermath of the Reformation, 'funeral practice was, inevitably, one of the areas where feeling remained most conservative'.¹⁷ Cressy concurs, observing that 'prayer for the dead was such a deeply engrained practice in mid-Tudor England that it took several decades of preaching and discipline to draw it to a close'.¹⁸ *The Spanish Tragedy* is, therefore, just as topical as the Inns of Court dramas that preceded it; however, the focus of this topicality is not matters of state but issues of death and commemoration.

Kyd's exploration of the theme of mourning is founded upon his depiction of three responses to death: Bel-imperia and Horatio's response to Don Andrea's passing, the Viceroy of Portugal's reaction to Balthazar's reported demise, and Hieronimo's response to Horatio's murder. Each of these episodes highlights the importance of commemorative ritual and demonstrative displays of grief. Bel-imperia and Horatio's response is exemplified in the following passage:

Bel-imperia: But then was Don Andrea's carcass lost?

Horatio: No, that was it for which I chiefly strove,
Nor stepped I back till I recovered him.
I took him up and wound him in mine arms,
And, wielding him unto my private tent,
There laid him down and dewed him with my tears,
And sighed and sorrowed as became a friend.
But neither friendly sorrow, sighs nor tears,
Could win pale Death from his usurped right.
Yet this I did, and less I could not do:
I saw him honoured with due funeral.
This scarf I plucked from off his lifeless arm,
And wear it in remembrance of my friend. (*ST*, I. 4. 31-43)

¹⁷ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England: 1400-1580* (New Haven; London: York University Press, 1997), p. 578.

¹⁸ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 398.

These lines stress the value of ritual action and performative displays of mourning to survivors. Bel-imperia's anxiety over the fate of Andrea's body, coupled with Horatio's account of his dedicated ministrations, is indicative of the survivors' desire to aid the soul of the departed. Horatio's use of the phrases 'as became a friend' and 'due funeral' also implies a sense of duty to the deceased. Furthermore, for Horatio and Bel-imperia, remembrance is demonstrative: they wish to honour Andrea and proclaim their grief and affection for him by commemorating him actively. This need is embodied by Horatio's emblematic adoption of Andrea's scarf. Ritual action and performative displays of mourning fulfil the needs Bel-imperia and Horatio have in the aftermath of their friend's death, enabling them to fulfil their obligation to him by granting him 'due funeral' and publicly displaying their grief. This passage thereby stresses the importance of commemorative ritual to survivors.

The Viceroy's reaction to the reported death of his son, Balthazar, also demonstrates the function and value of performative mourning. His response is considerably more flamboyant than Bel-imperia and Horatio's. He delivers a long and impassioned speech (*ST*, I. 3. 5-42), during which he prostrates himself upon the ground. In the course of this speech, the Viceroy makes it clear that the purpose of his exaggerated actions and lamentations is to alleviate his own suffering, rather than that of his son's spirit: 'Why wail I then, where's hope of no redress?/O yes, complaining makes my grief seem less' (*ST*, I. 3. 31-32). In this scene, then, the survivor is able to channel their negative emotion into an elaborate, performative action, thereby managing their grief and achieving catharsis. The Viceroy's defiant couplet is a rejoinder to the Reformers, who maintain that such lavish displays are worthless and immodest. The play's Latinate setting is a potential smokescreen here: the Viceroy's defiance could have been countered by the disdain of a contemporary audience, who felt they were witnessing all the excesses of a superstitious Catholic with his 'understanding simple and unschooled' (*Ham*, I. 2. 97). This was the view adopted by S. F. Johnson and Ronald Broude in the 1960s and 70s respectively. Both argued that the play, and indeed the revenge genre as a whole, was infused with anti-Catholic sentiment and,

ultimately, endorsed the Protestant viewpoint.¹⁹ Johnson observes that:

To Protestant interpreters, the symbolic Bablyon was of course Rome, the whore of Babylon, being equated with the Antichrist, in turn equated with the Pope, one of whose agents in Kyd's day was the King of Spain.²⁰

The play does not encourage the condemnation of the Viceroy, however. Instead, *The Spanish Tragedy* invites its audience to evaluate the negative implications of the abolition of ritualised mourning.

The play begins to explore these implications by fostering an implied relationship between the Viceroy and Hieronimo. Both are grieving fathers, yet their responses to bereavement are quite different. Hieronimo immediately craves bloody vengeance; the Viceroy does not. Their contrasting responses are attributable to their disparate views of performative mourning. The Viceroy's impassioned and elaborate display of grief concludes with a justification of his actions, and a reminder of ritualised mourning's cathartic, ameliorative properties. In Act III, scene vii, Hieronimo's lamentation ends with a dismissal: 'But wherefore waste I mine unfruitful words,/When naught but blood will satisfy my woes' (*ST*, III. 7. 67-68). In this respect, Hieronimo is comparable with *Gorboduc's* Videna. Following the murder of her favoured son, she is similarly dismissive of the worth of her lamentations: 'But whereunto waste I this ruthless speche' (*Gorb*, IV. 1. 61-2). She also shares Hieronimo's overwhelming desire for vengeance. Like him, violent revenge is Videna's preferred response: 'The Gods on thee in hell shall wreke their wrath,/And here in earth this hand shall take revenge' (*Gorb*, IV. 1. 33-35). Crucially, the Viceroy does not share Videna and Hieronimo's desire for vengeance. All three characters are compelled to respond to bereavement via the performance of a particular action.

¹⁹ S. F. Johnson, 'The Spanish Tragedy, or Babylon Revisited', in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honour of Hardin Craig*, ed. by Richard Hosley (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 23-36; Ronald Broude, "'Vindicta filia Temporis': Three English Forerunners of the Elizabethan Revenge Play', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 72 (1973), 489-502.

²⁰ Johnson, 'The Spanish Tragedy or Babylon Revisited', pp. 24-25.

However, the Viceroy's belief in the cathartic properties of ritual enables him to assuage his grief without resorting to violence. Videna and Hieronimo's lack of belief in the purgative properties of such practices render them unable to channel their negative emotions lawfully. The play thus considers the possibility that, since mourning rituals have been discredited and abolished, violent action could replace them as the method by which grief is expressed and perceived debts to the deceased are paid.

This argument is also conveyed via Isabella's response to Horatio's death:

So that you say this herb will purge the eye,
And this the head?
Ah, but none of them will purge the heart.
No there's no medicine left for my disease,
Nor any physic to recure the dead. *She runs lunatic.*
Horatio! O where's Horatio! (*ST*, III. 8. 1-6)

These lines, with their stress on purgation and healing, reaffirm the play's emphasis on the importance of ritual and performative action to the grieving process. Isabella's assertion that there is 'no medicine left for [her] disease' is a metaphor for the abolition of ritualised mourning: she and the contemporary audience who would have been observing her have been deprived of a key method of managing and controlling grief. That this deprivation has a damaging psychological impact is apparent in the fact that, once she has acknowledged the dearth of remedies for her suffering, Isabella 'runs lunatic'. Additionally, in line 5, Isabella acknowledges and accepts Horatio's death; by the following line she is distracted. Resigning herself to the lack of remedies precipitates Isabella's descent into frenzy and confusion, reaffirming the importance of ritual in managing the grieving process. Furthermore, after acknowledging that ritualised mourning is denied to her, Isabella turns her thoughts to revenge, the only 'medicine' left available: 'But say, where shall I find the men, the murderers,/That slew Horatio? Whither shall I run,/To find them out that murdèred my son?' (*ST*, III. 8. 23-25). In the absence of comforting, performative rituals to channel her grief, Isabella resorts to the violent action of cutting down the arbour where Horatio died with an axe:

Down with these branches and these loathsome boughs
Of this unfortunate and fatal pine!
Down with them, Isabella, rend them up
And burn the roots from whence the rest is sprung! (*ST*, IV. 2. 6-9)

Although the consequences of Isabella's actions are not as far-reaching as her husband's, they still infer that the abolition of ritualised mourning could push survivors to violent extremes in their attempts to alleviate their suffering.

It is, of course, through the character of Hieronimo that Kyd most vividly explores the notion of vengeance as a substitute for ritualised mourning. He does so by highlighting the innate similarities between the two. For instance, both practices are performative and underpinned by a relationship in which the living are in the service of the dead. Both the mourner and the avenger are motivated by their affection for, and sense of obligation to, the deceased. Moreover, the desired outcome of vengeance and mourning is for the living to detach themselves from the dead. Both processes aim to appease the deceased and, in doing so, secure them in the afterlife in order to prevent reprisals. Vengeance and remembrance thus aid the living as much as the dead, by providing the means by which the survivor can purge themselves of negative emotion and release themselves from the debt of obligation they owe to the deceased.

The parallels between vengeance and ritualised remembrance are just as apparent in early Elizabethan tragedy. The difference, of course, is that these plays do not exploit this relationship in order to stage post-Reformation concerns. Nevertheless, they do suggest the suitability of the revenge motif for such a purpose, and this is seized upon by later writers like Kyd. In *Gorboduc*, for example, Videna thus responds to the death of her son, Ferrex:

Doest thou not know that *Ferrex* mother lives
That loved him more dearly than her selfe?
And doth she live, and is not venged on thee? (*Gorb*, IV. 1. 79-81)

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Bel-imperia and Horatio use commemorative ritual to demonstrate their loyalty to, and affection for, the late Don Andrea. Horatio's performance of Andrea's burial rites also enables him to fulfil his sense of obligation to his friend. This sense of obligation is shared by Videna. The line 'And doth she live and is not venged on thee?' is imbued with self-condemnation; she accuses herself of neglecting her duty to her son. Furthermore, like Horatio, Videna wishes to proclaim her affection for Ferrex publicly, to demonstrate that she 'loved him more dearly than her selfe'. The performance of commemorative ritual and the act of vengeance thus achieve the same ends.

Horestes also indicates how revenge could be used as a metaphor for ritualised mourning. The following example comes shortly after Vyce has appeared to Horestes and assured him that he has divine approval to avenge his murdered father, Agamemnon:

My thinks I fele all feare to fley, all sorrow, grieffe and payne.
 My thinks I fele corrage provokes my will for ward againe
 For to revenge my fathers death and infamy so great. (*Horestes*, ll. 213-215)

The promise of vengeance, like ameliorative mourning rites, purges Horestes of 'sorrow, grieffe and payne', in much the same way as exaggerated lamentation makes the Viceroy's 'grief seem less' (*ST*, I. 3. 31-32). The play thereby implies how revenge could substitute ritualised mourning as the method by which responses to bereavement are managed and controlled. This idea is adopted in *The Spanish Tragedy* and underpins the Viceroy's speech, as well as Hieronimo's response to Horatio's death: 'To know the author were some ease of grief/For in revenge my heart would find reliefe' (*ST*, II. 5. 40-41). In *Horestes*, though, the analogy between vengeance and ritualised mourning is only fleeting. As the following lines indicate, the protagonist's desire to avenge his father is not motivated by his need to grieve for or commemorate him:

To caull to minde the crabyd rage of mothers yll attempt
 Provokes me now all pyttie quight from me to be exempt;
 Yet lo, Dame Nature teles me that I must with willing mind

Forgive the faute and to pytie some what to be inclyned;
 But lo, be hould, thadultress dame on hourdome morder vill
 Hath leaped up, not contented her spousale bed to fyll
 With forrayne love, but sought also my fatal thred to share
 As, erst before, my father fyll in sonder she dyd pare.
 O paterne love, why douste thou so of pytey me request,
 Syth thou to me wast quight denyed, my mother being prest? (*Horestes*, ll. 171-180)

Despite the references to ‘my father’ and ‘paterne love’, Horestes does not use this speech to eulogise his father or declare his affection for him. Instead, by focusing on Clytemnestra’s wickedness, he establishes his hatred for his mother, rather than his grief for his father, as one of his chief motivations. The other motivation is illustrative of *Horestes*’ function as a topical allegory and becomes apparent when, shortly after this speech, Horestes speaks of his father in an impersonal tone: ‘shall I revenged be/Of good Kynge Agamemnones death?’ (*Horestes*, ll. 185-186). By referring to his father as a king, Horestes endows the act of vengeance with a political, rather than a personal, function. The emphasis shifts from avenging a father to overthrowing a usurper. This shift signals that the revenge framework will be used to interrogate topical political themes, rather than theological ones. Thus, in *Horestes*, the act of vengeance does not double as an act of commemoration.

In contrast, *The Spanish Tragedy* is focused ‘around the relationship between memory and Revenge’.²¹ This relationship is signalled in the following speech by Hieronimo:

Seest thou this handkercher besmeared with blood?
 It shall not from me till I take revenge.
 Seest thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?
 I’ll not entomb them till I have revenged.
 Then will I joy amidst my discontent;
 Till then my sorrow never shall be spent. (*ST*, II. 5. 50-56)

At this point, remembrance fuels vengeance. The ‘wounds that yet are bleeding fresh’ and the

²¹ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 174-175.

unburied corpse indicate Hieronimo's need for suspension and stasis: in order to find the motivation for revenge, the past must remain present. The idea that memory motivates vengeance in this play is, potentially, compromised by the presence of Revenge. The argument is invalidated if Revenge is viewed as a "real" character, sent from the underworld, determining the outcome of the action before it properly begins'.²² From this perspective, Hieronimo becomes a mere cipher. However, when Andrea berates his companion for sleeping whilst their plot goes awry, Revenge reassures him thus: 'Sufficeth thee that poor Hieronimo/ Cannot forget his son Horatio' (*ST*, III. 15. 21-22). These lines establish remembrance, rather than supernatural agency, as the driving force of the play's central revenge plot.

By the time Hieronimo stages the play-within-the-play, however, it is clear that remembrance is more than simply the motivation for vengeance. Indeed, the climax demonstrates that, for Hieronimo, commemoration is as much as desired outcome as revenge; the act of vengeance is also an act of remembrance. It is at this point, then, that Kyd's argument that vengeance could come to substitute commemorative ritual is conveyed most clearly. The unveiling of Horatio's body (*ST*, IV. 4. 88) shows that that avenging his son is not Hieronimo's sole purpose; he also wishes to commemorate him by forcing his son's death back into the public consciousness. This is also noted by John Kerrigan, who observes that the performance of *Soliman and Perseda* functions as a re-enactment of Horatio's death:

When Soliman agrees to Erasto's death, reluctantly, as Balthazar does to Horatio's, Hieronimo stabs Lorenzo, the arbour scene returns, the court is invited to grasp those memories which cluster around the handkercher, and, in the death of Lorenzo in Horatio's role, revenge is clinched in remembrance.²³

Furthermore, Hieronimo's revelatory speech is as much a funeral address as it is a public proclamation of his motives for revenge. He uses this speech to affirm his bond with Horatio:

²² Lukas Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd*, The Revels Plays Companion Library. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 105.

²³ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 181.

‘No, princes, know I am Hieronimo,/The hopeless father of a hapless son’ (*ST*, IV. 4. 83-84); ‘my son’ (*ST*, IV. 4. 100; 111); ‘my son, my dear Horatio’ (*ST*, IV. 4. 105); ‘they butchered up my boy’ (*ST*, IV. 4. 111). Hieronimo’s language shows how the play-with-the play provides him with the opportunity to proclaim his affection for his son and express his grief. *The Spanish Tragedy* thus adopts *Gorboduc*’s suggestion that vengeance could function as a form of commemoration. That the play’s bloody climax is an act of remembrance is further implied by the reappearance of the blood-soaked scarf that once belonged to Andrea:

And here behold this bloody handkerchief
Which at Horatio’s death I weeping dipped
Within the river of his bleeding wounds ... (*ST*, IV. 4. 122-124)

Earlier in the play, Horatio wears the handkerchief in memory of Andrea, establishing the prop as an emblem of remembrance.²⁴ Its reappearance at the climax further implies that the public act of vengeance is a memorial to Horatio. Hieronimo not only uses Horatio’s corpse and blood-soaked handkerchief to stimulate his desire for vengeance; he also uses them to return his son temporarily to the present.

That the play-within-the-play is an act of remembrance as well as vengeance is also underscored by Hieronimo’s declaration that, now the act has been performed, his ‘heart is satisfied’ (*ST*, IV. 4. 129). For Hieronimo, vengeance has replaced ritualised remembrance as the culmination of the grieving process, the means by which the living can achieve catharsis. The play’s climax thus suggests the possibility that survivors could replace abolished mourning rituals with violence. The idea that the play considers the negative implications of the Protestants’ reform of commemorative culture is given further credence by the following lines:

Marry, this follows for Hieronimo:
Here we break off our sundry languages,
And thus conclude I in our vulgar tongue.
Haply you think, but bootless are your thoughts,
That this is *fabulously counterfeit*,

²⁴ See Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 174-5 for further discussion on the significance of the handkerchief.

And that we do as all tragedians do [...] (*ST*, IV. 4. 73-78; my emphasis)

This part of Hieronimo's speech, like Hamlet's defence of the 'trappings and the suits of woe' (*Ham*, I. 2. 86) is an apologia for ritualised mourning. Here, the act of vengeance is equated with an act of remembrance; Hieronimo thus opposes the Protestant view that such rituals are empty, meaningless and 'counterfeit.' Crucially, Hieronimo's position, unlike Hamlet's, does not receive authorial endorsement, for the staging of *Soliman and Perseda* also examines the post-schismatic debate regarding appropriate responses to grief from a very different angle. Indeed, the metatheatrical device is also used to consider whether performative acts of mourning promote the idea that excess is a fitting response to bereavement. The play thereby considers the possibility that the abolition of ritualised remembrance, and the emphasis on restraint in mourning, is valid and wise.

From one perspective, then, the play-within-the play results from the abolition of ritualised mourning. From another, the violence stems from the fact that performative acts of remembrance engender disproportionate responses to death. On one hand, vengeance is a potential consequence of the *abolition* of performative mourning; on the other it is a potential consequence of the *validation* of performative mourning. In the immediate aftermath of Horatio's murder, for instance, there are indications that Hieronimo, far from believing unrestrained displays of emotion to be worthless, concurs with Isabella's view that 'outrage fits [their] cursèd wretchedness' (*ST*, II. 5. 45). This tendency towards excess is denoted by his inclination to 'drown [Horatio] with an ocean of [his] tears' (*ST*, II. 5. 23). Moreover, Hieronimo's response to his son's death is performative: he enlists Isabella's help to bear their son's body away from the arbour in ceremonial fashion (*ST*, II. 5. 65), he holds his sword to his breast in a ritualistic manner (*ST*, II. 5. 67), and delivers a Latin dirge for his son (*ST*, II. 5. 67-80). This dirge provides Hieronimo with the opportunity to express his grief for his son and reaffirm his intention to avenge the murder: '*At tamen abistam properato cedere letho, / Ne mortem vindicta tuam tum*

nulla sequatur’ (*ST*, II. 5. 79-80).²⁵ David Bevington describes the dirge as ‘pagan in spirit but akin in a way to a church service for the dead’.²⁶ Vengeance and remembrance are again conflated, though this time the emphasis is not on the former as a replacement for the latter, but as a form, or offshoot, of it. Consequently, the play raises the possibility that vengeance may spring from performative mourning, rather than suggesting that it may grow up in its absence. From this perspective, Hieronimo exacts revenge because he, like the majority of characters in the play, has been conditioned to respond to death performatively. Hieronimo’s staging of *Soliman and Perseda* can, therefore, be seen to stem from his innate inclination to mourn actively, publicly and excessively. The play reflects upon the negative implications of this by examining whether this natural inclination precludes the possibility of Hieronimo obtaining justice via legal channels. Kyd does present his protagonist with a clear alternative to vengeance in the potentially sympathetic form of Castile (*ST*, III. 14. 58-78). Hieronimo’s inclination towards a performative response to Horatio’s death means that he rejects the possibility of legal or divine justice, choosing instead to adopt the theatrical role of avenger:

No, no, Hieronimo, thou must enjoin
 Thine eyes to observation, and thy tongue
 To milder speeches than thy spirit affords,
 Thy heart to patience, and thy hands to rest,
 Thy cap to courtesy, and thy knee to bow,
 Until to revenge thou know when, where, and how. (*ST*, III. 13. 39-44)

Conditioned to respond to bereavement actively, Hieronimo finds satisfaction in the act of vengeance, which, as the above lines demonstrate, involves performance. The play’s bloody climax becomes inevitable because Hieronimo would not find consolation in any other response to death or expression of grief. Furthermore, the protagonist’s histrionics also preclude legal justice because they enable Lorenzo to discredit him: ‘Yourself, my lord, hath seen his passions,/That ill-beseemed the presence of a king’ (*ST*, III. 14. 79-80). Moreover, Kyd

²⁵ ‘But none the less I shall keep myself from a hasty death, in case no revenge should follow your death’ (editor’s translation).

²⁶ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. by David Bevington, Revels Student Editions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 57.

invites reflection upon Hieronimo's conduct by having him murder Castile as well as Balthazar and Lorenzo, thereby rendering his actions too extreme to be considered proportionate. It thus becomes significant that a play in which the majority of characters respond to death in an excessive and performative manner ends in such bloodshed. Indeed, the violent climax undermines Rist's view that play's depiction of excessive and performative displays of grief defies 'the demand of the Reformers for rigour in mourning'.²⁷ It also challenges Lukas Erne's assertion that the play was written in a spirit of defiance against the reformed religion and endorses a Catholic viewpoint:

It may be too bold to advance a case for Kyd having been a Catholic or having had Catholic sympathies on the basis of (a) the purgatorial 'middle path' in the depiction of his Virgilian underworld (and, possibly, the purgatorial ghost in his *Hamlet*, (b) his only thinly veiled portrait of Leicester, the champion of the Protestant cause, the villain Lorenzo, (c) the negative evidence of his absence from university (where he would have had to have had to swear on the articles of the Church of England), and (d) his writing a play (*Hamlet*) which may well have been understood as critically commenting upon Queen Mary's execution [...], but the possibility is certainly intriguing.²⁸

Wherever the sympathies of its author may have lain, *The Spanish Tragedy* does not adopt either a Protestant or a Catholic position. Instead, the play examines possible links between vengeance and reforms to commemorative culture from two perspectives. On the one hand, the play investigates the possibility that the abolition of ritualised mourning robs survivors of crucial means of containing and negating their grief, opening a void that can be filled by revenge. On the other, the play considers the dangers inherent in conditioning survivors to respond to bereavement excessively and performatively, thereby advocating restraint in mourning.

That the play debates appropriate responses to death from two disparate viewpoints without offering a definitive conclusion invites similarities to Dermot Cavanagh's reading of

²⁷ Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration*, p. 36.

²⁸ Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy*, p. 55.

Gorboduc. Cavanagh rejects the more commonly held view that the play is heavily didactic and strongly promotes a single course of action (i. e. that the Queen secure the succession by either producing an heir or naming one). Instead, he suggests that watching, or reading, *Gorboduc*, is a more complex and interactive process:

As we listen to Gorboduc's counsellors deliberate, we are invited to respond as they do: testing arguments for disputable points, qualifying distinctions, and examining the quality of utility or principle intrinsic to a particular course of action.²⁹

The Spanish Tragedy may have presented a similar challenge to its original audiences, as, like *Gorboduc*, it invites spectators to evaluate the merits or otherwise of two distinct arguments. The comparison between these two plays indicates how the Elizabethan dramatic landscape is beginning to change. Late Elizabethan drama is as topical as earlier examples of the genre, focusing on issues directly relevant to contemporary audiences. At some point during the reign, however, early Elizabethan tragedy's concern with current matters of state gives way to an emergent interest in post-schismatic issues as the central focus of this topicality.

²⁹ Dermot Cavanagh, *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* (New York: Macmillan, 2003), p. 47.

Chapter 3. *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*

3.1 'Roman rites': Reformation imagery in *Titus* and *Caesar*

Like *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar* demonstrate the prominence and significance of representations of commemorative ritual in late Elizabethan tragedy. In *Titus*, depictions of burial are used to stage pivotal moments and frame discussions of key themes. The play begins with the funeral of Titus's fallen sons, which immediately exposes the flaws in the image-conscious protagonist and the morally corrupt society he represents. *Julius Caesar*'s most pivotal moment is not the assassination or the battle at Philippi, but Caesar's funeral. It is in the pulpit, not on the battlefield, that Antony truly confronts, and triumphs over, Brutus and the co-conspirators. Considered together, then, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus*, and *Caesar* highlight late sixteenth-century tragedy's reliance on depictions of commemoration to create structure, frame dramatic action, provide stage spectacle, and signpost thematic concerns.

These plays also show the extent to which depictions of commemorative culture reflect, and were shaped by, the impact of the Reformation. Comparing *The Spanish Tragedy* with *Titus* and *Caesar* reveals that the schism shaped sixteenth-century representations of mortuary culture in different ways. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* use commemorative ritual to examine the impact of the Reformation on Elizabethan mortuary culture. The effects of the schism, particularly its psychological ramifications, are a major theme in both tragedies. This is not the case in *Titus* and *Caesar*, although the Reformation still influences the representation of commemoration in these texts, the plays themselves have no thematic interest in the impact of the schism on sixteenth-century society. Despite this, their respective mortuary cultures are imbued with references to Elizabethan commemorative practices. The representation of death and mourning in *Titus* and *Caesar* can be historicised, just as it can in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. Each play acknowledges the changes wrought by the schism and relies upon its original audiences' awareness of these changes. This shared knowledge of the Reformation is, in all four

instances, used to highlight the plays' central themes. In *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* this is the psychological impact of the collapse of intercessory culture. In *Julius Caesar*, it is political conflict and its aftermath; in *Titus Andronicus* it is moral decline and cultural division.

Late Elizabethan tragedy thus produces two different responses to the reform of mortuary culture. *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* produce psychological and theological responses; *Titus* and *Caesar* offer an indirect response. Each response sheds a different light on the Reformation's impact on Elizabethan society. The former suggests a contemporary anxiety regarding the psychological effects of the schism. The latter illustrates how pervasive the impact of the Reformation had become by the late sixteenth century. *Titus* and *Caesar* indicate an awareness of their audiences' mindfulness and shared knowledge of the schism's ramifications. Both dramas show how dramatists utilised this pervasive collective knowledge; namely, by using the Reformation's visual imagery and rhetoric to frame unrelated themes and concerns. These are not plays 'about' the religious schism; they are not concerned with examining its consequences or evaluating its impact on contemporary society. Instead, the familiar language and imagery of the Reformation becomes a vital component in the construction of the plays' dramatic landscapes. This development suggests that the schism's rhetoric and visual language was, by this point, so familiar that it became a kind of short-hand. Indeed, in these plays, the language and imagery of the Reformation is a semiotic system used to signpost and stage socio-political conflicts and concerns.

In *Titus* and *Caesar*, commemorative rituals are used to create boundaries between disparate cultural and political factions respectively. As both plays equate commemoration with demarcation, they invite anthropological, as well as historicist, readings. The roots of anthropological approaches to literary texts lie in the works of C. L. Barber, Northrop Frye,

Mikhail Bakhtin, and René Girard.¹ Anthropological readings focus on the communal and the cultural, examining the representation and thematic importance of social structures, social and familial bonds, and traditional customs and ritual practices such as marriage ceremonies, feasts and funeral rites. When applied to tragedy, anthropological approaches stress the importance, not of the isolated individual or ‘tragic hero’, but of the community or society to which the protagonists belong. Anthropological readings of tragedy thus examine the ways in which society shapes or impacts upon the individual, and vice-versa. They also consider how the representation of social structures and customs frame and highlight key themes. The claim that the central focus of tragedy is the society or community, as opposed to the individual, can be traced back to Aristotle. When describing the six constituents of tragedy – plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song – Aristotle maintains that ‘of these elements the most important is the plot, the ordering of the incidents; for tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life’.² Naomi Conn Liebler acknowledges her debt to Aristotle in her response to C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy: The ritual foundations of genre* (1995). Liebler defines ‘Festive’ tragedy as ‘the drama of communities in crisis and of the redress available to them’.³ She later expands, drawing from *On the Art of Poetry* as she does so:

The focus of tragedy is upon the action of the whole represented community: protagonist, antagonist, servants, soldiers, masters, leaders. These designations refer to the entire dance, movement and dialogue represented by the dramatic work. The wide-angle lens invites analysis of the structures of society, its constituencies as the subject of tragedy, not ‘this man’ or ‘this woman’ or even ‘man,’ but the human community, human beings in community.⁴

¹ C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), *A Natural Perspective* (New York: Columbia, 1965), *Fools of Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, MASS: MIT Press, 1968), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by M. Holquist, trans. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

² Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, trans. by T. S. Dorsch, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, by Aristotle, Horace and Longinus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 31-75 (pp. 39-40).

³ Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy: The ritual foundations of genre* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 35.

⁴ Liebler, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy*, p. 49.

Titus and *Caesar* invite anthropological readings from the outset by fitting this definition neatly. Despite being named for individuals, the plays' focus on social structures and societies is apparent from the opening movements, as is the fact that both tragedies depict 'communities in crisis'. Both plays use social customs and rituals to introduce their key concerns. *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, opens with the following stage direction: 'Flourish. Enter the Tribunes [including MARCUS ANDRONICUS] and Senators aloft. And then enter [below] SATURNINUS and his followers at one door, and BASSIANUS and his followers at the other, with drums and colours' (TA, I. 1). Immediately, there is a glimpse of what Liebler describes as the 'wide-angle lens' approach that 'invites analysis of the structures of society'. The tribunes, senators, the competing candidates for the position as emperor, and their various followers represent different social strata. That the tribunes and senators enter 'aloft' and the others below implies a particular hierarchy, inviting consideration of this society's social and political structures, as well as its modes of operation. Furthermore, Saturninus and Bassianus enter on opposite sides of the stage, indicating conflict and unrest and suggesting that this community is in a state of transition or turmoil. Additionally, the action is situated in the public, rather than the private, sphere, defining the play's focus on the communal rather than the individual. The opening scene establishes *Titus's* concern with the workings of this community by depicting a series of public events, social customs and ritual practices: an election, a funeral, a military homecoming, the presentation and handing over of prisoners of war, a sacrifice, and a marriage. The opening movements of *Julius Caesar* also indicate a focus on society as a whole. The first characters to appear on stage are a carpenter and a cobbler, along with two tribunes, Flavius and Murellus. As in *Titus*, the audience is immediately introduced to different social strata, and to the concept of social structures and hierarchies. Moreover, there is tension and dispute between the workmen and the tribunes, indicating civil unrest. Additionally, the scene takes place on the Feast of Lupercal (JC, I. 1. 68), signalling that, like *Titus*, this play will use social customs associated with religious belief and practice to stage action and frame thematic concerns.

It is at this point that anthropological and historicist approaches intersect to show how the Reformation informs the depiction of mortuary culture in *Titus* and *Caesar*. As I have already indicated, and as anthropological readings stress, both plays are concerned with social structures, conflicts and divisions. *Titus*, for instance, is a play about the struggle to establish political, social and cultural dominance. This is apparent in the opening scene. In addition to Bassianus and Saturninus' competition for political supremacy, Titus fights to assert his family's importance to the state and to emphasise the 'civilised' Romans' superiority over the barbarous Goths. Commemorative ritual is the tool used throughout the play to attempt to fix the Andronici's place in the social hierarchy, and to establish a clear cultural demarcation between Roman and barbarian. This cynical utilisation of commemorative practice stems from the post-Reformation secularisation of mortuary culture. Prior to the schism, the purpose of the funeral and the funeral monument was to shorten the deceased's time in Purgatory by encouraging intercessory prayer. The Protestants' repudiation of Purgatory transformed the function of commemorative practices, with the funeral ceremony and tomb becoming methods of '[proclaiming] not just the power, wealth, and status of the defunct, but their place inside a fixed and unassailable social order'.⁵ The depiction of the funeral of Titus's sons reflects this process of secularisation, but does not comment upon it or interrogate its implications. Instead, the staging of the funeral and the utilisation of the Andronici monument exposes the protagonist's flaw. Using his dead sons to promote and advance his family's social standing, and denying Mutius burial in the monument because he is perceived to have died ignobly, reveals Titus to be 'unkind and careless of his own' (*TA*, I. 1. 89). The roots of his, and his family's, tragedy lie in the fact that he is a Roman before he is a father, that he adheres to Roman values and ideals to such an extent that he distorts them. The play's opening representation of commemorative ritual, therefore, signposts the protagonist's flawed ideology and moral corruption.

The portrayal of commemorative practice also confirms Titus as a product of his society,

⁵ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 269.

by demonstrating the flawed ideology and moral corruption of the state. That Rome is a diseased and degenerate society has been recognised by several critics and interpreters of the text. Julie Taymor's film adaptation stresses the state's moral, cultural and political corruption by utilising the visual imagery of 1930s politics and the rise of fascism.⁶ Grace Starry West argues that it is the play's distorted use of classical allusions that indicates 'the moral and intellectual decline of Rome'.⁷ Francis Barker and Liebler, informed by the work of Mary Douglas,⁸ suggest that the key indicator of Rome's degeneracy is the blurred cultural boundaries between Roman and barbarian: 'where [...] is the line between civilisation and barbarism?'⁹ Drawing from this anthropological approach, I will argue that it is the Romans' use of commemorative ritual that highlights their moral decline. In a further acknowledgement of the post-schismatic secularisation of mortuary culture, the Romans use commemorative ritual as a form of cultural demarcation to emphasise, maintain and, eventually, restore their superiority to the Goths. Ironically, the end result is that, since both factions distort, invert and deny commemorative ritual in order to enact revenge, the distinction between them is eradicated. The representation of mortuary culture thus denotes the moral corruption and cultural disintegration of Titus's Rome. This chapter will also examine the ways in which the bleak, spiritually barren dramatic landscape of *Titus* reflects and is informed by the collapse of intercessory culture. This collapse increased the distance between man and God, and is mirrored in the sense of abandonment that pervades *Titus*, a play in which 'the gods are frequently invoked but never reply'.¹⁰ Once again, then, the play utilises the imagery of the Reformation to set the tone, and indicate its thematic concerns.

The much-debated issue of *Titus*'s authorship needs to be raised at this point. That this play's representation of death and commemoration does not address the post-schismatic issues

⁶ *Titus Andronicus*, dir. by Julie Taymor (Walt Disney, 1999).

⁷ Grace Starry West, 'Going by the Book: Classical Allusions in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*', *Studies in Philology*, 79.1 (1982), 62-77 (p.76).

⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

⁹ Francis Barker, 'A Wilderness of Tigers: *Titus Andronicus*, anthropology, and the occlusion of violence', in *The Culture of Violence: Essays on Tragedy and History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 143-206 (p. 193).

¹⁰ Jonathan Bate, Introduction to *Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare, ed. by Jonathan Bate, *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series* (London: Cengage, 2004), 1-121 (p. 22).

explored by *Hamlet* is highly suggestive. *Titus*'s disparate approach could be attributed to the influence of another playwright. This co-author is widely believed to have been George Peele, an argument that this thesis accepts.¹¹ Although they analyse different linguistic characteristics, Brian Vickers, Macdonald Jackson and Marina Tarlinskaja all attribute Act I, Act II, scene I, and Act IV, scene I to Peele.¹² Brian Boyd also attributes the first act to Peele.¹³ Peele's authorship of the opening scene has potential implications for my argument as it is this scene that establishes Reformation imagery as a semiotic system. However, it is unlikely that it is Peele's influence alone that prompts this particular response to the schism. Indeed, the rhetoric and symbolism of the Reformation perform a similar function in *Julius Caesar*, a play attributed solely to Shakespeare. Like *Titus*, this play is highly concerned with socio-political boundaries, divisions and conflicts, suggesting that this preoccupation is not Peele's alone. Furthermore, Shakespeare draws from the Reformation, using the language and imagery of religious division to stage the political conflict and to distinguish the separate factions.

From the outset, the conflict between Caesar and his supporters and the conspirators is delineated as much by their disparate attitudes towards ritual as it is by their contrasting political convictions. The tragedy's key players are first introduced during the Feast of Lupercal, a social custom and communal activity. Ritual action thus plays a significant role in establishing and enacting the conflict between the two sides. As the second scene unfolds, the characters' contrasting attitudes towards ritual establish a clear divide between Caesar and Mark Antony on the one hand, and Brutus on the other. Note the following exchange between the former:

Caesar: Forget not in your speed, Antonio,
To touch Calphurnia; for our elders say,
The barren touched in this holy chase

¹¹ For a full discussion of this issue, and a breakdown of the results from previous studies see Brian Vickers, 'Titus Andronicus with George Peele' in *Shakespeare Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 148-243.

¹² Macdonald Jackson, *Studies in Attribution: Middleton and Shakespeare* (Salzburg: Salzburg University Press, 1979), 147 – 153; Marina Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare's Verse: Iambic Pentameter and the Poet's Idiosyncrasies* (New York: P. Lang, 1987), 121-124.

¹³ Brian Boyd, 'Common Words in *Titus Andronicus*: The Presence of Peele', *Notes and Queries*, 42.3 (September 1995), 300-307.

Shake off their sterile curse.
Antony: I shall remember.
When Caesar says 'Do this,' it is performed. (*JC*, I. 2. 5-10)

These lines imply that Caesar and Antony's alliance is founded, not merely upon shared political convictions, but upon a common belief in the efficacy of ritual action and a desire to uphold traditional beliefs and customs. Although he is driven by the very personal longing for an heir, Caesar is as much associated with the communal here as he is with individualism. His adherence to the age-old wisdom of the elders, for instance, further associates him with folk beliefs and cultural traditions. Antony, too, is identified with the communal and the traditional by the fact that he is a participant in the 'holy chase.' In contrast, Brutus is an onlooker, an abstainer:

Cassius: Will you go see the order of the course?
Brutus: Not I.
Cassius: I pray you, do.
Brutus: I am not gamesome. I do lack some part
Of that quick spirit that is in Antony. (*JC*, I. 2. 25-29)

Brutus immediately displays disdain for the cultural tradition, ritual and ceremony with which Caesar and Antony are identified, which defines him as their political opponent. As this chapter will demonstrate, *Julius Caesar* is not a Reformation allegory. However, these three characters' attitudes towards ritual practice are drawn from the theological writings of this period. The template for Caesar and Antony's leanings towards the traditional and the ceremonial are pre-Reformation beliefs, such as those espoused in Ignatius de Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1522-1538). This instructional text, influential amongst sixteenth-century Catholics, issues various prescriptions such as:

We should openly approve of the frequent hearing of Mass, and also of hymns, psalms and lengthy prayers both inside and outside the church, as well as the set

times for the divine office as a whole, for prayer in general and for all the canonical hours.¹⁴

For Catholics, as for Caesar and Antony, faith is demonstrated in the performance of ritual and ceremonial actions. For Brutus, all such trappings are redundant; it is faith itself, the act of believing, that is important, not its form of expression: ‘And what other oath,/Than honesty to honesty engaged,/That this shall be, or we will fall for it?’ (*JC*, II. 1. 125-127). Here, the chief conspirator espouses an ideology akin to that of *sola fides* (justification by faith alone) preached by Martin Luther: ‘Hence it is clear that as the soul needs the word alone for life and justification, so it is justified by faith alone, and not by any works’.¹⁵ Brutus does not represent the Protestant Reformers any more than Caesar and Antony represent the Catholics. However, their contrasting beliefs in the function and efficacy of ritual and ceremonial practices are deliberately drawn from Reformation rhetoric in order to stage political conflict, and signpost thematic concerns. For instance, Caesar and Antony’s resemblance to Catholics ally them with the traditional and the conservative. Brutus’ resemblance to a Reformer identifies him as one who will [attempt] to [restructure] the ‘beliefs and values’ of Rome.¹⁶ In keeping with the Reformation motif, commemorative ritual is Brutus’ chief method of politically and culturally redefining Rome, as my analysis of Caesar’s funeral will demonstrate. *Caesar*, like *Titus*, uses the post-schismatic secularisation of mortuary culture to frame socio-political themes.

Titus Andronicus and *Julius Caesar* provide further evidence of the extent to which the Protestant Reformation shaped the representation of commemoration in late Elizabethan tragedy. However, these plays shed more light on dramatic responses to the schism by borrowing its language and imagery to signpost and stage socio-political conflict. This approach is in contrast with that adopted in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, in which the impact of the

¹⁴ Ignatius de Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, in *Culture and Belief in Europe 1450-1600: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. by David Englander, Diana Norman, Rosemary O’ Day and W. R. Owens (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 237-243 (p. 237).

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, in *Culture and Belief in Europe*, 180-181 (p.181).

¹⁶ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 100.

Reformation is a chief thematic concern. The changes the schism wrought to commemorative culture were of such prevalence by the late-sixteenth century that dramatists could utilise them as a system of signs and signifiers to address unrelated themes.

3.2 'Repose in Fame': Commemorative Ritual in *Titus Andronicus*

The main focus of *Titus Andronicus* is the deeply flawed society at the heart of the play, and the representation of commemorative culture reflects this socio-political emphasis. In *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, the funeral and funerary monument are signifiers, and the plays' consideration of death and memory in general, and the impact of the Reformation in particular, are the signified. In *Titus*, commemorative ritual is the signifier and the moral corruption of the protagonists, and of the communities to which they belong, is the signified. The play's depiction of commemoration is not a response to topical debates regarding post-Reformation issues of death and remembrance. For instance, the funeral of Titus's battle-slain sons does not provide a platform for a discussion of grief, mourning or the psychological ramifications of the Protestants' reforms. On the contrary, the main function of this ceremony is to establish Titus's unwavering devotion to the Roman concept of honour as his major weakness and the catalyst of the tragedy. Consequently, a firm emphasis is placed upon the relationship between the individual and the state. The representation of commemorative ritual is used to debate who or what is responsible for Rome's moral corruption in the first place; whether the state corrupts the individual or the individual corrupts the state. The answer is both. The state is inherently corrupt; its values and culture are violent, base and, ultimately, dehumanising. Grace Starry West suggests this when she notes the effects of Roman culture, represented by classical texts like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, on outsiders (the Goth prisoners and Aaron the Moor):

Although the barbarians turn out to be just that, barbarous and brutal, we realize that they have learned to be even worse than they already were through their Roman educations. For within the beautiful expressions of Roman poetry is the

content, which [...] is capable of being distorted into a handbook on crime, the Thracian horrors of Ovid's Philomela story as well as the apparently innocuous ode of Horace.¹⁷

West's observations suggest a kind of vicious cycle: Rome's cultural values offer instruction in villainy and barbarity, corrupting the individual who further corrupts the state in return. Titus's hard-headed attitude towards the practice of commemoration identifies him as a product of the state. Roman values, like Roman culture, are potential weapons that can be used to devastating effects. Titus's exaggeration of these values reveals their inherent destructiveness, and dooms himself and his family.

The state of Rome is inherently impure and the Andronici contribute to this, as well as being infected by it. The community is often the victim of Titus's actions: it is he who releases the tigers into Rome when he makes an enemy of Tamora. He is also responsible for setting the wrong head upon 'headless Rome' (*TA*, I. 1. 89) by adhering to the law of primogeniture when crowning an emperor, rather than assessing the candidates on merit. Titus himself acknowledges his culpability when he remarks: Ah, Rome! Well, well, I made thee miserable,/What time I threw the people's suffrages/On him that thus doth tyrannize o'er me' (*TA*, IV. 3. 18-20). The play's depiction of commemorative ritual demonstrates the extent to which Roman citizens themselves contribute to the corruption of Rome. Titus and Lucius use burial rites – or their lack – in a vain attempt to preserve the distinction between them and the barbarians. In doing so, the supposedly civilised Romans adopt similar methods to their enemies, eroding the cultural boundary between native and Other. Titus and Lucius' method of revenge also renders them guilty of debasing and desecrating Rome's ritual practices by transmuting acts of commemoration into acts of violence and humiliation. The end of the play confirms that the term 'Roman rites' (*TA*, I. 1. 46) refers to acts of dismemberment and sacrifice, as well as to the rituals that affirm Roman identity.

¹⁷ West, 'Going by the Book', p. 76.

The funeral of Titus's sons, with which the play opens, immediately connects the representation of commemoration with the representation of the community. The most immediately striking feature of the funeral is that it is a public event rather than a private one. It is not exclusively a family occasion either, but one that allies itself with the interests of Rome. This is apparent in the multi-purpose nature of the gathering, which is 'simultaneously a military triumph [...] and a funeral'.¹⁸ The cynical and unsettling hybridisation of the funeral is reflected in Titus's very first line: 'Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!' (*TA*, I. 1. 73). There is also a clearly-defined political purpose to the occasion, which culminates in the election of a new emperor. This is indicative of Titus's attempt to weave his family name into the fabric of the state. Moreover, the civic nature of the burial of Titus's fallen sons has nothing to do with bringing the needs of the dead to the attention of the living and everything to do with projecting a carefully constructed public image of the dead in order to reaffirm the status and values of their survivors. This is an example of the funeral as propaganda. The ceremony establishes the function of representations of commemoration in the play by highlighting the protagonist's flawed value system. The dramatists utilise the trappings of mortuary culture to demonstrate and examine the workings of the state. Commemorative ritual is also used to examine the relationship between the individual and the state, considering the extent to which each influences, and contaminates, the other. The rhetoric and imagery of mortuary culture is thus used as a semiotic system. The funeral ceremony and the funerary monument transcend their literal meanings: instead of being used to examine issues of death, they provide a framework for the discussion of socio-political and anthropological concerns.

In order to establish this, it is first necessary to examine the portrayal of Titus's sons. The deceased are never individually named and, consequently, never endowed with individual identities or characteristics, instead functioning as a collective. The emblematic nature of this group is further emphasised by the fact that the living do not reflect upon whom these men were

¹⁸ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 290.

in life but what they represent in death. They are thrice referred to as 'valiant sons': once by their uncle Marcus (1. i. 34) and twice by their father (1. i. 82; 84). The latter, in a public address, also refers to them as 'Rome's readiest champions' (*TA*, I. 1. 54), and draws attention to the manner of their deaths in order to highlight their bravery, loyalty and sacrifice to Rome. His sons were, he stresses: 'Knighted in field, slain manfully in arms/In right and service of their noble country' (*TA*, I. 1. 199-200). The Andronici has reinvented its deceased as a collective embodiment of the values it believes define their 'clan'; namely, honour, valour and the readiness to lay down their lives to ensure the wellbeing of the state. This funeral is not about mourning but about pageantry and propaganda; it is a demonstration of the family's status and an opportunity for Titus, by highlighting the role he and his sons have played in the recent military campaign, to cement the position of the Andronici within the state hierarchy. Titus uses this occasion to promote the idea that his family has played a crucial role in improving the fortunes and securing the position of Rome, and that they are an intrinsic part of what makes this city truly great.

There is further evidence of the dead being assigned a key role in the propaganda campaign in Marcus's speech of 1.1.18-48. Here, he announces that a 'special party have by common voice/In election for the Roman empery/Chosen Andronicus' (*TA*, I. 1. 21-23), which immediately provides this address with a clear agenda. His aim is to prove of his brother that 'A nobler man, a braver warrior,/Lives not this day within the city walls' (*TA*, I. 1. 25-6). For Marcus, his dead nephews are merely evidence in support of his claims: 'five times [Titus] hath returned/Bleeding to Rome, bearing his valiant sons/In coffins from the field' (*TA*, I. 1. 33-35). These deaths demonstrate the extent of Titus's sacrifice to Rome, in turn underlining the extent of his loyalty and attesting to his superior claim to the title of emperor. Titus, although he refuses this position, nevertheless adopts a similar tone, with a similar intent, in his opening address: 'Romans, of five-and-twenty valiant sons,/Half of the number that King Priam had,/Behold the poor remains, alive and dead' (*TA*, I. 1. 82 – 84). Titus's implied comparison of himself to Priam is, again, intended to suggest his own status and standing. He, like Marcus,

emphasises the extent of his sacrifice to the city in order to demonstrate his embodiment of the Roman ideal. To Titus, his dead sons are both image-defining and, even more cynically, image-enhancing. The play reveals this to be Titus's major flaw, as Neill has observed: 'Titus' obsessive preoccupation with family honour makes him the murderer of his own children'.¹⁹

Titus's ultimate aim is to distinguish his sons in order to distinguish himself and his family; to highlight the Andronici's contribution to the state. The funeral is, however, a mere 'occasion': a parade, an exercise in propaganda and an advertisement, it is, nevertheless, fleeting and finite in nature. It is the function of the family tomb to preserve this idealised image in stone; to secure the family's place in society even in death. In this respect, the Andronici tomb is typical of ancient Roman monuments. When Jon Davies states that 'dominant Roman citizens' spent 'vast sums of money [...] on ensuring that the *genius* of the family was both protected and proclaimed by a fittingly monumental death', one is reminded that the Andronici monument has recently been 'sumptuously re-edified' (*TA*, I. 1. 356).²⁰ This notion of the ancient Roman funerary monument functioning as an indicator of social status is taken one step further by Maureen Carroll, who reveals that tombs were also used to enhance status and cement one's place within the community:

The funerary monument was designed to preserve memory It also acted as a visual indicator of the status of that person's family. The form and size of the monument itself ... made it possible to display and negotiate status, belonging, and social relations in the community.²¹

However, the commemorative practices of Titus's Rome comprise various influences: pre- and post-Reformation practices, ancient Roman customs, and the roots of the revenge genre itself. The dramatists' depiction of a mortuary culture founded on the concept of social status is

¹⁹ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 291.

²⁰ Jon Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 141.

²¹ Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 30.

indebted to Elizabethan, as well as to ancient Roman, funeral customs. The play thus reflects the changes the Reformation wrought to English commemorative culture. The funeral of Titus's sons alludes to these changes by highlighting the reformed function of the funeral service and monument. Once methods of securing intercessory prayer, both became concerned with proclaiming and securing a family's position in the social hierarchy following the schism. As Michael Neill has observed, the post-Reformation funeral and funerary monument were 'designed to proclaim not just the power, wealth, and status of the defunct, but their place inside a fixed and unassailable social order'.²² This presents a rather different response to death to that demonstrated by the *Danse macabre* motif prevalent in the Middle Ages, which served as a reminder to all of death's universal, indiscriminate nature. The heraldic funeral and the permanent monument attempt to challenge death's sweeping approach and to disarm the threat this poses to the social order. They distinguish the elite in death and attempt to 'fix' the social order: the elite remain so in death instead of merely becoming part of a mixed, mongrel group known simply as 'The Dead'.

The post-Reformation funeral monument was also concerned with establishing and promoting the lineage of a family or an individual. Monuments would detail the deceased's ancestry in order to proclaim, and preserve, their social status. As Nigel Llewellyn argues, the function of the monumental body was thus to 'replace the social body and to stress and maintain social differentiation'.²³ *Titus Andronicus* endows some of its central characters with this rather Elizabethan equation of monument building with the declaration of rank. The monuments featured in or referred to in the play are designed to secure the social status of the deceased, to demonstrate their membership of a distinguished group. Titus, for example, reveals that his sons will be given 'burial amongst their ancestors' (*TA*, I. 1. 87) and Lucius demands that Saturninus be given 'burial in his fathers' grave' (*TA*, V. 3. 191). The plural –'fathers' – in this line strongly

²² Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 269.

²³ Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual c. 1500 – c. 1800* (London: Reaktion, 1991), pp. 119-120.

equates commemoration with fixing the deceased's social status by confirming their ancestry and lineage.

The play's allusion to the Protestants' secularisation of commemorative culture is not topical, however; the dramatists' do not evoke the religious schism in order to evaluate its impact. The mortuary culture of Titus's Rome is not a direct representation of that of post-Reformation England; rather, it is composed of multiple influences, which its creators have borrowed, magpie-like, from various belief systems, literary models, and mythology. Moreover, pre- and post-Reformation approaches to mourning and commemoration are not evaluated in relation to one another as they are in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Instead, the impact of the schism is not a key thematic concern; rather, it is just one of a number of different points of reference that contribute to the patchwork nature of mortuary culture in the play. Consequently, the play's discussion of remembrance does not equate to a sustained, in-depth examination of the consequences of the schism. On the contrary, the dramatists' representation of death and commemoration is multi-faceted, rather than one-dimensional. The secular, status-oriented approach to remembrance is dominant. However, four quotations contrast with the play's largely profane tone. All four of these quotations touch upon the need to appease spirits and are striking considering that, elsewhere in the play, the needs of the dead are secondary to those of the living. Indeed, the funeral of Titus's sons implies that the dead are merely used to honour and distinguish their survivors. Just before the interment, however, Titus asks of himself: 'Why suffer'st thou thy sons unburied yet/To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?' (*TA*, I. 1. 190-191). This is the first indication that these burial rites have any significance to the dead themselves. These lines also mark the first reference to the dead sons as simply that – dead sons – as opposed to an emblematic, collective body that feathers the cap of its family. This is the first time that they, too, appear to have needs that their survivors feel obliged to fulfil. This reference is once again inspired by Virgil's depiction of the underworld in Book VI of *The Aeneid* in which the Sibyl informs Aeneas that the souls of the unburied '[flutter] round these shores until they

are at last allowed to return to the pools they have so longed for' (*Aeneid*, VI. 330-331).

The other three quotations also have their roots in the beliefs of ancient times. Lucius proposes the sacrifice of Alarbus 'so the shadows be not unappeased,/Nor we disturbed with prodigies on earth' (*TA*, I. 1. 103-4) and Titus sanctions the rite for the same reason: 'T`appease their groaning shadows that are gone' (*TA*, I. 1. 129). The final example comes later in the play, following the deaths of Quintus and Martius:

Then which way shall I find Revenge's cave?
For these two heads do seem to speak to me
And threat me I shall never come to bliss
Till all these mischiefs be returned again
Even in their throats that hath committed them. (*TA*, III. 1. 271-275)

These examples show that Titus and Lucius fear reprisals from the unappeased spirits of their dead. This was a genuine concern to the Ancient Romans, who were anxious to avoid the wrath of the *manes* (shades). In order for the *manes* to be "happy" and unthreatening, funerals had to be properly constituted and the post-interment rituals observed'.²⁴ Ritual practices, such as the Lemuria rites, were 'aimed at propitiating [...] apparently dangerous, hungry ghosts (*lemuria*) prowling around the houses'.²⁵ The primary concern of these rites was, more often than not, 'the welfare of the living', and this emphasis is clear in Lucius' line 'Nor *we* disturbed with prodigies on earth' (my emphasis).²⁶

These quotations do not merely evoke the beliefs of Ancient Rome, however. They are also highly suggestive of the central tenets of pre-Reformation beliefs. Like the bereaved of the late medieval period, Lucius and Titus believe themselves to be responsible for attending to the needs of the dead, for 'appeasing' them. That they are motivated by the fear of reprisals is reminiscent of this paradox at the centre of late medieval commemorative culture. The

²⁴ Davies, *Burial and Rebirth*, p. 147.

²⁵ Davies, *Burial and Rebirth*, p. 146.

²⁶ Davies, *Burial and Rebirth*, p. 146.

intercessory practice that grew out of the belief in Purgatory assigned particular roles to the living and the dead, which, in turn, defined their relationships to one another. As Eamon Duffy explains:

Some theologians believed that the souls of the dead could pray for others, but all agreed that they were powerless to help themselves, and so were at the mercy of their kindred, who, as inheritors of their property, could use it in good works to secure their speedy release or could divert it to other uses, and so leave them in torment.²⁷

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the dependence of the dead upon the living came to define them as a group fearful of being forgotten. This ‘neglect anxiety’ was, in turn, responsible for the frequent portrayal of the deceased as restless and vengeful. The play thus harks back to late medieval Catholicism by implying that Titus and Lucius believe their dead to be anxious of neglect and, therefore, potentially dangerous. Both use the verb ‘appease’, whilst Titus also imagines that the spirits of Quintus and Martius ‘threat[en]’ him (*TA*, III. 1. 273).

However, whilst the post-Reformation allusions in the play are double-layered due to their similarity to ancient Roman customs, these pre-Reformation echoes are part of a triple-layered effect: not only do these references evoke ancient Rome and late medieval England but they also help form the roots of the genre of revenge tragedy. John Kerrigan demonstrates the extent to which the perceived wrath of the ‘(Un)Dead’ drives these tragedies: ‘the envy and hostility of the dead world towards the living finds scope in revenge drama, where blood calling for blood is more than a metaphor of retribution’.²⁸ Kerrigan illustrates how this image of the dead grew from the genre’s cultural roots by explaining that it was common practice, during the age of Aeschylus and Sophocles, for citizens to attempt to incite the spirits of their dead to act on their behalf by burying alongside them tablets (*katadesmoi*) inscribed with grudges,

²⁷ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England: 1400-1580* (New Haven; London: York University Press, 1997), p. 349.

²⁸ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 36.

curses and the names of those who had wronged them. Victims of violent deaths were thought more likely to ‘act punitively for others because hostile towards a world which harboured those who had killed them’.²⁹ Conversely, Athenians also attempted to appease ‘the departed by making animal sacrifice, offering honeycake and, most often, pouring draughts of wine into the grave’.³⁰ Philippe Ariès also demonstrates that late medieval commemorative culture shares several traits, including its central paradox, with other, earlier cultures when he observes that ‘one of the aims of the ancient funeral cults was to prevent the deceased from *returning* to disturb the living’.³¹

Additionally, Kerrigan demonstrates that the act of transference central to late medieval commemorative culture, whereby the living become responsible for needs and contentment of the dead, is an equally intrinsic part of the revenge drama. Indeed, he argues that this act of transference or displaced agency contributes a great deal towards the dramatic potential of this genre, creating the opportunity, not only for stage spectacle, but for the consideration of a wide-range of themes: ‘in the transference from the dead to those who survive, questions of duty, justice, and loyalty are amplified, while a vibrant and eminently theatrical territory of ghosts, dream-visions and graveyards opens up’.³²

Peele and Shakespeare’s portrayal of death and remembrance is, therefore, a complex tapestry woven from multiple threads of influence: the actual and literary past of the ancient world; the foundations of genre and the dramatic splashes of colour they bring; and aspects of pre- and post-Reformation belief. Furthermore, these schismatic tropes are used to discuss themes of a secular and universal, rather than theological and topical, nature. The playwrights’ allusion to the secularisation of commemorative culture, for instance, does not precipitate an evaluation of the implications of the Protestants’ reforms. The secularisation of commemorative

²⁹ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 35.

³⁰ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 35.

³¹ Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. by Patricia M. Ranum (London: New York: Marion Boyars, 1976), p. 14.

³² Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 7.

culture in *Titus* signifies the immorality of Rome and its citizens. The post-Reformation belief that the chief purpose of the funerary monument was not to commemorate the dead but to honour their survivors denotes Titus's destructive obsession with honour and self-promotion. Titus himself encapsulates this when he refers to the family vault as a 'sweet cell of virtue and nobility' (*TA*, I. 1. 96). The tomb is a monument, not to the dead, but to the attributes for which Titus wishes his family to be known: not just 'virtue' and 'nobility,' but military heroism and faithful service to the state. This is an example of the social body as it is preserved by the monumental body: the tomb will attest to the family's embodiment of these values, as well as to its status and achievements, when it can no longer do so. The function of the Andronici vault is, as Francis Barker suggests, made explicit when Titus denies Mutius burial there:³³

He rests not in this tomb.
This monument five hundred years hath stood,
Which I have sumptuously re-edified.
Here none but soldiers and Rome's servitors
Repose in fame; none basely slain in brawls.
Bury him where you can, he comes not here. (*TA*, I. 1. 354-359)

This makes clear the fact that this is not a straightforward family memorial. Being a member of this family is not enough: there are far stricter entry requirements. This speech confirms the emblematic nature of Titus's fallen sons: in death, they have become akin to representatives or ambassadors. They are being given this elaborate, public funeral and have been granted burial in the family tomb because they are 'soldiers and Rome's servitors', because they embody their father's ideals, fulfil the relevant criteria. Titus has staged this funeral because he deems his sons worthy representatives, both of his family and of the set of values to which he attaches greater importance. Furthermore, his dismissive 'Bury him where you can' underlines the secular nature of these rites: they appear to be of more importance to the living than to the dead, to have little bearing on the contentment or fate of the deceased in the afterlife. Shakespeare and Peele thus demonstrate Titus's fatal flaw by drawing from and distorting post-Reformation commemorative

³³ Barker, 'A Wilderness of Tigers', p. 145.

practices.

The secularisation of commemorative culture also demonstrates the moral decline of the state. In addition to functioning as tools of propaganda, funeral rites serve to distinguish the boundaries that exist between 'Roman' and 'Other'. Mutius becomes Other by dying ignobly and failing to fulfil his father's definition of Roman. Barker observes that the 'text is [...] bracketed by elaborate funeral ritual on the one hand, and its marked lack for those who are not of Rome on the other.'³⁴ That burial rites function as a cultural marker is most apparent in the play's closing scene. Despite the fact that Saturninus allies himself with the Goths and becomes an enemy to the Andronici, Lucius still insists that he is given an appropriate burial within his ancestral tomb (*TA*, V. 3. 191). The newly-crowned emperor also declares that '[His] father and Lavinia shall forthwith/Be closed in [his] household's monument' (*TA*, V. 3. 190-193). These rites contrast with the 'non-funerals' prescribed for Aaron and Tamora. The former is 'set breast-deep in earth and [famished]' (*TA*, V. 3. 178) in what Neill describes as a 'vicious mock interment'.³⁵ When pronouncing Tamora's punishment, Lucius deliberately stresses its departure from the legitimate rites used to recognise and dignify distinguished Romans:

No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weed,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial,
But throw her forth to beasts and birds to prey (*TA*, V. 3. 195-197)

This is as much an example of the burial ritual as a propaganda tool as the funeral of Titus's sons. In I.1, the ceremony highlighted status and achievement; here, its lack signifies otherness and villainy. Tellingly, this villainy is relative: Titus and Saturninus have committed or been party to acts as heinous as those carried out by Aaron and Tamora. The ways in which these characters are variously commemorated, or not as the case may be, depends entirely upon those responsible for the construction and representation of the social body. Part of Aaron and Tamora's punishment is that this slides beyond their control and into that of their enemies; they

³⁴ Barker, 'A Wilderness of Tigers', pp. 147-148.

³⁵ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 296.

are both also denied lasting remembrance in the form of the monumental body. The Andronici are united in death: Titus and Lavinia are buried amongst their ancestors and the long, distinguished line is unbroken. Significantly, the natural bodies of Tamora and her sons are beyond burial: Alarbus is dismembered before being sacrificed, Demetrius and Chiron are mutilated before being consumed by their own mother and the body of Tamora herself is discarded in order to be devoured by bird and beast. Indeed, the Romans place the emphasis upon the fate of the natural body of the Other. The dismemberment, destruction or humiliation of the natural bodies of Aaron, Tamora, Demetrius, Chiron and Alarbus is the means by which they are undermined and punished. Romans are commemorated and honoured; their monumental bodies secure in death the social positions they held in life and enable them to proclaim their lineage. The 'Other' is denied commemoration and is, instead, punished with annihilation, eradication and exclusion. The play takes the secularisation of commemoration to extremes once again in order to illustrate the extent of Rome's decline: the war between Romans and Goths extends beyond the battle field and rituals of remembrance become the weapon of choice.

The notion of commemorative ritual being wielded like a weapon in the play is also explored by Michael Neill. He has identified several examples of distorted funeral practice, 'maimed rites' as he terms them, within the play and observes that 'the grisly force of revenge is carried through a series of increasingly grotesque mock funerals'.³⁶ The fate of Aaron is one such example, Aaron's murder of the nurse is another:

[...] you see I have given her physic,
And you must needs bestow her funeral;
The fields are near and you are gallant grooms. (*TA*, IV. 2. 164-6)

Aaron's darkly comic distortion of funeral practice robs the nurse of her dignity in death and communicates his inhumanity. Titus's method of dispatching Demetrius and Chiron is also

³⁶ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 294.

underpinned by a perversion of burial rites:

with your blood and it I'll make a paste,
And of the paste a coffin I will rear,
And make two pasties of your shameful heads,
And bid that strumpet, your unhallowed dam,
Like to the earth swallow her own increase. (*TA*, V. 2. 187-191)

The 'coffin' in line 188 refers to a pie-crust but the pun is obvious; there is also a more subtle grave metaphor in line 191. Furthermore, Neill sees in the stage directions at the beginning of Act V, Scene 3 – 'Enter Titus like a cook, placing the dishes, and Lavinia with a veil over her face' – the potential for this episode to be staged as a grotesque mock-funeral procession. To these examples of 'maimed rites' offered by Neill, I would also add Demetrius throwing the body of Bassianus into the pit at II. 2. 186. This 'swallowing womb' (*TA*, II. 2. 239) serves as a mock-grave and this is just one more example of the way in which the deliberate distortion of funeral practice and burial rites is both an instrument and a key method of staging revenge in this play. As these examples demonstrate, both Romans and Goths distort commemorative rituals to enact revenge: this, in turn, demonstrates the blurring boundaries between these two factions. The Romans consider themselves to epitomise civilisation and the Goths barbarity, but the fact that both are guilty of debasing, even desecrating, these ritual practices suggests that this is no longer the case. The play's representation of commemorative ritual thus signposts Rome's moral and cultural disintegration.

The closing scene in particular demonstrates the thematic importance of commemorative ritual: its distortion underlines Rome's moral and cultural decline. On a wider scale, these final movements highlight the emergence of a quite different approach to post-schismatic issues to that adopted in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. The latter plays' discussions of death, commemoration and the supernatural signal their concern with, and frame their examination of, the impact of the Reformation. Both *Hamlet* and *Titus* support Liebler's assertion that, in tragedy 'ritual is always present in a perverted, inverted, or aborted form, or is suggested to the

audience's mind by a reminder of its absence'.³⁷ However, both plays distort commemorative rituals to different ends. As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, *Hamlet* engages with post-schismatic issues explicitly throughout. Consequently, Polonius's 'hugger-mugger' interment (*Ham*, IV. 5. 84 and Ophelia's 'maimed rites' (*Ham*, V. 1. 208) may be seen to reflect the Protestants' reduction of commemorative practices and evaluate the consequences. In contrast, Lucius' perversion and denial of traditional burial rites in his punishment of Aaron and Tamora has no such historical or theological significance. The scene does not consider the psychological implications of the Protestants' reforms, but the moral and cultural implications of Lucius' actions. The play thus draws upon a topical concern with the reform of mortuary culture, utilising its audiences' awareness of this, in order to examine unrelated issues. When it comes to *Titus*'s representation of commemoration, topicality is the means rather than the end.

3.3 'Bootless Prayer': How *Titus Andronicus* reflects the post-Reformation landscape

The universe inhabited by the characters of *Titus Andronicus* is a profane one. The gods are remote and disinterested, the ghosts are conspicuous by their absence, and there is only a fleeting reference to omens and portents. The backdrop of the play is supernaturally barren, particularly in comparison with *Julius Caesar* and *Richard III*, both of which teem with ghosts, prophecies, prophetic dreams, omens and portents. There is just one such reference in *Titus*, uttered by the protagonist himself shortly before the hunt that will see Bassianus murdered, Quintus and Martius ensnared and framed, and Lavinia raped and mutilated: 'I have been troubled in my sleep this night,/But dawning day new comfort hath inspired' (*TA*, II. 1. 9-10). The fact that these lines presage such catastrophic events immediately suggests that Titus has experienced a premonition of some kind. The lines are also tellingly vague and, as such, they are ripe with possibility: Titus has been 'troubled in [his] sleep' but it is not revealed how – by whom or by

³⁷ Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy*, p. 27.

what. It is the fact that such things are implied but not made explicit that is important in this play: Titus's revelation is dealt with in a throwaway line followed by an instant change of mood – 'dawning day new comfort hath inspired'. There is no accompanying on-stage spectacle: no visions, lightning flashes or other such supernatural disturbances. This is a play in which such things do not happen.

Like their representation of commemorative culture, the dramatists' construction of *Titus's* universe is indebted to various sources of inspiration. Chief amongst these is Ovid's tale of Tereus, Procne and Philomela, which provides a template of a world in which humans are abandoned by the gods. The lack of supernatural tropes, and supernatural agency, is also attributable to the dramatists' desire for realism. This idea will be explored by considering how Aaron functions as a flesh-and-blood substitute of the medieval Vice, highlighting the play's modernisation of existing theatrical tropes. Most significantly, the play's dramatic landscape further demonstrates how *Titus's* approach to the Reformation differs to that of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. The remoteness of the gods, and the characters' resultant sense of abandonment, reflects the collapse of intercessory culture. However, the impact of this collapse, like the impact of the secularisation of commemorative culture, is not a topic of discussion or area of concern. Instead, allusions to the schism are just one of the tools used to evoke a sense of 'spiritual desolation', which, in turn, denotes the spiritual death of Rome and her inhabitants.³⁸ The play thereby demonstrates that, by the late Elizabethan period, the prevalence of the Reformation's impact was such that it became a repository of symbols and motifs.

Throughout the play, the characters' frequently refer and appeal to the gods in a manner that highlights the latter's remoteness and apparent indifference: 'O heavens, can you hear a good man groan/And not relent or not compassion him?' (*TA*, IV. 1. 123-124). In his analysis of IV. iii, Jonathan Bate notes that:

³⁸ Jack E. Reese, 'The Formalization of Horror in *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21.1 (1970), 77- 84 (p. 81).

When the post comes with the answer to the letters which Titus shoots into the heavens, it is in the form not of some message from the gods, the sort we get in *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, but of a Clown with a basket and two pigeons.³⁹

This sense of abandonment is heightened by the fact that the characters can be frequently seen kneeling in supplication or, as the Andronici do at III. 1. 279, gathering in circles to make vows. These scenes suggest that the characters resort to ritual in an attempt to create order and meaning. The overall impression is of a group of people cast adrift in a hostile world that is beyond their understanding. In creating this impression, the dramatists underline the parallels between *Titus* and *The Metamorphoses*, in which characters also appear to have been forsaken by the gods. The gods do not intervene at any point during Philomela's rape and her references to divine justice prior to being robbed of her speech highlight, as such references do in *Titus*, the deities' disinterest: 'Yet, if the gods/Are watching, if heaven's power means anything,/Unless my ruin's shared by all the world,/You'll pay my score one day'.⁴⁰ These lines are followed by: 'This bright sky/Shall hear, and any god that dwells on high' (*Metamorphoses*, IV. 550-551). In A. D. Melville's translation, quoted here, Philomela's repeated use of the word 'if' in harness with the phrase 'any god' implies uncertainty, as if she feels abandoned by the gods to such an extent that she is beginning to doubt their existence. Furthermore, it is Procne, rather than any supernatural being, who ultimately avenges Philomela.

Shakespeare and Peele utilise the lack of supernatural assistance or divine intervention in *The Metamorphoses* when creating the dramatic landscape of *Titus*. However, the material they have not chosen to adapt is of equal importance when it comes to the evocation of this sense of abandonment and desolation. In the original source, for instance, there is scope for what Robert Y. Turner describes as a causal induction: the framing device used, for example, in *Thyestes*,

³⁹ Bate, Introduction to *Titus Andronicus*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), IV. ll. 543-546. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses in the text.

Gismond of Salerne and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, to demonstrate that the cause of the ensuing tragedy is external and supernatural in origin.⁴¹ Ovid suggests this possibility to the Elizabethan dramatist by revealing Tereus and Procne's marriage to be ill-fated from the beginning and governed by the Furies:

When they were married, Juno was not there
To bless the rite, nor Hymen not the Graces.
The Furies held the torches, torches seized
From mourners' hands; the Furies made their bed.
An unclean screech-owl like a nightmare sat
Above their chamber on the palace roof.
That bird haunted the couple's union,
That bird haunted their parenthood. (*Metamorphoses*. IV. ll. 428 – 434)

These lines clearly demonstrate that events are set in motion by supernatural forces. There is no such suggestion of supernatural agency in *Titus*, largely because the play is far from being a straightforward adaptation of its source. Instead, it is highly conscious of its appropriation of classical material and self-referential to the extent that it becomes metatheatrical. Not only does a copy of the text actually appear on stage (in IV. i) but Aaron, whose similarities to the Vice character I will go on to examine, effectively directs the other characters in an adaptation of the story, casting Lavinia in the role of Philomela, Demetrius and Chiron as Tereus and Titus as the wronged father Pandion. Titus wrests this directorial control back from Aaron in order to enact the finale, recasting himself as Procne, Demetrius and Chiron as Itys and Tamora as Tereus. The characters thus appear capable of 'directing' their own fates; when this does not appear to be the case, it is because certain characters are being manipulated by others, not because they are being buffeted by cosmic forces. Moreover, as Grace Starry West and Heather James observe, this use of the Ovidian material serves to highlight the depravity at the heart of Roman society by demonstrating that one of the jewels in their cultural crown inspires the characters in their acts of 'rape, mutilation, and cannibalism'.⁴²

⁴¹ Robert Y. Turner, 'The Causal Induction in Some Elizabethan Plays', *Studies in Philology*, 60.2 (1963), 183- 190.

⁴² Heather James, 'Blazoning injustice: mutilating *Titus Andronicus*, Virgil, and Rome', in *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, politics, and the translation of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 42- 84 (p.42).

The dramatists don't just dispense with the causal induction; they also quite deliberately craft the opening scene to contrast with plays that do employ this device, thus immediately signalling that the emphasis will be on the socio-political rather than the metaphysical. The opening stage directions state that the tribunes and senators enter 'aloft' (*TA*, I. 1), so 'where Christian iconography had God and Kyd had Revenge, [this play] begins with human, secular authorities in the commanding position aloft'.⁴³ Additionally, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Revenge is a supernatural force and, it is implied, an active agent in human affairs, whereas, in *Titus*, it is merely the disguise adopted by Tamora in Act V, scene ii, a scene that develops into a battle of wits between herself and Titus. In this play, revenge is far from being a supernatural force: it is part of the degenerate value system responsible for setting the tragedy in motion. The dramatists' portrayal of revenge also emphasises the increasingly blurred boundary between Roman and barbarian. Romans and Goths alike are driven to vengeance by their adherence to a code of conduct which perceives revenge as an act of filial obligation. This is apparent in Lucius' reaction to his father's death at the hands of Saturninus: 'Can the son's eye behold his father bleed?/There's meed for meed, death for a deadly deed' (*TA*, V. 3. 64-65). A similar sentiment underpins Tamora's exchange with her sons shortly before the death of Bassianus and rape of Lavinia:

Tamora: Revenge it as you love your mother's life,
Or be ye not henceforth called my children.

Demetrius: This is a witness that I am thy son. (*TA*, II. 2. 114-116)

The image of the afterlife projected by Don Andrea in the first scene of *The Spanish Tragedy* alludes to the inner workings of a universe that restores balance and rights wrongs. The absence of supernatural tropes once again places the emphasis firmly upon socio-political concerns; namely, the meanings and values human beings create for themselves in the absence of guidance and intervention.

⁴³ Bate, Introduction to *Titus Andronicus*, p. 4.

The absence of supernatural tropes is also indicative of the play's attempt to update theatrical conventions and devices in order to achieve a greater degree of realism. *Titus* can be compared to *Gorboduc* in its substitution of supernatural tropes and models with real, flesh and blood ones. The latter substitutes Videna for a Fury and Hermon and Tyndar for Vices; *Titus* substitutes external, supernatural forces for senators, tribunes and humans in disguise. Aaron has been identified, by Howard Baker amongst others, as 'only too apparently a Vice from the moral plays, a fellow with Ambidexter in *Cambyses*'.⁴⁴ As I have previously discussed, Aaron functions as the director-dramatist of this tragedy. He is the very mirror of the playwrights themselves: like them, he adapts Ovid's story in order to avenge the Andronici and forces his enemies to perform the roles he has assigned to them:

Hark, Tamora, the empress of my soul,
Which never hopes more heaven than rests in thee,
This is the day of doom for Bassianus,
His Philomel must lose her tongue today,
Thy sons make pillage of her chastity
And wash their hands in Bassianus' blood. (*TA*, II. 2. 40-45)

It is, however, Aaron's relationship with Demetrius and Chiron that most clearly demonstrates how he operates in the manner of a Vice:

I was their tutor to instruct them.
That coddling spirit had they from their mother,
As sure a card as ever won the set.
That bloody mind I think they learned of me,
As true a dog as ever fought at head. (*TA*, V. 1. 98-102)

Here, Aaron identifies his own influence upon the brothers in harmony with genetic determinism as responsible for their actions. Thus Aaron functions, not as Seneca's Fury, capable of concocting evil and creating chaos out of nothing, but as a Vice: he finds himself

⁴⁴ Howard Baker, *Induction to Tragedy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1939), p. 130.

attracted to existing weakness and depravity and exploits it. This is clearly discernible when Aaron overhears the brothers quarrelling over Lavinia and uses his position as hidden observer to gather the information he requires to formulate his plans. To begin with, the brothers speak of their love for Lavinia: Chiron claims to love her 'more than all the world' (*TA*, II. 1. 72), whilst Demetrius states that she is 'Lavinia therefore must be loved' (*TA*, II. 1. 85). The tone quickly becomes bawdy, making it plain that the brothers are motivated by lust rather than by love: 'What, hast thou full often struck a doe/And borne her clearly by the keeper's nose?' (*TA*, II. 1. 94-95). There is also a strong undercurrent of sexual aggression to which Aaron immediately responds: 'Why, then, it seems some certain snatch or so/Would serve your turns' (*TA*, II. 1. 96-97). Aaron does not create malevolence but harnesses and utilises it.

However, as Bernard Spivack observes, Aaron is far from being a straightforward, one-dimensional substitution for the Vice. He is, largely due to his 'affection for his child', a 'hybrid'.⁴⁵ The flashes of humanity Aaron displays reflect the eradication of the distinction between Roman and barbarian, and highlight the gulf between the Romans' true nature and their self-image. For example, David Sundelson and Eldred Jones both judge Aaron to be a better parent than Titus.⁴⁶ The former becomes the very model of paternal devotion (*TA*, IV. 2. 109-113); the latter murders his own son for defying him and implicitly undermining Titus's image of himself as a great man of the city.

The play's spiritually barren landscape is greatly indebted to Ovid; it is also a by-product of the dramatists' attempts to cultivate a stark sense of realism. However, the environment of the play also reflects the impact of the Reformation, specifically the collapse of late medieval intercessory culture, which increased the distance between an individual and their God and burdened the faithful with a sense of helplessness. This helplessness was a result of the

⁴⁵ Bernard Spivack, 'The Hybrid Image in Shakespeare', in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, ed. by Philip C. Kolin (New York: London: Garland, 1995), 163-170 (pp. 163-164).

⁴⁶ David Sundelson, 'Paradise Regained', in *Shakespeare's Restoration of the Fathers* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 12-30; Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

Protestant doctrine of *sola fides*, which rejected ‘the Roman Catholic doctrine of good works that taught that the faithful could contribute in some degree to their own salvation by performing good works’.⁴⁷ The reformers also stamped out other aids to salvation, such as indulgences and pardons, intercessory prayers, pilgrimages and the veneration of images, which according to Diehl, they viewed as ‘mere externals that tempted people to trust in them, instead of putting their faith in God’.⁴⁸ The reformed religion thus assigned to the laity a passive role in assuring their own salvation: this was now solely in the hands of God and, to further complicate matters, God was much harder to ‘reach’ than He had been before.

Keith Thomas observes that the ‘medieval Church [...] acted as a vast repository of supernatural power which could be dispensed to the faithful to help them in their daily problems’.⁴⁹ This highlights the crucial difference in the relationship between God and man before and after the Reformation: in early Protestant England one could merely wait in the hope that mercy would be shown and assistance offered, whereas in the late Middle Ages it was considered possible to utilise a variety of rituals and practices – repositories of ‘supernatural power’ – in order to ‘draw down’ - God’s blessing, thus securing His intervention and aid.⁵⁰ Additionally, the medieval Church believed fully in the efficacy of intercessory prayer and it was considered appropriate ‘in times of disaster [...] for the clergy and people to invoke supernatural assistance’.⁵¹ The early Protestant Church opposed this using the fundamental doctrine of Providence – the belief that ‘nothing could happen in this world without God’s permission’ coupled with the denial of ‘the very possibility of chance or accident’.⁵² The Protestants’ insistence upon Providence functioned as a sweeping denial of ‘the claim of the medieval Church to be able to manipulate God’s grace for earthly purposes’.⁵³ Such a denial effectively shut down

⁴⁷ Huston Diehl, ‘Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 86-102 (p. 88).

⁴⁸ Diehl, ‘Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy’, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 32.

⁵⁰ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 35; p. 32.

⁵¹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 45.

⁵² Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 91.

⁵³ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 90.

a channel of communication between man and the Almighty: one could no longer ‘negotiate’ with God to intervene, alter the course of events and, thereby, end one’s suffering. Similarly, the Protestant Church had a drastically different view of the efficacy of prayer in general. Prior to the Reformation, the working of prayers was believed to follow ‘automatically upon their pronouncement’, whereas the reformers argued that such a belief, by definition, rendered them charms rather than prayers.⁵⁴ The Protestant view was that ‘Words and prayers [...] had no power in themselves unless God chose to heed them’.⁵⁵

This all gives rise to the sense of abandonment apparent throughout *Titus*. The protagonist, in a moment of despairing lucidity, refers to ‘bootless prayer’ (*TA* III. 1. 73-77), a phrase that touches upon the post-Reformation anxiety that such invocations no longer have any guaranteed effectiveness and may instead go unheeded. Significantly, when Titus does, in his more frenzied moments, express a belief in the guaranteed efficacy of prayer, it is indicative of his deteriorating mental state, a sign of desperation and distraction: ‘We will solicit heaven and move the gods/To send down Justice for to wreak our wrongs’ (*TA*, IV. 1. 51-52). These lines reflect the pre-Reformation notion that a procession or solicitation could obtain God’s grace and secure his intervention, whilst their function as an indicator of Titus’s growing madness upholds the orthodox belief that this is impossible, the desperate hope of a despairing man. The same can be said of the following speech:

What, wouldst thou kneel with me?
Do then ... for heaven shall hear our prayers,
Or with our sighs we’ll breathe the welkin dim
And stain the sun with fog, as sometimes clouds
When they do hug him in their melting bosoms. (*TA*, III. 1. 210-214)

Marcus’ retorts – ‘O brother, speak with possibility’ (*TA*, III. 1. 215) and ‘let reason govern thy

⁵⁴ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 70.

lament' (TA, III. 1. 219) – demonstrate the play's utilisation of post-Reformation theology, in which prayers may go unheeded and divine aid cannot be expected. Marcus' own appeal to the gods - 'O heavens, can you hear a good man groan/And not relent or compassion him?' (TA, IV. 1. 123-124) - also recalls the pre-Reformation notion that a man's innate goodness and outward shows of repentance could incite God's mercy and invoke His assistance. Here, however, there is little hope of a reply: the frequency of such appeals combines with the barren spiritual and supernatural landscape of the play in order to make the divine seem remote and the characters appear abandoned.

This effect was exacerbated by the reformers' attitude to intermediaries, namely priests and saints, who had previously functioned as 'mediators between man and God', thereby lessening the gap that existed between them whilst simultaneously providing another source of comfort and aid.⁵⁶ In the late Middle Ages, priests, somewhat inevitably, came to be 'set apart from the rest of the community by their celibacy and ritual consecration'.⁵⁷ Protestants, on the other hand opposed many priestly functions that elevated the clergy above the laity, including the ritual of auricular confession, and they advocated a priesthood of all believers, arguing that there should be no intermediary between an individual and his or her God.⁵⁸ Similarly, prior to the Reformation, saints were considered able to 'employ supernatural powers to relieve the adversities of their followers upon earth', a belief the reformers held to be 'reprehensible'.⁵⁹ Religious reform thus widened the gap between God and man by removing or transforming the roles of those who had previously bridged it. By the reforming the role of the priest in particular, the Protestant church robbed the laity of its most effective mediator. This, too, is reflected in *Titus* when the title character announces his intention to 'tell [his] sorrows to the stones' (TA, III. 1. 37). Again, this line contains echoes of the play's source: following her rape, Philomela vows that her 'voice shall fill the woods/And move the rocks to pity'

⁵⁶ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 35.

⁵⁸ Diehl, 'Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy', pp. 89-90.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 31; p. 70.

(*Metamorphoses*, IV. ll. 549-550). Yet this image is also highly suggestive of the lack of intercessory channels in post-Reformation England. God is remote, the disinterested senators and tribunes pass him by and all that remains are these inanimate objects. Significantly, there is nothing holy about these stones, no suggestion of them also being relics and, thus, repositories of supernatural power. The post-Reformation landscape, from which the magic of the medieval Church has been stripped away, thus plays a vital role in the construction of *Titus Andronicus*'s dramatic landscape. Once again, the dramatists adopt a non-interrogative approach to the schism, borrowing the themes and motifs associated with its impact to evoke the play's sense of spiritual isolation and despair. The play thereby demonstrates that, by the late sixteenth century, the impact of the Reformation was assimilated into collective, cultural knowledge. This assimilation allows late Elizabethan dramatists to use the schism as a semiotic system: the familiarity of its imagery and rhetoric is such that it can be employed to signify and frame unrelated concerns. Thus, *Titus Andronicus* is not a topical consideration of the schism's impact on sixteenth-century society. Instead, the play uses Reformation imagery to highlight key themes or aspects.

3.4 'True Rites and Lawful Ceremonies': Staging political conflict in *Julius Caesar*

Julius Caesar belongs in the same category as *Titus*. Post-schismatic issues are not a thematic concern and the play does not provide a topical discussion of the schism's consequences. Instead of political conflict functioning as a metaphor for religious conflict, the reverse is true: the play uses the language and imagery of theological division to signpost and stage political division. The opening scene of the play establishes the language and imagery of the Reformation as a semiotic system. The play's first movements clearly indicate that the schism itself is not a key thematic concern. Instead, the schism is the signifier, and political division, presaging widespread change and turmoil, is the signified. The prevalence of the Reformation's impact means it is able to transcend its literal meaning to become a recognisable symbol of impending social, political

and cultural redefinition.

Shakespeare exploits this symbolism from the beginning, aligning the tribunes, Flavius and Murellus, with reformers to establish Caesar's Rome as a society on the cusp of change. This metaphor was probably suggested to Shakespeare by his source material, Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*. In *The Life of Julius Caesar*, Plutarch describes how Flavius and Murellus were incensed that statues of Caesar had been crowned with diadems and pulled them down, angering the statesmen who stripped them of their 'Tribuneshippes'.⁶⁰ By the time Shakespeare came to depict the tribunes' attempt to 'Disrobe the images' that have been 'decked with ceremonies' (JC I. 1. 65-70), their actions would have had a particular resonance. Protestants and Catholics were divided by their conflicting attitudes towards devotional images. The worship of devotional images was central to the Catholic faith,⁶¹ a practice founded on the belief that 'physical objects could change their nature by a ritual of exorcism and consecration'.⁶² Reformers like Martin Luther derided such practices, which directly opposed the central doctrine of *sola fides*:

For when the heart is instructed that one pleases God alone through faith, and that in the matter of images nothing that is pleasing to him takes place, but is a fruitless service and effort, the people themselves willingly drop it, despise images, and have none made.⁶³

One of the defining doctrines of Protestantism was born of this insistence that the laity 'stood in a direct relationship to God and was solely dependent upon his omnipotence'. Consequently, believers could no longer trust 'in an imposing apparatus of ceremonial in the hope of prevailing

⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Lives of The Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. by Sir Thomas North (1579), *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, ed. by David Daniell, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Cengage, 1998), 323-371 (pp. 324-5).

⁶¹ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 155-160.

⁶² Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 86.

⁶³ Martin Luther, *Against the Heavenly Prophets* (1525) in *Culture and Belief*, 168-171 (p. 169).

upon God to grant [their] desires'.⁶⁴ By the late sixteenth century, then, any conflict regarding the use of images contained echoes of the schism. Shakespeare's faithful adherence to Plutarch signals his deliberate evocation of the Reformation. The fact that the images have been 'decked with ceremonies' (*JC*, I. 1. 66) recalls the Catholic practice of dressing altar images during festivals.⁶⁵ Correspondingly, Flavius' intention to 'Disrobe the images' (*JC*, I. 1. 65) evokes the 'iconoclasm and deliberate fouling of holy objects' that was particularly widespread during the Edwardian Reformation of the 1540s.⁶⁶

In addition to their iconoclasm, Flavius and Murellus resemble reformers in two other ways. Firstly, they mock the 'vulgar' (*JC*, I. 1. 71) crowd's belief in the efficacy of ritual action:

Murellus: Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

Flavius: Go, go, good countrymen, and for this fault
Assemble all the poor men of your sort;
Draw them to Tiber banks, and weep your tears
Into the channel, till the lowest stream
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all.

Exeunt all the Commoners.

See where their basest mettle be not moved.
They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness. (*JC*, I. 1. 54-63)

Flavius' final lines reveal the tribunes' motive in evoking intercessory practices: they have exploited the commoners' 'guiltiness', their need to absolve themselves by performing a ritual action, in order to disperse the crowds. This does not immediately identify the tribunes with the reformist movement since practices such as praying to God to 'intermit the plague' were not uncommon after the Reformation:

⁶⁴ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 87.

⁶⁵ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 71.

⁶⁶ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 86.

The Elizabethans who gathered together to pray for the ending of the plague were not simply engaging in a form of magic intended to be materially efficacious. They asked God for relief, it is true, though without any certainty that it would be granted. But they were also testifying publicly to the concern aroused in the whole community by the threat which confronted it. By assembling together they demonstrated their social solidarity in face of the epidemic; and by confessing the sins which they thought might have occasioned it, they reaffirmed the ethical standards of their society.⁶⁷

Social solidarity and communal contrition are also evoked by Flavius' instructions to 'Assemble all the poor men of your sort' to confess and seek forgiveness for their 'fault'. However, Flavius excludes himself and Murellus from this community – '*your* sort' – implying the existence of two separate factions in this society (my emphasis). Moreover, the faction to which the crowd belongs does appear to be 'engaging in a form of magic intended to be materially efficacious'. That they disperse at Flavius' suggestion implies their belief that the act of weeping into the Tiber will grant them absolution. Flavius and Murellus' contempt for this belief recalls the early reformers' attempts to '[depreciate] the miracle-working aspects of religion and [elevate] the importance of the individual's faith in God'.⁶⁸ Their disdain for what they perceive as the vulgar, ignorant behaviour of the crowd recalls the sentiments of early Protestant writers like John Bale, who decried the 'heathnysh behavers' of those who clung to 'supersticion' and 'horryble blasphemies'.⁶⁹

Secondly, Flavius's critique of Caesar's perceived desire to 'soar above the view of men/And keep us all in servile fearfulness' (*JC*, I. 1. 75-6) echoes anti-Papal sentiments, such as those found in the writings of John Jewel, an advocate of the Reformation:

we may say that there neither is nor can be any one man which may have the whole superiority in this universal state ... that there can be no one mortal

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 173-174.

⁶⁸ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 88.

⁶⁹ John Bale, 'The vocacyon of John Bale'

creature which is able to comprehend or conceive in his mind the universal church, that is to wit, all parts of the world.⁷⁰

The opening scene does, rather misleadingly, lend itself to being read as a Reformation allegory. The tribunes' iconoclasm, their contempt for ritual action, and Flavius' comparison of Caesar to the Pope, could suggest that they are reformers in a society in which Catholicism remains the official religion. Caska's revelation that the tribunes have been 'put to silence' for 'pulling scarves off Caesar's images' (*JC*, I. 2. 284-285) further identifies Flavius and Murellus as dissenters, opponents of the current regime. Were the play a Reformation allegory, then, its opening scene would be temporally located before schism. On this basis, Caesarism would be equivalent to Catholicism, the conspirators to reformers, and the actual assassination emblematic of the eventual break with Rome.

Historicists tend to read the play as a comment on the Reformation. Although they produce contrasting readings, Mary Hamer, Mark Rose and David Kaula agree that the political dynamics of the play reflect upon contemporary theological conflict. All three concur that, in the opening scene, the Reformation is the true signified. Hamer closely examines the language used by Flavius and Murellus, finding particular significance in the scornful way in which Murellus addresses the crowd – 'You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!' (*JC*, I. 1. 36). She notes that "blocks and stones" was, according to the *OED*, used 'in written texts to refer contemptuously to the old images of Mary and the saints'.⁷¹ This contempt for the crowd could, she argues, denote contempt for the superstitious trappings of Catholicism. Rose sets himself almost in direct conflict with Kaula, whose argument that Caesar is representative of the Pope he acknowledges and challenges. Both observe Flavius and Murellus's resemblance to the more extreme brand of Protestant. Analysing Murellus's speech of I. 1. 36-55, Rose remarks that he

⁷⁰ John Jewel, 'An Apology of the Church of England' (1564), trans. by Ann Bacon, ed. by J. E. Booty (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 24. Also quoted in David Kaula, "'Let Us Be Sacrificers': Religious Motifs in *Julius Caesar*", *Shakespeare Studies*, XIV (1981), 197-214 (pp. 200-201).

⁷¹ Mary Hamer, *William Shakespeare: Julius Caesar*, Writers and their Work (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998), pp. 13-14.

sounds ‘strikingly like an indignant Puritan calling sinners to repent’.⁷² Kaula couches his argument in similar terms but is slightly less specific, stating that in ‘calling on the citizens to repent their adulation of Caesar and in divesting the images the tribunes are behaving like Protestant reformers and iconoclasts’.⁷³ Despite their similar starting points, these critics reach very different conclusions regarding the exact way in which the play mirrors sixteenth-century theological conflict. Rose identifies a gulf between the tribunes and the conspirators on the one hand and Caesar and his supporters on the other. He argues that this gulf reflects that between Anglicans and Puritans. Flavius, Caska and Cassius are the most obvious representatives of the latter, and the pro-Caesar faction represent the former. This theory temporally locates the action of the play in the aftermath of the religious schism and suggests post-Reformation conflict as a central theme. More specifically, Rose claims that the play reflects the debate between Anglicans and Puritans regarding the issues of whether the authority of a clergyman was derived from the crown or the congregation, with the Anglicans insisting upon the former and the Puritans the latter.⁷⁴ In equating Caesar with the Pope, Kaula temporally locates the action of the play in the period immediately preceding, and immediately following, the break with Rome.

Reading *Julius Caesar* as a sustained Reformation allegory is deeply problematic, and the play itself actively resists such a reading. Kaula admits that his interpretation only fits particular passages and cannot be applied to the play as a whole. The structure of the play defies such interpretations. The play is saturated with allusions to the schism from the opening scene to Antony’s funeral oration. Afterwards, there is a distinct shift; the rhetoric and imagery of the Reformation is expunged from the language of the play. Additionally, the emphasis upon ritual and its role in distinguishing Caesar’s supporters from his enemies is removed. At the same time, Caesar’s spirit becomes the chief antagonist. David Daniell, Mark Rose and Jonathan Goldberg have all noted that it is the spirit of Caesar that dominates the second half of the play. Each critic

⁷² Mark Rose, ‘Conjuring Caesar: Ceremony, History and Authority in 1599’, in *True Rites and Maimed Rites: Ritual and Anti-Ritual in Shakespeare and His Age*, ed. by Linda Woodbridge and Edward Berry (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 256-269 (p. 256).

⁷³ Kaula, “‘Let Us Be Sacrificers’”, p. 206.

⁷⁴ Rose, ‘Conjuring Caesar’, p. 257.

comments on the significance of Shakespeare endowing the title character with such a powerful life-in-death, which provides a striking contrast to the emphasis he places on Caesar's physical frailty. Goldberg argues that, in doing this, the playwright affirms the absolutist doctrine of the king's two bodies by stressing that it is kingship, rather than the king, which is the real repository of power.⁷⁵ Daniell does not read the play allegorically so, for him, the spirit that dominates the latter half of the play is that of Caesarism, not Catholicism.⁷⁶ He finds a particular significance in Brutus's speech:

We all stand up against the spirit of Casesar,
And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
O that we then could come by Caesar's spirit
And not dismember Caesar. (*JC*, II. 1. 166-9)

These lines are deeply ironic as Brutus underlines the invulnerability of Caesar's spirit by emphasising its bloodlessness, simultaneously demonstrating that he is unaware of the indestructible nature of all his victim represents. His moment of *anagnorisis* comes in the final act: 'O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet./Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords/In our own proper entrails' (*JC*, V. 3. 94-6). Of course, if the play is considered to be an extended allegory, then it is Catholicism that is 'mighty yet'. As Kaula has already noted, however, it is highly unlikely that Shakespeare would have produced a play with such an overt message; especially one in which the Protestant Reformation, led by a politically naïve regicide, results in a civil war that is ended only by the return to power of the Catholic elite, represented by Antony and Octavius.⁷⁷

If the conspirators were taken to represent the reformers, their failure would equate to a heavy-handed endorsement of Catholic doctrines. For instance, the play links the conspirators' failure to their disregard for portents, which is shown to be a weakness. Towards the end of the

⁷⁵ Jonathan Goldberg, 'The Roman Actor: Julius Caesar', in *Julius Caesar: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Richard Wilson, New Casebooks (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), 92-107.

⁷⁶ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. by David Daniell, *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series* (London: Cengage, 1998), p. 208.

⁷⁷ Kaula, "Let Us Be Sacrificers", p. 206.

play, the once sceptical Cassius undergoes something of a conversion when he begins to give credence to superstition:

You know that I held Epicurus strong
And his opinion: now I change my mind
And partly credit things that do presage. (*JC*, V. 1. 76-78)

Moreover, as Rose notes, ‘the play implies that Cassius was right to have grown superstitious, to have changed his opinion about dreams: the portents that prefigure the assassination are not daggers of the mind’.⁷⁸ The newly credulous Cassius confesses to Messala that he has been troubled by an ill-omen:

[...] their shadows seem
An canopy most fatal, under which
Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost. (*JC*, V. 1. 86-88)

These lines turn out to be prophetic, yet Cassius is unwilling to reveal his change of heart to Brutus and, instead, maintains his previous persona of the proudly defiant man of reason:

Now, most noble Brutus,
The gods today stand friendly, that we may,
Lovers in peace, lead on our days to age.
But since the affairs of men rest still uncertain,
Let’s reason with the worst that may befall. (*JC*, V. 1. 92-96)

Here, Cassius is anxious to retain Brutus’s respect and regard and so passes off his premonition as a reasoned, practical acceptance of possible defeat. Disregard for superstition is thus equated with intellectual posturing and bravado. Furthermore, when characters dismiss bad omens in favour of protecting their reputations, their actions are invariably presented as folly. When begging Caesar to stay home, Calphurnia suggests that he ‘Call it my fear/That keeps you in the house’ (*JC*, II. 2. 50-51), implying an awareness of the potential damage to his reputation if he was to be seen to be superstitious. This is a concern picked up by the oily Decius:

⁷⁸ Rose, ‘Conjuring Caesar’, p. 262.

Besides, it were a mock
Apt to be rendered, for some one to say,
'Break up the Senate till another time
When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams.'
If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper,
'Lo, Cesar is afraid'? (*JC*, I. 2. 96-101)

Decius uses binary oppositions associated with gender to frame his argument. Dreams, the home and superstition belong to the female sphere, to 'Caesar's wife'; politics, the Senate and reason belong to the male sphere. Decius' suggestion that Caesar would be mocked and subjected to disparaging rumours for heeding Calphurnia's warning implies that this binary opposition is part of the social consciousness; it can thus be used as a weapon to manipulate Caesar. Caesar himself seems aware of the implications of Decius' dichotomy. His response indicates a sense of ignominy, and he is anxious to attribute the blame to the gullible female:

How foolish do your fears seem now, Calphurnia!
I am ashamed I did yield to them.
Give me my robe, for I will go. (*JC*, II. 2. 105-107)

Ardent disavowals of superstition are, again, associated with *machismo* and with a superficial desire to 'save face.' Furthermore, in *Richard III*, Decius' manipulation of the content of Calphurnia's dream might have suggested the slippery and unreliable nature of dreams. In this play, however, it suggests the slippery and unreliable nature of the character, Decius. Shakespeare's treatment of this topic here, then, is not cynical. Not only does Calphurnia's dream come true but the playwright suggests a certain arrogance in Caesar:

Caesar: The Ides of March are come.
Soothsayer: Ay, Caesar, but not gone. (*JC*, III. 1.1-2)

And:

Soothsayer: Beware the Ides of March.
Caesar: He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass. (*JC*, I. 2. 23-4)

It is unlikely that Shakespeare would have so strongly endorsed such views and so scornfully dismissed those who deride them if he was producing an allegorical text in which superstition is a by-word for, or synecdoche of, the Catholic faith.

Interpreting the Reformation allusions of the opening scene as a kind of ‘allegorical code’ thus leads to a dead-end. This approach is unfruitful because the Reformation is not the true signified. In this opening scene, for instance, the tribunes’ resemblance to reformers is purely symbolic: their defiance of the senate indicates political, rather than theological, conflict. The Reformation is evoked as an image of division and ideological conflict: Flavius and Murellus highlight the existence of a group of dissenters, foreshadowing the emergence of the conspirators. Furthermore, by comparing Caesar to the Pope, Flavius evokes the eve of the Reformation in Europe, when defiance of the Pontiff’s authority triggered widespread change. This image is used to foreshadow the overthrow of established socio-political structures. Here, then, the Reformation is an image of impending change and ideological redefinition. My argument thus differs only slightly from Naomi Conn Liebler’s. She suggests that the opening scene establishes confusion over ‘exactly what – or who – is being celebrated’ during the feast of Lupercal.⁷⁹ This dispute over the precise meaning and nature of specific rites and ceremonies, she adds, results in a ‘battle over cultural redefinition’ that rages throughout the play.⁸⁰ I would argue that this dispute signifies and foreshadows the conspirators’ attempts at cultural redefinition. Rites and ceremonies are not the cause of the dispute; they are merely the emblems through which the central power struggle is enacted and communicated. *Julius Caesar*, like *Titus*, thus demonstrates the assimilation of the Reformation’s impact into collective, cultural knowledge. The play acknowledges and utilises this assimilation, recognising the pervasiveness of the schism’s impact by converting its language and imagery into a semiotic system.

This system is also used, from the second scene until the depiction of Caesar’s funeral, to

⁷⁹ The actual purpose of Lupercalia was to purify the city, averting evil spirits and encouraging health and fertility.

⁸⁰ Liebler, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy*, p. 89; p. 92.

distinguish the two political factions. Once again, the language of sixteenth-century sectarian conflict is used for purely illustrative purposes, to draw a clear line of demarcation between the pro- and anti-Caesar contingents. From the outset, Caesar and Antony are associated with ritual and tradition, whilst Brutus and Cassius are variously linked with anti-ritual, *sola fides*, and heresy. Seven of Caesar's first ten lines convey his desire that the requisite customs be performed in the most thorough and efficacious manner possible:

Calphurnia [...]
Stand you directly in Antonio's way
When he doth run his course. Antonio [...]
Forget not in your speed, Antonio,
To touch Calphurnia; for our elders say,
The barren touched in this holy chase
Shake off their sterile curse [...]
Set on, and leave no ceremony out. (JC, I. 2.2-11)

Caesar's anxiety that this ritual be performed correctly points to an underlying belief in the ceremony's 'mechanical efficiency', a belief Protestant reformers actively discouraged.⁸¹ Antony's almost servile obedience – 'When Caesar says 'Do this,' it is performed' (JC, I. 2. 10) – suggests a similar belief. His allegiance is later confirmed when Caska reports that it was Antony who offered Caesar the crown (JC, I. 2. 231). Caesar and Antony's alliance is not communicated by underlining their shared political views; rather, it is demonstrated by their joint belief in the efficacy of ritual practice.

Correspondingly, Cassius and Brutus' enmity to Caesar and Antony is suggested by their contempt and distaste for such practices. To communicate this division to sixteenth-century audiences, Shakespeare aligns the latter with pre-Reformation thought and the former with post-Reformation beliefs. As in the opening scene, the purpose is not to establish a Reformation allegory but to separate these factions from one another by establishing them as opposites. The language and imagery of the schism thus functions as a recognisable signal of division and of

⁸¹ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 87.

ideological conflict. For instance, Cassius' brazen disregard for superstition and folk belief contrasts markedly with Caesar's meticulous observance of ritual:

For my part, I have walked about the streets,
Submitting me unto he perilous night,
And thus unbraced, Caska, as you see,
Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone ...
And when the cross blue lightning seemed to open
The breast of heaven, I did present myself
Even in the aim and very flash of it. (*JC*, I. 3. 46-52)

There is nothing theologically specific about these lines, nothing that clearly aligns them with Protestant thought. Specificity is not strictly necessary, however, since the play is not an allegory. The point is not that Caesar and Antony are Catholics and Brutus and Cassius Protestants; the object is to use Reformation imagery more loosely to establish these factions as political opponents. These lines, when compared with those spoken by Caesar in the second scene, stress this division. Previously, it is shown that Caesar, like medieval Catholics, believes that the careful observance of ritual will draw down supernatural aid. Cassius' defiance, which borders on the blasphemous and the heretical, is set against this faithful observance, highlighting his ideological divergence from Caesar.

The imagery of theological conflict – represented by contrasting attitudes towards ritual practice, superstition, and the supernatural – thus denotes political opposition in this play. Cassius' contempt for superstition and the supernatural, outlined above, establishes him as a counterpoint to Mark Antony. Not only does the latter appear to share Caesar's belief in the power of ritual action, he is later linked with the occult:

And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines, with a monarch's voice,
Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial. (*JC*, III. 1. 270-5)

In Act I, Cassius defies supernatural power; here, Antony attempts to harness it by invoking Caesar's ghost whilst uttering prophecies and curses. Antony's summoning of supernatural aid, his call for diabolical retribution, goes hand in hand with his apparent belief in the efficacy of ritual action. In both instances, his behaviour evokes the image of the medieval Catholic Church as a repository of supernatural power.⁸²

Brutus' political opposition to Caesar and Antony is signified by his rejection of the kind of formal ceremonial action favoured by the latter: 'No, not an oath' (*JC*, II. 1. 113). Furthermore, his contempt for the 'enforced ceremony' practised by 'hollow men' is juxtaposed with his preference for 'plain and simple faith' (*JC*, IV. 2. 19-24). Brutus' desire for simplicity and austerity contrasts markedly with Antony's attempt to harness the supernatural. Once again, Shakespeare uses the language of the religious schism to establish this contrast: Antony echoes the medieval Catholic's emphasis on the 'miracle-working aspects of religion', whilst Brutus shares the reformers' belief in the central importance of 'the individual's faith'.⁸³ Brutus' views reflect those of reformers, like Martin Luther, who rejected the ritualised, performative approach of the Catholic church in favour of unadorned and unaffected displays of faith:

And so it will profit nothing that the body should be adorned with sacred vestments, or dwell in holy places, or be occupied in sacred offices, or pray, fast and abstain from certain meats, or do whatever works can be done through the body and in the body. Something widely different will be necessary for the justification and liberty of the soul, since the things I have spoken of can be done by any impious person, and only hypocrites are produced by devotion to such things. On the other hand, it will not at all injure the soul that the body should be clothed in profane raiment, should dwell in profane places, should eat and drink in the ordinary fashion, should not pray aloud, and should leave undone all the things above mentioned, which may be done by hypocrites.⁸⁴

Brutus' disparaging reference to 'hollow men' evokes Luther's association of ritual action with

⁸² See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.

⁸³ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 88.

⁸⁴ Martin Luther, *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, in *Culture and Belief*, 180-181, (p.180).

superficiality and hypocrisy. Additionally, Luther rejects the performative and the demonstrative, espousing the doctrine of *sola fides*: 'Faith alone and the word reign in it'.⁸⁵ This doctrine is evoked by Brutus' dismissal of 'enforced ceremonies' and his subsequent justification: 'What need we any spur but our own cause/To prick us to redress?'. (*JC*, II. 2. 122-123). Shakespeare uses the language and imagery of the schism to portray and underline Cassius and Brutus' opposition to Caesar and Antony. The Reformation is evoked for illustrative purposes, and its impact is not examined as it is in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. Theological conflict is evoked, but political conflict is the true signified.

In *Julius Caesar*, then, the impact of the Reformation is a referent, not a thematic concern. This idea can be supported by examining the play's representation of commemorative culture. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* use this trope to address topical issues and debates arising from the Protestants' reforms. In both plays, the representation of commemoration interrogates the impact of the collapse of ritualised mourning. By contrast, in *Julius Caesar*, devices such as the staging of Caesar's funeral frame socio-political concerns. The function of Caesar's funeral is not to address issues of death and remembrance, but to expose Brutus' political naivety and initiate the conspirators' defeat at Antony's hands. The public's response to Antony's oration vindicates Cassius, who had argued that Antony should be slain alongside Caesar:

I think it is not meet
Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar,
Should outlive Caesar. We shall find of him
A shrewd contriver. (*JC*, II. 1. 154-157)

Antony's success at swaying the crowds supports Cassius' view of him as a skilled tactician and manipulator. The scene also demonstrates the extent to which Brutus underestimated Antony by dismissing him as 'but a limb of Caesar' (*JC*, II. 2. 164). Brutus' decision to spare Antony is connected to his idealisation of the assassination:

⁸⁵ Luther, *The Liberty of a Christian Man*, in *Culture and Belief*, p. 181.

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs –
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards –
[...]
Let us be sacrificers but not butchers, Caius. (*JC*, II. 1. 161-165)

Brutus' highly unrealistic aspiration is to construct a palatable and acceptable image of the assassination so that the public accepts the conspirators as 'purgers, not murderers' (*JC*, II. 1. 179). Allowing Antony to address the crowds at Caesar's funeral is a fatal blunder, as Cassius again foresees:

You know not what you do. Do not consent
That Antony speak in his funeral.
Know you how much the people may be moved
By that which he will utter. (*JC*, III. 1. 232-235)

If the play was read allegorically, and the conspirators were equated with reformers, then they would be shown to fail because their reforms were not extensive enough. Antony's victory would represent the reformers' failure to eradicate Catholicism, and the public's support would symbolise the enduring influence of the old faith. On the contrary, Antony's survival exposes Brutus' weakness as a statesman, underlining his lack of foresight. Allowing Antony to speak at Caesar's funeral grants him the opportunity to distort and dismantle Brutus' carefully constructed image of Caesar as destructively ambitious and the conspirators as the saviours of democracy. The funeral is a political arena, the scene of the most pivotal conflict between two rivals; it is not a framework in which topical, post-Reformation issues of death and remembrance are examined. Antony himself provides a clear indication of this, when he refers to his forthcoming funeral oration as a political exercise whereby the mood of the public can be assessed, and the opposition's next move calculated accordingly:

There shall I try
In my oration how the people take
The cruel issue of these bloody men,

According to the which thou shalt discourse
To young Octavius of the state of things. (*JC*, III. 1.292-296)

That said, the funeral scene is awash with allusions to the Reformation; this is a political battle couched in the terms of theological conflict. Brutus' insistence that he and Antony address the crowd from 'the same pulpit' stems from his desire to demonstrate political unity (*JC*, III. 1.250). By eradicating, or more realistically obscuring, the differences between himself and Antony, Brutus hopes to end the political conflict, impose his authority, and consolidate his leadership. In typical fashion, this plan backfires, exposing the disparity and contention between the two statesmen instead of underlining their accord. The language and imagery of the religious schism is, again, used to highlight the contrast and conflict between Brutus and Antony. The former speaks in prose, which lends his lines a utilitarian, rather than ceremonial, air and hints at a Puritanical lack of adornment. This austerity is also apparent in the way in which Brutus encourages the crowd to rely on reason rather than emotion when forming a judgement: 'Censure me in your *wisdom* and awake your *senses*, that you may the better *judge*' (*JC*, III. 2.16-17; my emphasis). Moreover, by publicly announcing the fact that Caesar has only one official mourner, Brutus is associated with reduced mourning rituals: 'Here comes [Caesar's] body, mourned by Mark Antony' (*JC*. III. 2. 41).

From the beginning of Antony's address at III. 2. 74, it is clear that it is the pulpit, rather than Philippi, which is the site of the definitive battle between him and Brutus. If the latter's prose and utilitarian approach recall the unembellished services of the Reformed church, Antony's verse is suggestive of ritualised Catholic liturgies. Tellingly, whilst Brutus demonstrates restraint in mourning, Antony becomes associated with excessive displays of collective grief: 'If you have tears, prepare to shed them now' (*JC*, III. 2. 167). Most significant, however, is Antony's awareness that, in participating in this diminished ritual, he is '[wronging] the dead' (*JC*, III. 2. 127). That the orator urges the crowd to 'make a ring around the corpse of Caesar' (*JC*, III. 2. 158) builds upon the hint provided in the opening scene, providing further evidence of

Antony's belief in the power of ritual action.

Antony's theatrical, highly ritualised approach does not characterise him as an influential recusant in a newly Protestant society. Rather, it illustrates his skill and effectiveness as a statesman in comparison to Brutus. For instance, Antony may evoke the Catholic faith by referring to sacred relics and depicting Caesar as a martyr:

Let but the commons hear this testament [...]
And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds,
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
And, dying, mention it within their wills,
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
Unto their issue. (*JC*, III. 2. 133-8)

However, Antony's motive is political, rather than theological: he attempts to destroy the crowd's support for the conspirators by deconstructing Brutus' image of Caesar as an 'ambitious' enemy of the people (*JC*, III. 2. 26). Brutus and Antony thus present two contrasting versions of Caesar's social body; each attempts to persuade the crowd to accept their version. Antony also seeks to undermine Brutus' image of the conspirators as 'honourable men' (*JC*, III. 2. 83), who sacrificed Caesar for the good of Rome. This he accomplishes by presenting an imagined reconstruction of the assassination:

For when the noble Caesar saw [Brutus] stab,
Ingratitude more strong than traitor's arms,
Quite vanquished him; then burst his mighty heart;
And in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the case of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell. (*JC*, III. 2. 182-187)

Antony thus ensures the public perceive the conspirators as 'butchers' rather than 'sacrificers'. Commemoration is a political tool for both Antony and Brutus. It is the method they choose in their attempts to gain control of, and impose their ideologies on, the state of Rome. Utilising and

manipulating traditional customs and ritual practices is politically expedient, as Brutus is aware:

[...] we are contented Caesar shall
Have all true rites and lawful ceremonies,
It shall advantage more than do us wrong. (*JC*, III. 1. 241-2)

This 'lawful ceremony' is more than a funeral; it is Brutus and Antony's attempt to redefine Rome culturally according to their own values, policies and ideologies. Brutus himself is highly aware that ceremonial rituals like funerals can be used to control and restructure a society. Prior to Antony's oration, Brutus gives his rival a series of instructions. His approach is prescriptive and his language smacks of censorship:

Mark Antony, here, take you Caesar's body.
You shall not in your funeral speech blame us,
But speak all good you can devise of Caesar,
And say you do it by our permission:
Else shall you not have any hand at all
About his funeral. And you shall speak
In the same pulpit whereto I am going,
After my speech is ended. (*JC*, III. 1. 244-251)

Brutus's tone is that of a new leader attempting to establish a new regime. These lines mark his attempt to assume immediate control of Rome's ceremonial and commemorative practices, signalling his awareness of the key role their reform will play in his attempts at cultural redefinition. Peter Marshall suggests that the abolition of Purgatory and the ensuing collapse of intercessory culture 'must rank as one of the most audacious attempts at the restructuring of beliefs and values ever attempted in England, a kind of collective cultural deprogramming'.⁸⁶ In *Julius Caesar*, Antony and Brutus attempt to seize control by influencing popular opinion and they use commemorative ritual to accomplish this. The play thereby utilises the image of commemoration as an instrument of socio-cultural change to signal Brutus and Antony's attempt to shape and restructure Rome's beliefs and values. Furthermore, Shakespeare quite deliberately

⁸⁶ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 100.

crosses the wires to preclude a straightforward, allegorical reading. For instance, politically speaking, it is Antony who is the radical and Brutus the traditionalist: the former had endorsed Caesar as emperor, whilst the latter desires Rome to remain a republic. The Reformation imagery may have prompted the play's original audiences to consider an allegorical interpretation, but they are quickly forced to reconsider. Instead, Shakespeare invites the play's original audiences to utilise their knowledge of the recent theological conflict in order to reach a heightened understanding of the political and ideological conflict that underpins *Julius Caesar*. Thus, Shakespeare draws upon his contemporary audiences' awareness of the changes the Reformation wrought to commemorative practices, but he does not examine the impact of these changes. Caesar's funeral does not frame a topical discussion of commemoration; it addresses political, rather than theological, issues.

Chapter 4. *Hamlet*

4.1 Avoidance, allusion, confrontation: post-Reformation issues in *Hamlet*

Late Elizabethan tragedy reflects the Reformation's impact on sixteenth-century society in two ways. *The Spanish Tragedy's* examination of death and remembrance suggests a contemporary concern with the psychological implications of the Protestants' reform of mortuary culture. *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar* point to the assimilation of the Reformation into collective cultural knowledge by converting its language and imagery into a semiotic system. *Hamlet* thus represents something of a departure for Shakespeare. Here, instead of using the Reformation as a mere referent, he examines its impact in depth. He returns to the ground previously covered by Kyd and adopts similar methods to explore the schism's psychological ramifications. *Hamlet's* engagement with post-schismatic issues may recall *The Spanish Tragedy's*, but it still marks something of a watershed in Elizabethan responses to the Reformation. *The Spanish Tragedy* alludes to Purgatory and implies that Andrea is a purgatorial spirit. *Hamlet* eschews allusion and insinuation, becoming the first Elizabethan tragedy to engage explicitly with post-Reformation theology.

Hamlet may address post-schismatic concerns more explicitly than *The Spanish Tragedy*, but uses similar methods to frame these issues; namely, representations of death, the supernatural, remembrance and commemorative culture. *Hamlet's* use of these tropes contrasts markedly with *Julius Caesar's*, highlighting the differences between the two dramatic responses to the Reformation. Although remembrance is a significant theme in both *Hamlet* and *Caesar*, only the former reflects on and examines how the Reformation complicated it. The abolition of Purgatory abruptly severed the link between the living and the dead that intercessory culture had previously maintained. The Protestants robbed survivors of many of the means they had previously used to remember their dead. The Ghost of Old Hamlet, so fearful of being forgotten, addresses the repercussions of this for Elizabethan audiences. The play thus reflects its original audiences'

anxiety over their possible neglect of the deceased. *Hamlet's* concern with the impact of the schism therefore results in a highly problematized concept of remembrance. The play frequently emphasises the contingent nature of memory: 'Purpose is but the slave to memory,/Of violent birth but poor validity' (*Ham*, III. 2. 182-183). In *Julius Caesar*, however, remembrance is the main destructive force. During his funeral address, Antony turns the crowd against Brutus by encouraging them to draw upon positive memories of Caesar:

He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff. (*JC*, III. 2. 89-93)

You all do know this mantle. I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on.
'Twas on a summer's evening in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii. (*JC*, III. 2. 168-171)

Instead of burying an ambitious tyrant, Antony resurrects the spirit of the noble, beneficent statesman and military commander. As I have already noted, it is this spirit that defeats the conspirators. Cassius and Brutus both acknowledge this shortly before their respective suicides: 'Caesar thou art revenged/Even with the sword that killed thee' (*JC* V. 3. 45-46); 'Caesar, now be still' (*JC*, V. 5. 51). It is thus made clear that the play does not address topical, post-Reformation concerns regarding remembrance. Whilst the Ghost of Old Hamlet is gradually effaced from the play, Julius Caesar is slowly written back in. In *Hamlet*, death leads to annihilation; in *Julius Caesar*, the dead become invulnerable and omnipotent. This contrast is also apparent in the two plays' disparate representations of the historical figure. Death transforms Caesar from a frail man of 'feeble temper' (*JC*, I. 2. 129) into a powerful supernatural force. Cassius' words thus seem prophetic: 'this man/Is now become a god' (*JC*, I. 2. 115-116). Mark Rose makes a similar observation: 'The vulnerable man has been revealed as the marmoreal figure of history. Caesar

has become Caesar'.¹ This 'marmoreal figure of history' is represented quite differently in *Hamlet*:

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away,
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t'expel the water's flow. (*Ham*, V. 1. 202-5)

Hamlet reflects post-Reformation concerns regarding remembrance by suggesting that death merely degrades and effaces. Power, authority and status are fleeting; their influence does not extend beyond the grave, if it even extends that far. *Julius Caesar* does not engage with these issues. In this play, death makes the departed invulnerable; the deceased senator is still able to keep 'the world in awe'. The representation of death, like the representation of commemoration, addresses political, rather than theological themes. Caesar's invulnerability in death reveals the extent to which the conspirators underestimated their task. Prior to the assassination, Brutus expresses his wish that he and his fellows could 'come by Caesar's spirit/And not dismember Caesar' (*JC*, II. 1. 169-170). Ironically, although Caesar is dismembered, his spirit remains intact. The play's underlying message is that political regimes can continue even after their figureheads are removed. *Hamlet* and *Caesar*'s contrasting representations of death thus reflect the disparity of their central themes and chief aims.

Death and commemoration are not considered within a theological framework in *Julius Caesar* as they are in *Hamlet*. Similarly, the latter uses supernatural tropes to address topical, post-Reformation concerns whilst the former does not. The contrast is made clear when, following his first sighting of the ghost, Horatio raises the possibility that the spectre is an ill omen, like those reported prior to Caesar's murder:

In the most high and palmy state of Rome
A little ere the mighty Julius fell
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead

¹ Mark Rose, 'Conjuring Caesar: Ceremony, History and Authority in 1599', in *True Rites and Maimed Rites: Ritual and Anti-Ritual in Shakespeare and His Age*, ed. by Linda Woodbridge and Edward Berry (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 256-269 (p. 264).

Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;
At 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.
And even the precurse of feared events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen. (*Ham*, I. 1. 112-124)

In *Julius Caesar*, the reanimation of the dead, who 'squeak and gibber in the Roman streets', foreshadows the civil unrest and political turmoil the assassination will precipitate. This image of the dead is divorced from Elizabethan cosmology; it is a theatrical, neo-classical portent of impending crisis, like the 'stars with trains of fire' and 'the disasters in the sun'. Horatio's speech typifies *Caesar's* use of supernatural elements: they do not frame contemporary debates regarding the existence of ghosts or the nature of the afterlife, but merely presage crisis within the world of the play. The appearance of the ghost of Old Hamlet does not simply '[bode] some strange eruption to [the] state' (*Ham*, I. 1. 68). The suggestion that the ghost is a Purgatorial spirit signals *Hamlet's* direct engagement with post-Reformation issues of death and remembrance. His appearance has implications for the contemporary world beyond the play.

In contrast, the appearance of *Caesar's* ghost does not signal the play's engagement with contemporary debates regarding the existence of spirits. The implications of the apparition are thus confined to the world of the play. In keeping with the use of supernatural tropes throughout the play, *Caesar's* ghost is an ill omen, presaging the defeat of the conspirators. Brutus himself believes the apparition to signify the failure of his enterprise:

The ghost of Caesar hath appeared to me
Two several times by night: at Sardis once,
And this last night, here in Philipp fields:
I know my hour is come. (*JC*, V. 5. 17-20)

Ghosts perform a similar function in *Richard III* (c.1592). The shades of Richard's victims

prefigure his defeat and death at the Battle of Bosworth:

Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd
Came to my tent, and every one did threat
Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.²

The ghosts of Caesar and of Richard's victims do not simply presage their killer's deaths. They represent the continued influence of the past upon the present. In this case, that past is individual to the characters – to Brutus and to Richard. The ghosts emphasise the indelibility of the murderer's past actions, the consequences of which are as inescapable as the ensuing guilt. This idea also underpins the appearance of Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth* (c. 1606). Whilst Brutus lacks the foresight to predict the consequences of his actions, Macbeth does not, though he deeply regrets this fact:

If it were done when `tis done, then `twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success – but that this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all – here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come.³

Banquo's ghost realises Macbeth's fear; he is the manifestation of the 'even-handed justice' that 'commends the ingredience of [Macbeth's] poisoned chalice/To [his] own lips' (*Mac*, I. 7. 10-11). The ghosts in *Julius Caesar*, *Richard III*, and *Macbeth* also emphasise the futility of their killings. Caesar's death does not destroy Caesarism but instead makes the fallen leader invulnerable. Despite, and partly because of, his elimination of all those who stand in his way, Richard cannot maintain a position of power. Macbeth's elimination of Banquo is similarly ineffectual. Since his

² William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series*, ed. by Anthony Hammond (London: Thomson, 2006), V. 3. 205-207. All subsequent citations will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *RIII*, in the text.

³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *The New Penguin Shakespeare*, ed. by G. K. Hunter (London: Penguin, 1987). I. 7. 1-7. All subsequent citations will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *Mac*, in the text.

son Fléance survives, Banquo will still become 'greater' than Macbeth (*Mac*, I. 3. 64); he remains destined to 'get kings' (*Mac*, I. 3. 66) and found a royal dynasty. His killer, on the other hand, will die childless. In addition to representing the continued hold of the individual's past on the present, these ghosts are indications that their murderers' ambitions for, and projected visions of, the future will not come to pass. The implications of the apparitions are confined to the environments of the plays they inhabit.

In each instance, the supernatural encounters are represented as subjective experiences, further confining the ramifications to the respective dramatic landscapes. Brutus is the only character to see the ghost of Caesar; his attendant Lucius sleeps through the incident, as do the soldiers, Claudio and Varro (*JC*, IV. 3. 287). Similarly, in *Macbeth*, it is only the protagonist who can see the ghost of Banquo. In *Richard III*, the ghosts of the tyrant's victims also visit his rival, Richmond (*RIII*, V. 3. 231-234). However, Richard and Richmond are visited separately in their dreams. The supernatural encounters in each of these three plays, then, are presented as private, individual experiences. In each case the emphasis is placed on the consequences of the individual's actions, and on the individual's conscience. The ghost of Old Hamlet, on the other hand, is initially observed by several characters: Hamlet, Horatio, Barnardo, Francisco, and Marcellus. Old Hamlet haunts the community, not just a single individual; his appearance prompts all of the aforementioned characters to question their beliefs. The haunting is a collective experience. This is indicative of the fact that, in this play, it is not any individual's past that is haunting the present but a shared past, a socio-cultural history. The implication that the ghost is a Purgatorial spirit suggests a collective Catholic past. The ramifications of this ghost's appearance are not confined to the world of the play, but are also deeply felt in the world beyond. The collective past embodied by the ghost is shared by Elizabethan audiences. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare examines the impact of religious reform in his own country by representing Elsinore as a reforming, or schismatic, society. His characters are repeatedly placed in situations where they have to confront contentious theological issues, to question their beliefs

regarding the existence of ghosts or consider the most appropriate ways to mourn and commemorate their dead. These scenes reveal that the characters are, like Faustus, caught between conflicting Catholic and Protestant doctrines. Recent critics agree that theological issues are particularly prominent in Elsinore but disagree as to whether the Reformation is already underway or merely looming. Anthony Low suggests that Shakespeare ‘obscures the time’ in which his play is set so that ‘we cannot be sure whether the action [...] takes place before or after the Reformation’.⁴ Mark A. McDonald argues that the play is set just before Denmark breaks with Rome and that ‘the time that is “out of joint” is the circumstance preceding the Reformation’.⁵ The remainder of this chapter will, however, endorse the theory that McDonald posits only to reject; that Claudius’s usurpation of his brother results in a Protestant Reformation in Elsinore.⁶

4.2 ‘To Hold as ’twere the mirror up to Nature’: Representing Reforming Society in *Hamlet*

Eleanor Prosser argues that the purpose of the opening scene is to establish that ‘the Ghost is probably malignant’.⁷ Her view was later echoed in the work of Arthur McGee, who believes it is ‘clear [...] that Shakespeare wishes us to associate the Ghost with demonic agencies and witchcraft’.⁸ These critics argue that the playwright clearly signals the Ghost’s demonic nature to the audience, with the most obvious clues being the fact that the phantom is ‘forced to leave when heaven is invoked’ and later, when the crow of the cock heralds the dawn (*Ham*, I. 1. 50 and I.i.40).⁹ Prosser points to the following passage from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (c. 1590-1595) as proof of Shakespeare’s familiarity with the popular belief that only hellish spirits were banished by the light of the sun:¹⁰

⁴ Anthony Low, ‘Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory: Imitations of Killing the Father’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 29.2 (2008), 443 – 466 (p. 454).

⁵ Mark A. McDonald, ‘On *Hamlet* and the Reformation: “To Show the Very Age and Body of the Time His Form and Pressure”’, 34.3 (2007), 207-274 (p. 227).

⁶ McDonald, ‘On *Hamlet* and the Reformation’, p. 213.

⁷ Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2nd edn. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), p. 122.

⁸ Arthur McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 54.

⁹ Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 119.

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast:
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts wandering here and there
Troop home to churchyards. Damned spirits all,
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone,
For fear lest day should look their shames upon:
They wilfully themselves exil'd from light,
And must for aye consort with black brow'd night.¹¹

The idea that Shakespeare unambiguously depicts the Ghost as a demon from the very beginning is not particularly convincing. For instance, Prosser, stressing that Catholic and Protestant ghost beliefs have more points of similarity than are commonly supposed, states that members of both denominations would 'at least be suspicious of a ghost who appeared on a precipice at midnight, especially if he appeared to a melancholic who thirsted for revenge'.¹² There are at least two points of contention here, both of which indicate that Shakespeare did not intend the Ghost to be instantly and categorically dismissed as a demon. That Old Hamlet first appears, not to his son, but to the sceptic, Horatio, suggests a conscious effort on the part of the author to challenge the Protestant association of ghost sightings with melancholia. This ghost is custom-made to trouble the audience by robbing them of any opportunity to explain him away. Moreover, Hamlet, like *The Spanish Tragedy's* Don Andrea before him, does not '[thirst] for revenge'. His reference to his 'prophetic soul' (*Ham*, I. 5. 40) shows that the Ghost's revelations merely confirm the protagonist's suspicions of his uncle yet, without Old Hamlet's visitation and injunction, it is unlikely he would have acted upon these. Hamlet's natural inclination appears to be towards inaction and he casts himself, not as the righter of wrongs, but as the agonised observer of the corruption and deceit he sees around him: 'It is not, nor it cannot come to good,/But, break my heart, for I must hold my tongue' (*Ham*, I. 2. 158-159).

¹⁰ Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 109.

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series*, ed. by Harold F. Brooks (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), III. 2. 380-388.

¹² Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 111.

Prosser is aware of the implications of her argument and acknowledges that, 'if we could unequivocally pronounce the Ghost a demon and its command a damnable temptation, the tragedy would be destroyed'.¹³ The following section will discuss Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of remembrance in the play in detail. For now, it will suffice to say that it is crucial that the injunction 'remember me' (*Ham*, I. 5. 91) is spoken by the ghost of a father rather than by a demon. In the opening scene, however, it matters not whether the apparition is a 'spirit of health or goblin damned' (*Ham*, I. 4. 40). The main function of the ghost's appearance in this opening scene is to signal Shakespeare's engagement with post-Reformation theology and establish Elsinore as a reforming society. Edward T. Oakes remarks that 'Shakespeare peppered his play with hints and indications that he meant *Hamlet* to be a commentary of the Reformation', and these hints are apparent from the very beginning of the play.¹⁴ The opening line 'Who's there?' (*Ham*, I. 1. 1) immediately suggests the uncertainty and confusion of a society in transition. This sense of disorientation is compounded by the fact that the first twenty lines are dedicated to establishing the identities of others, creating an atmosphere of tension and unease. The fact that 'Long live the King' (*Ham*, I. 1. 3) has become a kind of password also insinuates that this society has recently witnessed a radical change that has forced its inhabitants to reassess their loyalties and prove their allegiances. That this transformative event is not merely the establishment of a new monarchy but of a new religion is also strongly implied by the opening line. Barnardo's question does not just indicate general uncertainty and confusion but suggests that there is a particular dilemma regarding the nature of the afterlife and the existence of ghosts. This is promptly confirmed by the revelation that the guards' discomfort and anxiety has been caused by an apparition.

The guards' apprehension and agitation is conveyed through their manner of speech.

The play's opening sequence consists of a series of clipped, anxious half-lines:

¹³ Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 143.

¹⁴ Edward T. Oakes, 'Hamlet and the Reformation: The Prince of Denmark as Young Man Luther', *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 13.1 (2010), 53-78 (pp. 57-58).

Francisco: I think I hear them. Stand ho, who is there?
Horatio: Friends to this ground.
Marcellus: And liegemen to the Dane.
Francisco: Give you goodnight. (*Ham*, I. 1. 18-21)

Significantly, just when the characters establish a regular iambic rhythm and embark upon a consistent narrative, the Ghost appears, causing the narrative to rupture and resulting in a return to confusion and chaos, once again signalled by half-lines:

Marcellus: It is offended.
Barnardo: See, it stalk away.
Horatio: Stay, speak, speak, I charge thee speak.
Marcellus: 'Tis gone and will not answer. (*Ham*. I. 1. 49-51)

Shakespeare's engagement with theological controversies is not wholly undisguised. For instance, he has the guards provide less objectionable explanations for the ghost's appearance in this scene and focuses attention on Old Hamlet's role as a portent to signal political unrest and impending warfare: 'This bodes some strange eruption to our state' (*Ham*, I. 1. 68). As the scene unfolds, however, it becomes harder to ignore the fact that the narrative the guards and their society as a whole are trying to establish is Protestantism. Protestantism is the narrative that is ruptured by the appearance of the Ghost. Old Hamlet, long before his revelations about Purgatory, is an emblem of the Catholic past, the ghost that continues to haunt both Elsinore and England. Shakespeare's deployment and portrayal of the Ghost in this scene is, therefore, crucial to his establishment of Elsinore as a schismatic society.

The names Shakespeare attributes to the guards hints at Elsinore's past. Referring to Francisco and Barnardo, McGee argues that 'Shakespeare's first audience would [...] have been aware of the foreign names of the sentries – Italian or Spanish and certainly Catholic'.¹⁵ However, the unveiling of Elsinore as a reforming society is gradual and can be most clearly charted with reference to the character of Horatio. A pragmatic scholar from Wittenberg, a fact

¹⁵ McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet*, p. 48.

that is immediately suggestive in its own right, he is introduced as an archetypal Protestant. His scepticism is immediately apparent: 'Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy/And will not let belief take hold of him' (*Ham*, I. 1. 22-23). He also appears scornful and dismissive of his companions, covertly accusing them of superstition and credulousness: 'Tush, tush, 'twill not appear' (*Ham*, I. 1. 29). However, Shakespeare's portrayal of the sceptic's 'conversion' from doubt to acceptance is more complex and subtle than Horatio simply having to accept the Ghost's existence on account of 'the sensible and true avouch/Of [his] own eyes' (*Ham*, I. 1. 56-57). When Marcellus recounts the belief that 'no spirit dare stir abroad' during 'that season [...] /Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated', Horatio replies: 'So have I heard and do in part believe it' (*Ham* I. 1. 157-164). That 'in part' is the second clear indication that Horatio's beliefs are not as clear-cut as they first appear. The first comes when Horatio confronts Old Hamlet and it becomes evident that, despite appearances, he has not been able to fully rid himself of the Catholic beliefs he once held. Tellingly, he demands of the Ghost:

If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
 Speak to me.
 If there be any good thing to be done
 That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
 Speak to me. (*Ham*, I. 1. 127-131)

Thus it is Horatio, the apparent sceptic, who first considers the possibility that the Ghost is a Purgatorial spirit. His request that Old Hamlet speak if anything may do him 'ease' may be read as an expression of the Catholic belief that the living might alleviate the suffering of the dead, a notion quashed by the Protestants' abolition of Purgatory. As Prosser notes, the suggestion is 'so subtle that it would pass a rigorous Anglican censor, but it suffices'.¹⁶ The suggestion that Horatio was raised a Catholic in turn implies that his scepticism and pragmatism are mere affectations designed to enforce his image of intellectual superiority in comparison to his superstitious, parochial companions. The appearance of the Ghost in this opening scene thus serves to demonstrate the lingering uncertainty and indeterminacy that follows a religious schism.

¹⁶ Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 123.

Both individuals and the societies to which they belong are constantly forced to suppress pre-existing beliefs and to question whether they have truly got it right this time.

The decision to introduce a ghost into Saxo Grammaticus's tale of the Danish prince, and to have this ghost encountered by the play's human characters, appears to have been taken by the unknown author of the *Ur-Hamlet*. Thomas Lodge describes how the spectre confronted the protagonist and cried 'like an oyster-wife Hamlet revenge'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, this is all in keeping with Shakespeare's deployment of supernatural tropes elsewhere in his works: in *Julius Caesar* and *Richard III*, for example. He is the only playwright considered in this thesis who does not confine ghosts to separate frameworks and have his human characters remain ignorant of their presence. The previous section has shown how Shakespeare capitalises on the decision taken by his predecessor so that he can use the guards' encounter with the Ghost to establish Elsinore as a reforming society. Of course, Old Hamlet represents the ghost of England's Catholic past as well as Elsinore's, and Shakespeare's depiction of him signals his intention to 'hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature' and show 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (*Ham*, III. 2. 21-24). For instance, Heywood's translation of *Thyestes* initiated a trend for assigning ghosts, and other supernatural beings, dramaturgical roles. In *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, Gorlois delivers the Prologue and the Epilogue; Andrea, accompanied by Revenge, performs a similar role in *The Spanish Tragedy* and also functions as a Chorus. This technique neutralises Elizabethan stage ghosts by drawing attention to their status as dramatic devices or theatrical constructs and is thus a way for playwrights to deploy supernatural tropes without having to engage in contemporary controversies about the existence of ghosts or the nature of the afterlife. Emphasising the neo-classical origins of these ghosts by placing them in a Senecan or Virgilian underworld also distances these figures from contemporary reality. Indeed, Peter Marshall has observed that 'Most dramatists who placed ghosts on the stage did not unduly agonize over their precise ontological status, or they evaded sensitive theological issues by

¹⁷ Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare Vol. VII* (London: New York: Routledge; Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 24.

rationalizing them as spirits from Hades in the Senecan tradition'.¹⁸ This carefully constructed sense of theatricality and artificiality makes clear the fact that these ghosts are operating within what Prosser describes as a 'play world'. She further notes that, in *Hamlet*, 'no comfortable figure steps forward to speak the Prologue' in order to help the audience adjust to such a world.¹⁹ Thus, even before his revelations about Purgatory, the Ghost of Old Hamlet is closer to contemporary reality and, consequently, more unsettling, than his predecessors. Other Shakespearean ghosts – Banquo, Caesar, the victims of Richard III – are similarly removed from contemporary reality, as I have demonstrated. They haunt individuals, forcing them to examine their consciences and confront the indelibility of their past actions. *Hamlet's* original audiences are invited to see beyond the theatrical experience, to see their own society reflected in that of Elsinore. Contemporary audiences are haunted by the ghost as much as the play's protagonists are; audiences are also encouraged to question and re-evaluate their own beliefs. However, Old Hamlet's intrusion into the main action of the play, coupled with his Purgatorial origins, cannot be taken as evidence that Shakespeare is providing a definitive answer regarding the nature of the afterlife and the existence of ghosts. Instead, he merely suggests a plethora of possibilities, of which the Ghost is only one. This apparent confirmation of the existence of both ghosts and Purgatory is challenged by contrasting depictions of the afterlife elsewhere in the play. As a result of these competing narratives, the Ghost becomes increasingly isolated and marginalised. The remainder of this section will demonstrate that Old Hamlet is as just as segregated from the rest of the play he inhabits as Andrea and Gorlois are: he is confined to an 'invisible' framework.

Anthony Low points to the Ghost's claims to have died unshriven (*Ham*, I. 5. 77-80) as confirmation of Old Hamlet's Catholicism; the religion of his son, he observes, 'remains indeterminate'.²⁰ This indeterminacy is largely responsible for the conflicting representations of the afterlife which ultimately isolate the Ghost, and is immediately apparent in Hamlet's initial

¹⁸ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 257-258.

¹⁹ Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 97.

²⁰ Low, 'Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory', p. 453.

reactions to the news of the guards' encounters with Old Hamlet. To begin with, the protagonist adopts the more sceptical, cautious approach of Horatio and Barnardo. The former's references to the Ghost are at first dismissive and vague: he describes it as 'this thing' (*Ham*, I. 1. 20) and then as an 'illusion' (*Ham*, I. 1. 126). Even when he appears more credulous, Horatio falls short of describing the apparition as Old Hamlet's ghost and remains circumspect. He refers to 'our last King/Whose *image* even but now appeared to us' (*Ham*, I. 1. 79-80; my emphasis) and tells Hamlet of his encounter with 'a figure *like* your father' (*Ham*, I. 2. 198; my emphasis). Barnardo, too, exercises a similar caution, noting that the apparition appears 'in the same figure like the King that's dead' (*Ham*, I. 1. 40). At first, Hamlet appears to share his friends' reservations, assuring them that: 'if [the apparition] assume my noble father's person/I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape/And bid me hold my peace' (*Ham*, I. 2. 242-244). Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor note Hamlet's use of a theatrical analogy in these lines. The possibility that the phantom might 'assume' the role of his father conveys scepticism: this may be an imposter. Like Horatio and Barnardo before him, Hamlet is 'cautious about the Ghost's relationship to his father'.²¹ The possibility that 'hell itself' might 'gape' when Hamlet confronts the apparition further implies the protagonist's cynicism: 'Hamlet may [...] be indicating that he is prepared to risk damnation by conversing with a spirit who could be a devil'.²² Hamlet is coming close to demonstrating a Protestant mindset here by intimating that 'any ghost that was not the hallucination of a sick mind was a demon masquerading as the spirit of a dead man in order to tempt the living'.²³ That he is prepared to risk the wrath of hell, however, is also indicative of Hamlet's hope that this apparition is not a demon and thus suggests that he is, in the manner of Horatio and his 'partial' beliefs, not entirely sceptical. Indeed, once he is left alone, the protagonist exclaims 'my father's spirit – in arms!' (*Ham*, I. 2. 253), thereby connecting the apparition to his father with considerable certainty. Yet this sense of conviction is merely fleeting. Within two scenes, Hamlet is already reconsidering the possibility that the Ghost is a

²¹ Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, eds. *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series*, (London: Cengage, 2006), p. 187.

²² Thompson and Taylor, *Hamlet*, p. 187.

²³ Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 102.

‘goblin damned’ (*Ham*, I. 4. 40). He later feels the need to test the Ghost’s authenticity, a need that is underpinned by an adherence to Protestant doctrine: ‘the spirit that I have seen/May be a de’il, and the de’il hath power/T’assume a pleasing shape’ (*Ham*, II. 2. 533-535).

The character of Hamlet thus provides a neat counterpoint to that of Horatio: whilst an analysis of the opening scene demonstrates the latter’s inability to abandon his Catholic faith completely, the former is unable to renounce the new faith entirely, despite the challenge the Ghost presents to Protestant teaching. The protagonist ricochets between two conflicting doctrines: as in *Doctor Faustus*, it is the doctrinal multiplicity of post-Reformation society that leads to uncertainty and confusion. Indeed, Oakes’ description of Hamlet as ‘a Christian of a peculiar type: one torn between two rival versions of Christian eschatology, Catholic and Lutheran’ can, as this thesis has already shown, also be applied to Faustus.²⁴ The opening scene shows the Ghost throwing down his challenge to the new religion; the remainder of the play documents his failure to impose himself upon a society that continues to disown and deny him. The Ghost has returned to a world with which he is now out of step and he is gradually written out of the play’s discourse on the afterlife. Low’s argument that ‘Purgatory is not just abolished but effectively forgotten, as if it never were’ is perhaps too strongly worded, given Horatio’s subtle allusion to the notion that the living may alleviate the suffering of the dead and Ophelia’s prayer for ‘all Christian souls’ (*Ham*, IV. 5. 192). However, there is, on the part of the protagonist in particular, a persistent refusal to incorporate the Ghost and his testimony into the cosmology of the play. Low notes, for instance, that, although there are no specific references to Purgatory, ‘in several places there are significant absences, where the word would seem to be appropriate’.²⁵ Hamlet’s references to the afterlife are strictly, uncompromisingly binary. His assertion that the Ghost may be ‘a spirit of health or a goblin damned’ and may bring ‘airs from heaven or blasts from hell’ (*Ham*, I. 4. 40-41) allows for no third possibility. Furthermore, he later claims to have been ‘prompted to [his] revenge by heaven and hell’ (*Ham*, II. 2. 519) as if, suggests Low, ‘he is

²⁴ Oakes, ‘Hamlet and the Reformation’, p. 61.

²⁵ Low, ‘Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory’, p. 459.

repressing the real source of his prompting'.²⁶

The Ghost's appearance, then, does remarkably little to inform the play's overall representation of death and the afterlife; for the most part, the former equals annihilation and the latter uncertainty. In his 'to be or not to be speech' (*Ham*, III. 1. 55-87), Hamlet reveals that he is unable to summon the courage to take his own life because he is too anxious and uncertain about what might lie beyond it. The afterlife is unknowable:

to die: to sleep –
To sleep, perchance to dream – ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. (*Ham*, III. 1. 63-67)

The beyond is also described as 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn/No traveller returns' (*Ham*, III. 1. 78-79). However, Hamlet's father has returned and given his son a detailed account of his experiences in Purgatory. The Ghost thus becomes something of an anomaly, isolated from the rest of the play. Its appearance does not convince Hamlet of anything or provide him with any answers. The depiction of a ghost in the play does not add up to an endorsement of their existence; it merely hints at a further possibility.

The notion that 'no traveller returns' informs the play's portrayal of death far more than the appearance of the Ghost does. Rather paradoxically for a play containing such a prominent supernatural element, *Hamlet* frequently emphasises the insurmountable distance between the living and the dead and represents death as annihilation. The protagonist's last line, 'the rest is silence' (*Ham* V. 2. 342), is particularly suggestive of the finality of death. His comment that 'no man of aught he leaves knows what it is to leave betimes' (*Ham*, V. 2. 197-201) further implies a complete severance between the living and the deceased, as well as a lack of liminality between

²⁶ Low, 'Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory', p. 459.

the material world and the realm of the departed. Moreover, in her distracted grief over the death of her father, Ophelia dwells on the physical nature of death instead of reflecting on the possibility of a spiritual afterlife, as the following examples illustrate:

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone.
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone. (*Ham*, IV. 5. 29-32)

I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i'th' cold ground. (*Ham*, IV. 5. 68-69)

They bore him bare-faced on the bier
And in his grave rained many a tear. (*Ham*, IV. 5. 160-161)

And will 'a not come again?
And will 'a not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy deathbed.
He will never come again. (*Ham*, IV. 5. 182-186)

Ophelia's persistent emphasis on funeral and burial implies that, in the absence of intercessory prayer, such rituals now mark the end of the relationship between the living and the dead. The phrases 'dead and gone' and 'never come again' also intimate that death is more 'final' than the Ghost's appearance suggests; that the distance between the realms of the quick and the dead is wider and less surmountable. Again, *Old Hamlet* does not offer an automatic confirmation of the nature of the afterlife: there is no 'official line'. The Gravedigger's song also represents death as annihilation or obliteration:

But age with his stealing steps
Hath clawed me in his clutch
And hath shipped me into the land
As If I had never been such. (*Ham*, V. 1. 67-70)

The songs of Ophelia and the Gravedigger, along with Hamlet's soliloquy, are all responses to

Protestant doctrine regarding death and the afterlife and reflect the ‘effectual displacement of the dead as a distinct age-group’ in post-Reformation society and the way in which this ‘seemed to place the dead beyond the help or intercession of their survivors’.²⁷ Old Hamlet’s ‘yearning for remembrance’,²⁸ his fear of being forgotten, is also a response to this. The Ghost has been displaced by society: he is no longer part of an ‘age group’ and Purgatory has been denied, putting him beyond the reach and assistance of his survivors. Old Hamlet’s return to earth convinces his son of nothing: society has moved on and the ghost is, consequently, doomed to exist in a vacuum outside of the cosmology of the play. He is a remnant of the past returning to a present that no longer holds a place for him; a Catholic ghost haunting a newly Protestant court which denies, disowns and, eventually, forgets him.

4.3 ‘Maimed rites’: Mourning and commemorative ritual in *Hamlet*

At this point, it is important to remember Naomi Conn Liebler’s assertion that, in tragedy, ‘ritual is always present in a perverted, inverted, or aborted form, or is suggested to the audience’s mind by a reminder of its absence’.²⁹ This thesis has already shown this to be true of *Titus Andronicus*, in which funerary practice is constantly distorted or omitted as a form of punishment in order to demonstrate the lack of distinction between Roman and Barbarian. In *Hamlet*, too, the reduction and defilement of ritual mourning and commemorative practice reflects the corruption of the court and is one of the main indications that ‘something is rotten in the state of Denmark’ (*Ham*, I. 4. 90).

The dramatic tension of Act I, Scene ii stems solely from the conflict that arises from the confusion and conflation of ‘appropriate performances’ of grief and mourning.³⁰ The rites of

²⁷ Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 244.

²⁸ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 243.

²⁹ Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy: The ritual foundations of genre* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 27.

³⁰ Liebler, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy*, p. 27.

commemoration that follow Old Hamlet's passing are at once perverted, inverted and aborted when Claudius conflates – and effectively curtails – the period of mourning with a celebration of his marriage to Gertrude. This unseemly conflation is symbolised by the image of 'an auspicious and a dropping eye' (*Ham*, I. 2. 11), though the sense of aberration is best encapsulated by the contrariness and confusion inherent in the new king's resolution to observe 'mirth in funeral and [...] dirge in marriage' (*Ham*, I. 2. 11). Hamlet recognises this perversion and gives voice to the accompanying sense of impropriety when he jokes to Horatio that 'the funeral baked meats/Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables' (*Ham*, I. 2. 179-178). This remark also hints at the abortive nature of these rituals, as does the protagonist's claim that his mother's remarriage has come 'A little month, or e'er those shoes were old/With which she followed my poor father's body/Like Niobe, all tears' (*Ham*, I. 2. 147-149).

Although less intrinsic to the plot, there is something equally improper, deficient and diminished about the manner of Polonius's burial. Not only is he interred in 'hugger-mugger' fashion (*Ham*, IV. 5. 84), given an 'obscure funeral' (*Ham*, IV. 5. 205) and denied both 'noble rite' and 'formal ostentation' (*Ham*, IV. 5. 207), but Hamlet's quip that the dead minister is 'At supper [...] Not where he eats but where `a is eaten' (*Ham*, IV. 3. 17-19) recalls the distorted rituals and punitive, darkly comic mock-internments of *Titus*. Hamlet not only robs Polonius of his life but also his dignity, diminishing his status as a result; this recalls the way in which the Andronici reinforce the image of the Barbarians as 'Other' by denying them burial rites. The reduction of commemorative ritual also effects Ophelia's punishment in *Hamlet*: because she is believed to have taken her own life, she is permitted only 'maimed rites' (*Ham* V. 1. 208).

Although *Hamlet* offers support to Liebler's theory that tragedy is partially defined by its representation of the poisoning, inversion, or absence of ritual, the play's depiction of the aberration of mourning ritual and commemorative practice is far more than a coincidental by-product of its genre. Indeed, in the aftermath of religious reform, tragedy's emphasis on the

debasement and truncation of ritualised mourning takes on greater significance and becomes unavoidably resonant. In *Titus Andronicus*, the impact of the Reformation is merely a referent, a signifier. The characters' distortion of commemorative rituals evokes the Protestants' secularisation of mortuary culture, but does not consider its ramifications.

In *Hamlet*, however, Shakespeare devotes the opening scene to establishing Elsinore as a schismatic society, thereby signalling his intention to confront theological controversies directly and to examine the impact of the Reformation explicitly. The inversion and perversion of commemorative practice in this play, therefore, has a very specific purpose and context. The function of these 'maimed rites' goes beyond merely defining Claudius's court as corrupt and establishing the world of the play as a recognisably 'tragic' universe; they are also the means by which Shakespeare reinforces the parallel of Elsinore with Elizabethan England and considers the effects wrought by the reformers' abolition of ritualised mourning. Historicist techniques can, therefore, be applied effectively to *Hamlet*, in a way that they cannot be to *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*.

The Inns of Court dramas discussed in this thesis participate in contemporary political debates whilst evading theological controversies. Additionally, these plays address themes like mourning and mortality in neutral, universal terms, rather than within the specific content of the Reformation. *Gismond of Salerne* considers two issues also prominent in *Hamlet*: the length of time for which it is appropriate to mourn, and apposite expressions of grief. In *Gismond*, however, these issues are not theologically topical; they do not address specific post-schismatic concerns. When the heroine laments her late husband, the emphasis is placed on the wider theme of the transience of existence, rather than on the more suggestive topic of the reduction of ritualised remembrance stressed in *Hamlet*: 'Oh vaine unsteadfast state of mortall things!/Who trustes the world doeth leane to brittle stay' (*Gismond*, I. 2. 1-2). These lines also show how play is further distanced from contemporary reality, and from contemporary theological debates in particular,

by its reliance on the *de casibus* themes of medieval tragedy. The dramatic landscape of *Gismond* is entirely divorced from sixteenth-century England. In *Hamlet*, however, Elsinore functions as a microcosm of post-Reformation society; the glass which reflects the impact of the reform of ritualised mourning on Elizabethan society.

Although indeterminacy and inconsistency define Hamlet's religious beliefs elsewhere in the play, he assumes the recusant position in Act I, Scene 2. The protagonist becomes the device by which the author demonstrates his own 'awareness of the impact of the Reformation on the old religion'.³¹ Hamlet thus reflects the playwright's understanding that the religious schism 'had drastic consequences for society and for the individuals who formed and were formed by society'.³² Mark A. McDonald, however, reverses the argument presented in this thesis by suggesting that the play is concerned with circumstances immediately preceding, rather than following, a Protestant Reformation. He also asserts that it is Claudius who represents the corruption and ostentation of the Catholic Church, and Hamlet who symbolises the unaffected sincerity offered by Lutheranism. The claim for Claudius's Catholicism is based on rather circumstantial evidence: his mercenary watchmen, the carousing that gives Denmark a bad reputation, his enmity towards a prince from Wittenberg, and the fact that, like the Pope, he has a Swiss Guard. That the Denmark of the play has an elective monarchy is also of significance to McDonald, who considers this Shakespearean addition to signify 'another parallel with the Papacy'.³³

There is a great deal of evidence to contradict these assertions, not least that it is Claudius who interrupts and curtails a period of ritualised commemoration and denounces Hamlet's desire to continue in mourning as 'unmanly', 'an act of impious stubbornness' (*Ham*, I. 2. 94). Furthermore, Stephen Greenblatt notes how Claudius 'usurps not only the kingship but

³¹ Oakes, 'Hamlet and the Reformation', p. 64.

³² Low, 'Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory', p. 447.

³³ McDonald, 'On Hamlet and the Reformation', p. 216.

also the language of Protestant mourning', preaching the same message that the reformers had used in their attempts to 'wean their flock away from Purgatory and prayers for the dead and obstinate condolment'.³⁴ Indeed, the opening passages of this scene signal the new king's intention to detach himself from his late brother, and reflect his desire to consign Old Hamlet to the past. This is communicated by the fact that Claudius spends only seven of these first thirty-nine lines reflecting on his 'dear brother's death' (*Ham*, I. 2. 1) before going on to discuss the subject of his marriage, as well as other matters of state. Of course, Claudius is taking this stance because, like most murderous usurpers, he wishes to banish the memory of the previous reign and ensure allegiance to his own. Yet his attitude towards the deceased also suggests a Protestant mindset. His apparent dismissal of his brother's memory reflects the fact that, following the Reformation, the dead were no longer an 'age group' in society as they had been during the late Middle Ages: just as there is no place for the deceased in Elizabethan society, so is there no place for the memory of Old Hamlet in Elsinore. Additionally, the Protestant Reformation's abolition of ritualised mourning robbed the laity of the tools they had previously used to negate their grief. Similarly, Claudius's actions in this scene result in 'the disruption or poisoning of virtually all rituals for managing grief, allaying personal and collective anxiety, and restoring order'.³⁵ Hamlet is offered no comfort and his father no prayers; the former is merely reminded that the 'death of fathers' is a 'common theme' (*Ham*, I. 2. 103-6). Claudius's implicit contempt for the futility of ritualised mourning also reflects the reformist notion that the fate of the dead is non-negotiable. The possibility that Old Hamlet might be in Purgatory is not even considered in this newly Protestant court: the Ghost's fear of being forgotten is justified.

Mark McDonald's case for viewing Hamlet as a reformist is equally unconvincing. He suggests that the protagonist's insistence that there is more to his grief than the 'trappings and the suits of woe' (*Ham*, I. 2. 86) is rooted in the doctrine of *sola fides*, and thus functions as a critique of the hollowness of Catholic ritual. This interpretation can be countered with reference

³⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 247-248.

³⁵ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p. 247.

to Thomas Rist, who makes the more convincing claim that Hamlet is a recusant. Analysing the same passage, Rist concludes that Hamlet's claims that his 'suits of woe' do not 'alone' denote him puts forward the argument against 'reductive claims that ceremonial mourning is empty'.³⁶ It is not just these lines but the scene in its entirety that disputes the claims that ritualised mourning is entirely without purpose. Shakespeare uses Hamlet to examine the function of commemorative ritual and to portray the traumatic effects of its abolition.

Michael Neill picks up on Claudius's phrase 'To do obsequious sorrow' (*Ham*, I. 2. 92) as an indicator of his rather callous attitude towards ritualised commemoration and believes that he, like Titus, uses such displays as instruments of propaganda: 'For Claudius, tellingly, sorrow is not something to feel but something to "do" – a thing to be paraded in public, and then to be discarded like a funeral posy. Ritual for him, serves as a way of burying the past'.³⁷ The play itself endorses these claims to an extent: the coldness and hollowness implicit in Claudius's references to 'mourning duties' and 'filial obligation' (*Ham*, I. 2. 88-91) show that, to him, ritualised remembrance is merely a performance, a case of going through the motions. Yet if the new king does see this process as a 'way of burying the past' then he is right, for 'remembrance' is a misleading term. As Jean-Claude Schmitt notes, the purpose true of ritualised mourning was to 'help the living separate from the dead, to shorten the latter's stay in purgatorial punishment (or in purgatory), and finally enable the living to forget the deceased'.³⁸ Schmitt elaborates on this paradox, stating that commemorative ritual, or *memoria*,

was a social technique of forgetting. Its function was to 'cool off' the memory of the deceased until the memory became indistinct. A classifying technique, the *memoria*, put the dead in their rightful place so that the living, if they should happen to recall the names of the dead, could do so without fear or emotion.³⁹

³⁶ Thomas Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 61.

³⁷ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 301.

³⁸ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 6.

³⁹ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, p. 6.

In Act I, Scene ii, Hamlet seems condemned to exist in a state of ‘unprevailing woe’ (*Ham*, I. 2. 107) because the rituals that would have allowed him to allay his grief and detach himself from his father have been abolished. Nigel Alexander notes that ‘from the beginning of the play Hamlet’s remembrance of his father has been contrasted with the forgetfulness practised by the rest of the court’.⁴⁰ Yet this state of affairs is unwelcome to Hamlet. John Kerrigan notes that the protagonist’s desire to forget his father is symbolised by the ambiguous motif of his inky cloak: ‘a mark of respect for his father, it also indicates his desire eventually to detach himself from him’.⁴¹

Furthermore, Hamlet’s remembrance of his father is involuntary, something that assaults, torments and burdens him, rather than an act he indulges in: ‘Heaven and earth,/Must I remember?’ (*Ham* I. 2. 142-3). Hamlet’s plight is representative of that of the post-Reformation laity who, robbed of the means to separate themselves from their dead by assisting them in the afterlife and thus fulfilling their obligations to them, found themselves loaded ‘with an intolerable burden of remembrance’.⁴² Hamlet’s predicament also lends credence to Natalie Zemon Davis’s speculation that ‘the ending of Purgatory and ritual mourning [...] may have left Protestants [...] less removed from their parents, more alone with their memories, [and] more vulnerable to the prick of the past’.⁴³ Paradoxically, it is the Ghost’s demand for vengeance that provides Hamlet with the opportunity to relieve himself of the burden of his father’s memory. The next section of this chapter will demonstrate that, following the abolition of ritualised commemoration in Elsinore, vengeance replaces remembrance as the means by which Hamlet can ‘lay [the] perturbed [spirit] to rest, and thereby free [himself] from the insistent presence of the past’.⁴⁴ Old Hamlet’s dual requests for vengeance and remembrance result in an irreconcilable conflict and, ultimately, enable his obliteration.

Laertes functions as a counterpoint to Hamlet and he, too, expresses indignation at what

⁴⁰ Nigel Alexander, ‘Hamlet and the Art of Memory’, *Notes and Queries*, 15 (1968), 137-138 (p. 138).

⁴¹ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 183.

⁴² Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 244.

⁴³ Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘Ghosts, Kin and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France’, *Daedalus*, 106 (1977), 87-114, (p. 96).

⁴⁴ Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 246.

he perceives to be the ignoble burials of his father, Polonius, and sister, Ophelia. However, Laertes's fury at the lack of ceremony accompanying the burial of his kin misleadingly suggests that he, like Hamlet, is railing against the abolition of ritual mourning. That this is not the case demonstrates that, even when 'the absence of a fully performed, un-obscured and ritual funeral is the cause of rebellion', it does not necessarily mean that the 'rebel' in question is a recusant.⁴⁵ Indeed, Laertes stands out amongst the younger generation of major characters as the only one who never shows signs of a Catholic upbringing. Horatio and Hamlet do, as this chapter has already discussed, as does Ophelia when she utters the kind of prayer for 'all Christians' souls' that was censored by the reformers (*Ham*, IV. 5. 192). In contrast, her brother takes his place amongst the Protestant elite. His reformist tendencies become apparent when he expresses his fury over his father's 'obscure funeral' (*Ham*, IV. 5. 205). He complains, for instance, that Polonius has 'No trophy, sword nor hatchment o'er his bones' (*Ham*, IV. 5. 206). The imagery here is heraldic, and this suggests that Laertes' anger stems from the fact that his father has not been accorded a burial or a memorial befitting an individual of his status and nobility. Newly Protestant Elsinore is, therefore, reminiscent of Titus's Rome: here, too, the funeral is now a secular, heraldic practice concerned with the presentation and preservation of a highly idealised image of the deceased. The survivors celebrate the achievements and emphasise the status of the departed, distinguishing their dead in order to distinguish themselves.

The secularisation of commemorative practice in Elsinore is observed by Hamlet himself when, just by witnessing Ophelia's interment from a distance, he is able to ascertain her status, as well as gather circumstances of her death: 'This doth betoken/The corpse they follow did with desperate hand/Fordo its own life. 'Twas of some estate' (*Ham*, V. 1. 207-210). That Hamlet is able to deduce this information confirms that the funeral, and the monument, has become a signifier of social status. Moreover, here, as in *Titus*, permitting only 'maimed rites' (*Ham*, V. 1.

⁴⁵ Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration*, p. 70.

207) to the deceased has become both a form of social demarcation – Ophelia’s suicide ‘others’ her – and a means of punishment. In *Titus*, Tamora and Aaron’s punishment is enacted by the way in which the construction and representation of their social bodies slips from their control into that of their enemies. In *Hamlet*, it is Laertes who suffers the consequences of his sister’s actions; he is punished in her stead when he is denied responsibility over how Ophelia is remembered. His resentment of the minimal nature of Ophelia’s burial - ‘Must there no more be done?’ (*Ham*, V. 1. 224) - does not equate to an ‘open demand [...] for Roman Catholic rites for the dead’.⁴⁶ The cause of Laertes’s indignation is the fact that the image of Ophelia conveyed by the ‘maimed rites’ of her burial service conflicts with, and undermines, his vision of his sister as a ‘ministering angel’ (*Ham*, V. 1. 230). Furthermore, the lack of ceremony and dignity accorded to Ophelia taints, rather than distinguishes, Laertes and impacts negatively upon the honour and status of his family.

4.4 ‘Whiles memory holds a seat in this distracted globe’: The conditional nature of memory in *Hamlet*

This chapter has so far demonstrated *Hamlet*’s explicit and sustained engagement with contemporary theology. Elsinore, as a parallel schismatic society, is the ‘mirror’ that is held up to Elizabethan England in order to reflect and examine the impact of the Protestant Reformation on approaches to death, mourning and commemoration (*Ham* III. 2. 21-24). The traumatic effects of these reforms are, for the most part, illustrated by two characters from either side of the divide between the material world and the afterlife: Hamlet and the Ghost. The former serves to demonstrate how the schism has complicated and aggravated the grieving process by robbing survivors of the means to relieve themselves of their burdens towards their deceased and, thereby, detach themselves from them. The Ghost – a tellingly unambiguous Purgatorial spirit rather than a more commonplace neo-classical spectre – is a product of the unease of a generation of survivors forced to deny the existence of Purgatory and unable to assist their dead

⁴⁶ Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration*, p. 72.

in the afterlife. For a contemporary audience traumatised by the abolition of Purgatory, Old Hamlet, with his profound fear of being forgotten, presents something of a worst case scenario and embodies the neglect anxiety projected by the living onto the deceased.

Within a theological context, the play justifies the fears of the living and the imagined anxieties of the dead by suggesting that the Protestant Reformation in Elsinore has a crucial role in effecting the Ghost's gradual marginalisation and eventual effacement. Following the break with Rome, the deceased were no longer considered to be an age group as they had been in late medieval Catholic societies. The Reformation thereby severed the connections between past and present, living and dead, which the belief in Purgatory had previously maintained. The fate of the Ghost illustrates the effects of such a change: the religious schism has disenfranchised Old Hamlet, robbing him of a place in, or connection to, the present and consigning him to the past. It must be noted, however, that the aim of ritualised mourning was to ensure a non-traumatic, gradual severance of the connection between the survivors and the deceased. It is this which sets father and son into conflict: the latter desires to detach from the former but lacks the means to do so in a newly Protestant court and the father seeks to prevent this separation and have his son remain in the state of perpetual mourning that will best sustain his memory. Although this chapter stresses throughout that *Hamlet* is an evaluation of the traumatic effects of the reform of commemorative culture, Shakespeare's consideration of the theme of remembrance also functions independently of his engagement with contemporary theology and is more extensive and complex. The play does examine ways in which the religious schism has complicated and compromised remembrance, but it does not hold these changes wholly accountable for the Ghost's obliteration. The effects of the Protestant Reformation are vividly documented, but are ultimately shown to be incidental to Old Hamlet's fate. The nature of memory, the play stresses, has always been flawed: vulnerable to human frailty and the ravages of time, it is conditional, unreliable and under constant threat of erasure. As informed by post-Reformation conflict as it undoubtedly is, the play nevertheless shows that, religious schism or no, the Ghost's annihilation

is inevitable: in demanding permanent remembrance, he demands the impossible.

The contingent nature of memory is an oft-repeated refrain throughout *Hamlet*. The protagonist's reaction to the Ghost's injunction introduces this theme and strikes a keynote that immediately signals that in this play, and not merely because of the recent religious upheaval, memory will be depicted as something complicated, unreliable and, most crucially, finite. Hamlet's response to his father's request demonstrates his immediate awareness of the impossibility of the task he has been set:

Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records ... (*Ham*, I. 5. 95-99)

Hamlet's promise to devote himself obsessively to the remembrance of his father is offset and undermined by his anxious, almost frantic repetition of 'Remember thee?', which evokes a sense of dread combined with incredulity and suggests he is mindful of the fact that the Ghost is seeking the unattainable. The protagonist's perception of memory's ephemeral quality is encapsulated by his use of the conditional phrase 'whiles memory holds a seat/In this distracted globe', a phrase that defines the play's representation of memory. The 'distracted globe' is a dual metaphor that symbolises, on the one hand, Hamlet's state of mind and the idea that remembrance is competing with several preoccupations and emotions at any given time, all of which are finite in nature. On the other hand, the metaphor also refers to the world itself, 'distracted' because it is innately chaotic and in a constant state of flux. The Ghost's request for remembrance is also a demand for stasis: in order to secure his position in the present and assure his place in the future, he requires his son to remain in a state of perpetual mourning and for the world to cease changing in his absence.

The play stresses at regular intervals that the implausibility of the Ghost's demands, the

fact that he is excluded from the present and future, is as attributable to memory's vulnerability to time and the fleeting nature of human emotion as it is to the fact that Old Hamlet is the remnant of a Catholic past with no recognised place in a Protestant society. This idea is given particular emphasis during the play-within-a-play, which Kerrigan views as an act of remembrance; an instance of self-indulgent wallowing on Hamlet's part that purposefully delays the act of vengeance.⁴⁷ Indeed, *The Mousetrap* is undeniably preoccupied with remembrance, though significantly, it is with acknowledging the unrealistic nature of the Ghost's request that the whole episode is fixated. The Player King's speech contains three references to the nature of memory that recall, clarify, and reaffirm the ideas introduced by Hamlet's 'distracted globe' metaphor:

Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity. (*Ham*, III. 2. 182-3)

Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
That passion ending doth the purpose lose. (*Ham*, III. 2. 186-9)

This world is not for aye, nor 'tis strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change ... (*Ham*, III. 2. 194-5)

These lines link with Hamlet's initial reaction to the Ghost's injunction in order to formulate the play's 'theory of memory', which is founded upon the conflict between the fixed – represented by Old Hamlet, the afterlife and the concept of remembrance itself – and the fluid, represented by the living, defined as they are by their mercurial and capricious natures, and the material world. Permanent remembrance is impossible because the two are irreconcilable: memory, and purpose built on memory, is fleeting. This theory serves to underline the fact that, whilst the play acknowledges that the Reformation has widened the gulf between the living and the dead, the natural progression has always been for the two factions to separate and move away from one

⁴⁷ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 186-187.

another; the Ghost's desire to arrest this is irrational. The play thus establishes two separate frames of reference for its consideration of memory. One discussion takes place within a post-Reformation context and considers the traumatic effects of the abolition of ritualised mourning, acknowledging the Catholic belief that such rites need to be performed in order to finalise the separation between survivor and deceased via the purgation of anger, grief and sorrow. The second strand of this discourse focuses on the nature of memory rather than on commemorative ritual and demonstrates, though without taking a side in the denominational conflict, that purgative rituals are not necessary to enforce the separation between the living and the deceased; that time alone will subdue the emotions attendant upon bereavement, and dim and erase the memory of the departed.

The conditional nature of memory is stressed once more towards the end of the play when it is used by Claudius in his manipulation of Laertes: 'Not that I think you did not love your father/But that I know love is begun by time/And that I see in passages of proof/Time qualifies the spark and fire of it' (*Ham*, IV. 7. 108-111). This quotation is of less significance than the four previous examples, all of which could provide insight into Hamlet's attitude towards remembrance and towards his father's injunction. For, in addition to his reference to the 'distracted globe', there is the possibility that the Player King's speech represents the 'dozen lines, or sixteen lines' that Hamlet proposes to write and insert into *The Murder of Gonzago* at II. 2. 476-8. According to Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, these lines are the critics' most popular choice for those written by the protagonist, ahead of Lucianus's speech of III. 2. 248-53.⁴⁸ It is impossible to identify Hamlet's speech with any certainty, and it must be noted that the Player King's speech of III. 2. 182-207 is too long, whilst Lucianus's is too short. However, Hamlet's conditional promise to remember the Ghost for as long as 'memory holds a seat in this distracted globe' demonstrates his awareness of the finite nature of memory and communicates his immediate awareness of his inability to grant his father permanent remembrance. There is,

⁴⁸ Thompson and Taylor, *Hamlet*, pp. 273-274.

therefore, a certain logic to viewing the Player King's speech as both an extended consideration of this theme and a more explicit acknowledgement of the impossibility of fulfilling the Ghost's demands. Claudius's adoption of this concept of memory is still of some importance, however, as the added repetition helps to confirm this as a recurring theme and establish a unified, definitive theory of memory within the world of the play. Moreover, this theory is established beyond theological parameters and demonstrates that, in *Hamlet*, memory is also considered independently of the post-Reformation context.

The irrefutable nature of the play's theory of memory owes much to the fact that it is not merely expounded in a few key quotations but is wholly confirmed by the manner in which Hamlet's increasing detachment from his father provides 'passages of proof' that 'time qualifies the spark and fire' of memory and purpose based on memory (*Ham*, IV. 7. 110-11). Again, the play acknowledges the ways in which the Protestant Reformation in Elsinore effects the Ghost's displacement and marginalisation, simultaneously demonstrating that the contingent nature of memory and grief ensures the inevitability of his annihilation. This emphasis on memory's flaws and insufficiencies also has significant implications for its role as the chief motivating factor in revenge, and for the play's examination of the relationship between vengeance and remembrance in general. This relationship is particularly harmonious in *The Spanish Tragedy* where, free from *Hamlet's* stress upon the contingent nature of memory, remembrance motivates revenge in an unproblematic way. This congruity is evident when Hieronimo issues the following pledge to Horatio:

Seest thou this handkercher besmeared with blood?
It shall not from me till I take revenge.
Seest thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?
I'll not entomb them till I have revenged.
Then will I joy amidst my discontent;
Till then my sorrow never shall be spent. (*ST*, II. 6.652-56)

There is no suggestion here that 'purpose is but the slave to memory' (*Ham*, III. 2. 182); no

indication that Hieronimo's desire to punish Lorenzo and Balthazar will ever deviate from, or come to function independently of, his need to avenge, honour and remember his son. Nor is there any suggestion that the need for revenge will outlast the memories, emotions and sense of duty that initially prompt it. On the contrary, this speech is instrumental in unifying vengeance and remembrance, as Kerrigan has also noted.⁴⁹ Here, Hieronimo is determining to do what *Hamlet* claims to be impossible: suspend the grieving process until revenge has been exacted. Horatio's unburied body and open wounds symbolise the grief, and the memories, that Hieronimo will nurture until the desired outcome has been achieved. In this play, memory is not vulnerable to fluctuations of human emotion or the effects of time: both can be suspended until the moment of resolution, making revenge contingent upon remembrance. That *Hamlet* seeks to substantiate its claims regarding the instability of memory, and human emotion, ensures that vengeance and remembrance are in conflict rather than accord. Unlike Hieronimo, Hamlet, in a manner the whole tenor of the play suggests is inevitable, is unable to prolong the grieving process wilfully, and ceases to mourn his father even as he attempts to avenge him.

Comparing the language Hamlet uses to describe his father in Act I with that employed in Act V clearly indicates that the protagonist's grief is abating. When the audience first encounters Hamlet, he is tortured by his memories of father: 'so loving to my mother/That he might not betem the winds of heaven/Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth/Must I remember?' (*Ham* I. 2. 140-3). Impassioned and tormented, his highly emotive language communicates his grief. Moreover, these recollections of Old Hamlet as a loving husband are deeply personal and intimate. By the play's final scene, however, the fervent has been replaced by the detached, a development best illustrated by Hamlet's description of Claudius as he 'that hath killed my King and whored my mother' (*Ham*, V. 2. 63). The sense of separation between survivor and deceased implicit in this line strongly suggests that the protagonist has ceased mourning his father. The sense of detachment is now so great that Hamlet no longer considers

⁴⁹ See Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 174-175.

the Ghost as a father; he is merely his 'King'. Significantly, Gertrude is still referred to as a 'mother' rather than a queen, and the verb 'whored' conveys a sense of vehement disgust absent from the comparatively dispassionate 'killed'. Although Hamlet still considers Claudius' marriage to Gertrude as a personal slight, he has come to view the usurpation and murder of his father as a political crime: the overthrow of a noble king by his unworthy, villainous successor. The loving husband, so strongly recalled in Act I, has been forgotten, giving credence to the notion that memory is of 'violent birth but poor validity' (*Ham*, III. 2. 183). Remembrance is fraught with no such complications in *The Spanish Tragedy*; Hieronimo mourns Horatio until the very end, publicly defining himself as 'The hopeless father of a hapless son' (*ST*, IV. 4. 84) in order to justify his actions and cement the connection between memory and vengeance, past and present.

The exact moment of transition, when Hamlet ceases to grieve for his father and begins to neglect the duty of remembrance, undoubtedly occurs at some point during the closet scene, which, significantly, also marks the Ghost's final appearance. Ostensibly, the protagonist's attitude towards his father appears unaltered. Here, as in Act I, he unleashes an impassioned tirade centred around an unfavourable comparison of Old Hamlet to Claudius:

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers:
See what a grace was seated on this brow,
Hyperion's curls in front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,
A combination and a form indeed
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man;
This was your husband. (*Ham*, III. 4. 51-61)

Hamlet's veneration of his father misleadingly implies that he maintains a strong filial attachment to him. On the contrary, this speech carries the first indications that the protagonist is beginning to consider the Ghost as a king rather than a father. His recollections are more impersonal than

they were in Act I: they are the memories of a loyal and devoted subject rather than an affectionate, grief-stricken son. Hamlet's recollection of a loving husband restored, reclaimed and preserved some of the Ghost's humanity; these deific images strip this away again. The pronouncement that 'every god did seem to set his seal/To give the world assurance of a man' is, therefore, ironic: the protagonist is perpetuating an image of the patriarch as the ideal embodiment of monarchical power but, as he does so, the memory of Old Hamlet as a father and a husband, as a 'man', is overwritten and forgotten. All that will remain is what Nigel Llewellyn terms the 'social body': a carefully constructed, almost propagandist, public image of the deceased which, preserved by the monumental body, serves to proclaim their status, achievements and worth.⁵⁰ The conversion of the natural body into the social/monumental body has already been observed in *Titus Andronicus*, in which the protagonist transforms his dead sons into highly idealised Roman warriors in order to proclaim his family's value to the state. Old Hamlet's social body is that of a Danish Mars, a godlike warrior-king and it is in this guise that he appears, wearing 'the very armour he had on/When he the ambitious Norway combated' (*Ham*, I. 1. 59-60). The Ghost adopts this guise because it is as a warlike monarch that he is most widely remembered: to Horatio, Marcellus *et al* he is the 'goodly king' (*Ham*, I. 2. 185) who 'smote the sledded Polacks on the ice' (*Ham*, I. 1. 62). To the Gravedigger, he is the king who 'overcame Fortinbras' (*Ham*, V. 1. 136). In light of Gertrude's apparent forgetfulness, it is only Hamlet who remembers the father, the husband, the man. Yet, in the closet scene, the protagonist's abiding image of his father is his social body: intimate recollections have been replaced by something bordering on political propaganda. Gertrude has forgotten her first husband, Hamlet is forgetting: this aspect of the Ghost is being consigned to oblivion as he is gradually effaced.

In his final appearance, during the closet scene, the Ghost seems acutely aware of this effacement. Indeed, his appearance is designed halt this process. As Stephen Greenblatt has

⁵⁰ Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, p. 60.

suggested, Hamlet's accidental murder of Polonius in this same scene offers compelling evidence of the protagonist's thirst for revenge.⁵¹ This blunder thus raises the possibility that 'the almost blunted purpose' of which the Ghost speaks, and the 'dread command' to which his son refers, purports to the injunction to remember rather than to avenge (*Ham*, III. 4. 105-7). The Ghost's command 'Do not forget!' (*Ham*, III. 4.4106) also places the emphasis firmly upon remembrance, and Hamlet's reference to a lapse in 'time and passion' (*Ham*, III. 4. 104) contains echoes of the play's argument regarding the provisional nature of memory and its attendant emotions. Despite the Ghost's insistence, his banishment is effected at some point during this scene. Old Hamlet not only fails to appear again but, as Greenblatt and Kaula observe, he is barely even mentioned again, linking the Ghost's disappearance and Hamlet's forgetfulness in a direct cause and effect relationship.⁵² To this end, it is highly significant that the Ghost reappears during Hamlet's frenzied diatribe against Claudius:

A murderer and a villain,
 A slave that is not twentieth part the kith
 Of your precedent lord, a vice of kings,
 A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
 That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
 And put it in his pocket ... (*Ham*, III. 4. 94-98)

When examining the significance of the Ghost's intrusion at this point, it is important to highlight the fact that *Hamlet* is a metatheatrical work that deliberately sets itself in opposition to its predecessors, challenging and manipulating the conventions of the Elizabethan stage in order to highlight its distinction. Far from being a straightforward example of a revenge tragedy, this play interrogates the mechanics of the revenge plot, experimentally complicating various elements and components in order to examine the changes wrought by deviating from convention. Here, Shakespeare is considering the act of transference – variously termed 'displaced agency' or 'substitution' – identified by Kerrigan as underpinning the genre and

⁵¹ See Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p. 224.

⁵² Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p. 226; David Kaula, 'Hamlet and the Image of Both Churches', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 24.2 (1984), 241-255 (p. 252).

defining the relationship between victim and avenger. Kerrigan observes this process of merging and doubling in *Hamlet*, and suggests that the protagonist becomes a substitute for the father he is out to avenge. The vehement speech above suggests that an act of transference has taken place, that Hamlet has assumed the Ghost's place as wronged party, as Claudius' victim and has claimed his father's grievances against the usurper as his own. This process is complicated, however, by the fact that the Ghost demands remembrance as well as revenge and the play makes it clear that he cannot have both. The quest for revenge forces Hamlet to be a surrogate for his father; the son thus assumes the position within the present that the Ghost is battling to maintain for himself. Old Hamlet's demand for vengeance ironically provides his son with the means to displace him. As these lines indicate, Hamlet is now pursuing Claudius to avenge the injury he feels he has done him and his country, rather than his father. Hamlet writes himself into the revenge narrative and his father out, as Kaula notes when he observes that the protagonist replaces his father as Claudius' nemesis and 'opposite'.⁵³

Additionally, the impassioned speeches Hamlet delivers during the closet scene provide him with the opportunity to 'purge himself of his more violent feelings'.⁵⁴ From this point onwards, these emotions begin to wane as 'Time qualifies' their 'spark and fire' (*Ham* IV. 4. 111). That the protagonist's attitude towards his father has considerably altered is apparent when next he refers to him: 'How stand I then/That have a father killed, a mother stained,/Excitements of my reason and my blood,/And let all sleep' (*Ham* IV. 4. 55-8). Although his emotions have not yet cooled to the extent that his father has merely become his 'king', the fact that Hamlet is using the circumstances of the murder in a vain and desperate attempt to incite his passion and prompt his revenge demonstrates that the mere recollection of his father is no longer enough to do this: he has ceased to mourn. Moreover, he is now able to refer to Old Hamlet's murder casually and dispassionately, without embarking upon lengthy and emotive reminiscences or venerating him as great monarch. Such speeches, in evidence until the closet scene, are conspicuously absent

⁵³ Kaula, 'Hamlet and the Image of Both Churches', p. 252.

⁵⁴ Kaula, 'Hamlet and the Image of Both Churches', p. 252.

from the latter movements of the play. When, in the following scene, a courtier remarks that the recently bereaved Ophelia speaks ‘much of her father’, it underlines the fact that Hamlet no longer does (*Ham*, IV. 5. 4). Ophelia is grief-stricken and distracted; Hamlet is becoming increasingly composed.

It is clear that, by Act V, Hamlet has completed the process of mourning and is beginning to distance himself from his father. In earlier passages of the play, as Arthur Kirsch has observed, the protagonist is ‘described in images that suggest the ghost’s countenance’, as if father and son have become one as the revenge action demands.⁵⁵ One example of this doubling is Ophelia’s description of the prince: ‘Pale as his shirt [...] / And with a look so piteous in purport, / As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors’ (*Ham*, II. 2. 78-81). Notions of doubling and substitution still underpin the relationship between Hamlet and the Ghost in Act V, though it is now the former who has the upper hand. He is able to condemn Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death by assuming his father’s role and authority: ‘I had my father’s signet in my purse’ (*Ham*, V. 2. 49). The balance of power between the two has shifted: Hamlet thwarts his father’s attempts to hijack and overwrite his identity by forcing him into the role of avenger, turning the tables and displacing the dead king in the process. Furthermore, the protagonist is serene and composed, apparently having reached a new-found maturity and developed a clearly-defined world-view: ‘There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be, ’tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all’ (*Ham*, V. 2. 197-200). Hamlet’s ‘acceptance of Providence’ signifies that ‘the great anguish and struggle of his grief is over, and that he has completed the work of mourning’.⁵⁶ It is the Ghost’s demand for vengeance that enables the tortured protagonist of Act I to achieve such tranquillity by replacing ritualised mourning as the means by which Hamlet can fulfil his obligations to his father and lay him to rest. It is the Ghost’s tragedy that his quest for vengeance invalidates his demand for remembrance.

⁵⁵ Arthur Kirsch, ‘Hamlet’s Grief’, *ELH*, 48.1 (1981), 17-36 (p. 17).

⁵⁶ Kirsch, ‘Hamlet’s Grief’, pp. 32-33.

Hamlet's growing acceptance of his father's death and his ensuing neglect of Old Hamlet's memory is reflected by the Ghost's gradual disappearance from the play. In Act I, when the memories of Old Hamlet as both father and king are at their most potent, the Ghost is seen by Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo. In Act III, Scene iv, the closet scene, only Hamlet can see him whilst Gertrude cannot. In positing the theory that Gertrude cannot see the spirit of her dead husband because she has forgotten him, Kerrigan raises the possibility that, rather than the Ghost not appearing again, Hamlet does not *see* him again. For the final scene of the play makes it clear that the protagonist has all but forgotten his father. In this closing scene, Shakespeare again challenges the conventions of the revenge genre established by earlier plays like *The Spanish Tragedy* in order to effect and emphasise his play's complication of the possibility of remembrance. Remembrance of the victim is, in other examples of the genre, the avenger's chief incentive and this is typically fulfilled by an exegesis in the final act which presents the act of revenge as an act of remembrance. Long deceased victims are written back into the final acts of revenge tragedies and are included in the moment in which the survivor replays their debt to them. The past is thus brought into the present and the links between the two made clear. Both *The Spanish Tragedy* and Saxo's version of the Hamlet story make use of this device. Hieronimo's exegesis begins: 'No princes, know I am Hieronimo,/The hopeless father of a hapless son' (*ST*, IV. 4. 83-4), demonstrating that the connection between father and son, and between past and present, far from being broken, are being reasserted. However, these lines are perhaps the most significant:

Hieronimo: Behold the reason urging me to this

Shows his dead son.

See here my show, look on this spectacle ... (*ST*, IV. 4. 88-9)

By providing a full explanation, and revealing so graphically the motivation for his actions, Hieronimo is granting Horatio remembrance as well as vengeance, as Amleth does Horwendil in Saxo's *Historiae Danicae*. Saxo states that the 'occurrence of the King's (Feng's) slaughter was

greeted by the beholders with diverse minds'.⁵⁷ He goes on to describe how Amleth summoned 'those in whom he knew the memory of his father to be fast-rooted' and revealed the truth to them: 'Whom them so mad as to choose Feng the cruel before Horwendil the righteous? Remember how benignantly Horwendil fostered you, how justly he dealt with you, how kindly he loved you. Remember how you lost the mildest of princes and the justest of fathers, while in his place was put a tyrant and an assassin set up' (*Hist. Dan.*, pp. 70-71). Not only is Horwendil, like Horatio, offered a form of inclusion in these closing scenes, but his memory, unlike Old Hamlet's, is shown to be abiding rather than fleeting.

Hamlet utters words to the effect of Amleth's during his early soliloquies and within the private sphere of his mother's chamber but does not publicly invoke the memory of his father, even when the moment calls him to do so in Act V, Scene ii. Thus, whilst Horwendil and Horatio are included in the denouement, the Ghost is excluded. Moreover, the links between the past and the present are severed rather than affirmed; the past is forgotten rather than revisited. This is mainly effected by Hamlet's failure to provide a full explanation of his actions:

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time (as this fell sergeant Death/Is strict in his arrest) – O, I could tell
you –
But let it be. Horatio I am dead. Thou livest: report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied (*Ham*, V. 2. 318-324).

Hamlet replaces exegesis with ellipsis in accordance with the play's emphasis on memory's contingency upon time. Yet there are suggestions that Hamlet does not simply fail to evoke his father's memory because he has not the time to do so. Tellingly, when he finally kills Claudius, the protagonist fulfils the obligation to revenge with the words: 'Here, thou incestuous damned Dane!/Drink of this potion. Is the union here?/Follow my mother' (*Ham*, V. 2. 309-311). It is

⁵⁷ Saxo Grammaticus, *Historiae Danicae*, trans. by Oliver Elton (1894), in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare Vol. VII*, ed. by Geoffrey Bullough (London; New York: Routledge; Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 70. All subsequent citations from this work will be from this edition and will be given in parentheses, abbreviated as *Hist. Dan.*, in the text.

striking that, in completing this act, Hamlet spares no thought for the Ghost who incited him to it in the first place: it is his dead mother of whom he thinks. As Greenblatt states, 'At the moment that his command is finally fulfilled, old Hamlet has in effect been forgotten'.⁵⁸ The play's consideration of memory – of its transience, coupled with its complication in the aftermath of the Reformation – leads to the inevitable conclusion in which the Ghost is denied the remembrance he so desperately sought. The only hint that the Ghost will be remembered in the future comes with the promise of Horatio's story: 'So shall you hear/Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,/Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,/Of deaths put on by cunning, and for no cause, And in this upshot purposes mistook/fallen on th'inventors heads' (*Ham*, V. 2. 364-368). It appears that, despite his promise, Hamlet does provide a sufficiently detailed account of his exchange with the Ghost to Horatio ('O good Horatio, I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound' (*Ham*, III. 2. 278-9)). However, Old Hamlet's story remains destined to become only one of a number of competing narratives. Indeed, the events hinted at above refer to the deaths of the protagonist himself, Laertes, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Claudius and Gertrude, as well as to the murder of the former king. Moreover, Hamlet's insistence that his friend 'report *me* and *my cause* aright' (my emphasis) signifies that he has replaced his father at the centre of this narrative. The Ghost's annihilation is effected, not just because his son forgets him, but because he also displaces him. This is emphasised in this final act by Hamlet's strange and striking adoption of the past tense when referring to his imminent death. He does not say 'I am dying' but 'I am dead', thus assuming his father's role as a dead man demanding remembrance from the living.

Shakespeare takes advantage of the prolepsis which customarily underpins a tragedy's final act to underline the fact that, in usurping his father's position, Hamlet also inherits the Ghost's preoccupation with remembrance. The dying protagonist's chief concern is with the future – 'I do prophesy' (*Ham*, V. 2. 339) – and, more specifically, with how his memory will be

⁵⁸ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p. 227.

propagated in the future: ‘O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,/Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me’ (*Ham*, V. 2. 328-9). These lines provide yet another example of the playwright’s efforts to complicate the notion of remembrance. ‘Things [stand] thus unknown’ because Hamlet is not given the opportunity to account for himself or his actions, to tell his story. In denying the Ghost exegesis and excluding him from the present, Hamlet condemns himself to the same fate. His speech towards the end of the play is tellingly fragmented and elliptical as he acknowledges his defeat at the hands of time: ‘Had I but time (as this fell sergeant Death/Is strict in his arrest) – O, I could tell you -/But let it be’ (*Ham*, V. 2. 320-22). This is in direct contrast to, for example, Othello who, relying heavily on the imperative, effectively writes his own epitaph, giving a full account of his actions and seeking to control how he is remembered following his death: ‘Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,/Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak/Of one that lov’d not wisely, but too well.’⁵⁹ *Hamlet*’s concern with exposing the problems and complications inherent in the entwined notions of memory and identity dictates that its protagonist will play a considerably more passive role than Othello in the crafting of his memory. Indeed, the final act makes it clear that, because he has assumed his father’s position, Hamlet is destined to fall victim to the same fate: annihilation. The gradual process of obliteration is triggered even before his death when he beseeches Horatio to ‘tell [his] story’ (*Ham* V. 2. 333). This story, as Kerrigan has also noted, will be incomplete: Horatio, though clearly dedicated to his task, ‘is not equipped by circumstances to inform the yet unknowing world about the nunnery scene, Claudius’ words to heaven [...] or, indeed, any of those perplexed soliloquies’.⁶⁰ Much of Hamlet’s identity is effaced the second he draws his last breath, then, and the best he can hope for is a partial and fragmentary form of remembrance, which at least reflects some aspect of the man he was in life.

The play’s treatment of memory is consistent throughout, however, and the closing

⁵⁹ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigman (Walton-on Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1997), V. 2. 344-347.

⁶⁰ Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 189.

passages demonstrate that even a partial yet representative form of remembrance is beyond Hamlet's reach. Throughout the play, the protagonist is the victim of several attempts by various other characters to hijack and overwrite his identity by assigning him particular, restrictive roles; the prime example being the Ghost's attempts to force Hamlet into the role of avenger. Polonius assigns him the role of melancholic courtly lover and Ophelia constructs a chivalric image of him as the very ideal of a Renaissance prince:

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
Th'expectation and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th'observed of all observers, quite, quite down. (*Ham* III. 1. 149-153)

Laertes has previously warned his sister that Hamlet's status as heir apparent curbs his freewill and shapes his destiny:

but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own.
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The safety and health of this whole state,
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. (*Ham* I. 3. 16-23)

The play concludes by demonstrating that Hamlet's memory will be shaped and moulded by others following his death just as his identity was in life. Fortinbras's decision to honour Hamlet with a military funeral – 'for his passage/The soldiers' music and the rite of war/Speak loudly for him' (*Ham*, V. 2. 382-384) – is ill-judged and contributes a good deal more to the prince's effacement than Horatio's incomplete story. Hamlet's identity is usurped and remodelled into a misleading social body which is so unrepresentative of the protagonist that it is equivalent to no memorial at all. *Hamlet* thus stresses the problems with which remembrance is fraught right up until the end, demonstrating that memories, much like ghosts, are fragmentary, unreliable and ephemeral, beginning to fade from the very second they come into being.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the extent to which the Reformation influenced and shaped Elizabethan tragic drama. To enhance current understanding of this subject, the study focused on representations of death, the supernatural, and commemorative culture in tragedies produced between 1560 and the turn of the seventeenth-century. As I observed in the introduction, several critics, most notably Stephen Greenblatt, have demonstrated that later Elizabethan tragedies, such as *Hamlet*, reflect and evaluate the impact of the Protestants' reformation of mortuary culture. Studies like Greenblatt's, and those of Michael Neill and Thomas Rist, focus exclusively on post-Shakespearean tragedies. I thus elected to analyse early, pre-Shakespearean examples alongside later, canonical plays in order to map how dramatic responses to the Reformation evolved throughout the reign of Elizabeth I. To this end, this thesis presents two significant findings.

Firstly, my research indicates that early and late Elizabethan tragedy produced disparate responses to the religious schism. The Inns of Court plays of the 1560s follow on from Henrician drama by figuring the schism as a political matter. *Gorboduc*, *Cambyeses*, and *Horestes*, for instance, provide topical responses to the political ramifications of the schism. These plays are concerned with the indirect consequences of the schism, hence their level of engagement with post-Reformation issues is less prominent than in later tragedies. All three dramas address the need to prevent a counter-Reformation by securing England's status as a Protestant nation. They thus urge Elizabeth to secure the succession, either by marrying and producing an heir or by naming one. *Gorboduc* and *Horestes*, along with *The Misfortunes of Arthur* from 1587, also urge Elizabeth to confront and neutralise the threat posed by her Catholic cousin, and potential successor, Mary Queen of Scots.

Whilst addressing the political implications of the schism, these aforementioned tragedies, along with *Gismond of Salerne*, do not examine theological controversies. Post-

Reformation issues such as the abolition of ritualised mourning, the repudiation of Purgatory and the denial of ghosts are avoided for the most part. Even when these issues are not wholly avoided, they are never discussed in depth. *Gismond*, for instance, alludes to Purgatory but, unlike *Hamlet*, does not consider the impact of its denial on contemporary society. Analysing later tragedies demonstrates how the Reformation imbued the themes and tropes of death, the supernatural, and commemoration with new meanings. Late Elizabethan dramatists could then employ these themes and tropes to reflect and interrogate the ways in which the schism transformed and complicated the grieving process and commemorative rituals. The early Elizabethan tragedies considered here do not address how the Reformation impacted upon and problematised issues of death and remembrance. As illustrated by Chapter One, these plays' depictions of death, grief, mourning, commemoration, the afterlife, and the supernatural contrast with those found in later tragedies. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* use these devices to address post-Reformation issues, whilst early tragedies use them to frame political issues. *Cambises* demonstrates a typical, early Elizabethan response to issues of death. In this play, representations of bereavement and mourning do not precipitate a topical discussion of the way in which the schism has altered and complicated the grieving process. Instead, these expressions of lamentation underscore the monarch's cruelty. In turn, these scenes communicate the play's central argument, that, when placed in the wrong hands or wielded irresponsibly, monarchical power can cause great damage and suffering.

Additionally, the early Elizabethan tragedies discussed in this thesis often evade controversial post-Reformation issues entirely. For instance, I could find only one pre-Shakespearean play depicting an act of burial: *Apianus and Virginia*. Moreover, this play adopts a distinctly non-interrogative, uncontroversial approach to the representation of commemoration. Virginia's funeral is imbued with Protestant doctrine and dutifully reflects post-Reformation attitudes towards remembrance. The purpose of the ceremony is not to secure intercessory prayer for the deceased, as it would have been prior to the schism, but to extol the heroine's

virtues, thereby utilising her as a moral exemplar. Thus, on the basis of the evidence I have provided here, it would appear that early Elizabethan tragedy does not reflect how the Reformation transformed the act of commemoration, or consider the implications of these changes. Similarly, although at least two of the Inns of Court tragedies discussed here – *Gismond of Salerne* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* are heavily indebted to Seneca's *Thyestes*, neither of them deploy a stage ghost. Again, this points to a desire on the part of early Elizabethan writers to sidestep theological controversies. More extensive research into pre-Shakespearian drama's engagement with post-Reformation issues is, of course, required. However, this thesis suggests that Elizabethan tragedy did not begin addressing the impact of the Protestants' reforms of mortuary culture until the 1580s.

This thesis thus suggests that a shift took place between the decline of the Inns of Court tradition and the advent of the professional theatre in the mid-1570s. Again, further research must be undertaken to substantiate this claim. The aforementioned disparity between early and late Elizabethan responses to the schism does, however, provide compelling evidence. The thesis provides a starting point for further investigations into why such a shift in dramatic responses to the Reformation might have occurred. Using historicist techniques, I attribute early Elizabethan tragedy's response to the Reformation to two factors. The first is a desire to avoid theological controversies entirely. This evasion can, in turn, be attributed to the fact that Elizabeth's religious policy changed direction frequently during the 1560s, as the new queen attempted to appease the various denominations within her realm. As Elizabeth's religious policy lacked clarity, so did England's religious identity. Significantly, historians suggest that by the 1580s, when dramatists began to address the schism's non-political implications, both the queen's religious policy and her country's religious identity had clarified. By this point, England had, arguably, ceased reforming and become reformed: the country's religious identity was clearly defined as Protestant, and even more clearly defined as anti-Catholic. This suggests that early Elizabethan dramatists may have been reticent about engaging with post-Reformation theology

because, at this stage, Elizabeth's religious policies were fluid. It was thus unclear which doctrines or practices would be eventually endorsed or repudiated by the Elizabethan Church. Early dramatists may have been anxious about discussing issues of death and commemoration within a theological framework in case they found themselves suddenly, and dangerously, at odds with state religion. Similarly, they may merely have been biding their time, waiting for England's religious identity to stabilise and clarify before making an assessment. Either way, the fact that England's religious identity was in a state of flux throughout the 1560s appears to have contributed to the lack of engagement with post-Reformation issues of death in early Elizabethan tragedy.

The second factor that may have been responsible for this is connected to the establishment of the professional theatre in 1576. This paved the way for a different type of dramatist; a dramatist with a different set of priorities, and a different type of audience, to the writers of the 1560s. It is thus possible that not all early Elizabethan playwrights actively avoided theological controversy, but that addressing such issues was simply not one of their priorities. For instance, these writers were not professional dramatists but lawyers, politicians and courtiers. It is, therefore, logical that these playwrights perceived the schism as a political event and responded accordingly. Moreover, these dramatists were writing at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Consequently, it is understandable that they deal with the most urgent issues stemming from the Reformation, as opposed to reflecting upon its impact. These plays are, quite naturally, concerned with consolidating the reign, rather than reflecting upon it. Early Elizabethan playwrights were, quite often, also writing for an exclusive, politically informed audience of their peers and superiors. The plays' content thus caters to, and reflects, their original audiences: the purpose of these tragedies is to present possible solutions to pressing political issues, with the ultimate aim of inspiring appropriate action from the queen and her ministers. A different type of drama was required to entertain the wider audiences who attended the public theatres in the latter decades of the reign. This new generation of writers had different priorities and interests to

their predecessors. At the same time, more universal themes were required to appeal to new audiences; the impact of the Reformation was one of these themes.

This thesis suggests that these factors combined to alter dramatic responses to the Reformation. In *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, for instance, the schism is no longer perceived to be a political event, but a psychologically traumatic one. Both tragedies point to a contemporary concern with the possible implications of the reform of mortuary culture. *The Spanish Tragedy* dramatises the post-schismatic debate regarding appropriate styles of mourning and apposite expressions of grief. The play presents both sides of the argument without offering a clear solution; it is left to the audience to decide. On one hand, Kyd demonstrates how the abolition of ritualised mourning could inflict psychological damage on survivors. The bereaved, the play implies, need to perform ritual actions in order to assuage their grief. If they cannot do this, they may resort to violent revenge, the only remaining means by which they can purge themselves of negative emotion, and fulfil their perceived obligations to the deceased. On the other hand, Kyd suggests that it is the perpetuation of performative mourning, not the abolition, that is most problematic. Viewed from a different perspective, the actions of Hieronimo *et al* imply that the violence stems from the fact that these characters have been conditioned to respond to grief in an excessive, performative way.

Hamlet also confronts the ways in which the Reformation complicated issues of death and remembrance. The play engages explicitly with several post-schismatic issues. The Ghost of Old Hamlet is a vivid dramatisation of post-Reformation anxieties. This ghost represents one of the contemporary audiences' deepest fears, that Purgatory, where their neglected dead languish, *does* exist. Like *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Hamlet* is concerned with the abolition of ritualised mourning. When audiences first encounter the protagonist, it is clear that he is suffering the consequences of the collapse of intercessory culture. Hamlet is unable to assuage his grief and detach himself from his dead father because he has been deprived of the means – namely, intercessory prayer –

of doing so. Paradoxically, it is the ghost of his father, so desperate for remembrance, who provides Hamlet with the means of reconciling his loss. As in *The Spanish Tragedy*, vengeance replaces ritualised mourning though, this time, the relationship is less harmonious, and the results contrary to the deceased's desires. For, although *Hamlet* does expose the extent to which the Reformation complicated remembrance, it also demonstrates the concept's innate flaws. Remembrance, the play suggests, has always been contingent and paradoxical in nature. As Jean-Claude Schmitt has observed, the chief aim of any act of remembrance has always been to forget, to pay one's debt to the deceased and thereby enact one's final separation from them. *Hamlet* frequently reminds its audiences of this central paradox, stressing that, Reformation or no, the ghost's eventual effacement is ensured: it is inevitable that his son will cease to mourn and that he will be forgotten. This thesis thus draws upon and supports existing research, like that of Greenblatt and Rist, by identifying the impact of the Reformation as a thematic concern in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*.

These two plays also demonstrate the extent to which dramatic representations of death, commemoration, and the supernatural were transformed by the Reformation. The schism led to the reconstruction of certain dramatic conventions. *The Spanish Tragedy* demonstrates this by transfiguring the Senecan stage ghost and the Virgilian underworld; both are imbued with purgatorial allusions. Moreover, by openly inviting these allusions, Kyd demonstrates the extent to which late Elizabethan tragedy reconfigures the traditions of the Inns of Court dramas and *The Mirror for Magistrates* in response to the Reformation. This process begins with Kyd and culminates with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a play that dispenses with neo-classical camouflage entirely in order to depict a purgatorial spirit.

I now move on to the second contribution this thesis makes to furthering current understanding the Reformation's influence on Elizabethan tragedy. My research demonstrates that later tragedies do not respond to the schism in one clear, consistent way. Identifying

allusions to the Reformation in a late sixteenth-century tragedy can be misleading. Such allusions do not necessarily mean that the drama in question is concerned with the impact of the schism; not all late Elizabethan tragedies perceive the Reformation as a psychologically traumatic event. Indeed, *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar* allude to the religious schism, but for a different purpose to *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*. Moreover, these Roman plays provide new information regarding the Reformation's impact upon Elizabethan cultural identity. Neither play produces a topical response to post-schismatic issues. Instead, they convert the language and imagery of the Reformation into a semiotic system; this system is then used to frame the plays' socio-political themes. For example, *Titus* does not evaluate the impact of the secularisation of commemorative culture. It does, however, utilise the image of secularisation to underline the moral failings of *Titus's* Rome; namely, its obsession with public image and social status. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare uses the language and imagery of the Reformation to distinguish Caesar's supporters from his enemies, and to presage the conspirators' attempts at cultural redefinition. Caesar and Antony are aligned with pre-Reformation beliefs: they are united by their shared conviction in the efficacy of ritual action. Brutus and Cassius are associated with the reformist doctrine of *sola fides*; they eschew ritual action, folk belief and superstition. Shakespeare thus evokes a recognisable image of sectarian conflict in order to communicate the fact that the dispute between the pro- and anti-Caesar factions is ideological. *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar* thus assume and draw upon their original audiences' knowledge of the schism. This suggests that, by the late sixteenth-century, the impact of the Reformation had been absorbed into collective, cultural knowledge. Elizabethan tragedy thus produces three distinct responses to the schism. The Inns of Court tragedies constitute a political response; *Doctor Faustus*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* produce psychological responses; and *Titus and Caesar* produce indirect responses. Together, these plays demonstrate that Elizabethan tragedy's engagement with post-Reformation issues was continuous but multi-faceted.

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