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Los Angeles

Becoming Dead in Early Modern English Literature:

A Lucretian Poetics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Katherine Bolton Bonnici

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Becoming Dead in Early Modern English Literature:
A Lucretian Poetics

by

Katherine Bolton Bonnici
Doctor of Philosophy in English
University of California, Los Angeles, 2020
Professor Lowell Gallagher, Chair

In *Becoming Dead in Early Modern English Literature: A Lucretian Poetics*, I engage with the Lucretian turn in Renaissance studies by suggesting that through the figural trope of the Lucretian *clinamen* we may reimagine scholarly reading practices. In his Latin treatise *De rerum natura*, Lucretius describes the physical world as consisting of two things: bodies and space. Bodies connect and detach in space even as connected, or compound, bodies contain within them space. I bring to bear upon this tropic frame the critical works of Michel Serres, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Giorgio Agamben, arguing that because literary texts are compound bodies, reading texts brings their bodies and space inside the space of our own perceptual and interpretive habits so that the texts exist in the reader, continually forming different compounds. This reading practice based on Lucretian principles helps us understand the larger stakes within which literary texts participate--the processes of living, dying, and the reconstitution of matter.

Becoming Dead begins with the literature of Reformation and Counter-Reformation England, which occupies a particularly fruitful space between and within coextensive corporeal forms--Catholic and Protestant, manuscript and print, poetry and drama, Latin and vernacular, sealed island and porous union of kingdoms. Through close readings of Lady Jane Lumley's *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia translated out of Greake into Englisshe*, Robert Southwell's *Marie Magdalen's Funeral Teares*, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, and George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale,* I argue that the dying body (textual, material, readerly) is not discrete from but is a part of the continuous, turbulent motion of compound bodies that contain and are contained within a re-forming void. Thus, dying is not a cessation of being, but a becoming other, a becoming dead.

These four texts connect in a kinship (unexpected, perhaps, but laying bare the ficticity of any taxonomies that would separate them) and give shape to a Lucretian perception of becoming dead--of bodies, as bodies, becoming something other than they were and through such becoming continuing to be. In these instantiations seemingly known categories--dead/alive, story/play, human/animal, mother/daughter--unfasten from their origins to make something new even as we are made new through the space of reception. This recognition, in turn, allows us to reimagine a literary practice by which texts become historical artifacts whose dialogic and emotive energies open onto persistent dramas of encounter and contact. We see how, in a Lucretian understanding, "no visible object utterly passes away."

The dissertation of Katherine Bolton Bonnici is approved.

Christine Chism

Arthur L. Little

Deborah Willis

Lowell Gallagher, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

for Dan

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Lowell Gallagher, who brilliantly and kindly advised me throughout the whole of my tenure at UCLA while talking grief and hospice and photographs and roses, who introduced me to the work of the late Michel Serres, the encounter that changed everything, and who helped me celebrate good news, even in a pandemic; to Chris Chism, high priestess, who listened to my wanderings and then pushed them into a more rigorous and interesting woods; to Arthur Little, eminent scholar-mentor par excellence, who made me put away my notebook and think; and to Deborah Willis, whose course on early modern witch trials when I was an MFA student introduced me to *The Duchess of Malfi* and altered the course of my personal history, I thank you countless times over for your tremendous generosity, your sustaining encouragement, and your ever-wise counsel.

To my daughters, just out of toddlerhood when this journey began and now *this*, such luminous thinkers and makers, transformative and transforming, you are daily lessons in the miraculous. You leave me speechless with love.

To my father, who accepted with grace and forbearance the career shift that led here, know how grateful and devoted I will always be.

To my husband Dan, with infinite thanksgiving.

And for the women in my family who died during this book's travail--my mother-in-law Maureen Rose Murphy, my grandmother Paula Dean Bolton, and my mother Jean Suzanne Foster Bolton--how my soul yearns for you. Until we meet again.

VITA

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"Beholding Boldness: Reading, Writing, and the Interpretive Gaze in *The Faerie Queene.*" UCLA Friends of English Southland Conference: "Critical Recursions," June 10, 2017.

"'Like a teate and seemed as though one had suckt it': Embodied Narratives in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch*." UCLA Friends of English Southland Conference: "Low Fidelity: The Aesthetics and Politics of Adaptation," June 3, 2016.

Overture: “For in the wide wombe of the world there lyes”

- Edmund Spenser,
The Faerie Queene, III.vi.36.6

An answer not coming to the question of why
my friend bled inside two days after

they found more mets along the spine.
(False hope: pulled muscle.)

I have not told you this, only
that she’d been moved to hospice.

You know what it means.
You want it to be not yet.

In the beginning bloating. Doctor said,
lose weight come back later.

Wrong, of course, bulky tumor everywhere.

In the end internal hemorrhage.
I imagine the lower pelvic tumor leaking

(*seeping*, the correct verb) and remember
that she isn’t. The smiling online picture

with real hair a before-image
documenting the once-lived. (I have not told you.)

Her body like your body turned progeny
of chaos, and do I still use present tense?

Primary peritoneal disease, cancer type ovarian,
high grade serous carcinoma. Translation:

before your birth, cells typed *ovary* wandered
errant until awakening, as they did, they still do.

Introduction: Of Bodies and Space

> "Nevertheless it is along this thread that is transmitted down
> to the smallest particle of the world in which we live
> the duration immanent to the whole of the universe."
> - Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (216)

> "Why, then, a body? Because only a body can be cut
> down or raised up, because only a body can touch or not touch."
> - Jean-Luc Nancy*, Noli Me Tangere* (48)

The universe Lucretius describes in his treatise *De rerum natura* consists of two core things--*corporis atque loci*--often discussed as "atoms and void" (1.505). While Lucretius does use "void" and its synonyms (*spatium*, *inane*), for "atoms" he uses the word *corpora*--bodies. *Corpora* mark the Lucretian first beginnings: "the nature of the universe . . . is made up of two things; for there are bodies [*corpora*], and there is void" (1.419-420); and, *corpora* end *De rerum natura* as the last lines of Book 6 conclude a harrowing description of plague: "Sudden need also and poverty persuaded to many dreadful expedients: for they would lay their own kindred amidst loud lamentation upon piles of wood not their own, and would set light to the fire, often brawling with much shedding of blood rather than abandon the bodies [*corpora*]" (6.1281-1286). The nature of things begins with everlasting bodies and ends with a refusal to leave dead bodies behind. However, the Lucretian universe is not entirely bifurcated. It is not simply bodily presence or spatial absence. Or, I should say, there is slippage; there are angles of interaction, enfoldings. For where first bodies combine to make something else (compound), such compound bodies themselves contain void. As Lucretius writes, “there is void in created things [*genitus*]” (1.511).

In this ancient physics, which is a poetics, of bodies and space, bodies continually connect and detach in space even as connected, or compound, bodies contain within them space. This thinking holds bodily beginnings as constitutive of the bodies of the dead and allows for the convergence, in meaning, of Henri Bergson’s particles and of Jean-Luc Nancy’s bodies with which this introduction began. This is, therefore, a thinking about time (which has duration, periodicity, recurrence) and space (as convergence, as mixtures hospitable and hostile): the smallest particle down to which duration can be transmitted is a body that can touch or not touch, can touch or be touched, subject and object capable of conjunctive multiplicities themselves holding space over time. And so, the dying body is not discrete from but is a part of the continuous, turbulent motion of compound bodies that contain and are contained within continually a re-forming void. Dying is not a cessation of being, but a becoming other, a becoming dead.

In the famous first line of *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt writes: “I began with the desire to speak with the dead.” I came across this sentence in the weeks following my own mother’s death from cancer, my mind wracked not with the questions of *what* or *why*, but the question of *how*. How did tumors sprinkled like Rice Krispies around the abdomen lead to a peritoneal cavity filled with cisplatin and paclitaxol? How did we get from malignant ascites to remission to recurrence to hospice? How did a partial bowel obstruction turn to a shut-down gut? How did my mother, radiant with energy, become my mother, dead on the red recliner?

I read Greenblatt's line too soon after my mother died to believe I couldn't talk to her, and so I did not begin with the desire to speak with her--the dead--because desire, which is longing, as Robert Hass writes in the poem "Meditation at Lagunitas," must be "full of endless distances" (24-25). A desire to speak with her would have to acknowledge these distances. She was only just gone and not, I believed, distant. I did not begin with a desire to speak with the dead, but only with the question, *how did she become dead?*

As the weeks and months passed, I came to understand that my question was not static because deadness is not static. My mother did not *become dead*--past tense and done for. She was and is *becoming dead*--a process continually unfolding in memory, in the artifacts of her life, in the grave. This notion, at first a focal point for personal mourning, began to expand as I found myself reaching for a larger poetics of grief. *Becoming dead* kept pressing itself into my daily work of reading and writing about early modern literature until I eventually came to see its theoretical implications--a poetics of grief that is a poetics of duration, able to bring history into the present without denying the former's "salutary foreignness," in Roberto Calasso's words,[1] and without insisting, falsely, on clear bounds between subject--living/present--and object--dead/past. A poetics of grief that is a kind of physics.

I began to wonder: could I, daughter of the dead I understood as still becoming dead even as we, living, do the same, read the literatures of early modernity--situated in a temporally enfolding constellation of other literatures, all likewise becoming dead--with an attunement to this becoming? That is, might I as non-objective, proximate, grieving subject participating in and receptive to a state of continual and communal movement, read, think, *care for*, and thus relate to such texts without seeking mastery, fixity, or a grid of captured knowledge? What if I read these texts not because they helped me to know or allowed me to speak authoritatively, but because, attuned to their continual passage, they helped me live? What if we did?

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[1] *Tiepolo Pink* 8.

Lucretius set his physics treatise to the poetic form; so we can sense the ongoing structures (phenomenological, affective, philological, etc.) of becoming dead by reading poetry. Reading in the present the literatures of the historical past, which collapses temporal distance while calling out the ineffability of the present instant as it was and is, increases our felt understanding of the non-linear model at stake. What does this mean? Reading offers a way to answer the question of how the dead are becoming dead. Let me re-quote Lucretius: "there is void in created things." And let me add: we are created, compound things; there is void in us. Literary texts are created, compound things; they contain void. Because literary texts are compound bodies, to read a text is to be interpolated by its bodies and spaces so that the texts exist in the reader--ahistorical and simultaneous--continually forming different compounds.

We inhabit an age of Lucretian appreciation in early modern studies (the generatrix within which this study begins but does not remain) as scholars plumb the remarkable impact Lucretius' poem appears to have made on the period.[2] In his analysis of the Lucretian influence on *The Faerie Queene*, Gerard Passanante offers an evocative image of Spenser's archaic language as “the scattered dust of the dead blowing through his poem on a Lucretian wind” (171). Likewise in the context of Du Bellay’s use of a “Lucretian atomic poetics,” Andrew Hui powerfully builds upon this topoi of dust (biblical and classical), atoms, and letters, describing how in Lucretius, “human dust and cosmic dust intermingle in the great universal dance of becoming and unbecoming” (149). My project, however, is neither a material nor a philological tracing, but a process of study and an approach--never completed--to reading early modern texts, never completed. My approach has little to do with Lucretian receptions, influences, or applications in the period and everything to do with a Lucretian model *now*. Lucretius is not our object of study; rather, we enter into the turbulent motility the Lucretian world enables. To explain: Lucretius’ model of creation through continual convergence and detachment, which occurs when bodies incline however minimally (*clinamen*) as they fall through the void, unfixes linear and circular narrative schematizations and clarifies the processual, spiraling nature of such becoming. Lucretian physics offers a figure at the metaphorical level for a generative conjunction of intellectual traditions and time periods and at the literal level in the diachronic translation of physical and linguistic bodies. As we read we incline toward, come into contact with, and create anew.

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[2] Examples range from Greenblatt's bestselling material tracing in *Swerve* to Gerard Passanante's philological explorations in *The Lucretian Renaissance*, Ada Palmer's examination of contemporary reading practices in *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* and the edited collection by David Norbrook, Stephen Harrison, and Philip Hardie--*Lucretius and the Early Modern*.

Death is a subject of eternal concern for philosophers, theologians, historians, anthropologists, psychoanalysts, literary critics, writers, and, of course, all of us engaged in the daily work of living who face our own or another’s mortality. In his study of *Macbeth*, Robert N. Watson offers a stark and suitable imagistic foundation: “[i]n truth--that is, in time--Macbeth’s country is ‘another Golgotha,’ a heap of skulls. So was Shakespeare’s London, and so are our own cities” (139). In *Dominion of the Dead*, Robert Pogue Harrison accounts for the macro- and the microscopic: “Because the earth has reabsorbed the dead into its elements for so many millions upon millions of years, who can any longer tell the difference between receptacle and contents?” (1-2). We stand upon skulls, breathing in stars. As such, an area adjacent to that under consideration here is death studies. Taking cultural historian Philippe Ariès’ *The Hour of Our Death* (1981) as a thanatological point of departure, much fascinating historical and anthropological work has been done over the past few decades on early modern England, the literary source of this study. These works generally study death through intellectual and material histories, ritual functions, philosophical traditions, and/or doctrinal and lay religious understandings. By and large, they methodologically aim for symptomatic readings, viewing textual or material phenomena as evidence of past practices. Such a view, even when sympathetic, is a view from the outside, a view of the early modern historical subject, as object, from the distanced perspective of the present-day observer. At stake is an understanding of death as a distant, historically-situated cultural practice.[3]

---

[3] Some key historical analyses include Clare Gittings’ *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (1984), Julian Litten’s *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450* (1991), David Cressy’s *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (1997), Ralph Houlbrooke’s *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (1998), and Sarah Tarlow’s anthropological *Ritual, Belief, and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (2011). Studies that use literary analysis to reconstruct cultural practices and attitudes surrounding death include: Robert N. Watson’s *The Rest Is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (1994), William E. Engel’s *Mapping Mortality: The Persistence of Memory and Melancholy in Early Modern England* (1995), Michael Neill’s *Issues*

How do we move from creation into death? Duration. Mine is not a project of historicism, historiography, cultural materialism, or theology, but one that examines historical (and more recent) literatures existing, and persisting, in the present. The Lucretian frame brings you/the reader and the text into a common space of kinetic assemblage; it is an immersive methodology. I do not trace the literary or cultural relic to reconstruct historical positions, but read “then” in the space of “now”--a “now” that is itself always passing and so reveals a poetic topology or a topological poetics of becoming dead. In other words, I interpret meaning via the processes of diachronic mixture.

Let me offer through simile a starting premise. In *Past Looking: Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image*, Michael Ann Holly explains what we see when we see starlight:

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of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy (1997), Tobias Döring’s *Performances of Mourning in Shakespearean Theatre and Early Modern Culture* (2006), Scott L. Newstok’s *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs Beyond the Tomb* (2009), Brian Cummings’ *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity & Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (2013), and Judith H. Anderson’s *Light and Death: Figuration in Spenser, Kepler, Donne, Milton* (2017). Important edited collections pertaining to early modern Europe more broadly include *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, edited by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (2000), *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture*, edited by Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (2002), and *Emblems of Death in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Monica Calabritto and Peter Daly (2014). Two crucial writings on the medieval period are Patrick J. Geary’s *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* and Paul Binski’s *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (1996).

"[T]he illumination from old stars is the only light that enables us to look into the dark and distant. . . . Like the light emanating from a distant star, what is present has come from a place and time that still resonates, and what is past is not necessarily so" (207). In the same way that I conceive of dying not as mere decease, but as becoming dead, the starlight that reaches us tonight is still becoming dead, complicating a perspectival understanding of then and now. Embedded in this project is an acknowledgment of Holly's key claim--that cultural history (and, I would say, *reading* more broadly) "is a part of what it is looking at" (48). The subjects and objects of historiography interpenetrate; recognizing this interpenetration is a way of recognizing that perspective is itself a constructed paradigm (48). We might extrapolate out from this argument to connect it to Holly's claim that through Renaissance cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt's study of Albertian perspectival painting, such a perspective system became "an enduring cognitive schema that provided the narrative architectonic for the cultural historian who desired to relate objects and people and attitudes temporally" (47). As the representations at issue in this study push against a geometrically or temporally plottable point between life and death, so we must attend to the larger assumptions of plottability and precision connecting (or distinguishing) the historical past and the critical present. I do not claim to fix the past as historical, known object located securely elsewhere at a set synchronic point. Instead it moves, swells, unfurls, diachronic. Trying to keep the past still won't make it so.

To further explain, let me quote the entirety of a brief, elucidating piece called "Dead Roads" by American writer J. Robert Lennon and then introduce Maurice Blanchot's work on reading in *The Space of Literature*. Lennon writes:

> It is not unusual in our area for a road to fall into disuse, if the farm or village that it serves should be abandoned. In these cases, the land may be taken over by

> the state for use as a conservation area, game preserve or other project, and the road may be paved, graveled or simply maintained for the sake of access to the land.
>
> But should the state find no use for the land, the road will decay. Grass will appear in the tire ruts. Birds or wind may drop seeds, and tall trees grow; or a bramble may spring up and spread across the sunny space, attracting more birds and other animals.
>
> In this case, the road will no longer be distinguishable from the surrounding land. It can then be classified as dead, and will be removed from maps. (*Short* 246)

We can try to remove the road from the maps, but removal from maps doesn't make the road not so. Walking the space of the once was brings it through memory into the now so that even if there are no signs left of its having been, an awareness of or attunement to its having been recollects presence. I experience the presence of the absent road. I hold within me the space of the created thing. "Classified as dead" becomes a more complicated, porous, if not impossible, category.

To situate the porosity of this classification in terms of reading, I turn to Blanchot, who in "Communication and the Work" ponders the "'miracle' of reading" as a "helplessly joyful dance with the 'tomb,'" giving flesh to the relationship between void and created body. "To read a poem," Blanchot writes, "is not to read yet another poem; it is not even to enter, via this poem, into the essence of poetry. *The reading of a poem is the poem itself*; affirming itself in the reading as a work" (178 emphasis added). Walking the road *is* the road itself. This walking-reading enacts its own kind of resurrectory effect where "the stone and the tomb do not only withhold the cadaverous void which is to be animated; they constitute the presence, though dissimulated, of what is to appear." *The reading of a poem is the poem itself*. Reading, we incline into and so conjoin with the written, creating the compound body that is the poem. At the conclusion of the essay, Blanchot describes most fully the singular relationship of reading to the work, as a passage through which we find “a presence which is also a disappearance”:

> It is sometimes said regretfully that the work of art will never again speak the language it spoke when it was born, the language of its birth, which only those who belonged to the same world heard and received. Never again will the Eumenides speak to the Greeks, and we will never know what was said in that language. This is true. But it is also true that the Eumenides have still never spoken, and that each time they speak it is the unique birth of their language that they announce. . . . And notwithstanding all this, reading and vision each time recollect, from the weight of a given content and along the ramifications of an evolving world, the unique intimacy of the work, the wonder of its constant genesis and the swell of its unfurling.

Each time we read or listen to or witness in performance, each time our fingers trace or our mouths form the shape of words, we recollect. What has never been born is yet reborn. It is this space of bodily welcome, intimate and always, unique and constant, which I hope will open an approach to deadness not as fixed absence, but an approach capable of recognizing “the wonder of its constant genesis and the swell of its unfurling.”

Lucretian physics, which is both a figure in motion and an aperture, thus a moving body and a spatial opening, provides an experience of this making and unmaking, a process (not progress) of recurrence and repetition, ongoing and associative. We may consider the movements of bodies in space along concurrently formal and philosophical planes of thought and bring into generative contact additional theoretical perspectives including, significantly, philosophers

Michel Serres, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Giorgio Agamben, whose works filter through this entire project, as well as Jacques Derrida, Melanie Klein, Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Louis Marin. Their critical affinities are clarified by the project's framing question. *How does reading becoming dead as an ongoing process stage and complicate living, dying, and the redistribution --or recollection--of matter?* I hope to illuminate the constellated subjects--mourning, memory, genre, power, and translation--surrounding the cellular or textual body's continual conjunction, detachment, and reconstitution in new form. This project, then, is not an application of a set scholarly apparatus or a singular generic mode; it is a convocation of voices, a reading of the *ichnos* as Serres describes it, wandering tracks with all their attendant loops and re-loops of meaning, an encountering of bodies in the void. My approach is not genealogical, but gravitational, inclining; it relies not on an author-centric tracing of historical or intellectual conventions, but instead on reverberations among multiple discursive energies and generic modes that I find can be woven into meaningful structures--often tangential to their original purposes. When convened they begin to appear to us, if we let them, as a criss-crossed field capable of reimagining the roads we thought were dead and gone.

I turn to the phrase "becoming dead" instead of "death" or "dying" for multiple reasons. One could view this as a work of deconstruction--rejecting a clear binary between the presence of life and the absence of death and proposing, alternatively, that we acknowledge a phase transition, a changing state between the two that entangles notions of process (becoming, temporal) and being (dead, spatial). Similarly, it may be seen as touching the edges of phenomenology, through which "[t]he perceiving subject is an object of the world" continually transmitting and encountering signals in a space dense with communicative flux,[4] or as radicalizing reader response, through which the literary work becomes not only "a mode of living," as Louise M. Rosenblatt explains, but a mode of dying as well.[5]

Becoming dead may be seen as a mirror to a theory of infancy. In his "Essay on the Destruction of Experience," from the larger collection *Infancy and History*, Giorgio Agamben argues that infancy precedes speech and so marks the split between language and speech. He connects this view of infancy to a way of explaining the classical mysteries:

> For if we know that, as *páthēma*, it was ultimately an anticipation of death (Plutarch tells us that to die, *teleutān*, and to be initiated, *teleísthai*, are one and the same thing) the very element which all the sources concur in seeing as essence, and from which the very name "mystery" derives (from **mu*, which indicates the moaning sound when the mouth is closed)--in other words, silence--it is what has as yet found no adequate explanation. If it is true that in its primary form, what was at the heart of the experience of the mysteries was not a knowing, but a suffering . . . , and if this *páthēma* was in its essence abstracted from language--was an un-speakable, a closed-mouth moaning--then this experience approximated an experience of infancy . . . . (*IH* 69)

While Agamben goes on to explain that there appears to have been, instead, an understanding of this "mystical infancy" as a knowledge or a skill that must be kept silent, I would like to stay with the implications of an experience of what is un-speakable. If we can conceive of infancy as the phase through which the human acquires speech, we can imagine becoming dead as the mirroring move into the un-speakable--not as knowledge that must be kept silent, but as that which though perceptible "has as yet found no adequate explanation." The end of life (as rendered in literature and as a heuristic for considering historical literatures) is marked by a transforming periodicity worthy of study.

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[4] *The Birth of Physics*, Michel Serres, 70.

[5] *Literature as Experience*, Louise M. Rosenblatt, 264.

Becoming dead also functions as a conceptual and temporal map for the study of language. I/we/you (subject) can become dead (object); we cannot become death. Becoming dead allows the subject to become object and so makes visible in language the overlap between the two. Becoming as present participial verb suggests imperfect process, turning, continual metamorphosis. In Arthur Golding's 1565 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he gives the first line as: "Of shapes transformed to bodies strange I purpose to entreat." This project carries something of this entreaty, only I would render Golding's past tense as "transforming," the continuation or recurrence of becoming, to make clear that becoming dead--as biological, memorial, and critical processes--is ongoing. To borrow from Bergson, such becoming has *duration*, it is "the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances" (211).

As a theoretical mode of inquiry about literature, especially historical literatures, becoming dead recognizes a changing state never fully complete so long as there exist presently visible and sometimes audible resonances, or immanances, of the past. Asymptotic, atelic, we never reach the absolute absence of death.[6] Becoming dead also applies to methodology. In every theoretical or analytic application, what survives is not the whole but an elemental or first body. For this project, becoming dead also provides a way to think specifically about the literatures of English early modernity. "Early modern" is a name that can only be rendered with a backward-looking gaze. "Early modern" implies the commencement of modernity and the cessation of what came before. One might inaccurately say the "death" of pre-modernity, but such death cannot be plotted as a spatio-temporal instant or a synchronic point; it can only be approximated as a duration. Early modernity, if one chooses to demarcate, does not mark the death of pre-modernity; it marks its becoming dead.

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[6] As Hall Bjørnstad writes of the atelic threshold and its implications for the practice of theory, "an imperfective 'holding' always already lingering at the threshold rather than perfective 'threshing' only too ready to subsume the threshold under a distant telos": "Rather than the

Finally, the concept of becoming dead can help us allow for the mixture, indeed the suffusing, of different modes of inquiry--poetry, memoir, criticism intertwined like the wandering Hermes with Hestia at the hearth, to the others bound and thus finding their referents (*Statues* 199-200). Michel de Certeau explains in his essay "The Unnamable," as to the question of what it means to *be*, "the dying person is prevented from saying this nothing that he is becoming" (*Everyday* 193). To write this becoming is to enter "the very area where loss prevails, beyond the protected domain that had been delimited by the act of localizing death elsewhere"

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actual becoming-dead implied by death, the threshold here helps accentuate what this death does to the outlook of the dying. This change of perspective can be qualified in analogy with the linguistic distinction between perfective and imperfective grammatical aspect" (86-87). I would say the threshold, all-encompassing and remaining in the imperfective, accentuates that the "actual becoming-dead implied by death" is not isolatable or discrete, but ongoing. Becoming dead is not simply the implication but the essential motion that does not cease, continuing into what we label death and beyond.

(198). The desire (distant) of this project is to reach into the other of death and to write it as process (proximate, intimate). Within this space, an “index of all alterity” (194), the *I* opens alongside the *that*, subject and object, examiner and examined, allowing for nearness, touch, mixture. And so criticism may be story, poetry a grasping for theoretical granularities, memoir a mode of critique.

The texts from which the subsequent analysis emerges range from Elizabethan folk drama to Jacobean tragedy, from fable to Catholic prose to a translation of Euripides. I begin with the literature of Reformation and Counter-Reformation England, which occupies a particularly fruitful space between and within coextensive corporeal forms--Catholic and Protestant, manuscript and print, poetry and drama, Latin and vernacular, sealed island and porous union of kingdoms. Choosing an originating situs in pre-modernity peels back modern assumptions regarding secularity, mimesis, magic, medicine, and the self, while at the same time providing electric points of contact through which to consider an ancient physics by way of contemporary philosophy, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. These inquiries are, however, temporally and spatially interstitial; the center-point may be England from 1553 to 1623, but the focal lens of the project turns back toward antiquity and forward to 21st-century grief.

In this framing engagement with texts broadly classified as early modern English literature, I am guided by a metaphor not unlike Holly’s vision of starlight and that further illuminates the relationship between history and criticism--Benjamin’s connection between criticism and alchemy:

> [T]he history of works of art prepares their critique, and this is why historical distance increases their power. If, to use a simile, one views the growing work as a

> funeral pyre, its commentator can be likened to the chemist, its critic to an alchemist. While the former is left with wood and ashes as the sole objects of his analysis, the latter is concerned only with the enigma of the flame itself: the enigma of being alive. Thus the critic inquires about the truth whose living flame goes on burning over the heavy logs of the past and the light ashes of life gone by.[7]

I would recast Benjamin's simile to say the critic might be concerned not only with the enigma of the flame itself, but with the enigma of the flame in contact with body and wood and smoke lifting up its particulate matter to be breathed in by later generations. Thus, the critic "inquires about the truth whose living flame goes on burning over"--and so making dead--"the heavy logs of the past," a process never complete so long as the flame is fueled. The enigma of the flame itself is not just the flame but also its fuel and so is never only the enigma of being alive but always the simultaneously true enigma of becoming dead.

The following chapters quilt connected approaches through four central texts. The selection and sequence of these texts do not map onto a narrative of chronological transformation, but begin, as do all scholarly and creative works, with the capricious, revelatory combustions of fixation and occurrence--what arrests the mind colliding with lived experience. One might think of this in the terms Judith Anderson offers in her introduction to *Light and Death*, "This book itself began as an intellectual process . . . The process, as realized, is at once personal and professional--indeed, experienced scholarship" (2). I am especially grateful for Julia Reinhard Lupton's description of her own writing in the epilogue to *Thinking with Shakespeare*: there were days when she "made [her] way through Shakespeare surrounded by the chatter of [her children's] pre-algebra anxiety and after-school euphoria" and so found herself "writing about the plays under conditions where the self-withdrawing processes of thought made their efforts at exodus amidst the clamor of the *oikos*" (260-261).

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[7] From "Geothe's Elective Affinities" as translated in Hannah Arendt's introduction to *Illuminations* (4-5) and quoted in Agamben's essay "The Question of Method in Adorno and Benjamin" (*IH* 135).

In this book, I seek to acknowledge--and so to see, feel, hold, and write into--the clamor and the turbulence of lived experience. In *The Birth of Physics*, Serres writes: "Every nascent object is initially a vortex, as indeed is the world. . . . The world is a vortex of vortices, interlacings, a maze of waves" (71). We must remember that the spiral "begins in an infinitely small declination," the minimum angle of the clinamen (114). Thus, departing from a genealogical understanding that would read history as laminar flow, let us imagine this angle, a declining, a deviation that, however slight, opens into the spiral which is thought, becoming.

The first text, Lady Jane Lumley's *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia translated out of Greake into Englisshe* (c. 1553), is a tragedy over which the specter of dying looms and which enables us to understand becoming dead as a diachronic process of mixture. I encountered the scene at issue soon after my mother's death, and it struck me as being not just a conversation between mother and daughter before sacrificial slaughter, but as a dialogue that by some miraculous, even consubstantial, force resonated achingly and honestly with the experience of modern-day hospice--dying is happening, in different ways, daily, and one can only turn and keep turning toward it even as one unfolds from and is yet is continually enfolded by the living world. From this vantage of piecemeal detachment that is also a form of exchange, I could better understand a text on which I had previously worked: Robert Southwell's *Marie Magdalen's*

Funeral Teares (1591). As to the latter, I began with the description of Mary's reluctant departure from the risen Christ at Easter, which I'd read and re-read and thought and re-thought over the summer months when I visited with my mother (ill and approaching dying though her dying seemed a long way off yet, our mourning still tentatively preemptive or, in Derridean terms, originary). My work on *Iphigeneia* helped me more fully appreciate the embodied stakes of Mary's movements, her turning away and her turning back.

The subject of Chapter 3 is John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623), which pulled at me with something of the maternal magnetism at work in *Iphigeneia* and, to an extent, in *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Teares*. Here, I concentrate on the Duchess' beast fable, that radical generic irruption showing not only how bodies, like stories, are made and remade in language, but how the fable can undo our most familiar of ordering relations: life and death. Through thinking about the capacity of marvelous tales and tale-tellers to reimagine time and space--and the care such tales take as well as the respite they give--I move in the final chapter to George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale* (1595). I found that this play brought the other texts, as it brings its own merrily kaleidoscopic plot, into a coalescence that was itself a kind of marvel. I end the project with a scene of burial--and burial ends up showing us that it marks not the *end*point but only *a* point, non-linear and always a part of the passing "now" or, as I discuss in the first chapter, the unstable "this." *This* body in *this* ground, continually becoming other and so collapsing the distance between the grave where we gather and the hearth where we return.

Together, these texts connect in a kinship (unexpected, perhaps, but laying bare the ficticity of any taxonomies that would separate them) and give shape to a Lucretian perception of becoming dead--of bodies, as bodies, becoming something other than they were and through such becoming continuing *to be.* Such recognition, in turn, allows us to reimagine the stakes of literary practice. Particles as bodies converge, holding created space (and creating held space), and detach, opening into space, as they move in perpetuity through the void. Each convergence and detachment is an unfixed becoming that resists a perspectival schema. In these instantiations seemingly known categories--dead/alive, story/play, human/animal, mother/daughter--unfasten from their origins to make something new even as we are made new through the space of reception, and we see how, in a Lucretian understanding, “no visible object utterly passes away” (*DRN* 1.262).

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Lady Jane Lumley’s *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia translated out of Greake into Englisshe* (c. 1553).

This drama tells the story of Iphigeneia, daughter of Agamemnon. Her father is the leader of the Greek army charged with reclaiming Helen from Troy who waits with his troops at Aulis for a favorable wind sufficient to allow the ships to sail. The priest Calchas prophesies that Iphigeneia must be sacrificed to appease the goddess Diana, so Iphigeneia’s mother Clytemnestra is summoned and told (falsely) to bring her daughter to Aulis to be married to Achilles. Clytemnestra brings her daughter along with her younger son Orestes. A crucial tension in the play is Agamemnon’s agonizing indecision--pounced upon by his brother Menelaus--and the heartbreak when Iphigeneia realizes her father means not to celebrate her wedding but to sacrifice her. Clytemnestra’s fury, which will peak when the war is over and Agamemnon returns home, is kindled by this betrayal.

In this chapter, which begins with memoir before moving into a critical poetics, I concentrate, through a sixteenth-century Englishwoman's translation of the ancient Greek story of sacrifice at Aulis and in light of my mother's recent dying at home, not on Agamemnon's indecision, Clytemnestra's fury, Iphigeneia's sacrificial altar, or the early modern historical context (which is the subject of most scholarship on the play[8]), but on the conversion toward dying. Or, more precisely, I argue that the altar does not encompass the entire space-time of death. Iphigeneia is not departed but *departing*--detaching, moving from *who is this, that will carie me hence so sone*, as she first asks, to *surelye I will go hence*. What the play invites us to experience in this reading is the duration, or diachrony, of the mixed body--alive and dead, mother and daughter--present in departing as a continual becoming and continually reactivated with each reading.

Robert Southwell's *Marie Magdalen's Funeral Teares* (1591).

English Jesuit Robert Southwell enlarges upon the scene told in the Gospel of John and retold in medieval homilies in which Mary Magdalene returns to Jesus' tomb only to find the stone cover rolled away and the tomb empty. Jesus' body is missing. Mary, horrified and devastated, weeps. She does not understand what has happened--not when she sees the angels at the tomb and not when she sees the risen Christ, whom she mistakes for a gardener. It is only when Jesus says her name--*Maria*--that she begins to understand. Her flood of tears is just briefly abated, however, for not long after she recognizes Jesus, he instructs her to go to Galilee to tell the other apostles that he will soon join them. Mary turns, and it is Southwell's radical description of the turn that this chapter considers--how her movement and the particular similes describing her feelings illuminate the changing states of matter at stake in grief.[9]

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[8] See, e.g., Diane Purkiss' *Three Tragedies by Renaissance Women*, xxix-xxxii, Patricia Demers' "On First Looking into Lumley's Euripides"; Jaime Goodrich's "Returning to Lady Lumley's Schoolroom"; David H. Greene's "Lady Lumley and Greek Tragedy"; and Alison Findlay's "Reproducing *Iphigenia at Aulis*."

The text's recalibrates medieval homilies' multiple purposes, sharing not only doctrinal instruction but modeling consolation, itself a continual process. Indeed, Southwell's description of Mary's turn gives us a way of understanding her grief work as foundational. Her turn makes no grand claim; her turn is not itself the Resurrection. Yet, her turn--that is, her conversion--performs a quieter miracle: grief becomes a fluid state that through its tangled eddies and its revolutions founds a reimagined relationship with the dead. Founding, a move into stasis that can never fully occur, is itself a process of becoming dead. To illuminate this process, in this chapter I read Southwell's depiction of the Magdalene alongside a philosophical translation of Livy (Serres' *Rome*), tracing liquid points of contact and rupture in Mary's mourning--a weaning--for the absent and then untouchable Christ.

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[9] Recent key work on Southwell and the *noli me tangere* encounter includes a chapter from Paul Cefalu's *The Johannine Renaissance in Early Modern English Literature and Theology*; Patricia Badir's *The Maudlin Impression: English Literary Images of Mary Magdalene, 1550-1700*; and Anne Sweeney's *Snow in Arcadia: Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape, 1586-1595*; and Shaun Ross' "Robert Southwell: Sacrament and Self."

John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (published 1623, first performed c. 1613).

This Jacobean tragedy tells the story of the widowed Duchess of Malfi who chooses to marry--privately and without the permission of her powerful brothers--her steward Antonio. The two enjoy a companionate if secret marriage and have three children together. Eventually betrayed by Bosola, her Master of Horse employed as a household spy by her brothers, the Duchess, Antonio, and their children flee under the guise of a holy pilgrimage. Antonio escapes with their eldest child, but the Duchess is returned home. Before Bosola takes her there, and not long before he causes her murder by strangulation, the Duchess tells him a beast fable. Far from being frivolous or unnecessary, it is this fable that manifests a way of understanding the play and the methods and machinations of power at work in it--that is, how power over death is briefly subverted through the interventions of genre. Genre operates here not simply as a formal category, but as a mode of sculpting experience. Tragedy is silenced when the beasts of fable speak.

While the main lines of criticism concerning this play have included state politics, the female subject, sexuality, theatricality, family, and magic, little has been said of the Duchess' beast fable.[10] As Judith Haber writes of the Duchess' more commonly considered final maternal instructions concerning the care of her children, “not enough attention is given to the disruptive force of their extraordinary ordinariness” (“My Body Bestow” 148). Yet, the fable is crucial. In this chapter I bring separate works on fable by Derrida and Marin into conversation with Serres’ works on Lucretius and on statues to argue that fable is the poetic expression of the Lucretian *clinamen*--the point of convergence between consuming and being consumed, between human and animal, between subject and object. It speaks of looming death even as it forestalls it. Fable enacts a temporal, gestural, and strategic deferral, a declining, arresting the time of tragedy and forming the heart of the play. The fable’s dynamism of becoming, in its compact and crafted way, eclipses the tragic present much as Serres describes of music: “Music in its descent, restrained, maintained, makes the present flame out” (180-181). Such fable temporality refuses, for its duration, the tragic mandate.

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[10] Some recent scholarship includes Wendy Wall's complication of public-private divisions in "Just a spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England," *Modern Philology* (2006); Kaara L. Peterson's work on sexuality and medicine in the context of "the mother" illness in early modernity, "Shakespearean Revivifications: Early Modern Undead," *Shakespeare Studies* (2004); Bonnie Lander Johnson and Bethany Dubow's historical and ecological contextualizing of London glassmaking in "Allegories of Creation: Glassmaking, Forests, and

George Peele’s *The Old Wives’ Tale* (1595).

This play begins with three young pages lost in the woods who are eventually welcomed into the home of the generous smith Clunch. His wife Madge offers them food, which they decline, and begins to tell them a tale of a king’s stolen daughter. Two men appear, seemingly

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Fertility in Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *Renaissance Drama* (2017); Ernest B. Gilman’s exploration of the tale of Alexander and Lodowicke in “The ‘Old Tale’ in John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *SEL* (2018); Albert H. Tricomi’s “The Severed Hand in Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (Spring 2004); and Mary Floyd-Wilson’s “‘To think there’s power in potions’: experiment, sympathy, and the devil in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” in *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage*, 2013.

interrupting her story, but it is only the tale come to life. Thus the play-within-the-play begins and the tale of the pages becomes its frame. In the inner play, Erestus stands at the cross. The evil conjurer Sacrapant (who kidnapped Delia, the sister for whom the two men who first entered are looking) has turned Erestus' wife mad and has made Erestus an old man by day and a bear by night. The inner play's other characters come to him with their problems (often sharing food or alms as they do) and he answers them with sage prophecies. In between these various segments, harvesters enter singing songs of sowing and reaping. In one critical thread of story, the wandering knight Eumenides (beloved of Delia) encounters and pays for the burial of a poor dead man named Jack. Later Jack in ghost form helps Eumenides and the other characters, bringing the plays points of rupture into resolution.

Peele makes extensive use of various folkloric tropes (everything from the grateful dead to the three heads in a well to the little magic table) and plays with the very genre of romance, which decades of scholarship has explored.[11] Rather than an object of scrutiny or excavation, this last chapter treats the play as an occasion for meditation. Looking at Agamben's work on playland and funeral games alongside Serres' work on the double law of hospitality-hostility and

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[11] See, e.g., *The Grateful Dead: The History of a Folk Story* by Gordon Hall Gerould, 1973; Betsy Bowden, Betsy's "Exaltation of Folklore in *The Old Wives Tale* (1595)" in *Folklore Interpreted*, 1995; and M.C. Bradbrook's "Peele's Old Wives' Tale, A Play of Enchantment" in *English Studies* (1962). See also Adam Fox's crucial *Oral and Literate Culture in England: 1500-1700* (2000), as well as Mary Ellen Lamb's fascinating work on the gendered and ideological impetus behind the very notion of the "old wives' tale," "Old Wives' Tales, George Peele, and Narrative Abjection," *Critical Survey* (2002).

Nancy’s writing about the cemetery, I argue that death does not automatically stabilize the relationship between subject and object. Instead, this comedy with burial at its center reveals the stakes of dying--not as a passive move into absence and non-being, but as an affirmative becoming dead, a becoming that makes demands upon the living. A notion of death as mere decease is corporeally complicated through a ghost named Jack’s complex webbing of hospitality and hostility. Becoming dead shows the convergence of hospitality and hostility in the body that must be buried and shows the unstable temporal passage between worlds--rendered visible by the ghost, the grave, and the hearth on stage. Recognizing the compounded and overlapping relationship between hearth and grave allows the movements of the play, its gaps and jogs, to spill into present experience so that we may read the text as a resource for ethical and emotional solace.

These four texts, grouped and so made proximate by period and language, read or listened to now and interwoven in the now with insights from antiquity onward, move together through the spaces of history and memory as we, readers, move through the same spaces. This moving is a wandering upon the meadow where the roads once were, upon which our wandering imprints make roads that are sometimes new and sometimes the same. This wandering is not linear or bound; it is ichnography, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, and ichnography, Serres writes, “contains the possible” (*Rome* 21). Iphigeneia and her mother, Mary Magdalene and Jesus, the Duchess of Malfi and her family, Jack and his companions. This project’s central figures--relational, compound in the Lucretian sense, and participating in the swirl of bodies through the void, unfixed and diachronic--continually approach deadness. What I hope to show is that the approach to deadness does not equal erasure. If we concentrate on the approach, on the becoming, where paths cross and re-cross and through which their bodies become interwoven with our own and with one another, recollected, ongoing, we can encounter a mystery that, to use Agamben's words, "has as yet found no adequate explanation." Let us keep holding tight to that potent and lovely *yet*.

I. The Rhythm of Departing in Lady Jane Lumley's *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia translated out of Greake into Englisshe*

> "Lord, I told the undertaker,
> Undertaker, please drive slow.
> For this body you are hauling, Lord,
> I hate to see her go."
> - Carter Family, "Can the Circle Be Unbroken"

When my mother was dying but some weeks before her death, she called us to her room. *Sometimes*, she said, *people die in pieces. Sometimes it isn't all at once. This is one of those times.* We sat with her and we cried and then when she felt strong enough, we would have helped her walk to the kitchen, maybe have something to drink, take her medicine, send a text message.

My mother was dying and did die at home and her dying quietly in a rural American town leads me, like a ribbon, a trace via a long-dead Englishwoman, to the girl whose death in mythic history led to Troy's collapse, scattering, and reconstitution in Rome: Iphigeneia. This is a stretch, of course, a leap across time and geography and discipline, a topological crumpling. Or maybe it is merely Lucretian.

My mother died, and I write this book. First bodies become dead bodies and the living bodies who mourn them. First bodies become dead bodies and the ones who tell the stories. The story of Iphigeneia is this: Helen has gone, and the Greeks congregate at Aulis, waiting to sail to Troy. There are no winds. They cannot sail. Calchas prophesies a favorable wind if Agamemnon, leader of the Greek armies, will sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia to the goddess Diana.

Agamemnon agrees and has her mother Clytemnestra bring Iphigeneia to Aulis under the guise that she is to marry Achilles. When the women learn the truth, they are horrified, but eventually Iphigeneia agrees to the sacrifice. She converts. Later, it is reported to her mother that at the moment of her death, her body was miraculously replaced with that of a deer.

My mother, departed, leads me to Iphigeneia, departing. Departing, Iphigeneia has her last conversation with her own mother. In Lady Jane Lumley's *The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia translated out of Greake into Englisshe* (c. 1553), this marks Iphigeneia's turn from her mother and toward dying, toward becoming dead.[12]

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[12] After Euripides died in the winter of 407-406 BC, *Iphigenia at Aulis* was one of the first plays performed (c. 405 BC, Kovacs 157). Erasmus' Latin translation was published in 1506 (Purkiss 168). Soon after her marriage to John, first Baron Lumley, Lady Jane Lumley (née Fitzalan, 1537, daughter of Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, and Katherine Grey, aunt of Lady Jane Grey) translated the play from the Greek, likely utilizing the Latin as well, in a book containing some of her other Latin translations. For a more thorough discussion of her sources, see Diane Purkiss' edition, *Three Tragedies by Renaissance Women*, 167-169. If we estimate the date to be 1553, as Purkiss does, Lumley would have been sixteen years old (iv). Lumley's *Iphigeneia* is the earliest English translation of Euripides and the earliest extant English drama by a woman (ODNB). Lumley's unique autograph manuscript is a translation from Greek, using Latin, into English, written in Italic, contained within a larger collection of translations into Latin and at least one other hand, British Library MS Royal 15.A.ix. All quotations and citations of Lumley's *Iphigeneia* come from a facsimile of this manuscript.

Iphigeneia's sacrificial altar will form both a site of death (hers, the deer's) and a site of origin (hers, the deer's). What interests me and what I investigate primarily in this chapter, however, is not the altar--or, to be more specific, I argue that the altar does not encompass the entire site of death or of origin. Beyond the altar, I explore the turn, the step, the door *into* death, *into* becoming. Not departed but departing--the move from *who is this, that will carie me hence so sone*, as Iphigeneia asks, to *surelye I will goo hence*. Whether the event of her dying is foreclosed or not, Iphigeneia turns toward it. It would be a commonplace to say she embraces death, incomplete to say Iphigeneia only aligns herself with the patriarchal order.[13] Instead, Iphigeneia here does something else: Iphigeneia tells her mother how the living must allow the dying to become dead. This telling is itself a moving, a translation of the body.[14] *I must go from you unto the altar of the goddess' temple. I must go and I will go.*

Call and Response.

The final conversation between Iphigeneia and Clytemnestra begins with an important series of questions by Clytemnestra followed by Iphigeneia's answers. This question and answer, which scaffolds the gestures of repetition and refrain to follow, moves through several significant modes of mourning--lamentation of death; what to say to the survivors *from* the dead; and what to do after death *for* the dead. We witness the reversal of roles, as mother asks and daughter answers, which ultimately leads to the carriage of the daughter away from the mother:

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[13] See Carol Gilligan's profound work *The Birth of Pleasure*, 145-152, which considers the relationship between Iphigeneia and Agamemnon in Euripides' play, not Lumley's translation.

[14] Translation in all its denotative valences, which includes movement of the body.

Clyt: **What shall not I lament your deathe?**

Iphi: No truly you oughte not seinge that I shall both be sacraficed to the goddes Dyana and also saue grece.

Cly: Well I will folowe your counsell daughter, seinge you haue spoken so well: **but tell me, what shall I saye ~~from~~ to your sisters from you?**

Iphi: Desier them I praie you, not to mourne for my death.

Clit: **And what shall I saye unto the other uirgins from you.**

Iphi: Bid them all farewell in my name, and I praye you for my sake bringe up my litell brother Orestes, till he come to mans age.

Clit: Take your leaue of him, for this is the laste daie, that euer you shall see him.

Iphi: Farewell my welbeloued brother, for I am euen as it weare compelled to loue you, bicause you ware so glad to helpe me.

Clit: **Is there any other thinge, that I may do for you at grece?**

Iphi: No truly, but I praie you not to hate my father for this dede. For he is compelled to do it for the welthe and honor of grece.

Clit: If he hath done this willinglye then trulye he hathe comitted a dede farre unworthie of suche a noble man as he is.

Iphi: Who is this, that will carie me hence so sone?

Let us concentrate on the four questions Clytemnestra asks Iphigeneia before Iphigeneia herself turns and poses the question to which we will subsequently attend.

What shall not I lament your deathe?

[B]ut tell me, what shall I saye to your sisters from you?

And what shall I saye unto the other uirgins from you.

Is there any other thinge, that I may do for you at grece?

The first three pose questions of future action--how Clytemnestra shall not lament and what she shall say, but even in its asking the first subverts the idea of "your death" as taking place at a future date because Iphigeneia has just told her mother "do you holde your peace lamentinge so withe in your selfe." Clytemnestra is even now *lamentinge so*; she laments Iphigeneia's death in the present. We might imagine she laments the impending idea of death, its inevitability, the way in which Iphigeneia's life has been foreclosed and so death is, in effect, already a part of the now or is "originary," in Derrida's terms. We could also imagine *your death* as unfolding over time, beginning with Calchas' decree, Agamemnon's summons, and Iphigeneia's conversion, and continuing through and beyond the sacrifice. *Your death* is the biological event toward which you advance, as well as the symbolic and emotional processes, ongoing, in which you, and we, already participate.

The second and third are questions of language: *but tell me, what shall I saye to your sisters from you? And what shall I saye unto the other uirgins from you.* These questions seek in language to defer the finality of death, to push back the temporal frames, keeping the acts at issue always in the future. Yet even in deferral, the impingement of future time upon the present is clear. Or, as indicated by the first question, because your death is already unfolding in time, the desired futurity of the second and third questions collapses. What shall I, the living speaker, say in the future, what words shall I offer to your sisters, your familial community, a choric equivalent, from you, who will be or may be already dead? And what shall I, still living, say in the future to the broader community of other virgins, the other young women of Greece, from you, who will be or may be already dead? And when I take those words from you--living now but dead by the time I speak--am I translating from the dead to the living? Am I translating death? When I repeat then the words you now give me, do the words come from one alive or one dead? What does it mean that the words come *from you*--becoming dead--through me, your incomplete witness? Am I a flow-through, a filter, or an impediment, a parasite, between you--speaker/subject--and them, listening objects? These questions are not answered directly but a form of answer is modeled in the language of the conversation between Iphigeneia and her mother that comes later and that reveals the collapse, interpenetration, or conjunction of subject and object in the processes of dying and of mourning.

Lastly, *[i]s there any other thinge, that I may do for you at grece?* “Any other thing” presupposes some things already done, which requires that the words said to the sisters and to the virgins be considered as such. This last question does not repeat “shall” (shall not lament, shall say), but transitions to “may,” easing the act’s necessary or automatic nature and acknowledging a temporal flattening. We might imagine this question as a kind of plea--*is there something, anything, please, that I can do for you?* Iphigeneia’s opening to her answer--*No truly, but*--indicates that the direction of her answer will pivot away from the question. Perhaps she doesn’t request something done at Greece, but here in Aulis. Perhaps she doesn’t request something done *for her*. The full answer to this question marks the one act Clytemnestra cannot or will not do.

The difficulty with Iphigeneia’s directives in this scene is that they are almost all impossible prohibitions--she forbids lamentation, she forbids mourning, she forbids hate. If we consider Iphigeneia’s explanation of what Clytemnestra should say to the sisters as the transmission of another prohibition (“Desier them I praie you, not to mourne for my death”), the only affirmative directions come in response to the question of what to say to the virgins. Iphigeneia’s answer: “Bid them all farewell in my name, and I praye you for my sake bringe up my litell brother Orestes, till he come to mans age.” She provides only two acceptable affirmative “things done” before turning to the approaching group that will take her toward sacrifice--bid the virgins farewell in her name and for her sake raise Orestes unto adulthood. Why these?

There are first-line responses we could give. As to the virgins, whom Iphigeneia left thinking to forfeit her relationship among them through marriage but whom she will in fact leave far differently, perhaps farewell offers a needed closure, a way of saying goodbye as she couldn’t have done before. The child Orestes gives both mother and daughter a point of continuity. Orestes will, of course, go on to kill his mother, an act set in motion by the scene at Aulis, but at this point he is between mother and daughter a representation of possibility--Iphigeneia is ongoing in her closest male kin, and Clytemnestra, whose daughter is to be murdered and thus ripped prematurely from her maternal fold, has another child upon whom to concentrate her affections. Such hopes are naïve and inadequate, but they still proffer a form of tangible, embodied offering.

But there is more to this moment than longings for either closure or familial/filial commemoration. To understand it more fully, let us make the methodological move we will continue to make throughout this study; let us think adjacently. In an essay on Georges de la Tour’s mid-seventeenth century paintings of Mary Magdalene in which Mary, holding a skull in her lap, looks at the flame of a candle, Michel Serres writes, “The light does not go from the living face to the inert thing: on the contrary, the mediating face receives it from the object. The I does not begin, rather the *that* does” (*Statues* 133). This description, which is a thinking through of the Cartesian *I* in the context of both de la Tour’s painting sequence and the underlying stories of Mary and Lazarus and Mary at the tomb of Jesus (which we will explore in the following chapter), traces a dynamism analogous to that which we encounter here (and which is conceptually useful despite its application to later works). *Bid them all farewell in my name, and I praye you for my sake bringe up my litell brother Orestes, till he come to mans age.* Iphigeneia here speaks how "the mediating face receives [the light] from the object," how "[t]he I does not begin, rather the *that* does," because she speaks to her own becoming object, her transition from *I* to *that*.

When her mother relays her words to the virgins, they (words or light or words as light) do not go from the living face (the source of words/light is no longer living) to the inert thing, but, conjuring resurrection, from Iphigeneia as inert thing to the faces which receive her--virgins, Orestes, her mother. And, yet, as dead inert object, as *that*, she speaks: "The subject comes out of or resurrects from the object" (*Statues* 134). Or, as Nancy explains, "*Anastasis* comes to the self from the other or arises from the other within the self--or, again, it is the raising of the other in the self" (*NMT* 19). What Iphigeneia explains is that there is no one-way transmission; "from you" is not so clear a course as we might think. For the farewell--speaking as subject--comes from a you that is (dead) object to a plural (living) audience (also object). "Bring up . . . Orestes, till he come to mans age" is an ongoing directive under which Clytemnestra will continue to operate long after the subject from whom (from which?) it originates has become dead object. Subject and object are not stable from the beginning, and this is made clear in the mother's litany of questions to her daughter until at last the daughter asks her own.

The Mixed Body.

After this sequence of instructions in which Iphigeneia tells her mother what to do and what not to do, there comes a crucial shift. Iphigeneia asks a question whose object or addressee appears unclear: "Who is this, that will carie me hence so sone?" Iphigeneia does not ask, Who caries me hence? She asks, Who is *this*? The question gestures to sensorial apprehension that is also always historical. It is the impossible "desire to grasp the *This*"--which is always *has been* and so is *not* *This*--that reveals "the sensuous This that … *cannot be reached* by language" (*LD*12-13).[15] Her mother answers, "I will goo withe you O daughter." But she is wrong. Despite Iphigeneia's multiple preceding instructions, her mother has answered incorrectly. Her daughter is already departing, entering the unspeakable, and her mother cannot follow.

The next and final lines of Iphigeneia's conversation with her mother form a helical chain of haunted repetitions and returns centering around the verb *to go*--*I will goo, I must nedes goo, And will you go awaye, I must goo from you, Surelye I will goo hence*--each articulation an alternation of "will" and "must" between mother (*will*) and daughter (*must*), until the daughter takes on the language of the mother (*I will goo*) and so in transposition or translation departs.

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[15] I quote Agamben, quoting Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 66, emphasis in original. Agamben writes of Hegel on the deictic "this": "To demonstrate something, to desire to grasp the *This* in the act of indication . . . signifies a realization that sense-certainty is, in actuality, a dialectical process of negation and mediation; the 'natural consciousness' . . . one might wish to place at the beginning as absolute, is, in fact, always already a 'history'" (*L&D* 12, quoting *PS* at 90). We may also consider Kristeva ("Place Names" and "The True-Real") in her critiques of the Port-Royale logicians on the utterance, "This is my body": "[T]he logicians of Port-Royal [] cannot rationalize the passage from one to the other under the same shifter *ceci* except through recourse to *time*: Before, *ceci* was bread and now, *ceci* is my body. Reason is unscathed only at the expense of an obsessional shackling to time and, by the same token, of erasing 'mystery' as bodily"--this *then* this (*DIL* 291).

Their exchange is framed by the rhyming of *carie* and *tarie*: *Who is this, that will carie me hence so sone? I praye you . . . tarie heare still, I pray you daughter tarie, for if I did tarie.* Movement interweaves with stasis. To quote in full:

> Iphi: Who is this, that will **carie** me hence so sone?
>
> Clit: **I will goo** withe you O daughter.
>
> Iphi: Take hede I praye you leste you happen to do that whiche shall not become you: Wherfore O Mother I praye you folowe my councell and **tarie** heare still, for **I muste nedes goo** to be sacrafised unto the goddes Diana.
>
> Clit: And **will you go awaye,** O daughter, leuinge me your mother heare?
>
> Iphi: Yeae surelye mother, **I muste goo from you** unto suche a place, from whence I shall neuer come ageine, althoughe I haue not deserued it.
>
> Clit: I pray you daughter **tarie**, and do not forsake me nowe.
>
> Iphi: **Surelye I will goo hence** Mother, for if I did **tarie**, I shulde moue you to more lamentation. *Wherfore I shall desier all you women to singe some songe of my deathe, and to prophecie good lucke unto the grecians: for withe my deathe I shall purchase unto them a glorious uictorie;* ***bring me therfore unto the aultor*** *of the temple of the goddes Diana, that withe my blode I maye pacifie the wrathe of the goddes againste you.* (1278-1306, emphasis added)

Prior to the turn to address the women of the chorus, there is little grandeur. The lines between mother and daughter are spare, direct, repetitive. Through dialogue, mother and daughter unlock themselves one from the other as a braid is unwoven, the space between their bodies increasing with each opened link, with each repetition of leave-taking and remaining, each alternation of obligation (*must*) and futurity (*will*) reenacting in language the bodily parturition which has already occurred and which continues occurring between them. They leave each other not all at once but in pieces.

Mother and daughter unbind and as they unbind, switch places. The mother's *I will go* becomes the daughter's *I will go*. Words come together and reverse, a gestural and linguistic offering and receiving that effects not only transposition but transformation, one assuming the other's words as the deer will, in language, assume Iphigeneia's body. We see what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "[t]he *given* and the *created* in a speech utterance," a dialogic manifestation of their bodily relation:

> An utterance is never just a reflection or an expression of something already existing outside it that is given and final. It always creates something that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable . . . . But something created is always created out of something given. . . . What is given is completely transformed in what is created. ("The Problem of the Text" 119-120)

Each repetition is an offering, given, from which an utterance, created, emerges. The created opens from the given, becoming the given, in turn, from which the created opens.

> I will goo
>
> I must nedes goo
>
> And will you go awaye
>
> I must goo from you
>
> I pray you daughter tarie
>
> Surelye I will goo hence Mother, for if I did tarie. . . . bring me therfore

Through this unwrapping or unbinding, which sonically and visually effects rather a textual enfolding, an exchange occurs between the *I*-mother-daughter and *you*-mother-daughter, an exchange between what will happen and what is happening. What *is* and what *will become* destabilize; future going becomes present imperative. When does one become the other?

In his exploration of mixed human-animal bodies in *Statues*, Michel Serres introduces the idea of substitution--from algebra to the mythic substitution of Abraham's son Isaac by the ram. Understanding the timing of such substitution--a diachronic phase impossible to synchronically isolate, that is, mixture as process--helps clarify what I mean by an exchange between mother and daughter and the destabilization of *is* and *will become*:

> In the middle of this process, when the hand holding the dagger reaches the midpoint of its trajectory, who is lying on the stone when the motion stops if not this half-animal half-human monster depicted by ancient Egypt? The Biblical narrative effaces it. Substitution, elementary and discontinuous, puts an animal in place of the son; we see the ram, we see Isaac, exclusive of one another, like two tokens that can't fit together into the same place in accordance with the principle of the excluded middle: it's impossible, we say, for the man and the animal to be in the same place at the same time. Either one or the other. Granted. *However we notice a middle moment, precisely the one during which the replacement is in the process of happening: the duration of the operation causes the mixed body to appear*. (159-160, emphasis added)

Serres goes on to connect this substitution with the origins of tragedy and theater (*tragos* as the Greek word for the goat that replaces man) and "mixed fetishes" like the sphinx as "commemorat[ing] the inaugural moment of history in which animal sacrifice was substituted for human sacrifice" (161), which is, of course, where the tragedy of Iphigeneia is headed. Her sacrifice becomes the sacrifice of the deer. But, I would like to examine at greater length the "middle moment," or, more precisely, a different mixed body over time--not girl and deer but living and dead. I propose the following: the process of becoming dead involves this middle moment when what is alive becomes no longer living. *The duration of the operation causes the mixed body*--the process, the becoming--*to appear*.

This duration is not reducible to either thing or act or to a measurable, synchronic instant, not least of all because the process of the mixed body may be in part but is not exclusively biological--e.g., the heart beats but the kidney ceases functioning or, to put it in early modern medical terms, a woman breathes as her matrix suffocates.[16] As Charles Segal asks in an illuminating essay on Euripides' *Alcestis*, where death occurs at home and from disease, "[i]n a prolonged death from illness, what is the point that definitively separates the living from the dead" (221)?[17] My argument is that even if we could identify "the soul's separation of the body" or a particular cultural gesture such as "the covering of the face . . . turning the face to the wall . . . [or] composing one's features and crossing the arms on the chest" (221), this synchronic signal does not fully isolate the mixed body's constituent parts; such signal does not mark when mixture begins nor when it ends. The mixed body (living-dead) may continue through the work of mourning and beyond, and the mixed body may appear, as it does in this conversation between Iphigeneia and her mother, in language, in affect, in the position of the self vis-à-vis another. The mixed body continues over time before and after death. This scene reveals a duration of mixture--of alive and dead, of grief in life, of mother and daughter as those roles converge and detach.

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[16] See *The Birth of Mankind: Otherwise Named, the Woman's Book*, translated by Thomas Reynalde (1560) and edited by Elaine Hobby.

[17] At a medical humanities conference entitled *Seeing the Difference: Conversations on Death an Dying*, one panel chair clearly framed the stakes: "[I]dentifying the moment of death becomes inextricably bound to the question, what is death?" (53).

What I seek is a philosophy of mixture that acknowledges the excluded middle, not as a lacuna but as a process through which we reconceive of space--that is, of the space occupied by and within the body--and of temporality, as a convergence that is also a departing, a becoming. One might also think here of the sorites paradox in its classic formulation wherein singular grains of sand are removed from a heap; when is the "heap" no longer?[18] Agamben writes that, "the passage . . . between the world of the living and the world of the dead[] occurs in a kind of 'quantum leap'" (*IH* 93). It is the duration of this quantum leap with which I am concerned and which, I argue, Lumley reveals. At stake is understanding *Iphigeneia* as not only a commentary on early modern socio-political mores or a product of Renaissance humanist pedagogy or an exploration of tragic pathos, but as a brief, honest exposure of becoming dead. It is an exposure that shows, through dialogue, how the move into deadness conjures the mixed body.

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[18] I do not seek to describe what Renaissance writers during plague episodes concretized, in Michael Neill's words, as "illegitimate mixture" or as the "'heaps' and 'piles'" of undifferentiated, decomposing bodies (*Issues of Death* 20-21). My question is both more and less metaphorical, more and less discrete: without treating death as an absolute, beyond which point "mixture" can only describe physical disintegration and combination, *how might we imagine a body moving into deadness--that is, becoming dead--in a way that accounts for more than biological classification and geographic placement?*

Carrying.

As much as it builds toward mythic substitution--deer for girl, English for Greek--*Iphigeneia* is not a play in which first there is life and then there is death with a stark demarcation in-between. As with the sorites, the line is not a clear one. Serres further explains this concept in terms of the uncertainty principle between hostility and hospitality by clarifying that though it seems "some given line is an edge or border; it separates space; it defines sets; it closes cities; it limits belonging; it designates the enemy," this is in fact not so: "There is no such line. The city wall is porous, the sanctuary woods has fuzzy edges; a grey or blurry band takes shape there, so wide that it can occupy the inside of the entire set plus its complement" (*R* 158).[19] A central argument of this book is that as the early modern and other literatures under consideration make clear, there is no such geometric, plottable, or representable line between life and death in which the one is separated, enclosed, defined in distinction from the other. There is only porosity, fuzzy edges, a grey or blurry band made imperfectly but achingly visible in language.

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[19] I will discuss hospitality and hostility in the chapter on John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and at greater length in the chapter on George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*, but it is relevant to understand the uncertainty between the two--or, rather, the way the former can contain the latter, as Lowell Gallagher clarifies in naming "hospitality's two faces--welcome and risk" (3). Iphigeneia, brought to Aulis under the guise of a wedding (hospitality), is sacrificed to start a war (hostility), the goal of which is to retrieve Helen, a guest in Troy (hospitality), and to punish the Trojans for taking her (hostility).

To see this porosity taking shape in *Iphigeneia*, we should consider that it is often regarded as a play between father and daughter, but here, I argue, the process leading to the middle moment does not begin "when the hand holding the dagger reaches the midpoint of its trajectory"; it begins with a conversation between mother and daughter, most significantly when Iphigeneia poses a question that starts to turn her from her mother. *Who is this, that will carie me hence so sone?* Becoming dead is a carrying *henc*e, from here. *Who is* ***this***--a question with no true answer in language--*that will carie me* ***hence***--not the shifting locus of *there*, only the originary *from here*--*so sone*? At stake is the movement--the carrying and the going away. The going away does not end with the end of life; the departing, the carrying from hence is a continual process--*procedere*, going forward, going before--for the bodies of the dead and for those left behind. Iphigeneia keeps being carried hence.

Translating into poetic terms (using the blurry band of the analogy and so that we are attuned to the resonances of genre), one might imagine an aubade--generally understood as a separation between lovers at dawn but capacious enough to describe transformative separations more broadly, as Edward Hirsch writes in *A Poet's Glossary*:

> [T]he aubade recalls the joy of two lovers joined together in original darkness. It remembers the ecstasy of union. But it also describes a parting at dawn, and with that parting comes the dawning of individual consciousness; the separated, or day-lit, mind bears the grief or burden of longing for what has been lost. The characteristic or typal aubade flows from the darkness of the hour before dawn to the brightness of the hour afterward. It moves from silence to speech, from the

> rapture of communion to the burden of isolation, and the poem itself becomes a conscious recognition of our separateness. (45-46)

Hirsch points us to 20th-century English poet Philip Larkin’s final poem as an example. In Larkin’s “Aubade” the last stanza turns, like a nocturne, upon our proximity to dying, this time as dawn approaches:

> Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
> It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
> Have always known, know that we can’t escape,
> Yet can’t accept. One side will have to go.
> Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
> In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
> Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
> The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
> Work has to be done.
> Postmen like doctors go from house to house. (lines 41-50)

The poem ends with formation as disintegration, awakening into eternal sleep. As light comes in and the room forms, becoming visible, what is known also takes increasing shape--*One side will have to go*. The world awakens, waiting to spring into life, action, work, delivery, as we awaken into dying. Hirsch describes the lovers’ aubade as a movement from silence into speech. In the dialogue between Iphigeneia and her mother, it is a movement through the same modes Hirsch identifies--parting, longing, memory, separation--but it moves from speech into the unsayable, into the outer limits of representation. Iphigeneia will be carried from hence and dawn will come. Iphigeneia is carried from hence; dawn comes and keeps coming. In both, our synchronic desire to pinpoint, to identify *this*, is thwarted and rendered impossible. The carrying into death and the continual arrival of dawn occur diachronically, unspeakable as instants.

The Acting Out of Passage.

Given that Lumley's *Iphigeneia* participates in the humanist pedagogical project of translating literatures of antiquity--as Patricia Demers notes, Lumley was steeped in "heuristic imitation" and in "the deep assimilation and transformation of classical texts"[20]--let us borrow partially, but fittingly, from the original theoretical framework to which these scholars refer: Thomas Greene's description of the Renaissance poetic imitative strategy he calls *heuristic* (giving as examples certain passages from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* alluding to the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics*) and through which the allusive exercise indicates its understanding of diachrony. I do not argue that this scene in *Iphigeneia* is heuristically imitative, nor I do not reckon here with its categorization as metaphrase, paraphrase, or imitation (51). I find instead that Greene's explanation of this form of Renaissance imitation, itself concerned with loss, gives us a means of understanding (a heuristic for understanding) how the scene articulates the temporal and processual unfolding of loss, the carrying into death. That is, an explanation of certain mechanical structures of Renaissance imitation can help us understand the linguistic structures of meaning, or the poetics, of the scene. Greene writes:

> In all these cases, the informed reader notes the allusion but he notes simultaneously the gulf in language, in sensibility, in cultural context, in world view, and in moral style. Each imitation embodies and dramatizes a passage of history, builds it into the poetic experience as a constitutive element. . . . It is through a diachronic

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[20] Demers at 28, quoting Mary Thomas Crane's *Framing Authority* at 91.

> structure, an acting out of passage, that the humanist poem demonstrates its own conscientious and creative memory." (*The Light in Troy* 40-41)

Iphigeneia's conversation with her mother and Larkin's aubade both act out passage and so make visible the diachronic structure of becoming dead. "Heuristic imitations," Green writes, "come to us advertising their derivation from the subtexts they carry with them, but having done that, they proceed to *distance themselves* from the subtexts and force us to recognize the poetic distance traversed" (40, emphasis in original). Larkin titles his poem "Aubade," evoking the centuries-long subtext of lovers parting, but travels to telephones and offices and postal delivery and death, to the contemporary ways in which dying is communal in its solitude. We are forced to recognize the distance traversed, which is tremendous and yet intimate, for we remain in the bedroom with the voice of the lyric *I*. Iphigeneia's question carries--as she is carried by--the subtext of sacrifice and corrective or substitutive death. *Who is this, that will carie me hence so sone?* And yet we hear *the gulf in language* in the crumbling attempt to say *this*, as Hegel explains, to say *here* and thus *hence* (*PS* 66). We hear it in the very acknowledgment of unknowing manifest in the question form--*Who is this?* Iphigeneia's question grammatically acts out temporal passage and in so doing reveals the underlying diachronic structure--*is this* . . . *will carrie* . . . *so sone*. Present tense "is" so soon becomes future "will."

Greene continues: "Imitation of this type is heuristic because it can come about only through a double process of discovery: on the one hand through a tentative and experimental groping for the subtext in its specificity and otherness, and on the other hand through a groping for the modern poet's own appropriate voice and idiom" (42). Let us think of what we have been considering in this chapter and will continue to consider throughout the larger project--translation into the mixed body, the porous boundary between subject and object, passage, and the diachronic structure--in light of this “double process of discovery.” Iphigeneia’s question is a “tentative and experimental groping for the subtext in its specificity and otherness”--one with different or more urgent stakes than what we might think of as Renaissance *imitatio* but with a similar subtext of the dying body. To approach death is to approach the gulf of language, the gulf of the known and sayable object. It is to approach the collapse of subject and object. To represent in literature the approach to death is to “grop[e] for [one’s] own appropriate voice and idiom.” To ask urgently, to try to *know*, the sensorial *this* “that . . . *cannot be reached* by language,” the saying of which makes it “therefore crumble away,” to grope for the subtext in all its otherness that *will* carry one away, even as one gropes for one’s own voice--this is what Iphigeneia does. Her mother answers her, likewise groping through diachronic double processes, and, to quote Hegel, as “those who started to describe it would not be able to complete the description, but would be compelled to leave it to others,” those who continue “would themselves finally have to admit to speaking about something which *is not*” (*PS* 66). Iphigeneia and her mother’s repetitions and echoes of each other’s words may be read through this lens of heuristic imitation. Each repetition is an allusive act. Each derives from and is distant from the other, creating from the given. While one subtext is death, an additional subtext is the other person in the dialogue. I allude, in my speech, to what you have said, even if only just now, and in so doing I am reaching for you, the other, and I am reaching for me.

Let us bring to this thinking about dialogic allusion Bakhtin’s articulation of the boundaries between utterances. While Bakhtin argues the boundaries are generally absolute and demarcated by the change of speaker such that “[e]ach individual utterance [forms] a link in the chain of speech communion,” where, as here, one speaker repeats the other’s speech, a particular kind of blurring happens, energy driving new combinations of particle and space: “[I]t is as though the *change of speech subjects* has been internalized. The *boundaries* created by this change are weakened here and of a special sort: the speaker's expression penetrates through these boundaries and spreads to the other's speech" ("The Problem of Speech Genres" 71, 92-94, emphasis in original). The given, internalized, opening into the created even as they separate, "[t]he seams of the boundaries between utterances" suture the trace of the allusive, which is to say dialogic, relation. Repetition as a reaching for. Between us the gulf in language we try impossibly to bridge even as the distance increases. And so Clytemnestra answers incorrectly.

Noli Me Tangere.

To continue to understand Iphigeneia's conversation with her mother as marking a "diachronic structure, an acting out of passage," we may overtly do what we have already gestured toward and connect Iphigeneia to Jesus in his conversation with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, a scene that shares a poetic consciousness with the aubade and that illuminates Iphigeneia's move not merely as a concession or a deceasing, but as a conversion toward other forms of becoming that through such conversion demonstrates synchronic impossibility: Iphigeneia going toward death and the resurrected Christ having emerged from the tomb but not yet ascended into heaven are both bodies who demand not to be touched, demand to be let go. Both instruct the living how to release the dead even as the living incorporate the dead, or both instruct the living that release of the dead may be a means of incorporation. Both insist on existing in the letting go, in passage. *Noli me tangere*. Not merely, as Jean-Luc Nancy explains, do not touch me, but do not *wish*, do not *want* to touch me (*NMT* 37). In his paraphrase of Jesus' speech to Mary as told through the Gospel of John, Nancy writes:

> *Do not touch me, do not hold me back, do not think to seize or reach toward me for I am going to the Father, that is, still and always to the very power of death. I am withdrawing into it; I am fading away into its nocturnal brilliance on this spring morning. I am already going away; I am only in this departure; I am the parting of this departure. My being consists in it and my word is this: "I, the Truth, am going away."* (*NMT* 16, emphasis in original)

When Clytemnestra says she will go with her daughter, Iphigeneia tells her mother she cannot go: "Take hede I praye you leste you happen to do that whiche shall not become you: Wherfore O Mother I praye you folowe my councell and tarie heare still, for I muste nedes goo to be sacrafised unto the goddes Diana." Iphigeneia is departing, and her mother cannot follow. Iphigeneia exists "only in this departure"; she is "the parting of this departure." *One side will have to go*.

The action of the subject "I" is announced in "muste nedes goo" before transitioning to the passive infinitive through which the subject will be acted upon--"to be sacrafised." The "I" acts and exists in the going, in the departing. Clytemnestra cannot go with her daughter, "leste [she] happen to do that whiche shall not become [her]." *Become* as in behoove her, suit her, be appropriate or suitable to her. *Become* also as begin to be, to turn into a "you" that she is not yet but into which she is already capable of being transformed or translated. This is the injunction ultimately refused that leads in Euripides' *Electra* and *Orestes* and in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* to Agamemnon's death, Clytemnestra's death, and to the eventual collapse of the House of Atreus. What will *not* become you? More lamentation. What will you become? A murderer yourself. Dead.

Nancy explains that in the Gospel of John's original Greek, Jesus' phrase was *Mē mou haptou* and that the verb *haptein* can mean "to touch" as well as "to hold back, to stop" (*NMT* 15): "To touch him or to hold him back would be to adhere to immediate presence, and just as this would be to believe in touching (to believe in the presence of the present), it would be to miss the departing [*la partance*] according to which the touch and presence come to us." Nancy's argument calls us to understand that this is not a moment of presence or absence, but the becoming presence of absence. There is no clean border. There is only the departing, which *becomes* of itself. A mixed body. In pieces. Or, to bring in a corollary description from Nancy's *Corpus* that helps get at the heart of this study:

> Bodies always about to leave, on the verge of a movement, a fall, a gap, a dislocation. (Even the simplest *departure* is just this: the moment when some body's no longer *there*, right *here* where he was. The moment he makes room for a lone gulf in the spacing that he himself *is*. A departing body carries its spacing away, itself gets carried away as spacing, and somehow it sets itself aside, withdraws into itself--while leaving its very spacing "behind"--as one says--*in its place*, with this place remaining its own, at once absolutely intact and absolutely abandoned. *Hoc est enim absentia corporis et tamen corpus ipse.*) (33)

But perhaps Nancy moves too quickly. What I argue we *cannot* isolate is "the moment when some body's no longer *there*." What we must come to terms with is "the verge of a movement," the commencement of which is ongoing. The departing body continues departing even once departed. My critique is a matter of tense and temporality. The dying body is both present and becoming absent; the dead body is still and continues becoming absent. The buried body, present even if not visible, continues becoming absent. As Nancy writes, "there is quite simply only a *present*. But always a presentation of the one to the other, toward the other or within the other: the presentation of a parting" (NMT 19).[21]

The dying-departing body continually carries its spacing away and is carried away and yet leaves its spacing behind. Departed, the space of the body continues "at once absolutely intact and absolutely abandoned," and this is an "at once" describing mixture but which is continuing over time. That is to say, a synchronic snapshot, a snapshot of *at once*, would always reveal the absolutely intact with the absolutely abandoned, subject resurrecting from object--the mixed body that Lucretius, to spiral back, explains so succinctly: "there is void in created things."

For This Day, This Body.

Let us conclude with a moment near the very end of the play, when the messenger Nuncius recounts to Clytemnestra what he has seen during the sacrifice: "And whan they had made an ende: the preste takinge the sworde in his hande, began to loke for a place conuenient wher he might sle your daughter, sodenly there chaunced a grete wonder, for althoughe all the people harde the voice of the stroke, yet she uanisshed sodenlye awaye, And whan all they meruelinge at it, began to give a greate skritche, then ther appeared unto them a white harte lienge before the aultor, strudgelinge for life."[22] This is the play's most violent transformation, performed as an act of translation. Examination of this passage offers insight into what has preceded it. Nuncius brings to Clytemnestra a description of events she can neither confirm nor deny (a fact she acknowledges). She did not witness the sacrifice or purported transformation of her daughter's body into that of a deer, but must rely upon its re-telling. The original is wholly lost to her. She is, in a way, in the position of the sisters and virgins who must depend upon what words Clytemnestra will later tell them from Iphigeneia--all must trust others with knowledge of the original actions or language who can or will convert the originals into subsequently legible form. Speaking subject has become translated object.

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[21] The textual existence of these moments in literature ensures that they are perenially reactivated in reading. As Robert Pogue Harrison writes: "Every reader or listener who reactivates the semantic content of the literary work performs an act of prosopopoeia, that is, a reverbalization of the text through a transfer of his or her voice to its otherwise dead letter" (153).

Nuncius ends his recounting with the following: "for this daie your daughter hathe bene both alive and deade." *For this daie*, evoking both Leviticus and the Gospel of Luke, returns us to Hegel's impossible *this*--*this* day, *this* moment that can never be reached by language as a plottable or chronological instant. In its very saying it passes; its saying causes it to crumble away. And yet--in its crumbling away it becomes connective as others keep attempting the impossible description (*PS* 66).

Hegel (and Agamben) move from here to a conclusion of negativity (*LD* 13-14). I would argue the unsayable in language marks not its space of absolute negativity but its unceasingness. Here, the fold back around into infancy where what cannot be said is nonetheless voiced, nonetheless attempted, even if only as a cry or a moan. We keep reaching for *this* as we keep reaching for a temporal sequence when what is before us is what Nuncius has plainly put. Not this *then* this or alive *then* dead, but *and*--the mixed body, translated, transforming. What occurs is a combination that preserves "'mystery' as bodily and/or nominal mutation under the same signifier" (Kristeva *DIL* 291)--both alive *and* dead.

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[22] See Purkiss 34, transcribing the manuscript as "voice of the stroke," but there is ambiguity in the v/n at the start of the word.

This is a mixture with duration, in time and over time. Iphigeneia exists and goes on existing in her departing, and this departing cannot, because of the continued space her body makes for itself even in absence, be isolated as a synchronic instant. In his final statement translating what has transpired, the messenger conveys keenly the play's crucial poetics. First bodies become alive and dead bodies, unceasingly constituting and reconstituting. Iphigeneia as a body in space and a body occupying space and a body filled with space has been on this day--which we in reading/listening to are still trying to capture and so still call *this daie*--both alive and dead. The "and" between them is blurry. It has fuzzy edges "so wide that it can occupy the inside of the entire set plus its complement." Alive *and* dead. Alive in death. Dead in life. Sorites. Always the interpenetrating subject and object acting out passage: *Who is this, that will carie me hence so sone?* It is an infinite process.

This brings us to the epigraph with which this chapter opens. In the bluegrass song, Maybelle Carter reminds the undertaker who has come to drive her mother's body to the funeral: "Undertaker, please drive slow. For this body you are hauling, Lord, I hate to see her go." The object the undertaker drives is the subject of the song--*this body*, impossible to grasp, that is also *her* that is also mother. The undertaker hauls the body of her that goes. The singer watches and grieves. *I pray you daughter tarie, and do not forsake me nowe*, Clytemnestra asks of her daughter. *Undertaker,* Ma Carter sings, *please drive slow*. The desire on the flip side of synchrony--to elongate the diachronic thread of time's passage until it is stretched to an almost imperceptible fineness. Slow does not stop the drive to the grave. Tarrying does not cease the going hence. But this desire recognizes leave-taking as a process--a cyclical or helical one, a percolating one, piecemeal. We recognize the unfixed mixture of subject-object, language looping back but always at an angle as the body unbinds, memory clings, and the vortex holds. Becoming dead cannot be stretched into imperception so that loss is not felt, just as becoming dead cannot be paused so that the instant is isolated. Passage is what remains.

II. Mourning as Founding in Robert Southwell's *Marie Magdalen's Funeral Teares*

Morning.

The grass is dew-slick, folded, stems cut short and frayed at the top by the pull of velvet flat-toothed mouths, by the wandering of hooves. The grass summons, here and there, through some unlanguaged means. Sunlight on green or a glistening. The cattle graze. The calves nurse. A soft, occasional lowing until one by one they are led, backwards, away from the meadow, steps un-tracing what they had drawn, steps into the unknown, the black box, the cave. The herd, broken, becomes no longer. Into the spaces of the once was the grass fills, lifting up its greenness to the sun and to the morning.

*

The wheat glows sunlit and glorious, gold down to its Mars-red base. The glorious wheat glows and grows in blood. Blood grows wheat man-high. The wheat is unusable, its consumption a violation, a desecration, a misuse of the sacred. And so cut the wheat that blood grows and toss the blood-wheat into the river. The river runs red. The wheat is washed. The wheat, cut and tossed, clumps and stacks and grows in height. Not man-high but island-high. Cut the wheat, make an island, build a temple, build an empire. Scatter the seeds.

*

The deer goes to the water. The child latches to the breast. There is no cup, only a mouth for swallowing.

*

In the garden a woman steps into and out of, into and out of. Into the once was and is no longer. Out of the once was and is no longer. Where an other body once was there is no longer, only her body, which must include, now, the other. (This continues. This is the pace of lamentation. This, the distance of desire.) Tears trace her cheeks, and the tears are a river demarcating sorrow and its passage--from source to mouth, eyelids as banks overrun, skin flooded. Fluvial waters touch and touch, clean as beginning, curdling into salt. Tears, convex, bead the grass. Tears, concave, hollow the dust.

*

When the man appears, as he will appear to the woman who wanders into and out of, is he ever other than still? Do the angels leave a trace?

*

Listen to the cattle lowing. Hear the sound of their wandering, which is a longing. Quiet, the deer goes to the water. Piercing, the child hollers. Footsteps and wheat break the skin of river, hands break the cup. Does a river of tears break the body's skin or only rewrite it? Seeds once closed will open, making newness perfect each time.

***

Island.

Mary Magdalene comes on the third day after Jesus' death and burial to anoint his body with her own oils, only to find "the grave open, and the body taken out, " as English Jesuit missionary and eventual martyr Robert Southwell writes in *Marie Magdalen's Funeral Teares* (B3v). The body that Mary has come to look at, to touch, to care for, three days dead and presumably decomposing, is gone. With no body to tend, no object upon which to feast her eyes, grief floods like a river's surging banks. Southwell uses the subject of her tears, those media of creation and erasure, and the related bodily acts of weeping and breathing for thinking through the fluid underpinnings of loss. The scene becomes a study of liquidity in formation and deformation--salt-water tears, spring fountains, Christ's bleeding wounds, breastmilk--as the strata upon which a private mourning, and a larger mythology, is founded. In so doing, the imperative grows increasingly more intimate and more exquisitely fraught; the liquid self without an object-body to hold it together would, but must not, dissolve because of and into its own longings, its thirsts and its sorrows, always remembering the tautly porous membrane between: the river sustains; the river drowns; the river remakes.

To better understand Mary's response to her Easter encounter let us read Southwell's text alongside Michel Serres' philosophical study of the founding of Rome, because moments in Serres' work help illuminate subtle but strong forces, we might call them undercurrents, flowing through Southwell. Southwell began his work on Mary Magdalene while in Rome (Janelle 184). There, Southwell was an English Catholic studying in the heart of Catholicism; as a later Jesuit missionary, he represented Rome in England, operating as a spiritual and physical link between the Church and its English recusants. Much research has been done on Southwell's missionary work and on the missionary (devotional, sacramental, meditational, etc.) aims of his writing for those English Catholics who were separated from the open practice of their religion much as Mary Magdalene was separated from the physical body of Christ. Rome, here, is transhistorical and many-layered.

Serres traces Rome's continual founding and re-founding through a reading of Livy's *History of Rome*, concluding with a summer scene of harvest after the removal of Rome's last king. The grain has been cut on Campus Martius, but its consumption would be sacrilege and so the crowd throws the grain into the Tiber. As Livy recounts, the solid surface of land is formed, or founded, on water: "So the heaps of grain, caught in the shallow water, settled down in the mud, and out of these and the accumulation of other chance materials such as a river brings down, there was gradually formed an island" (Livy, Book 2.5). Founding is shown as a process of expulsion and accumulation, grain heaps and chance matter caught by the current. The island forms in and from the river. Serres explains the primacy of liquidity in the act of harvest from which an island that became an empire emerged: "A good foundation occurs on what moves. The crowd founds the island; it founds it, as in a crucible, that hot day. One only founds on what flows; one only founds on time" (*Rome* 229). Not only does the crowd found the island on water, but the water participates by its movement--its current, its recurrence--the water participates by its "transport, [its] bringing, [its] carrying" (228-29). For Serres, founding occurs at the site of a change in phase; it is the process in which liquid solidifies or evaporates: "[F]oundation is the passage from the waters to stone, a phase transition" (201). Most importantly, foundation, we come to understand, is not static: "Foundation is a thought, a practice of the moving. Of fusion and mixture. Of the multiplicity of times" (229).

The scene of Jesus' resurrection in *MMFT* marks *the practice of moving*: *Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.* In this scene, Jesus is risen from the tomb, but, as he will tell Mary, he is still to ascend unto heaven. This is why when he first appears to her in the latter part of Southwell's work she cannot touch him. The phase is changing--from solid physical body to something other. Mary, who has "Stoode without at the tomb weeping," stunned that the body she came to anoint with oils was gone and has now reappeared, wants only to cleanse his feet and wounds with her tears: "running to the haunt of her chiefest delights, and falling at his sacred feete, shee offered to bath them with her teares of joye, and to satisfie her lippes with kissing his once grievous, but now most glorious wounds" (Southwell B1v, quoting John 20, and I4r). Even such small gratification is not allowed. Jesus prevents her, saying, "Do not touch me for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (I4v). Instead of allowing the rinsing of his blood with her tears, Jesus, having only just appeared to Mary after a text centered around the grief of his missing body, instructs her to leave, to go to Galilee to tell the others he will meet them (I6v-7r). This is the intermediary state, before equilibrium, the moment of transition.

Robert Southwell intervenes in the space the Gospels and subsequent homiletic renderings leave open by using figures of liquidity to explain Mary's agony in turning away: "Mary therfore preferring her lords will, before her owne wish, yet sorry that her will was worthy of no better event, *departeth from him like a hungry infant puld from a full teat, or a thirsty hart chased from a sweet fountain*" (I7r, emphasis added). These similes, framed in the alternative, pivot between two figurations of Christ as liquid nurture: maternal breast and fresh-water source. To describe the pain of severance so soon upon the discovered pleasure of Jesus' appearance, Southwell chooses points of contact between the body and fluid other--the full breast, the sweet fountain--depicting an originary moment of Christian mythology as the phase transitions.[23] The two similes liquify desire moving at the core of encounter, desire that in its naming echoes or swerves--helical--back to Mary Magdalene's tears, bringing fluids to a point of embodied contact--milk to mouth, water to mouth--and away. From the tearful sea that has flooded her experience, these similes construct a surface in the liquid substrate by which the subject may access the substrate, a material intervention that enters/re-enters the current. The mouth to the breast--here, conjured in its removal--is the harvest grain island; the shore of the fountain where the hart would drink, the surface strong enough to sustain a temple.

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[23] Patricia Badir observes that the twelfth-century homily *De beata maria magdalena* was a source for Southwell (65). The similes at stake in this chapter do not appear in English translations of said text, entitled "An Homelie of Marye Magdalene, declaring her ferue[n]t love and zele towards Christ." Pierre Janelle traces Southwell's work, including manuscript drafts, to an earlier Italian manuscript and to the Italian intellectual meditation on tears (see Martz 200, Janelle 184-197). Badir interprets these disjunctive similes contained in Southwell's published version as "mak[ing] much more of the physical distance between Mary and her Lord than does the medieval homilist":

> Christ's ghostly touch tickles, leaving an itch that Mary cannot scratch. And yet because this is the case the *noli me tangere* moment becomes more useful than it is vexing because it commands a different kind of recognition. Mary's problem, according to Southwell, is that she presumes too much, too soon. Eager to recapture the intimacy they once shared, Mary charges at Christ's body without considering the implications of the resurrection. She cannot touch because she doesn't understand. . . . Only when prepared to accept the idea of Christ, rather than his body, will his presence be made manifest. (74-75)

While this scene does evoke a "different kind of recognition," as we will explore in this chapter, the desire at stake in the disjunctive simile is not only about misapprehension or misunderstanding, and Mary's turn does not only conjure "representational innocence" or insatiability, but instead reveals a radical reimagining of time, memory, and the body in space.

Tears.[24]

I return again to Serres' *Rome*, specifically to his discussion of the *boustrophedon* that emerges from a very early moment in Livy and that can help us understand the dislocation of Mary's mourning in *MMFT*. Livy has been describing Romulus' first act of sacrifice after the death of his twin, but then leaves the recounting of history for an interlude about Hercules. After

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[24] There are centuries of powerful writing about Southwell's Mary Magdalene and the larger "literature of tears," including more recently, Janelle's *Robert Southwell the Writer: A Study in Religious Inspiration*, Louis L. Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature*, Anne Sweeney's *Robert Southwell: Snow in Arcadia, Redrawing the English Lyric Landscape, 1586-95*, and Gary Kuchar's *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England*. Kuchar wrote in a recent article that the goal of Southwell's text is to "spiritually purify its reader, inspire him or her to meditation to transform the wanderings of desire into contrite and purifying tears of repentence" (117). Here, I seek not to explain Mary Magdalene's tears, to situate them within broader intellectual or religious traditions, or to assign their particular pedagogical purpose, for others have already done this well. I only acknowledge their fluid presence: hers is a liquid substrate.

Hercules murdered Geryon and stole his cattle, he fled across the river (erasing his tracks) to the meadow. There he slept and did not notice Cacus the shepherd, who decided to steal the stolen cattle. Cacus dragged them backward into the cave so that their tracks faced outward, a temporarily effective measure of misdirection. Upon awakening: “Glancing over the herd, and perceiving that a part of their number was lacking, [Hercules] proceeded to the nearest cave, in case there might be footprints leading to it. When he saw that they were all turned outward and yet did not lead to any other place, he was confused and bewildered, and made ready to drive his herd away from that uncanny spot” (Livy, Book 1.7). Mary Magdalene wanders into and out of the tomb searching for Jesus’ body, only there are no tracks to guide or mislead her; there is the before of the body and the after, which is the present scene, absent of body, a bifurcation layered upon the before of the living Jesus and the after of his death. In all constructions, the before of presence, the after of absence. The site of not knowing is the tomb, the cave, which is also the site of mistake--the leaving of it in observance of the Sabbath, the inability to comprehend the purpose of the two angels Mary sees, the misapprehension of Jesus when he appears, mistaking the direction of the tracks, mistaking sight and text.

In parsing Hercules’ experience, Serres traces back from the cattle’s misleading tracks to/from the cave to the tracks the cattle would have left when grazing in the meadow, revealing how the permutations of step that emerge from wandering, from travail that is not labor before the plow but exploratory movement of the body, map different possibilities:

> The cattle, who leave the boustrophedon behind them when they plough, here leave a meadow dense with ichnographic signs. *Ichnos*, in Greek, is the mark of the step, the track of the foot. The boustrophedon is the curve with two directions; ichnography has every direction; it’s the finished drawing left on the ground by the

> herd when it wanders, in which each brute beast, drawn by the tuft, flower and odour, bothered, pushed, bitten by the flies, maddened by a shadow or going about licking another's neck, wanders without knowing where or why. (20)

Hercules, like Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, seeks tracks the directions of which mislead, appearing to gesture away from the cave that is the black box, the site of not knowing and knowing, containing the answer manifested in voice: "As the cattle were being driven off, some of them lowed, as usually happens, missing those which had been left behind. They were answered with a low by the cattle shut up in the cave, and this made Hercules turn back" (Livy, Book 1.7).

When Jesus appears to Mary outside the tomb, she does not recognize him. She cannot apprehend him. Her tears and the sound of his once-living voice in her head form a visual and aural veil. Mary believes the man she sees to be a gardener and says, "O Lord if thou hast carried him from hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away" (G5r-v). The conceivable trajectory is twofold--taking away, returning. The absent body means taken body, which Mary will seek out. The absent body must be returned. Within the tomb, without the tomb. There, not there. Mary's course is proscribed, her psychological and physical movement delimited along the boustrophedon, the lines of text forward and backward, the tracks of the oxen in the field. As rows are ploughed, as lines of text go out and return, so does Mary. Left to right, right to left. Back again.[25]

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[25] Robert Hass' brief poem "Iowa, January" can help us visualize this movement:

> In the long winter nights, a farmer's dreams are narrow.
> Over and over, he enters the furrow.

Before Mary is able to recognize Jesus, when she sees a man she thinks is a gardener, Southwell conveys her inability to comprehend what she sees and what she hears:

> But there is such a showre of tears betweene thee and him, and thy eyes are so dimmed with weeping for him, that though you seest the shape of a man, yet thou canst not discern him. Thy eares also are still so possessed with the doleful Eccho of his last speeches, which want of breath made him utter in a dying voice, that the force and loudnesse of his living wordes, maketh the[e] imagine it the voice of a stranger: and therefore as hee seemeth unto thee so like a stranger, he asketh this question of thee, O woman why weepest thou, whom seekest thou? (G3r)

The first question Jesus asks Mary is one that has been asked of her throughout the scene. The angels ask her. The narrator asks her. Jesus asks her. *Why weepest thou* is the text's central, obsessive concern, repeated, a refrain. *MMFT* is not a poem in verse, though it may be (and is called by the editor of the facsimile edition) a poem in prose. As a prose poem, its music lies not in the line but in the syntactical organizations of sentence and paragraph and so the repeated interrogative--*why weepest thou?*--does the work of what in verse would appear as a refrain, recurring at intervals. *Why weepest thou* is the return at the edge of the field, the curve of the boustrophedon.

The bodily act of weeping that the repeated sentence concerns is itself repetitive. Weeping is not purely linear or singular. As one tear or a profusion of tears streaks down the face, others emerge, converge, course. The weeper's shoulders shake and tremble; her breath catches. Weeping is rhythmic--marking, in Kristevan terms, "a sequence of linked instants."[26] Weeping is the patterned, embodied enactment of *ostinato*. To extract from Edward Hirsch's definition of repetition in poetry, weeping is emotion "so insistent it spills over," repeatedly (518-19). The weeping body and linguistic/poetic refrain "are, and have, memories--of their prior strophes or stretches of text, of their own preoccurrences, of their own genealogies in earlier texts as well" (Hollander 138), and so they continually return us to loss, to the absence for which Mary mourns. Tears are not stone but a recording no less memorial because they document past experience. Yet, archival, tears record not just what is past but indicate a conservation of what is present--what was, in different form, still is.[27]

Jesus' second question--*whom seekest thou?*--shifts the refrain by variation. In so doing, the question reveals that mourning has not only a temporal quality (there then not, present then absent), but a spatial one as well: the *why* of weeping is connected to the one whom she seeks, who is sought because absent from *here*. Her tears document not only that a loss has occurred and is occurring (temporal), but identify a here from which one is missing, which is the situs of loss (spatial). Mourning, as Jesus' question illuminates and as Jean-Luc Nancy explains in the context of landscape, is "the presentation of a given absence of presence"--not a location but a *dis*-location, a space for becoming within the subjects who mourn (*Ground* 59-60).

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[26] "Place Names," 286. Kristeva writes: "Laughter is the evidence that the instant *took place*: the space that supports it signifies time" (286, emphasis in original). Weeping might be analogous in an evidentiary sense--as proof of what is lost that also records loss, leaving liquid traces, a form becoming dead takes as it is inscribed on the surface and inside of remembering bodies.

[27] Klein articulates the braided, dependent pattern between weeping and memory: "[W]hile grief is experienced to the full and despair is at its height, the love for the object wells up and the mourner feels more strongly that life inside and outside will go on after all, and that the lost loved object can be preserved within" (163, "Mourning and Manic-Depressive States").

Tomb.

Mary is bound by the field's (or garden's) edges until Jesus speaks again, naming: "Jesus saith unto her, Maria, She turning, said unto him: Rabboni" (I1r). The direct address of the familiar, *naming*, causes Mary to turn away from the tomb, to recognize and to acknowledge recognition in the moment of differentiated temporal frames: present tense (saith), present progressive tense (turning), past tense (said). She, turning, said not *Gardener* but *Rabboni*. History reoccurs, not unchanged, converted. It is not just voice that redirects her--*why weepest thou, whom seekest thou* did not--but what the voice now says: Mary turns because she is named and so called, and her naming reveals the speaking subject to be the lost, mourned-for object. In "Place Names," Julia Kristeva explains that "[t]he proper name is a substantive of definite reference (therefore similar to the demonstrative) but of indefinite signification ('cognitive' as well as 'emotive'), arising from an uncertain position of the speaking subject's identity and referring back to the pre-objectival state of naming" (*Desire in Language* 290). In the space and time of deathly ambiguity, of fraught and amazing potential within which Mary moves and which moves with the reader reading her, her naming is revelation, identification, explanation--thus, the profound "impact within unconscious and imaginary constructs" (291). In this moment, for the first time in the scene, her naming holds cognitive and emotive depth sufficient to reach within and thus lift the veil of her tears.

Maria emerges from a place of uncertainty: before her name is said, Mary does not know the speaker; in the act of naming, she does. This is the moment of the miraculous, making manifest the identity of the speaking subject, but it is not a moment one can bind to “an obsessional shackling to time and . . . eras[e] ‘mystery’ as bodily” (291). *Jesus saith unto her, Maria, She turning, said unto him: Rabboni*. Jesus calls her in the present tense and so he remains, which prompts her knowing, her turning, but which turning is likewise not temporally bound, not *this* then *this*, but at the same time and always.[28]

Indeed, the naming and Mary’s reaction to it marks “the full, discontinuous, finite and complete time of pleasure” (Agamben 115). Jesus calls her and she turns, unendingly. Only Mary’s acknowledgment is past tense--*said*. A theological explanation may be that Christ’s calling to us is always ongoing; the Christian subject, on the other hand, must keep turning and returning. I would offer an additional layer of meaning made clear by the past tense of Mary’s speech, the meaning of which is illuminated by Roberto Calasso’s astonishingly poetic study of ancient Greece:

> The veil, or something that encloses, that wraps around, or belts on, a ribbon, a sash, a band, is the last thing we meet in Greece. Beyond the veil, there is no other thing. The veil is the other. It tells us that the existing world, alone, cannot hold, that at the very least it needs to be continually covered and discovered, to appear and to disappear. *That which is accomplished, be it initiation, or marriage, or*

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[28] This argument builds upon Kristeva’s thinking about “*ceci*” as “provid[ing] a presence, posited but indistinct, and an evocation of uncertain multiplicities, which would therefore explain why *this*, in its well-known evangelical usage, is at the same time Bread and Body of Christ” (*Desire in Language*, “Place Names” 291).

> *sacrifice, requires a veil, precisely because that which is accomplished is perfect, and the perfect stands for everything,* and everything includes the veil, that surplus which is the fragrance of things. (368, emphasis added)

The "finite and complete time of pleasure" is the moment of the perfect, the moment which must always exist--be located--in memory, which is to say in history. The veil of tears, given physical location as the *vale* elsewhere in Southwell's verse, is lifted and so marks the moment of perfect pleasure when what was lost is found:

> And as all this while shee hath sought without finding, weept without comforte, and called without aunswere: so nowe thou satisfiest her seeking with thy comming, her tears with thy triumph, and al her cries with this one word Marie. For when she heard thee call her in thy woonted maner, and with thy usual voyce, her onely name issuing fr[om] thy mouth, wrought so strange an alteration in her, as if she had beene wholly new made, when she was only named. For whereas before the violence of her griefe had so benummed her, that her bodie seemed but the hearse of her dead heart, and her heart the cophin of an unliving soule, and her whole presence but a representation of a double funeral of thine, and of her owne: now with this one word her senses are restored, her minde lightened, her heart quickened, and her soule revived. (I1v)

In the intimacy of naming, Mary is resurrected. She becomes a new bodily form, "wholly new made" and able to take further steps.

Ichnos.

At first the movement toward and away, to and from the tomb, continues, seems as if it will always continue, even as Mary is directed to Galilee; she goes toward Jesus and away from him: “Go to Galilee . . . . Mary departeth from him . . . .”—only the subsequent disjunctive similes fully interrupt the back-and-forth movement, interrupt the linear, interrupt the boustrophedon: “like a hungry infant puld from a full teat, or a thirsty hart chased from a sweet fountain.” Without metaphor, one thing does not replace another. “Or” sunders the repetition of replacement even more. Pulled (linear) from the breast, the infant cries and reaches, hands splayed. Chased from the fountain, the hart flees, bolts, waits, hides. As Serres describes Hercules’/Geryon’s cattle grazing in the meadow just prior to being taken:

> This means that the cattle, grazing in the thick grass, go just anywhere; they don’t go, subject to the swing plough, diligently from left to right and back again, as in morality or politics; they wander, that’s all; they go everywhere in space; their tracks form a crazily complicated graph; this drawing, quickly enough, must fill the entire plan, the whole of its surface as well as the local details. The meadow, under the pasturage, is no longer anything but the tracks from their steps. (20)

Like the infant pulled and the hart chased, both driven into movement, a kind of Brownian motion, without knowing where or why, the disjunctive similes fracture Mary’s possibilities. She is likened but not equated to two disparate objects--human child, adult male deer.

Just as Livy slips out of historical narration in the anecdotal moment of Hercules’ background (“so the story goes”), Southwell interrupts the saturation of the scene to pivot. Mary does not just depart, she departs *like*. While gesturing to (simile) without fully equating (metaphor), the scene allows Mary to step out of exact equation. More broadly, Jesus’ directive that she go to Galilee shifts movement away from the borders of grief previously visualized--within and without the tomb. Galilee demands existence of a new imagined scene, the named place interrupting a contained loop of loss. Galilee is not achieved in the scene of *MMFT*, but its mention enlarges the scope, becomes a part of the possible. Mary's thoughts, or the thoughts imputed to her as she leaves, likewise and more immediately alter the scene, the "site[] from which to see the representation" (Serres 20). In that moment, the scene comes to include a different set of potentialities embodied in different incarnations of desire, in different forms of loss/absence/grief that link her experience to larger sets. Hers is no longer unique, no longer entirely singular and thus isolated, but part of a web of likened sorrow, a web of want. At the same time, her experience is incapable of exact substitution, which is to say it is not replaceable, mimicable, or sacrificial (27). Mary experiences particularized loss that is, even yet, more alike in its loss than she--or the narrator--has realized until that moment. The infant howls with hunger. The water ripples, disturbed by the hart's fleet hooves. The fractured, inexact but effective similes of infant and hart reveal two patterns. They gesture in language to non-verbal, embodied perceptions delimited by time (past tense) and space (from): baby pulled from breast, deer chased from water. The disjunctive similes are also ichnographic: the hart flees, darting this way and that through the forest; milk sprays.

As mark, track, *ichnos*, the similes cast in the alternative resist substitution and become part of the possibilities of poetic dispersal, diffusion, and profusion. The similes deny "the possibility of putting one element in the place of another element," which "exchange is victimary" (Serres 27). Through the pivot, the slight shift of "like," Southwell indicates a way out of time-as-exact-recurrence and thus erasure; we find instead the *ichnos*, the wandering steps, a range of expansive openings into which one can poetically go (27). The desired exchange is not sacrificial--lamb for man--but nutritive: what would satisfy hunger, satisfy thirst (fitting for a scene of Resurrection). Kristeva reads the semantic shift of "serving" in the Gospel of Luke that transitions to “giving his life,” which is a “ransom” (Gospel of Mark), as indicating an understanding of Christian sacrifice that is more nourishing, more attentive to communion than to replacement:

> He who provides food is the one who sacrifices himself and disappears so that others might live. His death is neither murder nor evacuation but a life-giving discontinuity, closer to nutrition than to the simple destruction of value or the abandonment of a fallen object. . . . While it is true that giving implies deprivation on the part of the one who gives, who gives of *himself*, there is greater stress placed on the *bond*, on assimilation (“serving at the table”), and on the reconciliatory benefits of that process. (*Black Sun* 130-131)

Mary’s encounter expands such notions of sustaining contact or ongoing sustenance. The longed-for becomes generative contact and movement of and through the body that insists upon the continued existence of both elements. It is less exchange than translation. Body and liquid, neither dissolved.

Before, Mary wanted to disappear, to become liquid, melting in sorrow as the Sirens’ song of mourning to be resisted: “And had she not feared to break the Table, and to breake open the closet, to which she had entrusted this last relique of her lost happinesse, the violence of grief would have melted her heart into inward bleeding teares, and blotted her remembraunce with a fatall oblivion” (B5r-v). Once Jesus appears, naming Mary and directing her to Galilee, her thoughts shift from her own liquification to the pleasures of bodily contact with the liquid. In his *Mourning Diary*, written in fragments following the death of his mother, Roland Barthes noted: “Not to suppress mourning (suffering) (the stupid notion that time will do away with such a thing) but to change it, transform it, to shift it from a static stage (stasis, obstruction, recurrences of the same thing) to a fluid state" (142). Not to suppress mourning, one could say, but to translate it. Mary's departure *like*--by acknowledging recurrent desires that are not identical to but likened--indicates such a move out of stasis. This is the site of a change in phase. Mary no longer desires her own liquidity and the consequent erasure of memory; instead, the lost--the dead--is recognized as like liquid--breastmilk, fountain--and thus made a time and a place from which she can leave and to which she can, in memory, return.

Breast.

These two similes offer not just removal from any fluid contact, but from specifically resonant forms of fluidity. The first simile likens Mary to a hungry baby removed from the milk-heavy breast. Here the infant is "puld," a passive verb indicating action by an external force, after latch and prior to gratification. In *Dante and the Grammar of the Nursing Body*, Gary P. Cestaro draws upon Kristevan psycholinguistics to investigate the function of nursing in Dante, concluding that in the new Christian grammar, love and language come together in the breastfeeding body--Christian subjectivity is a regression to nursing, as indicated in the last line of Dante's *Paradiso*: "Now will my speech fall more short, even in respect to that which I remember, than that of an infant who still bathes his tongue at the breast." (Cestaro 166, quoting *Par*. 33.106-08) Yet, *MMFT* is not a scene of nursing to gratification; it is more akin to a scene of weaning, a word Southwell uses at least two other times prior to this moment: "It may be she knewe not her former happinesse, till shee was weaned from it" (I1r) and "It is now necessary to weane thee from the comfort of my eterrnall presence, that thou maist learne to lodge mee in the secretes of thy heart, and teach thy thoughts to supply the offices of outward senses" (I6v). In her 1956 "Study on Envy and Gratitude," Melanie Klein describes the psychoanalytic function of the breast: “[T]he breast, towards which all [the infant’s] desires are directed, is instinctively felt to be not only the source of nourishment but of life itself” (211-212). Weaning is the removal of this life-source, an act that forms the infant’s first experience with grief and to which the mourning adult returns. The removal of the breast is, in Kleinian terms, a mourned loss that grief in adulthood resuscitates: “[T]he child goes through states of mind comparable to the mourning of the adult, or rather, [] this early mourning is revived whenever grief is experienced later in life” (147, “Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States,” 1940). Through the simile of the “hungry infant puld from a full teat,” Southwell explicitly figures Mary’s sensation of loss (and longing) as she turns from Jesus, whose body is visibly present and who cannot or will not provide the kind of nurture she (infant) thinks she needs, but who he (mother-breast) knows must be revised.

However, Mary’s simile does not figure only the sensation of loss or render cessation as pure absence. That is, it can be taken as a resistance to weaning, a resistance to *forgetting* nursing, to forgetting the history of bodily contact, or a resistance to conceiving of weaning as only absence. The simile remembers bodily experience prior to weaning. In removal she comes to understand not only the violence of rupture (*puld*), but recognizes the full teat. In this act of weaning the bond forms within loss; Mary remembers the breast/life-source itself, not merely its absence--she remembers nursing. Unlike weaning in the context of breastfeeding in which earliest memories may not be articulable, these are. Yet, like weaning from the breast, what remains is not an absolute absence, a pure negative, but only an altered form of relationship--an altered presence. Mary’s simile insists not just upon the memory of absence, but upon the prior memory of contact.

Badir has described Mary as an important repository for memory. In an illuminating study of early modern depictions of Mary Magdalene, Badir moves through Southwell's description of the *noli me tangere* moment by moving away from Louis Martz's emphasis on Jesuit sensorial meditation, the goal of which is to conjure an encounter with Christ, through Elizabeth Harvey's work on "tactile contact within religious representation," evoking Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories of touch and Susan Stewart's connection between touch (in its removal or prohibition) and emotion (*MMI* 77-79). Badir's argument is that "for Southwell, the object of Mary's love is not that which comes into focus at the moment of revelation--that is, one does not necessarily see what Mary sees. . . . The object ultimately beautified here is Mary as her body registers the sublime effect the strange encounter at the sepulcher has had upon her" (77). The experience, and the registration of it, makes Mary's own body memorial/sepulchral: "Mary is special because she has useful memories that others do not" (73). Mary's is the memory of connection, which is why the figuration of weaning is in this case more radical, fitting, and complex than might first appear. Her weaning as a form of mourning includes not only the removal of the mother-breast, but the insistent memory of when the mother-breast was there, of memory before loss--a memory that begins to be registered in this moment as the powers of liquidity that have threatened to flood Mary, to dissolve her, are reimagined as constitutive.

We can imagine Mary Magdalene here embodying a version of the medieval Vierges Ouvrantes in which "the Madonna encloses the history of salvation within her body" (Warner 44). The Vierge Ouvrante, or "Opening Virgin," is a form of small scupture, the exterior of which depicts the Christ child sitting and/or breastfeeding on his mother's lap. The body of the Virgin Mary opens down the middle (*porta mundi*) to reveal God as Father "offering forth his sacrificed Son for humanity's redemption" (Brisman 3). As Shira Brisman explains with regard to a fourteenth-century Vierge Ouvrante in the collection of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, holding and opening the Virgin Mary's body invites one to perceive divine incorporation:

> The tactile process of opening the Virgin's body dramatizes a qualitative sequence of knowledge acquisition, both by revealing that the Trinity dwells within the Virgin and by offering the devout practitioner an object that can be touched, opened, and held--making concrete the invisible and heavenly realms. The Trinity within emerges as the Vierge Ouvrante is opened. This invites the beholder to bring God closer and in doing so to recognize the potential for intimate physical union between believer and divinity. (4)

The Opening Virgin (tense imperfect, atelic) physicalizes the Lucretian mode within which a body brings into and holds within its space other bodies, temporal and material, thus becoming a new form or body itself.[29]

The "sublime effect" Mary Magdalene's body registers, materialized in the Vierge Ouvrante, leads me to Michel de Certeau's work on the "mystical body," which helps reveal the stakes of Southwell's (and Mary's) intervention. In the first volume of *The Mystic Fable*, de Certeau explains that "[t]he mystical body is the intended goal of a journey that moves, like all pilgrimages, toward the site of a disappearance" (79-80). De Certeau argues that the Christian tradition is founded upon the loss of the body of Christ and "an initial privation of body goes on producing institutions and discourses that are the effects of and substitutes for that absence":

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[29] Marina Warner, in her work on enchantment as a critical method for thinking about art and artists, brings together the Vierge Ouvrante and contemporary artist Janine Antoni's sculpture *Wean* (1990). Antoni's sculpture "focused on the breast as maternal and mourned the inevitable separation from it; in so doing the artist overturned the contemporary sexual fetishism in favour of the medieval metaphor of lactation, a link between the ethereal and the corporeal" (44). This link is relevant to Mary Magdalene's experience, which we perceive as illuminating connectedness even in bodily separation.

> How can a body be made from the word? This question raises the other haunting question of an impossible mourning: "Where art thou?" These questions stir the mystics. . . . These same questions were already present at the evangelical beginnings. Before the empty tomb stood Mary Magdalene, that eponymous figure of the modern mystic. . . . With events that are murmurings come from afar, with Christian discourses that codify the hermeneutics of new experiences, with community practices that render present a *caritas*, they "invent" a mystic body--missing and sought after--that would also be their own. (81-82)

In her figuration as the baby at the breast, Mary does not invent a new body to be her own, she returns to one that has always been hers, which is another way of considering Badir's idea of bodily registration and remembrance. One can imagine through the infant's cry--the sound of the wail, the heat of wet tears--the same opened mouth that will soon open in speech now caught in the un-speakable (Agamben *IH* 54). Christ's return in different, untouchable form resuscitates a memory as it makes a new one. The memory of separation is not the same as separation and carries with it the memory of connection, recorded in interior and flowing traces. And so, in one image, Southwell explodes the idea of absent memoriam: Mary gives us an analogy for a continuing bond because even in weaning the breast does not cease to exist.[30] Christ's physical, sensorial body as breast is removed and so absent, but a different form of presence remains.

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[30] Of the word *analogy*, Serres writes: "Yes, this is the great Greek invention: ana-logy, the *logos* that transits, passes from bottom to top and from top to bottom, *kata logon*, the word that slides

Fountain.

The second part of the disjunctive simile is that of a thirsty hart chased from the fountain. The hart, defined at least since the medieval period as a male deer in or subsequent to its fifth year (OED), is also an alternative spelling of "heart" used throughout *MMFT* (e.g., I2r, I4r).[31]

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and passes, wanders and is exchanged, and which nevertheless doesn't pass since everything is evaluated and measured owing to its transport, the fixed mesage of flying Hermes. No, it's not a question of cutting some thing up into parts and so of dividing up or deducting, which everyone, generous or one-sided, has known how to do since the world has lain under the light of the sun and the ferocity of war, but rather of constructing, step by step, a chain, therefore of finding what, stable, transits along its sequence" (*Geometry* 205). *See also* Judith H. Anderson's "Connecting the Cultural Dots: Classical to Modern Traditions of Analogy" in *Light and Death: Figuration in Spenser, Kepler, Donne, Milton*, 77-112. The phrase "continuing bond" is indebted to an important work by bereavement scholars entitled *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*, edited by Dennis Klass, Phyllis R. Silverman, and Steven L. Nickman, Routledge, 1996. However, a theory of continuity between dead and living communities is not new.

[31] The female of the deer is generally referred to as a "hind," although sometimes more specific terms are utilized. For example, a hind in its second year may be called a "Hearse" (Norwich 227). Southwell's phrase--"that her bodie seemed but the hearse of her dead heart"--could denote

The hart at the fountain is another image historically linked to God. In Psalm 42, the psalmist writes: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."[32] In *MMFT*, the hart has been chased, that is, hunted (OED). A contemporary, primary meaning of fountain is "[a] spring or source of water issuing from the earth and collecting in a basin, natural or artificial; also, the head-spring or source of a stream or river" (OED). An additional meaning is a baptismal font (OED). As with the "puld" infant, the hart is the object of a passively used verb: a hunted hart forced from the source not only of thirst's consolation, but the place to which it would normally go in times of danger, for water would erase its scent and its tracks.[33] Water would allow the hart to merge with or re-enter the forest through a kind of erasure, a remaking. Here, fountain as transformation is denied.

The persecutory, grievous sensation of a wild creature hunted away from such goodness is devastating indeed, and it is a devastation extending beyond physical or spiritual thirst, a

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a tomblike frame around and carrying Mary Magdalene's grieving heart even as it connotes male and female deer.

[32] As Gary Kuchar notes, Psalm 42 has had a profound influence on "discourses of godly sorrow" (11, 15-18), *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England*. See also Houlbrook's *Death, Religion, and the Family*, observing the psalm's common usage in Catholic vespers and matins for the dead, 256. Psalm 42 remains a part of the Catholic Office for the Dead.

[33] In the chapter entitled, "The Hart and Its Nature," the early English hunting book *The Master of Game* describes the hart seeking water (32).

devastation that feels irreparable. In his Exposition on Psalm 42, Augustine writes:

> And indeed it is not ill understood as the cry of those, who being as yet Catechumens, are hastening to the grace of the holy Font. On which account too this Psalm is ordinarily chanted on those occasions, that they may long for the Fountain of remission of sins, even 'as the hart for the water-brooks.' Let this be allowed; and this meaning retain its place in the Church; a place both truthful and sanctioned by usage. *Nevertheless, it appears to me, my brethren, that such 'a longing' is not fully satisfied even in the faithful in Baptism: but that haply, if they know where they are sojourning, and whither they have to remove from hence, their 'longing' is kindled in even greater intensity*. (1, emphasis added)

Mary Magdalene's departure from Jesus "like a thirsty hart" alludes to the traditional biblical thirst for God without being exactly Augustinian in its insistence upon deferral. The scene of Mary outside Jesus' empty tomb and her departure from the risen Lord does not convey a state of perpetual, unfulfilled longing. The difference between her experience and Augustine's take on the Psalm is not in desire, it is in knowledge, which is to say in the capacity to acknowledge what one knows. The text clarifies that Mary Magdalene has experienced the pleasure of following Jesus, and she knows enough to apprehend, to recognize pleasure lost and regained. Instead of linear temporality--earthly absence followed by an eternity of messianic fulfillment--Southwell's scene of Mary allows for pleasure's occurrence and recurrence--loss, longing, gratification. Mary recognizes the breast, recognizes the river, and is capable not only of knowing what she knows (and thus what she is losing), but also that knowledge--and its sources--can evolve and transform.

Pleasure and Return.

To illuminate more fully the relationship among liquidity, pleasure, and the mourning body, let us move from classical and biblical examples to consider at greater length another medieval one. Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Vita Merlini* tells of the prophet Merlin's tremendous grief from the loss in battle of companions and of his flight to the forest where he forgets who he is and who he was. Near the conclusion of the poem, when Merlin's sister Ganeida has renounced the world after the death of her husband and has come to live with Merlin in the forest, "the servants rushed in and announced that a new spring had arisen at the foot of the mountains and was pouring forth clean waters which even now were spreading all through the valley and splashing through the meadows as it skipped along" (Faletra 268). They hurried to see the new spring, and Merlin drank of it:

> He soon became thirsty and bent his head into the river, drinking at his pleasure, and the water passed through his stomach and internal organs. The moisture of that draught coursed through him and its humors settled within his body. At once he regained his mind and recognized himself. His madness fell away, and the feelings that had for so long been dormant within him returned. He became as sane and whole as he had ever been, his reason now restored. (268)

Upon drinking, Merlin praises God "through whom [his] sense has returned and the wandering of [his] mind has ceased." Continuing the language of return, Merlin says, "I have now come back to myself" (268).

When Merlin drinks of the new spring that emerges from the earth, his imbibing mirrors and reverses the liquid emptying of the body that occurred in early grief and in prophecy--then, the body took in nothing; it only flooded the surrounding space with blood and with tears. In the scene with the new spring, time slows to savor the return of bodily pleasure, pleasure marked by the entrance of fluidity to the body instead of from it, “drinking at his pleasure, . . . the water passed through his stomach and internal organs” (268). He drinks *at* his pleasure--he drinks when he desires to drink--and he also drinks *with* pleasure until his thirst is sated. When the water has passed fully through him, time speeds back up and with it recognition: “*At once* he regained his mind and recognized himself” (268, emphasis added). The intake of fluid returns the body, not unchanged, to its full state, the state disrupted in the original moment of grief. In Christine Chism’s work on the *Vita*, she describes the water as having “penetrat[ed] and restor[ed] not only the landscape’s hollows (‘concava’), but those of Merlin himself” (474). The outpouring of the new spring re-fills the outpouring of lamentations rent forth after the spilling of blood and tears upon the ground.

Merlin’s conclusion--“I have now come back to myself” (268)--makes sense if we consider that hunger and thirst are recurrent, temporal, and bodily forms of loss, the return of which causes suffering, the removal of which may bring pleasure. They recur as water is recurrent, as history is recurrent. Only, hunger and thirst are bodily and thus finite. The layering of the finite over the infinite--the embodied, mortal desire for immortal liquidity--makes the infinite imaginable and so possible, a definition perhaps of faith. The hart goes to the water. Being chased from the water does not discount either his longing or his understanding of longing’s alleviation, for in thirst there is a memory of drink, a memory of pleasure, which once remembered is required again.

Pleasure, in its rhythms of recurrence, becomes here a way of understanding time. In his essay “Critique of the Instant and the Continuum,” Agamben argues that “a new concept of time could be founded" on pleasure[34]:

> True historical materialism does not pursue an empty mirage of continuous progress along infinite linear time, but is ready at any moment to stop time, because it holds the memory that man's original home is pleasure. . . . He who in the *epochē* of pleasure, has remembered history as he would remember his original home, will bring this memory to everything, will exact this promise from each instant; he is the true revolutionary and the true seer, released from time not at the millennium, but now. (*IH* 115)

The key is in how we understand occurrence and recurrence in memory and remembering: the occurrence/recurrence of longing, gratification, and loss occurs not in "precise, continuous" increments (cyclical or linear) and not for the first time, but in shifting currents that flow and swirl, flood and recede, accumulating chance materials and so shifting course, never ceasing to exist in some phase or transition between. Or, in the Lucretian physics Serres posits, which explains why foundations occur upon the liquid: "Look at the water scatter in droplets, depart in steam or evaporate, run through the clouds, the waves, the spindrifts; not one atom of it has gone missing since the world was the world; liquid is not liquid; it's the most solid, the most resistant, the most permanent of the beings of the world" (229).

Source.

In *Geometry*, the final book of his *Foundations* trilogy, Michel Serres recounts an anecdote about the ancient Greek cynic Diogenes who, having deliberately shed all non-essential encumbrances, lives in a barrel and keeps only a bowl for drinking. As he sits near the public fountain, Diogenes sees a young boy scoop water into his hands and drink, and "[w]ith a flash of laughter in his eyes, Diogenes stretches his arm to the bottom of the barrel, pulls out his bowl, breaks it . . . . Between the mouth and the water, why this useless and dangerous intermediary?" (*G* 115). What Diogenes has witnessed is the unmediated access of body to liquid, without interference or what Serres will later describe as the parasite, the intervener: "[b]etween attention and an object of the world, an interrupter, an interceptor, always comes and slips in . . . a screen" (118). What Mary imagines is even more radical--not hands holding water but the mouth drinking directly and thus the body directly open to the other, open without the intervening parasite, without the screen. Mary's comparisons--mouth to breast, mouth to fountain--break the bowl.

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[34] Agamben uses "pleasure" in the Aristotelian sense of perfection "within each now something whole and complete" (*IH* at 114 on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*).

What is at stake in breaking the bowl? The liquid remains sacred. As Serres argues, the existence of the container creates value for the container while desacralizing the contained:

> Rare in my hand and on my lips, the water of thirst and rejoicing remains transparent and white. Should it remain for a time in a vase, jug or bowl immediately the opacity of the wall is seen. Liquid or elementary, the water vanishes, nothing more than the vase is seen: made of stone or clay, silver or crystal, it's worth a price; in comparison, the water no longer has any value: the vase, a sacred chalice; the water, non-holy. (*G* 115)

The similes of the infant to the breast and the hart to the fountain keep liquid's opacity by eliminating mediation, eliminating what would "slip in" or function as a screen between subject and object bodies and so occlude both, leaving only the screen visible. Mary's loss is the loss of mouth to milk and mouth to water in which the liquid itself has not been covered by anything other than a bodily vessel. The liquid object passes to the subject and is known through taste and touch and perhaps smell and sight and sound.

In another tale of Diogenes, as he lounges in the warm sunlight Alexander the Great appears. Diogenes says to Alexander, "[R]emove yourself from my sun" (*G* 118). The king's shadow intervenes between Diogenes and the sun's warmth just as the bowl intervened between Diogenes and the cool water. In both a screen divides. Diogenes breaks the bowl and asks Alexander to move so that there is no impediment or parasite between him and the desired warmth/drink. Mary's separations are different, and this difference hinges upon the prepositions "from" and "between." In elaborating upon Diogenes in a section entitled "Position and preposition: Between" (119), Serres seeks to explain "what gives their value to things, now interesting": "What is interest? Our wise language says it plainly: what resides *between* [*entre*], situated in the interval. Interest resides between me and I know not what" (119). When Mary "departeth from him like a hungry infant puld from a full teat, or a thirsty hart chased from a sweet fountain" (I7r), she describes what was once direct, sensorial experience (and so knowledge); she does not, however, describe a screen. She does not describe the covering noise of the parasite. She is separated *from* Christ because she departeth *from* him, but she does not describe, in these similes, what lies *between*.

Mary departs *from*, emanative, without denoting a parasitic intervention. Like the sun on Diogenes once Alexander has moved, she is separated from Jesus, yet there is no shadow between them. Like the sun but in keeping with the analogy of liquidity that saturates Southwell's work and this chapter, let us think about her movement *from* as an ablative of separation, departure from the source. In *Geometry*, Serres describes the topography of a river's source: “Most often it consists of a collection basin, natural like a bog or a hollow, otherwise artificial: a trough, tub, sink, basin or reservoir that has been built” (xxxviii). One could add to this list the fountain (OED, source of water) and the breast (Klein, source of nourishment and source of life).

Understanding the mechanics of source is a way of understanding time and memory and love, because it helps us visualize passage: “Before the origin, now marked out, in general time percolates below the percolation threshold; this signifies that, here and there, a given flow passes and that elsewhere it doesn’t pass.” (xlviii). Mary’s weeping and turn away from the risen Christ characterized as a rupture from the breast or the fountain are ways of figuring the Christian source without allowing for or insisting upon an ultimate absence; instead, by the very liquidity of her religious sorrow Mary locates a source through which presence can and does move. Through the source we arrive at such movement; founding occurs on liquid because of this movement. *Flow*, as Serres clarifies, would be the wrong word. A more apt one? *Percolate*.

As the tears streak down the weeping face, as milk is swallowed, as water passes under a bridge, so Mary’s connection with the source--of her anguish, of her salvation--does not move at a steady state: “Countercurrents impell[] part of the flow to head back upstream; eddies and turbulences seize[] another part under the bridge pier; randomly and in a circle; evaporation transform[s] yet another part into vapor . . . certain elements pass while others go back up or are retained, and other lastly are annulled” (xxxiv). Again, the boustrophedon is resisted; the currents are ichnographic. What happens if we conceptualize grief--like time, like water--as recurrent? As moving temporally, yes, but also experientially, sensorially, affectively, psychically, and physically, in a filtered, trickling, percolating mode?

To conceptualize Mary’s relationship with Christ as he is becoming dead, or at least preparing for departure, acknowledges the fact that relationships continue even as what is *insoluble*--her physical touching of the body--does not here pass through. This movement/filtration/percolation is not uniform. It is not unidirectional, which allows for the possibility of return, or, as Serres asks and answers: “If the water sometimes remains stable and other times heads back the way it came, does a memory pocket form following the arc? Yes, past time returns, yes, loves return; no, neither forgetfulness nor time flows, just like the Seine, rather they percolate” (xxxiv-v). The gap, unfilled, between the source and Mary does not remain empty nor is it clogged with parasitic screens. From the source, liquid-love-memory percolates--accessible, eucharistic.

Breath.

And yet, if the touch of the insoluble body does *not* pass, then what does? How does Mary sustain herself in the changing state upon which her private grief and a larger Christian longing are founded? Mary, bemoaning her fate as she turns from Christ, thinks that “in hauing taken a taste of the highest delite, that the knowledge & want of it might drowne me in deepest misery” (I7v)--knowing the taste of encounter and then wanting, or lacking, being weaned from, encounter might drown her in sorrow. Drown is the slip side of the encounter with the liquid. Perhaps this, and not thirst, is the inverse of to drink. A covering over that is not erasure but asphyxia. The drowned body does not cease to be; it becomes something other.

When Mary Magdalene departs from Christ, she does not depart without a backward glance. She looks back repeatedly and in so doing keeps herself afloat. Unlike other paradigmatic stories in which one is punished by or for this--Lot’s wife turned to a statue of salt for looking, Eurydice disappearing into the underworld when looked upon--Mary looks back and is not undone:

> Thus dutie leading, and loue with-holding her, shee goeth as fast backe-ward in thought as forward in pace, readie eftsoones to faint for griefe, but that a firme hope to see him againe did support her weakenesse. *Shee often turned towards the tombe to breath[e], deeming the verie ayre that came from the place where he stood to haue taken vertue of his presence, and to haue in it a refreshing force aboue the course of nature*. (I7v, emphasis added)

Mary goes forward in practice and backward in thought and, most importantly, *she turns* to the one she has now doubly or triply lost. In so turning toward loss, repeatedly, she neither solidifies nor disappears, and the one upon whom she looks neither solidifies nor disappears. Mary's turning, her conversion, reimagines a narrative caught between the trajectories of erasure or immobility--allowing, as in the similes of interrupted liquidity, for recurrence, for becoming.

Let us consider the trajectories against which Mary's turning operates. In Book IV of the *Georgics* (one version of the Eurydice story[35]), Virgil tells of Orpheus' failed attempt to bring Eurydice up from the underworld and back from death:

> And now, as he retraced his steps . . . and the regained Eurydice was nearing the upper world, following behind . . . . He halted, and on the very verge of light, unmindful, alas, and vanquished in purpose, on Eurydice, now regained look back!

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[35] Another newly crucial version of the story is one of the few told from Eurydice's perspective, first as a play written by Sarah Ruhl and then as an opera that debuted in February 2020 by the Los Angeles Opera. Both are entitled *Eurydice*. For the opera, Ruhl is the librettist with Matthew Aucoin, composer.

> In that instant all his toil was spilt like water. . . . [Eurydice] spoke, and straightway from his sight, like smoke mingling with thin air, vanished afar and saw him not again, as he vainly clutched at the shadows with so much left unsaid. (4:485-502)

The turning back through which Lot's wife is destroyed in the Book of Genesis is more direct: "And his wife looking behind her, was turned into a statue of salt" (Douay-Rheims, Gen. 19:26). In *Statues*, Serres synthesizes the dichotomy between the two narratives, the dichotomy that Mary's actions collapse or avoid:

> There, [Lot's wife is] transformed because she turns around, herself, toward the forbidden; [Eurydice's] guide, her lover dissolves her, here, for turning around toward her: a passive object of the gaze or an active subject of sight. She crystallizes on her own; someone else sublimates her into smoke. Let her observe and here she is, manifest, exposed, motionless; there she is, undone in the temporary breaths of air, invisible as soon as the other observed her. (*Statues* 191)

Mary neither crystallizes nor is sublimated. She is not motionless nor does she dissolve. Instead, she turns and keeps turning even as she moves away from the tomb. She turns and keeps turning back toward the tomb not merely to see, but *to breathe*. Unlike the "breaths of air" that Eurydice becomes, Mary breathes. Unlike Lot's wife, motionless, Mary breathes.

What this triangulation shows is not that Mary escapes entirely the consequences of Eurydice and Lot's Wife, but that smoke and solidity are false binaries. Serres links the stories of Eurydice and Lot's Wife to music and sculpture, respectively:

> Eurydice vanishes like vapor: the rare and adorable place of her body and her forms comes undone, leaving ribbons floating in the air. Just as a wave passes and is propagated, music combs extension in such a way that the folds [*plis*] open. By

> invading space with non-presence, it dissipates the light non-being in every place and, present everywhere, absent there, completes the homogeneous isotropy. Absent everywhere, except there, a statue presents itself, unique in a singular place, in such a way that it becomes the head of a local grasp, a seed, a navel of space or being, heavy. . . . Both of them at the vague border of being and non-being: the statue, appearing, is born to being, makes it be born, drives it to propagate itself in its own and dense neighborhood, whereas music, disappearing, ceaselessly leaves being toward non-being. . . . The statue ends time and starts space; music finishes space and makes its début in time. (*Statues* 193-194)

Mary stops, her form still. Still, she breathes. A statue is stillness. Breath, music. Stopping to turn and to breathe, she joins together Serres' "dual and contraposed aesthetics" (194). The static form marks place, marks *here*, as breathing brings in the diffusion of non-being. We arrive thus at another way of envisioning Lot's Wife and Eurydice through Mary Magdalene's turning to breathe. If the statue or pillar marks not simply the dead ("here lies"), but might also "stand for survival and, more, for unanticipated means of survival," as Lowell Gallagher writes of Lot's Wife in *Sodomscapes*, then this "single change of orientation invites us to consider" Mary's turn back not as regression or paralysis, but as participating in the "doubled orientation, looking backward and forward at the same time" that constitutes the work of mourning (87). Through the turn toward breath, Serres' pocket of memory forms. Breathing is a taking inside the self of the other--the exhalations, dust, water droplets, atoms, or very air. Breathing imbibes the changing state. In breath, the mixed body. Unlike Eurydice dissipating as breath, Mary's is the breath of hospitality, the breath of welcome, holding and giving rest to that which is past and yet still is.

Breathing, like weeping, repeats until it doesn't. *Shee often turned towards the tombe to* *breath[e]*. Stated once in the text to convey a repeated action, we can imagine Mary's breathing as another incarnation of her bodily refrain, both evidentiary and calibrating. If her tears document through affective outpouring the inner state, her steps into and out of the tomb narrating the demarcations of presence into absence, Mary's breath builds upon this. For breath is inhalation and exhalation, inside and outside, into and upon. Inspiration. *Inspiro*. Breathing pulls air in through the nose or mouth and down through the throat into the lungs. A different, more immediately necessary or at least corollary form of bodily ingestion and movement. Breathing is the last indicator of life, its cessation the first indicator of death--hence the understood agony of King Lear holding his dead daughter Cordelia, hoping for a sign of breath and thus life: "If that her breath will mist or stain the stone, / Why then she lives. . . . This feather stirs, she lives" (5.3.260-261, 263). Mary turns toward the tomb and keeps breathing, keeps remembering, keeps living.

Breathing, of course, also regulates poetry.[36] We might picture here the caesura, which Sidney describes in *The Defense of Poesy*: "That caesura, or breathing-place in the midst of the verse, neither Italian nor Spanish have, the French and we never almost fail of." (*Misc. Works*

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[36] Derrida brings these ideas together in *The Beast and the Sovereign* when after quoting Paul Celan's attempted definition of poetry--"Poetry: that can mean a turning of breath"--Derrida goes on to write: "But breath remains, among certain living beings at least, the first sign of life but also the last sign of life, of living life. The first and the last sign of living life. No doubt there is no speech and no speaking silence without breath, but before speech and at the beginning of speech there would be breath" (218).

122). In poetic terms, we can understand Mary's action as a caesura--the opening that is not the end of the poem but a space between phrases. As she departs from, Mary acknowledges and reaches into the space between, through breath. The caesura is not parasitic; it does not occlude or distort; it is only the named and necessary opening. I do not use caesura with the insistent prosodic demands of metrical, semantic, and syntactical coherence or to be vaguely synonymous with mere pause--I mean to explain by way of example how breath at the juncture between subsets of a poetic line can help us imagine a space between two bodies (physical, psychological, philological) wherein the two are divided of necessity but not wholly separated, that is, still remaining a part of the whole. In her essay "Holbein's Dead Christ," Kristeva refers to Christ's death itself as a caesura relevant to psychoanalytic theories of development: "The break, brief as it might have been, in the bond linking Christ to his Father and to life introduces into the mythical representation of the Subject a fundamental and psychically necessary discontinuity. Such a caesura, which some have called a 'hiatus,' provides an image, at the same time as a narrative, for many separations that build up the psychic life of individuals" (*Black Sun* 132). Yet, as breath in the poem parts, so it connects. And on the other side of this caesura, breath as the exhalation into voice is crucial to the apostolic directive--to tell the good news of the Resurrection.

Shee often turned towards the tombe to breath[e], deeming the verie ayre that came from the place where he stood to haue taken vertue of his presence, and to haue in it a refreshing force aboue the course of nature. In so acting (turning, breathing) upon her understanding or her way of seeing and reading (that the air she breathes has virtue and force), Mary reveals to us how in this changing, fluid state, through a relationship whereby one body may not be or will not always be a body as we know it and that reconceives of death as we know it, one might keep bodily contact, as in de la Tour's representation of the living mediating face still receiving light from the dead object (*Statues* 133). That is, one might not deny that the work of mourning is embodied or that one might keep like a treasure, in Barthes' words, desire and grief (*Camera Lucida* 21). Mary breathes the very air. She moves from concretizing figurations of liquidity--mouth to breast, mouth to fountain--to a new means of imagining encounter and so foundation. Breathing founds anew the relationship at stake in this scene of recurring, helical, loss and joy. Below the substrate of thirst, the more ancient breath.

Space.

"What should be there is missing," de Certeau writes in an early paragraph of *The Mystic Fable*. "One sole being is lacking, and all is lacking. This new beginning orders a sequel of wanderings and pursuits" (2). The profound and radiant offering of Southwell's work is to reimagine these wanderings. Its power lies not only, as others have observed, in the poem's performance of a sacramental function or substitution.[37] Mary's encounter and her turn *from* offer a sacramental phenomenology insisting upon regenerative recurrence, insisting upon immanence and fluidity, demonstratively participatory. The absent (void) is present (body), but not in a bifurcated metaphysics. We might say, as Nancy writes in *Ground of the Image*, "[t]he empty place of the absent [is] a place that is not empty" (67). Wandering, yes, and wandering *from*, but not wandering *without*.

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[37] See, e.g., Shaun Ross' "Robert Southwell: Sacrament and Self," *English Literary Renaissance*, 47:1, 2017, 73-109; Robert Miola's "Publishing the Word: Robert Southwell's Sacred Poetry," *Review of English Studies*, 64:265, 2013, 410-432.

This acknowledgment of absence "as a place that is not empty," that is not meaningless, that holds meaning in its openness, returns us to Lucretius. In the first book of *De rerum natura*, Lucretius explains the necessity of not just bodies, but of void. Creation requires both:

> Therefore, there is intangible space, void, emptiness. . . . [W]e discern before our eyes, throughout seas and lands and the heights of heaven, many things moving and in many ways and various manners, which, if there were no void, would not so much lack altogether their restless motion, as never would have been in any way produced at all, since matter would have been everywhere quiescent packed in one solid mass." (1.340-345)

Creation requires an emptiness--not empty of meaning but having room--and the energy of movement. The tomb is empty. *Noli me tangere*. Keep the space between us. Let me breathe. *Runne to my bretheren and enforme them what I say, that I will goe before them into Galilee* (I6r).

Simile itself opens into the emptiness necessary for creation. As American poet Brenda Hillman writes in the poem "Day 2":

A simile sets up space   for you to doubt
ever getting past the suffering (57)

Her poem enacts its argument--following the word "space" with the literal-visual space of the caesura. This is neither filled nor empty space, but that which makes possible the swerve of bodies or the turn of thought the next half-line brings: "for you to doubt." The simile, which likens without erasing and so strays from the definitive furrows of equation, makes room for uncertainty and hesitation as it makes room for the *you*. After the line break, itself a visual and cognitive opening that is both the seam between phrases and the stitch connecting them, the sentence concludes: “ever getting past the suffering.” And so we return to mourning, to the temporal and rhythmic recurrences of relation, the work of enabling creation that occurs in *intangible space, void, emptiness*.

In thinking of bodies moving through the necessary void and in their movements coming into and detaching from relationship, moments of juncture and conjunction, let us consider also Serres’ definition of foundation with which this chapter began. Not only is foundation *a thought, a practice of the moving*, but “[i]n the literal sense, yes, all foundation is current.” It is Mary’s departing as she remembers drink and the interruption of drink. It is the articulation of pleasure, complete and historical, archived in the body’s tearful expulsions, in the gasps of air, in hunger, in naming. It is in falling toward rest, in burial. All require and participate in an *intangible space*, an *emptiness* without which there is only quiescence and from which nothing would be produced, nothing made. The space of poetry. *Foundation is current*--ongoing, moving, liquid--which explains why mourning is an act of founding, meaning an act of creating. The living are not one solid mass and even without the spectacle of resurrection, neither are the dead. Energy as percolation, interpenetration, and transformation, leaving traces and the landscapes and bodies in which they reverberate: the cattle graze, the baby cries, we turn to breathe. The wandering *restless motion* of existence does not cease.

Intermezzo: Apparitions

> “everything that is born and comes forth
> into the borders of light”
> - Lucretius, 1.170-171

When the whitetail deer appeared in the clearing, my beloved and I held our breath, squinting to see their brown-to-white outlines. We were fifteen feet above ground in a small plywood shooting stand near Styx River, a navigable Alabama stream the banks of which could not be reached without walking down a web of dirt roads. Around us, forests of longleaf and slash pines, squirrels jostling the underbrush grown heavy in the absence of natural fires. A wasp cast its shadow. The cold at our throats burning. Red-lit cellular towers rose above a mannerly Interstate thrum. Somewhere to the west, a four-wheeler revved. Google Earth on the iPhone showed how neighbors had carved dirt open for a race track. Back at the cabin up the slight hill, our daughters glued glitter to Styrofoam balls--my mother’s idea for Christmas ornaments. Fragments of Styrofoam coated the table surface and their pink nostril linings. The wasp made me nervous even though I understood it was a lethargic, disinterested species. Through the binoculars, I saw six does and a spike file back into grazing. One always looking. We sat together for four hours on the wobbly, elevated hut beneath the guise that we might kill something, when we had no intention of killing anything, only watching and being, trying to breathe, not too loudly. It grew so dark we could not see with our eyes and looked through the rifle scope, which gathered more light. In the cabin, our daughters breathed

Styrofoam particles. Drivers headed eastward and westward on a freeway. The woods had stopped burning and without burning did not breathe. All together we watched twenty deer emerge and then disappear.

III. Out of the Mouths of Beasts: Fabulous Speech in *The Duchess of Malfi*

"One always forgets a wolf along the way."
- Jacques Derrida*, The Beast and the Sovereign* (79)

The Sovereign's Beast Fable.

The Duchess of Malfi could be re-named *The Beast and the Sovereign*, the translated title of Jacques Derrida's last seminar. At the end of Act 3, the Duchess (sovereign) tells a beast fable. The tale emerges after her brothers (sovereigns) have caused her banishment--casting her beast-like into the wild because she married her steward Antonio, a man considered her social inferior (beast). The Duchess tells her fable to the Master of Horse Bosola (beast) turned captor (sovereign). Not long after she tells her tale, the Duchess (sovereign) is strangled to death (beast), and her murderous brother Duke Ferdinand (sovereign) becomes a lycanthrope (beast). Derrida moves on to study the "becoming-beast" of a sovereign (10); here, we pause on the cusp of tragedy, taking as a catalyst for our inquiry the sovereign Duchess' beast fable. Such inquiry reframes critical understanding of the fable's operative force in the drama.

After the family's banishment but before Antonio flees with their eldest son, the Duchess anticipates Antonio's death in her last words to him:

> Let me look upon you once more, for that speech
> Came from a dying father. Your kiss is colder
> Than that I have seen an holy anchorite
> Give to a dead man's skull. (3.5.87-90)

In her brief, chilling speech that revolves, helical, through forms of sensorial knowledge--from sight ("let me look") to sound ("that speech") to touch ("Your kiss is colder"), returning to sight ("I have seen") and then to touch (an anchorite's kiss)--she prophesies death, turning the living, kissing subject (Antonio) to kissed, dead object ("skull"). The Duchess' prophetic understanding, emergent, hinges upon the mouth--her speech translates Antonio's speech, his kiss that of the anchorite.

Shortly thereafter, she proceeds to tell a fable that is itself anticipatory, cautionary and yet predictive, its moral less about finality than about ongoing acts of deferral, acknowledging danger stealthily approaching, in Derrida's French idiom, *à pas de loup*: "There is no wolf yet when things are looming *à pas de loup*. There is only a word, a spoken word, a fable" (5). Fable emerges in the transitory, transitional state of becoming where tragedy appears like a wolf. "Sad tales befit my woe," the Duchess begins, "I'll tell you one":

> A salmon, as she swam unto the sea,
> Met with a dog-fish, who encounters her
> With this rough language: "Why art thou so bold
> To mix thyself with our high state of floods,
> Being no eminent courtier, but one
> That for the calmest and fresh time o'th' year
> Dost live in shallow rivers, rank'st thyself
> With silly smelts and shrimps? And darest thou
> Pass by our dog-ship, without reverence?"
> "O," quoth the salmon, "sister, be at peace;

Thank Jupiter we both have passed the net.
Our value never can be truly known
Till in the fisher's basket we be shown;
I'th' market then my price may be the higher,
Even when I am nearest to the cook and fire." (3.5.124-139)

In fifteen lines of iambic pentameter content-wise the exact opposite of but structurally very akin to Aesop's "The Saltwater Fish and the Freshwater Fish," the Duchess narrates the encounter of two fish as they negotiate the boundaries of a political landscape underwater and an economic one on land.[38] The fable remains at this point of encounter, charting actual passage from freshwater into saltwater and deferring the always possible but not yet realized passage from net to market to fire (and, impliedly, to consumption). To understand the fable's meaning within the larger play, it is necessary to think through a deeper theory of the fable so that we may strive to answer the persistent question: why fable here?

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[38] Fable 190, Avianus 38, Perry 584--Aesop's freshwater fish is rude. In "Fishermen's Lore and the Salmon-Dogfish Fable in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Notes and Queries*, September 2007, James T. Bratcher, claiming that the story is "evidently . . . of Webster's own invention," notes a folk belief that dogfish contain and prey upon other fish as the Duchess herself "is trapped and threatened" (325). An allegorical reading alone of the fable, while insightful, does not fully account for the fable's power in the scene.

The Fable's Mouth.

Through her fable, the Duchess forms a stay against time, which stay is solid, a statue; hers is a statue not against penetration but against movement apart or, more precisely, against the dissolution that is tragedy's mandate. Mine is not an historical argument but a tropic one, through which I use the figure of the Lucretian swerve to understand the function of the fable. Thus, I write into the play from a different poetic angle than more historically-situated feminist works.[39] I read the play in the space of the now, which is itself always in motion.

In "The Fabulous Animal" chapter of *Food for Thought*, a theoretical rendering of fables and fairy tales based on an embodied, Lucretian relationship between oral and verbal functions, Louis Marin states his thesis on fables:

> [T]he fabulous talking animal is a figure of this fiction of the infinitesimal swerve, of the *clinamen* imagined to be the origin. The animal figuring in fables is properly animal in that it is presented as a body that both eats and is eaten. Yet this animal also speaks. In the fable, the animal simulates a symbolic regression to the level of instinct: we have here a fiction that locates the origin of discourse in Eros and destruction, and which would serve the function of depriving the rulers of their power over discourse. (44)

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[39] See, for example, Judith Haber's "'My Body Bestow upon My Women': The Space of the Feminine in *The Duchess of Malfi*" and Theodora A. Jankowski's "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*."

Let us spend some time unraveling this thread. The *clinamen*, or swerve of atoms, centers us in the physics of *De rerum natura*, such that in a world consisting only of bodies and void (*corporis atque loci*, 1.505) while "bodies are being carried downwards by their weight in a straight line through the void, at times quite uncertain and uncertain places, they swerve a little from their course, just so much as you might call a change of motion" (*DRN* 2.217-222). The result? Collisions and blows, without which "nature would never have produced anything" (2.224). *Clinamen* is a Latin word Lucretius uses for this "infinitesimal" adjustment.[40] Marin's iteration of the *clinamen* concentrates less on movement than on convergence, on the "point of contact"--"between talking and eating, verbality and orality, the instinct for self-preservation and the linguistic drive" (44). The point of contact is both a place of power and of power's transition, its transformation or translation. Power over discourse and power over origins, because what may be consumed consumes--*Eros and destruction*.

The beast fable is located at this juncture of authority and vulnerability, the juncture, one might say, of Pasiphaë and the Trojan Horse, the golden calf and the Lamb of God. Yet, if we move closer we find the point of contact, the point of convergence, is even more discrete. It is not the beasts' claws or fins or fur or horns. No, the swerve occurs at the mouth: the mouth speaks and consumes. The fabulous animal speaks and consumes. The fabulous animal is consumed. “The fables are told” (Marin 54).[41]

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[40] "[I]d facit exiguum clinamen principiorum nec regione loci certa nec tempore certo" (*De rerum natura*, 2.292-293).

This essay asks and seeks to answer the question: why the *clinamen* of fable at this point in *The Duchess of Malfi*? For fable here is much more than what Michael Neill characterizes as “a deliberately humble paraphrase upon the old tag *finis coronat opus*” (*Issues of Death* 352). Far from being a simple commentary on final judgment, fable tells the tragedy of violent consumption while holding, temporarily, all discursive power in its teeth. Fable marks a declining toward void, toward the loss of husband and child, that speaks what is looming--death, the wolf at the door--even as it forestalls it through such telling. Fable is anticipation and power converging at the mouth. A theory of fable thus requires a theory of the mouth, which Serres offers in *Statues*, the second of his *Foundations* trilogy. Serres' theory emerges from a chapter that moves from an explanation of the ancient Egyptian sculptural practice called "Opening of the Mouth" to a reading of Guy de Maupassant's nineteenth-century short story "Beside a Dead Man," which is also translated as "Beside Schopenhauer's Corpse" and which tells of dentures falling from the dead man's decomposing lips. The mouth is where, as the Duchess threatens Bosola, one "counterfeit face" becomes the other (3.5.118). It is where men eat "[p]heasants and quails," where they curse, where they tell tales, where they kiss (3.5.112, 116, 125). The mouth is subject and object and the point of contact in between:

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[41] Of the spoken nature of the fable Derrida writes: “[A]s its Latin name indicates, a fable is always and before all else speech--*for*, *fari*, is to speak, to say, to celebrate, to sing, to predict, and *fabula* is first of all something said” (34). In *The Mystic Fable*, Michel de Certeau also links fable with the spoken work (*parole*):

> Where does the spoken word subsist? . . . [S]pirituals and mystics took up the challenge of the spoken word. In doing so, they were displaced toward the area of “fable.” They formed a solidarity with all the tongues that continued speaking, marked in their discourse by the assimilation to the child, the woman, the illiterate, madness, angels, or the body. Everywhere they insinuate an “extraordinary”: they are voices quoted--voices grown more and more separate from the field of meaning that writing had conquered, even closer to the song or the cry. (12-13)

> [T]he mouth, yours or mine, even distant, makes the immediate presence of what makes us living and expressive be seen, felt, touched, heard, and sometimes tasted. Mouth object, certainly verifiable by experience in the full sense, yet mouth subject, breathing, saying, unexpected, delicate, receptive, excitable, quick-tempered, emotional, biting, tender. Opening this orifice means going from high to low, from exterior to interior, but also folding or unfolding the edges or sides. The complex object-subject is situated on this warped border. (*Statues* 87)

The mouth is the opened-closed boundary of "a body that both eats and is eaten" (Marin 44). It is the convergence of states: liquid, solid, breath. Like the *clinamen*, the atomic swerve, whose actions (*declining* - Perseus, *inclining* - Loeb, *leaning* - Esolen translations) of collision both create and separate, the human mouth births the fabulous animal who, in turn, severs and re-commences history. Through the mouth, the fable itself becomes "the minute swerving of the first-beginnings at no fixed place and at no fixed time" (Lucretius 2.292-293). Mouth as object opens into subject.

Yet, unlike any other speech act, the open mouth of the human speaker bewitched into silence and narrating a fable does not speak with the subjective, or lyric, “I.” It speaks with the voice of that which cannot speak, but can only be spoken. The mouth is open but the “I” is silent. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess has been banished from her home, her husband and their eldest child forced to flee. At this moment of spatial, biological, temporal, even (attempted) sacramental separation, she ceases to speak in the first person.[42] She tells a fable. The human is silenced; *animalia muta* speak.[43] This is a temporizing inclination, as we shall see, an inverted game. What occurs when the mouth as object opens into something other than subject? Here, one finds ventriloquism via the initial layering of dramatic performance--the Duchess is already always performed by an actor--but we should treat as meaningful an additional layer, the silencing not only of generic actor to become specific character, but the silencing of the human to become a different speaking creature, registering speech and the silence beneath speech.

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[42] By this I refer to the attempted dissolution of the sacrament of marriage that has united the Duchess and Antonio, specifically, but also to the broader notion of the sacramental body. As to the first, in their private wedding ceremony the Duchess prays for their “absolute marriage”: “Bless, heaven, this sacred Gordian, which let violence / Never untwine” (1.1.469-471). Antonio says earlier in the same conversation, when he doesn’t yet know where it’s going, “Begin with that first good deed began i’th’ world / After man’s creation, the sacrament of marriage” (1.1.376-377). Their separation in the later scene of banishment marks violence’s attempted untwining of an “absolute” union they, at least, seem to consider sacramental. As to the second and broader idea of a sacramental body, let us consider the Augustinian terms that Michel de Certeau uses to explain the joining of sacramental and Church bodies, whose inversions of consuming-consumed we find the fable echoes: “the sacrament (‘sumere Christum’) and the Church (‘sumi a Christo’) were joined (the term ‘communio’ was, moreover, common to both) as the contemporary performance of a distinct, unique ‘event,’ the *kairos*, designated by the ‘historical body’ (Jesus)” (*Mystic Fable* 83). De Certeau explains that ‘[t]hese Augustinian expressions characterize two ‘communions’ with the Body: the act of ‘consuming, eating,

What is a silent, still, voiceless human? A statue? What is a statue? A tropic memory or echo of the human? An attempt to halt entropy, to mimic and so contain the body, to preserve time? Serres answers, "A mummy first of all":

> Mummification slows, sometimes indefinitely, the inevitable process of decomposition: retains the stiffness of the dead body and announces statuary stability. History, myth, religion, and ontology speak inseparably here: death

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receiving' Christ (that is, the Eucharist) and the act of 'being consumed, received, assimilated' by Christ (that is, the Church)" (315 n.15).

[43] In the fable, Giorgio Agamben writes, the human "is struck dumb, and animals emerge from the pure language of nature in order to speak. Through the temporary confusion of the two spheres, it is the world of the *open mouth*, of the Indo-European root **bha* (from which the word of the fable is derived), which the [fable] validates, against the world of the *closed mouth*, of the root **mu*" (*IH* 70).

> explicates the statue; this latter implicates the former, the way appearance contains the concept or essence or, better said in this circumstance, substance . . . . The statue is a black box: open it, and you'll look death in the face. Don't open it. (*Statues* 188-189)

The Duchess speaks in fable, and for fifteen lines her subjective self is masked, encased, enclosed, protected briefly from tragedy's decomposition by immuring the self in the vocalized echo of the mummy. We leave the sphere of human subjectivity and with it human, tragic time. Through the space-time of the fable, the Duchess' husband and children are also masked, encased, enclosed by the tale's preservative energies. They, too, are protected.

One way to conjure understanding is to imagine other forms of open mouth *not* utilized in the scene. To borrow from Shakespeare, the Duchess does not respond like Young Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*, who says to his father after being told to address his dead grandfather's body: "O Lord, I cannot speak to him for weeping, / My tears will choke me if I ope my mouth" (5.3.173-74). I paraphrase Serres in noting that the Duchess does not cry, does not scream, does not collapse before the specter of death, the absoluteness of absence, however terrifying (*Statues* 136). She does not voice fear. With preternatural and impavid composure, she opens her mouth and speaks in story: "Sad tales befit my woe. I'll tell you one."

As the swerve of bodies diverts them from "fall[ing] downwards like raindrops through the profound void" (2.221-222), so fable is not mere narrative but an intervention that diverts, defers, slows, for the time of the tale, tragedy's seemingly inevitable momentum. In the essay "Fable and History: Considerations on the Nativity Crib," Agamben touches on an analogous suspension. Agamben quotes the apocryphal Book of James or *Protoevangelium* on the moment of Jesus' nativity: "I Joseph was walking and I walked not . . . and they that were chewing chewed not. . . . And behold there were sheep being driven and they went not forward but stood still; and the shepherd lifted his hand to smite them with his staff, and his hands remained up" (*IH*, quoting The Book of James, XVIII:1). Agamben describes this as a moment when "time stood still--not in the eternity of myth and fairy tale, but in the messianic interval between two moments, which is the time of history ('And of a sudden things moved onward in their course')" (*IH* 144). In the fable, where the imagined space-time of the mummy merges with the messianic, the dog-fish does not die. The salmon does not die. The irruption of their imagined voices on-stage defers the tragic trajectory of the dramatic frame so that in perpetuity the fish-speakers' deaths are only ever possible, not actual. More importantly, for the period of their speech, always held in the Duchess' mouth, neither she nor Antonio go toward their own dying. They are paused, still: statues.

Wolf, Lamb, Game.

Having considered the dynamics of the fable as both protection and disruption, another layer to understanding the fable's function is by thinking about the fable as game. The fable's game properties, I suggest, focus attention on the fable's formal structures and the consequences of undoing those formal structures. In the essay "Knowledge in the Classical Age: La Fontaine and Descartes," Serres links La Fontaine's beast fables (particularly "The Wolf and the Lamb") to "a martial game" (*Hermes* 27). In so doing, Serres describes "[t]he three elements located in the fable . . . : a space structured by the ordering relation, a circle, [and] a game with its moves, its end, and its winner" (23-24). This articulation by which the fable becomes a game-space further clarifies the operative logic of the Duchess' tale.[44]

If we approach the fable as having its own physics-poetics, its own form as a series of formulas or games, this makes manifest crucial meanings in the play. Let us begin by quoting at length from Serres to understand the game-space of the fable, through which we better understand the Duchess' moves in this moment and at her death:

> All of the fable's model-spaces are deducible from the very elementary properties of the ordering relation. Let us take the most general case, the very form of the process. And let us say that this space, organized in this way--a space in which there exist pairs like upstream-downstream, cause-effect, mother-son--is that of a *game-space*. Now the process becomes a trial. . . .

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[44] Although La Fontaine's work was published after *The Duchess of Malfi*, La Fontaine participates in an "Aesopian tradition" ongoing from classical times to the current (Hollander xxiii). In fact, in his address to the French Dauphin with which he begins the fable collection, La Fontaine writes: "I sing these heroes, Aesop's progeny / Whose tales, fictitious though indeed they be, / Contain much truth. Herein, endowed with speech -- / Even the fish!" (Hollander 1, lines 1-4). I argue that we may read Serres' work on the beast fable of later Aesopian tradition as relevant to the earlier Aesopian beast fable the Duchess tells.

> A trial (as elementary jurisdiction) first of all tries to establish a responsibility. Let there be a wrongdoing that a plaintiff claims to have suffered: before evaluating the vengeance (the punishment that the accused must incur), it is necessary to show at least the possibility of injury. The set of possibilities includes physical, moral, temporal, socio-political, and other possibilities. Now, possibility is always the higher point on the tree, whatever that tree might be. If an order is strict, he who occupies the lower position, let us call him the *minorant*, has no control over the *majorant*, who, on the contrary, has complete control over the former. Hence the fable's strategies. . . . [H]e who is upstream, he who is greater, is responsible and loses. The minorant wins and eats the other. (19-20, emphasis in original)

In the trial of the fable organized as a sequence of relations, the stronger and therefore responsible party loses. The Duchess' fable of the dogfish and the salmon begins by outlining the structure of ordered relations in what appears to be the start of a fable game-space. The dogfish (*A*) identifies the salmon (*B*) as upstart usurper of the dogfish's political hierarchy by the fact of the salmon's presence in the sea. The dogfish establishes the applicable sets of ordered relations (some of which I borrow from Serres): dominator-subject (political); saltwater-freshwater (spatial); purity-mixture (physical); eminent-silly (social). Serres reduces the most essential positions to majorant and minorant. To win the game of the fable, Serres argues, "play the role of the minorant":

> Whether dealing with drinking, eating, or dying, the *succession of moves* in the game follows the ordering relation: you are the stronger, I am the weaker; you are upstream, I am downstream; you are the cause, I am the effect; you muddy it, I

> cannot muddy it; you slandered me last year, I had not yet been born; it must be your brother, I do not have any, and so on. (20, emphasis in original)

As Serres explains in the context of "The Wolf and the Lamb," the strategy by which the lamb survives is to place the wolf in the position of absolute majorant. The strategy by which the wolf emerges as victor and so is able to eat the lamb, which is what happens at the end of that fable, is for the wolf to "succeed[] in showing the existence of a third man, upstream from himself, in the lamb's social group" (20), thereby putting the wolf in position of minorant victor.[45] Given Serres' convincing explanation for the structure of fables--a structure that we see emerging with the dogfish's opening critique of the salmon--one would expect the salmon to claim to be minorant vis-à-vis the dogfish as absolute majorant. The salmon instead counters by claiming that they are *both* minorants; they are both "downstream" because as fish both are preceded in power by a third, superior position. The dogfish is actually at least *B* to the salmon's *C*, and any

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[45] Marin describes a similar means by which the fable subverts frameworks of power: "It could very well be that the fable, the story of the weak and marginal, generally constitutes a particular kind of apparatus within the medium of discourse itself. The function of this apparatus is to allow the weak to displace and reverse the power contained in the discourse of the strong" (53). This is also a reference to the fable's strategy of circularity, for in addition to the structured sets that organize the game, the fable maintains the circle: "*A* is upstream from *B*, *A* must place *B* or a third person upstream from himself in order to have the right to eat or kill the adversary" (*Hermes* 21).

B-*C* distinction between them is inconsequential because both are preceded by the *A* of the fisherman's net. Taken further, the dogfish and salmon are preceded not only by the net, but by the fishmonger's basket in the market, by the cook working at the fire, and by Jupiter. In other words, both are *B* or both *C* and so forth. Neither is *A* and neither is in the same social group as the occupant of *A*. Both are equally agonistic to *A*.

The Duchess' fable, unsuccessful at deferring death in the real of the play, does successfully preserve the lives of both players in the real of the fable by making *both* players minorants (and thus victors) in a game played against third-party majorants. The salmon begins by placating the dogfish ("sister, be at peace"), but the line break at this moment marks a volta or turn from the dogfish's game-space of ordered relations and shows these ordered relations to be--to borrow from Serres and to mix metaphors--just one tree in a larger forest. For the salmon's next lines construct a *new* set of ordered relations wherein the competition is not between dogfish and salmon, but between fish and fisherman and, later, fish/fishmonger and fish/cook. The dogfish and the salmon are not analogous to the wolf and the lamb; they are both lambs. They are lambs who have, by the grace of Jupiter and just for the moment, escaped the world of wolves:

> "O," quoth the salmon, "sister, be at peace;
> Thank Jupiter we both have passed the net.
> Our value never can be truly known
> Till in the fisher's basket we be shown;
> I'th' market then my price may be the higher,
> Even when I am nearest to the cook and fire."

As dual occupants of the minorant position ("we both"), it is in their better interests to both stay alive. If they were *not* to have passed the net, their relative values might be different than in the relations framed by the dogfish's sets. In other words--and this is the critical move the Duchess makes--the salmon does not stay within "the *dialectical game*." The Duchess, through the salmon, does not play at who is better or worse than whom in a sequence of varying capacities or sequential game moves. She "attacks *the ordered structure itself*--which is the condition for the game's existence or, rather, without which the game can have neither space nor time--in order to shatter it" (*Hermes* 22, emphasis in original).

Such shattering of the ordered structure occurs at the moment of the break following the salmon's opening line. "'O,' quoth the salmon, 'sister, be at peace" leads us to think we might remain with the game-space of the dogfish's opening and that the salmon will make a move to singular minorant. However, the next line undoes this possibility: "Thank Jupiter we both have passed the net." If the beast fable as a narrative form is itself a Lucretian *clinamen*, then this turn, this *versure* in Agamben's words (*The End of the Poem* 111), figures the *clinamen* at the level of the poetic line. This is the moment when the falling first bodies of fable participants swerve so they no longer "fall downwards like raindrops" (*DRN* 2.221-222). We have left the game-space of "The Wolf and the Lamb" and reached the radical heart of the Duchess' fable. Her tale is not only formally Lucretian by virtue of being a beast fable. Inside the form of the fable, it inclines, it collides, it breaks--and so remakes.

Lucretius writes that without the swerve or the inclination of falling bodies, "no collision would take place and no blow would be caused amongst the first-beginnings: thus nature would never have produced anything" (2.221-225). And later:

> [I]f all motion is always one long chain, and new motion arises out of the old in order invariable, and if the first-beginnings do not make by swerving a beginning of motion such as to break the decrees of fate, that cause may not follow cause from infinity, whence comes this free will in living creatures all over the earth, whence I say is this will wrested from the fates by which we proceed whither pleasure leads us each, swerving also in our motions not at fixed times and fixed places, but just where our mind has taken us? (2.251-262)

The Lucretian inclining and declining that lead to collision and production shatter the game-space to "break the decrees of fate." In the same way, the turn of the line after "peace" alters the long chain of motion and from it a "new motion arises" that is *not* "out of the old in order invariable." With "we both" the Duchess angles away from and so causes to crumble the dogfish's dialectic of structured relations that would control, like fate, the sequential outcome of the fabled game.

The Statue at the Feast.

In telling this tale, the Duchess shows that she understands the game being played in the fable and that she understands how to *attack the ordered structure itself*, not only to win the game but *to shatter it*. In telling this tale, the Duchess shows that she also understands the game being played in the tragic real-time of the play. Yet, at this point in the play the Duchess refuses to embrace the position of individual or collective minorant. She refuses to accept anything other than the position of non-absolute majorant, meaning that she will not engage on the agonistic battlefield and that if the terms upon which the game is played are life and death, she will not survive. As she says in the haunting line just before her murder, “I am Duchess of Malfi still” (4.2.134).

The Duchess knows that it is the bestial, elementary world of the fable to which her brothers will return upon her death. This is why fable here: a theory of fable shows us what she is doing and what she is not doing; that is, what the Duchess apprehends hinges upon the fable. Far from being only strange or frivolous or even simply an effective discursive mode, fable holds an incisive key in its teeth; it reveals the Duchess’ subsequent speeches and actions to be choices knowingly made, and it reveals such choices to be more complex than mere resignation unto death. Her fable offers a moment of radical stillness that shatters--for the time of its telling and through the intervention of “we both”--the dialectic. Fable thus calls into stark relief her later pivot in the end--no longer *we both*, as collective, but *I*, *you*, *they*, in recognition of atomist dispersal. The Duchess may be dying, but she is not the lamb.

The Duchess’ last full lines harken back, helical, to the tension between consumption and consuming at stake in the fable, making it clear she knows the fable can be a game-space wherein there are winners and losers: in the fable the animal speaks; in the fable the animal is eaten. As Wendy Wall has recognized, a few lines earlier the Duchess reflects upon “the scene of domestic cannibalism she leaves behind” when she describes herself to Cariola as “used and half-eaten food”: “In my last will I have not much to give; / A many hungry guests have fed upon me, / Thine will be a poor reversion” (4.2.192-194; Wall 170-171). Yet, as the fabulous animal may both consume and be consumed, speak and be spoken, so the Duchess’ final lines cast her as more than food. She is feast and she is host, and, as host, she retains power over consumption of the feast. The Duchess says to Bosola and her executioner:

Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength
Must pull down heaven upon me.
Yet stay; heaven' gates are not so highly arched
As princes' palaces; they that enter there
Must go upon their knees. Come, violent death,
Serve for mandragora to make me sleep.
Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet.
They strangle her. (4.2.222-229)

She begins by telling those who will cause her death how to do it--they must be strong and also allow her to kneel. She then summons death metaphorized as that which will make her sleep. Sleep, of course, is itself a metaphor for death, but the Duchess also clarifies that life and death are not the distinctly demarcated ordered sets at stake here. Lastly, and crucially, in her final two lines, she instructs Bosola what to tell her brothers when she is dead. We return in these two lines to the mouth: the mouth that speaks, the mouth of the dead, the mouth that consumes. *Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out, / They then may feed in quiet.* If this directive is spoken, it will have come from a dead mouth. If she is laid out, dead, the victors may eat. Mouth subject, mouth object.

To more fully understand what this moment reveals, as in the case of *Iphigeneia*, let us refer back to Serres' essay on de La Tour through which Serres concludes: "The light does not go from the living face to the inert thing: on the contrary, the mediating face receives it from the object. The I does not begin, rather the *that* does" (*Statues* 133). *Go, tell my brothers.* As dead *that* the Duchess will speak. *When I am laid out*. When the living-subject-*I* has become corpse-object-*that*, categorizations unstable, you will say these words aloud, and they will come not from you, current speaking subject, but from the former speaking subject now continually becoming dead object, the *that* which will allow the victorious beasts to eat. Indeed, the *that* which gives them permission to *feed in quiet*.

Yoking the power of the fable to what will be her posthumous directive, the Duchess does what Marin notes it may be possible to do in the fable, she "reverse[s] the power contained in the discourse of the strong." Even here, however, the Duchess does not move within the dialectic of the minorant-majorant game-space. She does not speak prospectively from after-death as a site of finality, negativity, or absence; she does not say when I am buried or burned but *when I am laid out*. When I am dead and have been prepared for the funeral but prior to the enactment of such rites. When I am laid out and present fully as becoming dead. When I am laid out and the process of decomposition has begun but is not complete. Thus, when I am a statue, not marble but flesh, then (and only then?) do I grant you permission to eat. By becoming dead and by claiming, through the words of the dead, the power to determine when (*then*) and how (*in quiet*) her brothers, as ostensible victors, shall feed, the Duchess creates a space of greater power than previously imagined. She controls the border between the living and the dead, which is no discrete geometric line, but blurry, folded, a mouth. The boundary between what "makes us living" and what makes us dead may encompass or be the source of the whole.

This scene thus presents a dark mirror of the post-Resurrection Christic trajectory. Resurrected, Jesus appeared to certain of his followers on the road to Emmaus. They did not recognize him, but nonetheless invited this stranger-guest with whom they had conversed to supper. It was not until they ate together that they understood: "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight" (Gospel of Luke 24:30-31, *KJV*). Later, in Jerusalem, when Jesus appeared to the remaining eleven, they dared not believe in him until he ate: "And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb. And he took *it*, and did eat before them" (Luke 24:40-43).

In both, speech is insufficient for belief; belief requires consumption. The speaking mouth must consume; consumption illuminates speech. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, speech permits consumption. In her last full lines, spectral, the Duchess gives us the language of fable newly made in newly awakened and reassembled sacramental terms--the act of consuming is joined with the act of being consumed. As corpse-body turned decomposing statue whose words another will speak like the human speaking the mute animal, a converted *vierge ouvrant*, the Duchess becomes what's on the inside of the box, what's on the other side of the door, *à pas de loup*, even as containment is impossible. *The statue is a black box: open it, and you'll look death in the face. Don't open it.* Or, as her brother Ferdinand says upon seeing the murdered Duchess: "Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle: she died young" (4.2.256).

The Duchess' beast fable and her final words also effect a kind of radical inversion of Hermione's statue form in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. It is now easy to see how radically different Webster's portrait of the Duchess is from the more satisfying arc Shakespeare gives Hermione. From dead body to stone statue to living mother and wife--as those around her perceive the changing states--Hermione emerges warm and moving in the play's final lines, the miracle of her emergence like a far-fetched story. As her friend Paulina says, "That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale: but it appears she lives" (5.3-115-117). To her living mother, not quite moving, not quite speaking, Perdita can kneel and pray for blessing as to a statue (5.3.118-119). Hermione has effected stillness as erasure, physically removed from the violence of impending tragedy and so able to rise at its end, resurrected, converting sorrow to joy and resolving the romance. The Duchess of Malfi does something other indeed. Her beast fable, like mummification, enfolds time in language so as to hold destruction at bay. Each line of verse wrapping around her family, each line-length of text the textile of preserving linens to hold them safe, but each line of text also only the textile of the shroud around bodies that will die, not as wax figures but as flesh and bone. Here, where the utterance of becoming dead occludes the satisfactions of narrative resolution, there is something harder to hold in thought but also more essential. Hermione moves from fixed into living form; the beast fable forms a statue imposed against time only for the duration of its telling. When the tale ends, what has been stilled must exit. But, the Duchess returns in her final lines to what she began with the tale, wrapping her own body as a statue within the text so that long after the dead have eclipsed all preservation, the spoken word stays.

The Wolf at the Door.

With the death of the Duchess, the beast fable of old like the wolf forgotten along the way returns to consume tragedy, which by its ingestion does not disappear. In the belly of the fable, tragedy asks who is the wolf and why. Seeing the Duchess' murdered children, Ferdinand says only, "The death / Of young wolves is never to be pitied" (4.2.250-251). These dead children like dead wild beasts are disposable threats, the death of which is not to be lamented.[46] Fifty lines later, he threatens Bosola with revelation of the Duchess' murder: "O, I'll tell thee: / The wolf shall find her grave, and scrape it up; / Not to devour the corpse, but to discover / The horrid murder" (4.2.301-303). René Weis notes this is a reference (also made in Webster's *The White Devil*) to the contemporary belief that wolves dug up the buried bodies of murder victims (385). Here, we find wolf as public servant. Like the cruentating corpse whose stab wounds weep at the sight of its killer, the wolf in the graveyard demands justice.[47] In the end Ferdinand himself becomes wolf/grave-marauder, "[s]teal[ing] forth to churchyards in the dead of night, / And dig[ging] dead bodies up" (5.2.11-12).

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[46] See "Allegories of Creation: Glassmaking, Forests, and Fertility in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," by Bonnie Lander Johnson and Bethany Dubow, which historicizes Ferdinand's lines in the context of "[t]he figurative fertility of the English forests," the legal history of deforestation, and the elimination of wildness, marking the Duchess' body as a kind of natural landscape (132-133). While it is informative to read the wolf/cub references with this historical overlayer, the play also makes manifest deeper confluences beyond a reflection of a topical occurrence; the wolf is more and other than its disappearance from English forests. Disappeared, the wolf remains always at the door.

[47] See Gaskill 228; McMahon 26, 37.

And so from the stillness of fable through the pitiless deaths of child-wolves (young enough to be killed at their mother's teats or killed when they have passed from wolf-nurslings to would-be kings like Romulus and Remus) to the excavating wolf scraping the graves of the dead to expose a crime (murder) or to commit a crime (stealing body parts), we arrive at "the double law," that unstable tension between hospitality and hostility always at work as it was from the moment the salmon swam into the sea with the dogfish and that even death cannot fix (as death itself is not fixed).[48] From the twins Romulus and Remus to the Duchess' execution at the behest of her brothers, one of whom is her twin, the wolf marks the interstitium of murder and welcome. Serres writes:

> The twins, nourished by the she-wolf's milk, found Rome via the crime we know; amid an enterprise, peaceful at first, the ancestral evil intervenes: the desire to be king. As though there was an evil running in the family, something like a royal illness, something like a hereditary disease, a first sin of ruling. A little after Troy fell, amid the ravages and crimes of the captured city, an exception intervenes, the law of ancient hospitality. As though a welcome existed running through our memories, a hospitable gentleness, a residual and rare peace, a lifting of assuaging. (*Rome* 119-120)

The welcome runs alongside the threat. "Mercy," the Duchess breathes out her last word to the one who will set in motion the revenge murders of her brothers (4.2.345). Hospitality mixes with what escapes, what invades, hostile, and even in peace hunger never ceases. Net, market, fire. At the hearth, we take sustenance and consume the fish. The still-living stands like a "reverend monument / Whose ruins are even pitied" (4.2.33-34), while in rigor the corpse leaks. My mother vomited when the undertakers carried her body from our home.

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[48] Serres, *Rome* 119.

The Duchess' final full lines persist. *Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out, / They then may feed in quiet*. Physically absent--or rather, not present as contained body--her words and her understanding linger, imprinted upon the remainder of the play. It is the small and potent phrase "in quiet" within which we hear what the fable has uncovered. The Duchess opened her fable by explaining that the hostile dogfish "encounters" the salmon with "this rough language." An OED definition of "to encounter" is "to accost, address." In my earlier analysis of the fable, I argued that the fable remains at this stage of encounter. That is, it remains at the stage of address; it remains speech.

In quiet, which at first might seem to replicate the fable's hospitable *at peace*, instead more closely carries *encounter's* sonic resonance, its echo, its darkening shade. *In quiet* marks the uncanny repetition through revision of *encounter*. As an inexact echo, the spoken words do not fall straight through the void, they incline a little, they swerve. *In quiet* is the *clinamen* of *encounter.*

To encounter is to address. To be *in quiet* is to have gone beyond address, beyond speech, to be inside of the said--in the door, in the black box. Or, as Angela Carter writes in the short story "The Company of Wolves," here the wolf has arrived at the hearth (*Bloody Chamber* 111). Colder than a kiss to a dead man's skull, the Duchess' words predict that which we won't understand until the play's end. Upon her death her brothers, silenced, become *animalia muta*. *In quiet* and so past speech, they can only be spoken.

The spoken beast fable of *The Duchess of Malfi*, for the time of its telling, keeps the cold wolf out even as it sets up the stakes for what is to come. The Duchess knows this. She knows that with her death, her brothers will descend entirely into the fable's bestial and murderous game-space. She also knows the ordered sets--guest-host, hospitable-hostile, dead-alive--have already collapsed. Before Derrida, she knows what will hold "is only a word, a spoken word, a fable."

IV. Gather at the Hearth, Graveside: Burial in George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*

"We mercifully preserve their bones, and pisse not upon their ashes."

- Thomas Browne, *Urne-Buriall* (95)

Eternal Rest.

After my mother's funeral service, family and close friends drove behind the hearse carrying her body to the cemetery for interment. It was late afternoon in December. A raw day and daylight dwindling. The line of us wound through the clay roads, iced and jolting, until at some point, momentarily inexplicable, we stopped. The funeral home director hurried over to my father. *There's been a mistake,* she said. *I'm so sorry but we've opened the wrong grave. This will take some time to fix because the guys have to get the backhoe out and dig the hole in the right place.*

The line of us in our cars, lights on, wound again away from the graves and toward the funeral home. The hearse parked. My father pulled in behind it. Through the rear windshield we could see the curve of casket, spray of roses on top. The other mourners went inside to get warm.

I'm not going in, my dad said. *I'm going to sit here and watch your mother until they put her in the ground.*

And so we sat. One by one the others eventually went back home where the food had already been laid out. The day receded. We could hear the backhoe digging until it was fully dark and our headlights cast a glare on the hearse rear-windshield. Only a few of us remained.

Down into the Ground.

When I was a child, my favorite story my mother told me was about removing a patient's "hot" (infected and almost bursting) gallbladder. The invited guest-surgeon extracts the hostile intruder-infection to restore health and, with enough attention to sterility, an always on the verge of hostile ER remains hospitable. She told this story, depleted and just home from work long after dark, to three children who would not go to sleep. Fitting then to take a play about tale-telling, about hosts and guests, about wandering, and about place as the ground upon which we, having considered different stages of becoming dead, look now to burial.

George Peele's 1595 comedic play *The Old Wives' Tale* is a tale of burial. Burial is the hinge by which the kaleidoscopic plots turn and return. Burial, which is an *acting out of passage* whereby the bodies of the living contact and detach from the body of the dead, implicates the subject-object tensions at the heart of this study, the ineffable *this*, ideas of porosity and mixture, percolation, and the *clinamen*. Burial as a gesture, as a landscape of becoming dead, and as a demarcation of place, makes manifest the instabilities of hospitality and hostility. Indeed, burial marks a most intimate and common experience of the hospitality-hostility crisis. Burial allows the body to decompose and to be recomposed, precarious, as the story held in the mouth is composed, decomposes, becomes recomposed.

In *The Old Wives' Tale* relationships are brought into a kind of alignment or conjunction through a sequence of events (including a funeral procession, 470-71, and a peal of bells, 505) culminating in self-interment. The old man at the cross has been reunited with his wife and she no longer "[r]uns madding all enraged about the woods." The brothers have found their stolen sister Delia, who has herself been reunited with her lover Eumenides the Wandering Knight. His friend Jack has just tested Eumenides' constancy by first demanding that he cut Delia in half but then staying his hand at the last minute. The stage directions next indicate that Jack, the character who orchestrates (but almost undoes) these plot resolutions, “leaps down in the ground.” Eumenides speaks first to him and then to the Thessalonians:

> Jack, what art thou gone? Then farewell, Jack.
> Come, brothers and my beauteous Delia,
> Erestus and thy dear Venelia;
> We will to Thessaly with joyful hearts. (881-884)

Eumenides’ first line can be read in a vein of comic confusion or as a straight articulation of grief, but either response--or a hybrid--begs the question of why he is able to turn, to summon his fellow Thessalonians toward home “with joyful hearts.” Their departure returns us to the frame with which the play opened. Old wife Madge has been telling a tale-come-to-life to young pages who were lost in the woods, and it is Madge who explains the tale’s end:

> FANTASTIC: What, gammer, asleep?
>
> MADGE: By the mass, son, ’tis almost day, and my windows shut at the cock’s crow!
>
> FROLIC: Do you hear, gammer? Methinks this Jack bore a great sway amongst them.
>
> MADGE: O, man, this was the ghost of the poor man that they kept such a coil to bury, and that makes him to help the wandering knight so much. But come, let us in. We will have a cup of ale and a toast this morning, and so depart.
>
> FANTASTIC: Then you have made an end of your tale, gammer?
>
> MADGE: Yes, faith. When this was done I took a piece of bread and cheese,

> and came my way, and so shall you too before you go, to your
> breakfast. (886-898)

Jack, Madge tells us, was not alive, but a ghost (and thus his constancy test that of the folkloric "grateful dead"[49]). His "leap[] down in the ground" is a dead man's leap into the grave, concluding the funeral rites begun at the exact midpoint of the play when Eumenides paid for the burial of a stranger also named Jack. In her penultimate lines, Madge unites their identities: friend/partner-Jack is the same as dead/unburied-Jack in the form of ghost-Jack, and ghost-Jack disappears into the ground. Once Jack is buried, the remaining characters, with some confusion perhaps, may all return "with joyful hearts" to Thessaly; the audience and sometime-participants may turn to their breakfast.

The Old Wives' Tale is an immersion into the Websterian fablescape without the tragic frame, which explains the radiant, insistent disposition of the hospitality question throughout.

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[49] Katharine Briggs defines the "grateful dead" in *Anatomy of Puck*: "A type as primitive, of the nature of the lares, is the grateful soul of the man whose body has been saved from indignity, and who comes to life to serve his benefactor. Peele, whose *Old Wives Tale*, is rich in folk-lore, uses this story, which occurs in Grimm, Hans Andersen, and the Irish folk-tale of *The King of Ireland's Son and the Well of the Western World*: and is indeed common through European and Asiatic folk-lore" (130; see also Hook 324-329). However, Jack the ghost is remarkable for drama in the period. As Keith Thomas noted in his foundational work *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, "ghosts were rare in Elizabethan comedy, and not a subject for frivolity before the eighteenth century" (597). More familiar are the ghosts of tragedy.

The play is concerned with networks of social exchange, beginning with Madge and her husband's early welcome to the lost pages--as Frolic says, "And, in faith, sir, unless your hospitality do relieve us, we are like to wander with a sorrowful 'heigh-ho' among the owlets and hobgoblins of the forest," 36-37. Clunch later answers, explaining the dog's bark the pages had heard earlier, "Hark! This is Ball, my dog, that bids you welcome in his own language. Come, take heed for stumbling on the threshold. -- Open door, Madge; take in guests" (49-51). Later, as Madge begins her tale, different and unexpected guests arrive, startling her. "God's me bones!" she says. "Who comes here?" (122). The burial plot, both a narrative trajectory and a literal ground, situates the convergence of concerns about hospitality and hostility, as well as an opening into resolution. Burial as a gesture away from hostility (murder of Sacrapant, near-murder of Delia) into hospitality (welcome into the grave) translates the inner tale (its characters strangers turned a form of guests in Madge's home) to the frame within which Madge has comforted the boys through story and offers them another meal. The grave is the spatio-temporal site where Jack (as ghost) ends and from whence the Thessalonians, Madge, the pages, and we come. Space of absence marked by lines of departure. From the grave toward home. From the grave toward breakfast.

Burial and the Double Law.

By burial I mean contact with and detachment from the dead body, contact and detachment that illuminates the precarious, mutable boundary between the living and dead. Burial is not necessarily the final contact the living have with the dead, but only the final anticipated (or often desired) contact, the one by which we expect stabilizing effects. Other and subsequent forms of contact might be but are not limited to: anthropological (e.g., Thomas

Browne's *Urne Buriall*), practical (the use of ossuaries/charnel houses), religious (prayers/masses for the dead), medical (autopsies, cadavers), punitive (quartering, beheading, etc.), and spectral (ghosts, vampires, zombies, and other forms of "undead"), not to mention the proximity of graves in medieval and early modern churches and churchyards. Bodies were always, literally, under foot. Burial signifies a threshold that in its signification becomes porous and blurred, that is, in fact, a mixture.[50] Burial acknowledges that the body, each body, is itself such a mixture. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes of both the living and the dead:

> The body is the unconscious: seeds of ancestors sequenced in its cells, and mineral salts consumed, and mollusks caressed, broken bits of wood, and worms feasting on its cadaver underground, or else the flame that incinerates it and the ash it yields, epitomizing it in impalpable powder, and the people, plants, and animals whose paths it crosses and with whom it rubs shoulders, and the tales from long-gone nurses, and monuments in ruins covered with lichens, and enormous turbines in factories fabricating extraordinary alloys from which its prosthetic devices will be made, and rough or lisping phonemes, with which its tongue makes spoken noises, and laws engraved on steles, and secret desires for murder or immortality. ("Fifty-eight Indices on the Body" No. 42)

As Nancy revolves in his definition from feasting worms to tales told in the nursery, one way we can imagine this porosity, which is a kind of precarious parataxis, is to consider the boundary between host and guest, between the hospitable and the hostile. This boundary transcends categories of alive or dead, of human, animal, or atom, because it has always been and because it knows no end. Michel Serres writes of the tension between hospitality and hostility in *Rome*: "The uncertainty principle--which causes the law of hospitality to turn into war or which causes, by a sudden miracle, a spectacle between two hostile armies, an implacable enemy to become the husband of the opposing king--the principle of hostility-hospitality, the double law, is at work from the origin, from the beginning, from the collapse of Troy" (119). This double law at work from the beginning--a beginning that is itself a dying--continues into death. The (unrisen) dead body is both host and guest, the site of hospitality and the potential target of hostility, at the mercy of preservation or piss. The dead body hosts worms and parasites; it is a guest closed in the grave. Anointment and burial, gestures of hospitality. Abandoning the unburied, hostile. Lucretius' Athenian dead fill the sanctuaries of the gods; the living fight so their kin can have a place on the flaming pyres (6.1272, 6.1281-86). The ancient dead excavated in England in 1658, vulnerable to misuse or care, are treated to Thomas Browne's anthropological-literary scrutiny.

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[50] In *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England*, Clare Gittings describes the "lack of differentiation between the living and the dead body" (71). See also Sarah Tarlow's *Ritual, Belief, and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (2011).

In Serres, this leads to a discussion of Lucrece and Coriolanus, tragedies of the hospitable host turned upon. In a similar vein, the near-final lines of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1592) offer a procession through the rotations of hospitality-hostility unto and beyond death that haunt the larger play, as Lucius gives instructions for handling the dead:

> Some loving friends convey the emperor hence
> And give him burial in his father's grave.
> My father and Lavinia shall forthwith
> Be closèd in our household's monument.
> As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,

No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weed,
No mournfull bell shall ring her burial;
But throw her forth to beasts and birds to prey.
Her life was beastly and devoid of pity,
And being dead, let birds on her take pity. (5.3.190-99)

This comes, of course, just after the order to leave Aaron buried only halfway in the ground, making burial the very cause of death. We could also turn to *Cymbeline* at the funeral rites of Cloten (and the only temporarily "dead" and disguised Imogen) who though an enemy is given rites concluding with a song of protection:

No exorcisor harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have,
And renowned be thy grave! (4.2.276-281)

These moments illuminate precisely Serres' description of the ever-working doubleness of hospitality and hostility (from pity and quiet consummation to prey and charm/harm), a doubleness that calls into question a claim Serres makes in the second book of his *Foundations* trilogy: "Death makes the relation between subjects and objects stable" (*Statues* 21). We see that fluctuation still remains: even beyond the scope of messianic resurrection, death does not stabilize the uncertainty principle, the inverting possibilities of hospitality-hostility. Instead, while such inversions remain possible, certainty or stability in the relation between subject and object is deferred. The valued dead are hosted within the "father's grave" or the "household's monument." These are the welcome guests whose entry into the home is embraced in death if not in life. But the unwelcome guest is denied entry into the grave/home. Unburied and denied all rites, Tamora must depend upon the hospitality of the birds and beasts, whose hospitality we are meant to understand will never be extended. Thrown forth, the unwelcome guest (subject) becomes food (object) for hostile hosts--her body which previously participated in a hostile meal now hosting their ravenous banquet. Or, thrown forth, the unwelcome dead might haunt, "unlaid"--object turned hostile subject--while the living try to reassure themselves there is no wolf-ghost-guest at the door.

Neither death alone nor burial stabilizes the relationship between subject and object. For in death, as we learn in *Hamlet*, the body may be Yorick's, then only an excavated skull in the dirt, and then recognized again as Yorick.[51] Or consider, for example, American poet Natasha Trethewey's poem "Monument," written after the death of her mother. The speaker conveys a state of burial that is ongoing, becoming and unbecoming, as she watches the work of the ants at her mother's gravesite, where there is no monument:

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[51] Let us note Gittings on the general absence of early modern monuments or grave markers, which we might keep in mind as we think about Madge's revelation that Jack's leap was a leap into the grave: "For the vast majority of burials, the last shovelful of earth, and perhaps the replacement of the turf, was the finishing touch for the grave. Very few graves, particularly in churchyards, had tombstones before the late seventeenth century. The position of a particular grave would only be remembered by close relatives or, as in *Hamlet*, by the gravedigger; it was an exceptional incumbent who bothered to record the location" (143).

how they brought up soil
        of which she will be part,
and piled it before me. Believe me when I say
        I've tried not to begrudge them

their industry, this reminder of what
        I haven't done. Even now,
the mound is a blister on my heart,
        a red and humming swarm. (43:17-24)

Even now the ants are at work in the "soil / of which she will be part": they "emerge and--/ like everything I've forgotten--disappear / into the subterranean--a world / made by displacement" (43:4-7). Guests welcome and unwelcome. Hosts willing or not. Deadness is not stable.

Burial as *Clinamen*.

Without fixity we cling to moments of convergence, points at which--however brief, however tangential--we can adhere one to another, the living to the dead. This is how we might imagine the *clinamen*, the swerve into contact and detachment. In *Corpus*, a philosophical meditation on the body, Nancy uses the *clinamen* to think about the apparition of the dead body occupying a particularized space: "*Clinamen*, a fragile, fractile prose, inclining to accident. Not the body-animal of sense, but the areality of bodies: of bodies indeed, including the dead body. Not the cadaver, where the body disappears, but this body *as the dead one's apparition*, in the final discreteness of its spacing: not the dead body, but the dead one as a body--and there is no other" (53, emphasis in original). Soon after, Nancy describes "corpus" as a cemetery:

> Corpus would be the topo-graphy of the cemetery *whence we come*, which isn't filled with the petrifying medusa-phantasmagoria of Rot. A topography, a photography, of graveyard tranquility, not derisive, simply potent, making room for the community of our bodies, opening the space that is *ours*. Which wouldn't mean writing without sorrow--without anxiety, perhaps, but not without sorrow (or pain), and not without joy. (55, emphasis in original)

Let us extract from these articulations two key words. First, *clinamen*. In the preceding chapter we considered *clinamen* in the context of the fable as the mouth, the point of contact between consumer and consumed, between human and animal, between subject and object. *Clinamen* is the swerve of Lucretian first-bodies "at no fixed place and at no fixed times" (*DRN* 2.292-293), the "inclining to accident" (*Corpus* 53) that results in the collisions of natural production. Serres defines *clinamen* at the core of Lucretian physics as a move within a broader condition of movement: "The minimal angle to laminar flow initiates a turbulence. And from these pockets of turbulence here and there in indefinite times and places, there is one world among many, that of things and of men. . . . The minimal angle of turbulence produces the first spirals here and there. It is literally revolution" (*Hermes* 99-100).

Second, cemetery. In *The Old Wives' Tale*, the cemetery, which would be the churchyard with all its attendant and concurrent uses (as Jack's friends say upon the conclusion of funeral negotiations: "Well, we'll to the church stile and have a pot or so, trill-lill," 507-508), as the landscape of graves marks the contact point, the hinge, the conjunction where the bodies of the living swerve into and away from the bodies of the dead. This is the space-time of partition. Burial becomes bodily contact and severance, parturition inverted. One body (dead, entirely vulnerable) passes through the hands (not womb but still part of the corpus) of other bodies.

Buried and so passing into new forms. Buried and so made separate (if only briefly) from the bodies, from the world, of the living. Not simply *clinamen* and cemetery, but understanding the cemetery as *clinamen* "whence we come," an endpoint and a point of origin, gives us a way to think about burial as a desire within which hospitable geographies converge and overlap. The grave, long linked to eternal rest and so to the bed, more radically connects to that space which forms the centerpiece of hospitality and hospitality's generous respite--the hearth. More than mere likeness, the grave comes from the hearth. The grave is as important as the hearth. The grave returns us to the hearth.

Unburied Nightmare.

The Old Wives' Tale, with its bodies inclining into and out of contact, its play with reality and *simulacra*, has perhaps the most Lucretian orchestration of any text at issue in this project. A confabulation of conjunctions, *The Old Wives' Tale* makes manifest the fact that "every formation is a linking; everything is only relation" (*Hermes* 114). Both *The Old Wives' Tale* and *De rerum natura* conclude with the bodies of the dead in descriptions that may seem different, but which depend upon the funereal *clinamen*. Lucretius concludes Book 6 with a description of Athenian plague ravaging to such an extent that:

> death had filled all the sanctuaries of the gods with lifeless bodies, all the temples of the celestials everywhere remained burdened with corpses, all which places the sacristans had crowded with guests. For indeed now neither the worship of gods nor their power was much regarded: the present grief was too great. Nor did that custom of sepulture remain in the city, with which this nation in the past had been always accustomed to be buried; for the whole nation was in trepidation and dismay, and

> each man in his sorrow buried his own dead as time and circumstances allowed. Sudden need also and poverty persuaded to many dreadful expedients: for they would lay their own kindred amidst loud lamentation upon piles of wood not their own, and would set light to the fire, often brawling with much shedding of blood rather than abandon the bodies. (6.1272-1286)

Whether meant as a critique of non-Epicurean superstitions or not, the cataclysmic world Lucretius describes is one in which there is no spacing, no discretion, no discreteness, not even a guarantee of finality: "bodies half-dead with fainting limbs caked with squalor and covered with rags perishing in filth of body, nothing but skin on their bones, and that almost buried in foul ulcers and dirt" (6.1267-1271). This is becoming dead at its most horrifying, the nightmare of the half-dead, zombie-like, the perishing, the almost-buried, a becoming dead that persists only and always in its state of perpetual physiological process. If the resurrected Christ marks a glorious and infinite reconception of such becoming, then the Lucretian plague (and its early modern echo)--along with the small sadness of a single unburied man named Jack--marks its hellish other.

The horror of an undying state of becoming dead is assuaged through burial, and Lucretius' brawling desperation is mildly re-worked for comedic effect in *The Old Wives' Tale*. In the latter, Erestus tells Eumenides:

> Bestow thy alms, give more than all,
> Till dead men's bones come at thy call.
> Farewell, my son; dream of no rest,
> Till thou repent that thou didst best. (430-433)

Eumenides then falls asleep, as indicated by the subsequent stage directions, "Eumenides awakes." Scholars generally mention his sleep, in passing, as being in opposition to Erestus' prophetic advice (see, e.g., 27 n. 438 Whitworth edition), but I would argue Eumenides does exactly what the old man has directed him to do--and which shows a central concern of the play. When the old man says, "Dream of no rest," he tells Eumenides to sleep and thus to dream *about no rest*, either for the night or for, as here, an unburied eternity.

Eumenides awakens to a dispute between friends of the deceased Jack and the church officials who refuse to bury Jack for lack of funds. Eumenides interrupts their altercation ("Help, help, help! Wiggen sets upon the parish with a pikestaff!"), explaining "[t]his fellow does but the part of a friend, to seek to bury his friend" and asking how much burial would cost (462-463, 494-495). He then gives all the money he has save "one poor three half-pence" to bury the dead man and as he does so "remember[s] the words the old man spake at the cross: 'Bestow all thou hast'--and this is all--'till dead men's bones come at thy call'" (500-503).[52] Jack's subsequently appearing ghost-turned-page, "the Grateful Dead" who is not recognized as such until after his interment, assists Eumenides in his quest to rescue Delia, meanwhile helping free Venelia from her madness and repairing the play's initial points of hostile rupture. Erestus helps Eumenides, who helps Jack, who then helps Eumenides, Erestus, and Venelia. Once Jack leaps into the ground, all are able to return joyfully home.

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[52] Frank Ardolino reads this scene as a critique of Catholic simony, *ANQ*, Winter 2004, Vol. 1, 9-11.While this may be so, burial here is crucially part of a larger concern with hospitality that pervades the play.

The desire of *The Old Wives' Tale* is that the bodies meriting hospitality not be abandoned,[53] that there be with regard to each a "final discreteness of its spacing" through which signifiers are stabilized. The concern, the care--for where to place bodies in space, *for how to give rest*--and the recognition that each seeks its own peaceful rest is there all along.[54] In the beginning such desire means the pages must not wander lost in the wood, but be soothed with story. In its intermediate state, it means Delia must be found, Venelia's madness healed, Lampriscus' daughters matched to would-be husbands, Erestus returned to original form, and everyone allowed to go home. In the end, desire means burial so that no one is left to "lie so long above ground" (441), no one is left uncared for, no one is left with no rest.

Landscape of the Departing.

If burial marks a gestural, and thus figural, boundary between hospitality and hostility, then consider the site of interment--the burial ground--as a visible, spatial one. All funeral-goers have departed, but a gaze (ours, the pages, Madge's) remains briefly upon the grave. Burial is embodied (those who bury, those who are buried) and located (the grave), but the grave after burial is dis-embodied and dis-located, the space of void. It is, as described in Trethewey's poem, “the subterranean--a world / made by displacement.” Words spoken, church bells rung, the cemetery empty of mourners. What does the grave contain? A dead body but not a living soul? When Madge’s characters exit, their departures extinguish presence but not the space of their having-been. What remains is a landscape of the departed who do not cease departing. In *The Ground of the Image*, Nancy describes landscape, which may encompass painting, literature, and music, as a genre not of location but “dis-location,” an “announcement of what is not there,” a place of figural disappearance, which in its translation of absence causes “uncanny estrangement”:

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[53] Merit seems to be based on the character's own hospitality toward others. Sacrapant, the conjurer who stole Delia, caused Venelia's madness, and transformed Erestus into an old man by day and a bear by night, is beheaded and his body presumably abandoned, unburied. It would seem the (false) hospitality Sacrapant showed Delia with the little magic table was insufficient given its basis in hostile actions.

[54] *Hermes* 116.

> Depopulated, the landscape estranges, it renders uncanny: there is no more community, no more civic life, but it is not simply “nature.” It is the land of those who have no land, who are uncanny and estranged, who are not a people, who are at once those who have lost their way and those who contemplate the infinite--perhaps their infinite estrangement.
>
> . . . Uncanny estrangement occurs in the suspension of presence: the imminence of a departure or an arrival, neither good nor evil, only a wide space [*largeur*] and a generosity [*largesse*] that allows this suspension to be thought and to pass. (61)

The landscape of the grave, a depopulated surface--and what is a grave if not an announcement of what is not there?--pushes us outward into the frame of Madge and the boys, toward a different iteration of place. Jack’s self-interment (the ground into which he leaps marking a kind of horizon line, 60) and the other characters’ exit for Thessaly (through the plane of the vertical axis) creates a space of absence, a residue of depopulation, the boundaries of the scene having, in Nancy’s words, *absorbed* or *dissolved* all presences and figures into itself (58). The play-within-the-play of *The Old Wives’ Tale* ends in two directions: down in the ground and to Thessaly, below stage and off stage, forming "two axes of reference and thus of an opening separated by whatever angle they create" (*Ground* 51). Below the stage. Off the stage. What remains *upon the stage* is place dis-located, propelling and yet briefly suspending passage from story into present.

We can understand this dislocation by looking to what comes next--Madge coaxes us forward with language: "But come, let us in. We will have a cup of ale and a toast this morning." *Come, let us in* implies invitation, movement from the outside inward, as if that is where the "us" has been, but she and her audience did not ever leave her comfortable cottage. They did not go to another location from which they now return and so go *in* for breakfast. Rather, the landscape of the tale came to them, invited or not--as a scene, a perspective, a vision emerging when the two brothers first entered, pronouncing their arrival "Upon these chalky cliffs of Albion" and seeking their lost sister Delia (125-129), and then followed by old Erestus at the cross. This does not mean that Madge's words are untrue. If landscape estranges, if it "renders uncanny," then Madge must bring her audience back from displacement with the locating language of welcome--*Come, let us in*. But first, let us return to the place from which we are to come in. The landscape of the grave into which Jack has just stepped offers us the site where hospitality (the hearth) and hostility (the wolf), the "once and the no longer" converge--or, more precisely, where the "pure differential margin" between them exists (Agamben *IH* 80).

In the essay "In Playland: Reflections on History and Play," Agamben discusses the differential margin with regard to the capacity of a child's toy, "playing as much on *diachrony* as *synchrony*" to illuminate "the pure differential margin between the 'once' and the 'no longer'" (80). The toy, a miniaturized version of what once belonged beyond the child's game, is the "*once, no longer*" (80). Agamben then moves from the toy to the funeral: the funeral with its fusion of play and rite transitions between diachrony and synchrony in a mode conceptually analogous to the toy.[55] Agamben argues that death marks a movement from diachronic and synchronic signification to the solely synchronic and imagistic (91). The result is that "[t]he *larva*, the unstable signifier between synchrony and diachrony, is transformed into *lare*, the mask and graven image of the ancestor which, as a stable signifier, guarantees the continuity of the system" (91). This transformation is not automatic--and neither, as we shall see, is it fully possible.

While Agamben argues that the *larva*, the ghost, as the unstable image of the dead is stabilized, memorialized, and made stone through the funeral, I posit what we witness instead is not transformation to stability or synchrony, but only the *desire* for such, which is a desire for resolution in the form of rest.[56] Yet there is much at stake in this desire. It drives the play, and Agamben's link between toys and funerals is relevant to *The Old Wives' Tale* because Madge's tale is told to children and centrally concerns a ghost. The children as audience are the outer ballasts; Jack is the structural/architectural centerpiece--in a play of 898 lines, Jack as unburied dead is first mentioned at line 441 and first named at line 454. He is situated at the play's literal center. Uncannily and mathematically near perfect, the structural position of Jack's burial indicates the play's thematic center. Through the angle, or *clinamen*, Jack's burial is then able to end the wanderings of a wandering knight, a mad wife, and lost pages. Jack's burial returns us to the young pages about to have a meal. Cemetery as *clinamen whence we come*.

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[55] I use "burial" instead of funeral to denote a smaller, more intimate moment within the larger sequence of funereal rites. By burial I mean bodily detachment (partition/parturition) of the living from the dead, detachment that is not, as I have discussed, imporous, absolute, or discrete.

[56] Agamben's argument is not unrelated to Serres' work in *Statues* or to Robert Pogue Harrison's argument in *Dominion of the Dead*, a central tenet of which says of those who have died, "To realize their fate and become truly dead they must first be made to disappear" (1).

Hic Jacet.

We find ourselves in an emptied scene between the tale and the play's frame, between the routes to Thessaly and to the grave. Depopulation becomes suspended parturition demonstrating Nancy's sense of "[a] landscape [as] always the suspension of a passage, and this passage occurs as a separation, an emptying out of the scene or of being: not even a passage from one point to another or from one moment to another, but the step [*le pas*] of the opening itself" (61). Picture, then, the moment of Jack's burial and the others' departure as "the step of the opening itself." Not *to open* or *already opened* but the step of becoming, the doorway. The guest enters through the door. The host welcomes at the door. The wolf waits outside. The fire burns inside.

How then do we understand where we are? Where is "here" and how does Jack's leap into the ground help answer this question? In the chapter entitled "Hic Jacet" of *Dominion of the Dead*, Robert Pogue Harrison productively explains the signifying properties of the grave, which begins to clarify why burial returns us to the frame of Madge's hearth and why Madge must tell us that a burial has indeed occurred:

> [T]he Greek word for 'sign,' *sema*, is also the word for 'grave.' For the Greeks the grave marker was not just one sign among others. It was a sign that signified the source of signification itself, since it 'stood for' what 'stood in'--the ground of burial as such. In its pointing to itself, or to its own mark in the ground, the *sema* effectively opens up the place of the 'here,' giving it that human foundation without

> which there would be no places in nature. For the *sema* points to something present only in and through its sign. Prior to gaining outward reference, its 'here' refers to the place of a disappearance. It is that disappearance--death as such--that opens the horizon of reference in the first place. (20)

Jack's grave is first signified not by speech or by monument but by an act of the body--body as boundary stone. The stage directions (contained in the text's printed quarto) indicate: "Jack leaps down into the ground." Our only sign of the grave is movement into absence--the step into the opening. *Prior to gaining outward reference*, we have only *the place of a disappearance*--"down into the ground." Jack's leap is followed by Eumenides' exclamation, vocalizing the suspension of passage: "Jack, what art thou gone? Then farewell, Jack." It is Jack's disappearance that *opens the horizon of reference*. Madge is then able to explain to her audience (the pages, us) what has happened: "[T]his was the ghost of the poor man they kept such a coil to bury." Her Hegelian "this" enacts its impossibility (the "this" has already disappeared by the time of which it is spoken) and so we turn, as on a hinge, to the hearth: "But come, let us in. We will have a cup of ale and a toast this morning."

Here we might introduce another Greek word. In *Geometry*, Serres describes the Greek noun "Hestia" and through it the connection between the episteme and the hearth:

> *Hestia*, a woman, occupies the center of this static constellation of the Greek dictionary: as commonly used, this proper name signifies a fixed point, the quietude of repose, the hearth, the woman who weaves, next to the fire, like Penelope, the loom, the upright of the loom, then the ship's mast, which stays maximally fixed in

> the great commotion of storms, the colonnade, the axis of the world. . . . The *episteme*, knowledge, comes to Hestia's hearth, the ultimate reference. (58)[57]

Jack's interment, *open[ing] the horizon of reference*, returns us to the hearth, *the ultimate reference*, and it is from the vantage of the hearth that we understand where we were before as we didn't when we were there--at the grave. We come in from the grave although we are already inside. We come to the hearth we have not left. Or, perhaps we do not move from the grave to the hearth after all; perhaps we never entirely leave either. Perhaps both remain--passage, continual.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Hestia* the poet sings, "In your absence / there are no mortal banquets." We could envision breakfast in Madge's cottage as a kind of funeral dinner, the shared meal through which the dead are commemorated and the living cohere as a community.[58] I would posit, however, something more porous: burial itself is a mortal banquet. The consuming body is consumed. Consumed, the body is transformed.

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[57] In the earlier *Statues*, Serres links the etymology of "Hestia" to his larger philosophy of the statue, which he connects to the origins of the word "episteme" as meaning "invariance and stability": "Pillar, rock, bomb, collet, all bear the common noun 'statues' or the proper noun 'Hestia.' These two designations are so alike you can't tell them apart. Together they signify immobility, fixity or invariance, stability. The term 'wandering' finds its reference" (199).

[58] See Houlbrook 264, describing the funeral dinner as "like a last great exercise of hospitable largesse on behalf of the deceased."

“[T]here is no nature but that of compounds.”[59]

In the end, why does burial in *The Old Wives' Tale* return us to Madge's hearth, to breakfast and comfort and the start of a new day? Serres' answer--which is given in response to the question of why plague returns to Athens in *De rerum natura*--reminds us of the Lucretian premise: bodies (*corpora*) and void (*inane*): “*Let us return to the object.* There are only two objects that constitute everything: atoms and the void. The void, *inane*, has its root in the Greek verb *inein*, which means to purge, to expel, or, in the passive, to be chased by a purge. The void is a part of chaos but is also a catharsis” (*Hermes* 123). By its demarcation of the spatial and temporal boundaries of the body, burial translates or calls into visible relief the void through which bodies move and are expelled, a condition that is not fixed being but process, not homeostasis but homeorhesis (74).

Serres writes, in his most distilled invocation of Lucretian dynamism: “For Lucretius, and for us as well, the universe is the global vortex of local vortices” (*Hermes* 117). In this way burial is revolution as the hearth is revolution. We revolve around the horizontal axis of the grave: we go into the earth; we come up from the earth. We revolve around the vertical axis of the hearth: we enter the home or stage; we exit--always inclining a little. As bodies moving through the void, we incline and we come into contact, forming paratactical mixtures. We eat and are eaten; we die and we bury: each the compound of the *clinamen*. Nancy writes in Number 42 of the “Fifty-eight Indices on the Body”: “And everything ends up making a body, down to the *corpus* of dust assembling and dancing a vibrant dance in the thin streak of light where the last day of the world draws to a close” (*Corpus* 156). Everything makes a body and each body moves in space, which is what burial, by making visible the void, allows us to understand. The

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[59] Serres, *Hermes* 113.

Lucretian world that is our world, while turbulent and "globally entropic," is "negatively entropic in certain swirling pockets" (*Hermes* 116). Pockets or folds of order emerge, epistemic and connected--"the network of relations" (124). This may be, as we saw in *Mary Magdalene's Funeral Teares*, a pocket of memory holding time, pleasure, and knowledge. It may be the fable with its structured sets. It may occur in speaking the words of the becoming dead.

To show vividly how Jack's burial turns us toward the hearth, how the grave can move us, albeit briefly, toward communion and understanding, or toward understanding as communion, to see this "network of relations" that is always occurring within a dynamic, moving system, I would like to quote from a recent work that concludes with its own take on burial. *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers* is a 2015 novel in which a widower (a Ted Hughes scholar who is trying to complete a work on Hughes' *Crow* and to raise two young sons in London) is "haunted" not by his dead wife's ghost, but by a huge speaking crow. In the end, after Crow has gone, the very last scene takes us to the morning when Dad and the Boys scatter the ashes of the one who was their wife and mother:

> The ashes stirred and seemed eager so I tilted the tin and I yelled into the wind
> I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU
> and up they went, the sense of a cloud, the failure of clouds, scientifically quick and visually hopeless, a murder of little burnt birds flecked against the grey sky, the grey sea, the white sun, and gone. And the boys were behind me, a tide-wall of laughter and yelling, hugging my legs, tripping and grabbing, leaping, spinning, stumbling, roaring, shrieking and the boys shouted
> I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU I LOVE YOU

> and their voice was the life and song of their mother. Unfinished. Beautiful.
>
> Everything. (114)

Bodies and void. The ashes swirl up, turbulent; the boys swirl up, turbulent. In the changing state, ecstatic, they create and recreate their mother. In the detachment of ashes, their voice is her life. Jack leaps down and the Thessalonians leave, joyful. Ghost-form returns to body and as body allows itself to enter into a universal unmaking and remaking: ashes, cloud, crows, tide, boys. Ghost returns to body, buried, giving us the mortal boundaries of place: "When this was done," Madge says, "I took a piece of bread and cheese and came my way, and so shall you too before you go." Here, a fold or a pocket of negative entropy amidst the endless running of thermodynamic time as it goes toward both disorder and rest (*Hermes* 116). Grave and hearth, coexistent. The stabilizing, synchronizing transformation of the dead remains only and always impossible.

Come, let us in. Echoing Eumenides to the Thessalonians: "Come. . . . We will to Thessaly with joyful hearts," both are inclusive forms of direct address. First-person plural (we, us) invites and so welcomes the second-person collective, opening the self, plural, to include the other, likewise multiple, and by doing so collapsing the host-guest hierarchy continually vulnerable to hostility. Thus, what I have called mixture and precarious parataxis, which is coincidence without subordination, we might also call transubstantiation. As Julia Kristeva asks in "Place Names": "Could trans-substantiation . . . be an indelible theming of this same fold between the 'space' of need (for food and survival) and a symbolic space of designation (of the body proper)"?[60] Here, at the "limits of corporeal identity," is the fold wherein we find the hearth

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[60] *DiL* 291.

(the space of the living) and the grave (the space of the dead) only to learn the dead too gather at the hearth, the living stand by the grave.

Light Perpetual.

Stars glowed in the December night, their past lives illuminating passage, their present astral dust mixing with the damp soil of which my mother would become a part. These were the lights by which she was buried and beneath which we returned home. Returning home, we would eat. We would drink. We would tell tales.

Come, let us in.

Conclusion: Duration of Care

Iphigenia’s unbinding from her mother. Mary’s turn from Jesus. The Duchess’ familial rupture held briefly by the mouths of beasts. Jack’s burial. What is it I seek to say in presenting these scenes of detachment?

That they are processual and ongoing--thus, not simply “detachment,” but the continuous imperfect, *detaching*. That this detaching unfolds through time, immanent over a duration marking not chronology but topology: there are folds, currents and recurrence, recollections, breaks, clumps, slight eddies, strong ones. A rhythm. That this detaching occurs in felt space, which we might call a place, which we might call here. That this detaching, which begins with the *clinamen*’s minimal angle of inclination, is vectored and, as such, is a departing.

That each scene wherein we witness and so can chart the detaching, which is a departing, of one body from another tells us that prior to this process, there came a convergence, a conjunction. Bodies in some form--voice, gesture, breath, touch, tear--inclined, declined, swerved, connected. This is connection that detaching does not disavow or altogether undo, but only calls our attention to, percolating sometimes above the thresholds of perception.

Becoming dead is a detaching after convergence.

Becoming dead is a detaching, ongoing, after convergence, continual, which keeps asymptotic the movement from going into gone.

In the midst of a book of American photographer Sally Mann’s largely black or sepia and white photographs--collected for the occasion of an exhibition at the Getty Center in Los Angeles--comes one (not part of the Getty exhibit) entitled, “Daddy Dead on the Couch.” The body that fills the space of the photograph lies as if asleep on the sofa, the sofa's deep, red-lined velvet just a shade more muted than his thin cotton bathrobe and both gradations of drying blood. Light brightens the upper half of the face turned toward the camera. It's a gentle light that touches (is touched by?) the skin as if the skin is still warm and soft. The right edge of the mouth pulls downward. Arms at his sides. One wrist is tied with small flowers and others are placed at his bathrobe lapel like a boutonniere. Under the right tricep, a bit of plastic sticks out that, along with the towel folded under the lower body, may be there to catch bodily fluids before they seep into the couch fabric.

Daddy Dead on the Couch: a man past dying who is yet, as a body photographed, still present. The dead object (*that*) is coterminous with the subject (*he, you, I*) and so not localized elsewhere, in de Certeau's words, but proximate, intimate. *Here lies*, we might say. *Here is*. Or, *this*. The photograph of a dead body taken by a living body dilates time so that the man, called Daddy, who was dead on the couch, remains: Daddy dead on the couch. The photograph of the dead is both *what has been*, in Barthes' words, and what *is*. Or returning to Spenser's Lucretian garden with which I began this project, we see that the photograph's collective of eye, finger, and mechanical movement of light converts the departing:

> "All things from thence doe their first being fetch,
> And borrow matter, whereof they are made,
> Which whenas forme and feature it does ketch,
> Becomes a body" (*TFQ*, III.vi.37.1-4).

We can see in the photograph a duration of care--subject/object *cared for* in the image we *care for*, depicting a progressive state of *caring for*--through a place that is a dead body, that is the space of the dead body and the space of our bodies coming and going, among the dead, among ourselves, even as the dead enter us. As Kristeva writes of Hans Holbein's painting *Dead Christ*, "[o]ur eyes having been filled with such a vision of the invisible," we are invited into "a living tomb, to participate in the painted death and thus include it in our own life, in order to live with it and make it live" (138, 113). Perceiving the image becomes the image itself, the body itself, as for Blanchot, *the reading of the poem is the poem itself*.

Thus transformed and transforming, the space of the body we enter takes "its place in us (others), as in the cavernous recesses in which it will carry on its rumination" (Nancy, *Ground* 107). Through these cavernous recesses, through the black box, the cave, past the grave and the hearth and the wolf, we return, not unchanged, to the cattle grazing upon the meadow. Rumination, recurrent thought, *ruminato*.

Each step a wandering that makes and unmakes. Some old roads, some new.

Carefully balancing in my lap an open book on the verso side of which folded leaf lies a photograph, not original but duplicated, of a dead body cared for in its laying out and cared for still and so slowing down, with care, diachrony, is to experience its becoming.

We try to hold the dying still. We try to hold the dead, still.

Becoming dead is the continuous, incomplete detaching of a body from the continual conjunctions by which that body was and keeps being known as all bodies move through and carry within them space.

We can't pause the movement. We can't say *this*. But we try.

Coda: Recollection

"Time moves forward by returning, like a helix,

along a line of origin. This latter is not a point; it is a generatrix.

- Michel Serres, *Rome* (220)

Morning, the NG tube that will aspirate
The fluids and air not leaving your gut
Is a welcome comfort source. You're sedate.
But when dark comes, the wolves of midnight strut

And stalk the forest of this confusèd room
Outside of which you think runs the road
You followed into labor, your womb
Carrying children, you a patient load.

How to convince you that the hostile guest
Is not? *Hush, hush now, leave it be*, I croon,
But you won't be susurrated into rest.
Thick night chokes words intangible as the moon.

I can't translate, can only hold your slight
frame, window becoming the borders of light.

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