Trauma and Hauntology in Shakespeare's Early History Plays

Linhan Gan

Submitted in Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Studies

Durham University

2022

Contents

Declaration

This thesis is solely the work of the author, Linhan Gan, under the supervisions of Professor Patrick Gray and Professor Barry Sheils.

STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

Acknowledgement

First and foremost I am extremely grateful to my supervisors, Prof Patrick Gray and Prof Barry Sheils for their dedicated support and invaluable advice during my PhD study. Patrick continuously provided encouragement and was enthusiastic to assist in any way he could throughout the project. His immense knowledge in Shakespeare was priceless in shaping my research. Barry was continuously willing to discuss my ideas regarding their wider implications beyond the scope of trauma theory *per se*. Without his remarkable perception of trauma theory and deconstruction, this work could not have gained the profundity that it now has.

I would like to thank Prof Barbara Ravelhofer. It was her kind support that encouraged me to pursue my research at Durham University. I would also like to thank my thesis committee: Pro Barbara Ravelhofer, for kindly consenting to chairing my viva; Pro Patricia A. Cahill and Dr Fraser Riddell, for their encouragement and insightful comments, as well as their thought-provoking questions.

My special and immeasurable gratitude go to my families: my grandparents, my parents, my wife, and my aunts. Without their tremendous understanding, unwavering support, and unfaltering faith, it would be impossible for me to complete this odyssey.

Dedication

In loving memory of my grandma. I will always miss you.

Abstract

In his first tetralogy and *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare delineates two opposing views on historiography, manifesting not only a redemptive understanding of history foregrounding a traditional sense of historical restitution, but also an amoral Machiavellian vision featuring the synergy between fortune and *virtu*. Neither approach, however, sufficiently explains the persistent manifestations of historically unresolved trauma that Shakespeare accentuates in these plays. This thesis argues that there is a prescient re-conceptualisation of historiography in those plays that could be described as traumatography, in which historical aberrations doggedly unsettle the more familiar conventions of linear narrative. In keeping with the Augustinian pessimism, Shakespeare suggests trauma can reside within. Skepticism about the state of an uninterpreted social cohesion haunts his hope for a shared recovery from past cultural trauma.

Chapter one reads Clarence as a victim of war trauma and establishes a framework to understand how a historical violence belatedly besieges a subjectivity. Chapter two examines the cultural and socio-political forces that cause a revision of primal violence. By producing a disconnect between the past and the present, this effect of superimposition plants trauma at the heart of historical transmission. Chapter three examines Shakespeare's reflection on trans-historical trauma in the first tetralogy. It argues that Shakespeare stages a skepticism about mankind's moral capability, a skepticism in keeping with the pessimistic view of human nature salient in Western culture. Chapter four proposes that Shakespeare presents a prescient vision of the Freudian pessimism about civilisation. For Shakespeare, civilisation seems incapable of working through the possibility of social disintegration. Chapter five argues that

the intense military culture in *1 Henry VI* paradoxically inaugurates a future in *Richard III* of the ghostly and the immaterial. Chapter six examines the fetishisation of historical trauma and the victimisation of the other in *Titus Andronicus*.

Introduction

In his earliest Roman play, *Titus Andronicus,* as well as his first tetralogy of English history plays, Shakespeare incorporates two opposing Tudor perspectives on historiography, invoking not only a traditional sense of natural law and divine providence, but also Machiavelli's very different vision of the amoral interplay of fortune and *virtù*. Neither approach to history adequately captures, however, the disruptive manifestations of historically unassimilated trauma that Shakespeare emphasises in these plays and that gives them their distinctive character, including not only pervasive, extraordinary violence but also the recurrent displacement of the verbal by the physical, as well as the repeated appearance of inopportune ghosts both literal and figurative. Through moments of historiographical rupture, Shakespeare offers an account of Roman as well as English history in which causality itself deteriorates into illegibility. Trauma theory, tempered by Derrida's reflections on what he calls 'hauntology', provides a conceptual framework for articulating a new and disconcerting element in Shakespeare's initial representation of pagan Roman and medieval English history: a prescient re-imagining of historiography itself that could be described as traumatography, in which unexpected yet momentous historical change derails the more familiar conventions of linear narrative. Social fragmentation such as the English Wars of the Roses leads to abiding trauma that subsequent representation may not in the end work through. Theorists tend to think of trauma as moving from the outside in: first external, then internalised. In these plays, however, in keeping with an Augustinian sense of human nature as fallen, Shakespeare suggests that trauma is embedded in the self. Pessimism about the possibility of sustained

social cohesion haunts his hopes for successful shared recovery from past cultural trauma.

1. Trauma vs. forgetting: a theoretical contention.

For the past three decades, the study of memory within Shakespeare's history plays has been gone back and forth between drawing on trauma theory and instead emphasizing the importance of forgetting. Building on Cathy Caruth's more general conclusions in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Patricia Cahill's *Unto the Breach*, one of the most important such works to date, turns more specifically to trauma culture in early modern England. In keeping with what Judith Herman calls the 'central dialectic of psychological trauma': 'the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud', *Unto the Breach* explores the 'complexities of a historical moment when martial performances might, at the very same time, suggest both the ordered rule of war and the unruliness of trauma'.[1] The Elizabethan era witnessed the rise of the early modern military science. The birth of modern warfare, coupled with the tense atmosphere of militarisation, demanded a new understanding of war in terms of 'rationality and abstraction'.[2]

In the first part, Cahill explores 'how specific plays are implicated in the era's new discourses of measurement […] (and) how they register the imprint of militarization

---

[1] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), p. 1; Patricia Cahill, *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 2.

[2] Cahill, p. 3.

on individual bodies'.[3] In response to the rise of 'military science […] as a modern discipline', war plays staged the ' "new order of warre" ', revealed through their 'preoccupation with disciplined multitudes, impressed common men, and regulated population'.[4] In doing so, these plays helped circulate the latest military knowledge and 'shape the cultural imaginary'.[5] The Elizabethan martial repertory reveals a community, by this light, that struggled to subject itself to emerging 'disciplinary regimes'.[6]

The martial plays' 'seemingly straightforward depictions of early modernity', as Cahill points out, are troubled, however, by unresolved trauma.[7] If those martial plays perform discipline and order, they also simultaneously stage incomprehensibility and confusion: 'representing a world in which bodies are uncanny and time and space are out of joint', they expose the 'collective sense of disorientation' as a result of the age's intense engagement with war.[8] Drawing on psychoanalytical theories developed by Freud, Cathy Caruth, Dominick Lacapra, and Dori Laub, Cahill reveals an early modern England struggling under the shadow of unassimilated traumatic encounter. As the author's meticulous reading of *The Trial of Chivalry*, *A Larum for London*, and *Richard III* shows, battlefield experience, due to its overwhelmingly catastrophic nature, can persist long after the end of the war.

---

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 3, 18.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

The ways by which the trauma belatedly influences the victim's life are legion: the 'staging of repetitive images' of injury; the survival of a wounded body; and the dramatisation of breached spatio-temporality, as the ' "deferred action" of warfare', suggests the Elizabethan community's engagement with trauma by 'acting them out'.[9] While 'the measured movements and martial formations that distinguish the Elizabethan staging of war suggest an embrace of modern rationalities', Cahill concludes, one must also be aware of the martial plays' capacity for helping contemporary society confront 'traumatic modernity'.[10]

In ' "Shame and Eternal Shame": The Dynamics of Historical Trauma in Shakespeare's First Tetralogy', Laurie Ellinghausen explores trauma's haunting effect in Shakespeare's early history plays. Rather than focusing on any 'particular incident', however, Ellinghausen investigates the relation between recognition and trauma.[11] For the characters she examines, trauma is not a result of an overwhelming event of a life-threatening death encounter, 'but rather stems from a sense of the self's absence, brought on by the failure of others to properly recognize and thus validate the victim in the terms of his own ethos'.[12] What begets trauma, in other words, is the dwindling of the ego, a wound inflicted on the characters' narcissism by the lack of a proper recognition from the outside world.

---

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 201, 216.

[10] Cahill, p. 220.

[11] Laurie Ellinghausen, ' "Shame and Eternal Shame" : The Dynamics of Historical Trauma in Shakespeare's First Tetralogy', *Exemplaria*, 20 (2008), 264-282 (p. 267).

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

Drawing on Ewan Fernie's study *Shame in Shakespeare*, Ellinghausen argues that scenes of shaming pervades the first tetralogy. Both the dramatisation of 'the loss of one's ability to self-present', a kind of 'failed recognition' characterised by being 'seen as something other than one's heroic self', and the depiction of departure, which is shown in Eleanor's shameful exile, Suffolk's 'banishment and execution', and Margaret's banishment, tend to produce trauma.[13]

The essay also addresses the question of transgenerational trauma. Can one work through the wound that the ' "breach" that challenges a character's sense of self' inflicts?[14] Ellinghausen, it seems, adopts a pessimistic view. Given that departure causes trauma and shame, one tends to experience the blow to his narcissism in such a way that the trauma, acting itself out, haunts a community belatedly in a repetitive cycle that sees no ending. Building on Freud's theory of trauma's latency in *Moses and Monotheism*, Ellinghausen proposes that collective psychology, like the individual psyche, is characterised by trauma's incomprehensibility.

England's traumatic memory of its 'loss of France and the dissolution into factionalism' in the late medieval period did not pass away with the passing on of history, but instead returned belatedly in the Elizabethan era to haunt contemporary culture, and in particular the commercial theater: 'periods of peace become mere markers of unrecognized trauma---aftereffects of war, invasion, and capture'.[15] In spite of the attempt of the 'heroic narrative in the first tetralogy […] to manage the return of the repressed', trauma manifests itself by staging 'the recurrence of shame

---

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

wrought by failed recognition'.[16] Shot through by 'fissures' and stutters, the first tetralogy 'offers a view of history that troubles the heroic narrative it purports to offer'.[17]

Ellinghausen also takes up what Kai Erikson calls trauma's 'centripetal' force. According to Erikson, trauma can draw people together: the experience of being traumatised can 'become a kind of calling, a status, where people are drawn to others similarly marked'.[18] In keeping with Erikson's view, Ellinghausen argues that Shakespeare's history plays do not regard trauma as something that 'isolate[s]', but instead as generating 'a relationship of interdependency that creates history through a continual cycle of shaming tactics'.[19] History, she concludes, 'captures the inscrutable yet inescapable way that subjects and realms participate in one another's trauma'.[20]

Emerging alongside trauma theory, and in some tension with its premises and conclusions, the study of forgetting in Shakespeare's history plays argues that memory is not absolute and self-sufficient but instead can be better understood as subject to external manipulation. As Christopher Ivic argues in *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe's Legacies*, 'memory is not a totalizing

---

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

[18] Kai Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp.183-99 (p. 186).

[19] Ellinghausen, pp. 264-282 (p. 279)

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

field, and forgetting is neither the outside nor a lack within such an idealized field'.[21] Forgetting, then, amounts to a cultural phenomenon that dwells within memory and often works with remembering. With '[I]ts relationship to and circumscription [overriding] its traditional subordination to memory', forgetting occupies a much more important space in the early modern England, acting as 'the silent yet active partner of memory in the social sphere'.[22]

Among the numerous 'vital and complex cultural work[s]' that forgetting performs, for Ivic, it plays a 'constitutive role'.[23] Taking up Renan's and Benedict Anderson's discussions of the ' "construction of national genealogies" ', Ivic argues that the formation of national identity involves active collaboration between remembering and forgetting: '[r]ather than simply obstructing remembrance', forgetting 'is bound up with memory'.[24] Adopting John Speed's *Description of the Ciuill Warres of England* by as an analogue, Ivic argues that Shakespeare, in his depiction of the Wars of the Roses in *1 Henry IV*, intentionally elides the 'sense of the sharp geographic and political divisions that clearly rent England' in the late medieval period by

---

[21] Grant Williams and Christopher Ivic, 'Sites of forgetting in early modern English literature and culture', in *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe's Legacy*, ed. by Christopher Ivic and Grant Williams (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-17 (p. 1).

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[24] Christopher Ivic, 'Reassuring Fratricide in *1 Henry VI*', in *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe's Legacy*, (see Williams and Ivic, above), pp. 99-109 (pp. 99-100).

'appropriating the narrative material that sustained royalist propaganda for the purposes of rewriting narratives of the nation'.[25]

Thanks to political revision, England's traumatic history, rather than being remembered as contentions between aristocratic families in a land divided by feudal interests and 'Anglo-Scottish-Welsh' identities, came to be perceived as 'civil wars' between siblings fought in a larger context of a nascent unified Englishness.[26] The play's act of remembering the Wars of the Roses presupposes a retrospective remaking of that divided feudal past into a unified history. An active and purposeful forgetting of the unbrotherly aspect of the wars becomes, therefore, the very prerequisite for the representation of 'early modern English identities'.[27] Although Ivic's analysis of the play shows Elizabethan commercial theatre's participation in the shaping of national identity, it does not necessarily follow, as Ivic himself points out, that 'practices of memory/forgetting' are monopolised by a contemporary hegemonic cultural authority.[28] Some acts of forgetting that the Elizabethan theatrical stage perform are 'often in opposition to [certainly complicating] official memory'.[29]

In *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama*, Garrett A. Sullivan explores the formative role that forgetting plays in the English Renaissance culture. Sullivan questions of the assumption set out in most early modern discussions of memory that forgetting is a form of privation: a lethal and erosive force which

---

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[26] *Ibid.*, p .101.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

ransacks the ‘ “treasure house” ’ of our being and renders history mute.[30] Forgetting, he argues, does not simply denote an inability to remember, but instead can be better understood as potentially productive. Remodeling subjectivity, forgetting challenges what the dominant discourse considers ‘normative models for behavior’.[31]

Sullivan’s foremost aim in this project then, is to bring forgetting in from the margins of early modern discussions of identity. Forgetting, he argues, plays a generative role. Rather than amounting to a state of privation or negativity, it ‘has a content’, which presents itself somatically.[32] In various religious and medical discourses, the ‘forgetful body’ is depicted as ‘idle and unregulated’.[33] Forgetting, therefore, can be said to gain a shape in ‘bodily dispositions and humoral excesses’.[34]

Pathologising forgetting might seem to corroborate the traditional interpretation of forgetting as a form of unwanted erosion, a dangerous exteriority to be kept at bay from the realm of memory. As Sullivan admits, forgetting, in terms of self-conceptualisation, does tend to produce a crisis of identity. But this kind of crisis is also an opportunity: ‘[s]elf forgetting is a violence done to the self that reconstitutes self’.[35] Self-forgetting enables characters, in other words, to rid themselves of their older selves, to dismantle the mansion of the rational or proper selfhood prescribed by

---

[30] Garrett A. Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 29.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

the dominant ideology. In doing so, they can find a 'new heaven and a new earth', meaning in this case new forms of self-identity.

In his reading of plays by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Webster, Sullivan discerns a variety of distinct subjectivities produced by religious as ' "erotic' self-forgetting" '.[36] Although not necessarily sanctioned 'by secular and ecclesiastical authorities', these new forms of selfhood render possible exploration of 'the relationship between identity and subjectivity'.[37] By experimenting with forgetting, characters attain new forms of self-knowledge, manifest in, for example, the formation of Bertram's 'unchaste composition', the rise of ' "European man" ' in Dr. Faustus, and the awakening of Antony's hedonic self in stark contrast to his previous Roman identity, as well as the crafting of the Duchess of Malfi's desiring self and the 'self-alienation' of her brother Ferdinand.[38]

While Sullivan's work focuses on the role of forgetting in shaping individual's self-identity, Jonathan Baldo's essay 'Wars of Memory in Henry V' pays more attention to national amnesia. Much as individual self-oblivion generates new selves, collective forgetting, Baldo demonstrates, lays the basis for the formation of England's national identity in the early modern period, 'a period of shifting definition for England'.[39] Through the management of state power, he argues, the central authority not only tries to influence the outcome of every significant historical event

---

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 135

[38] *Ibid.*, 119.

[39] Jonathan Baldo, 'Wars of Memory in Henry V', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (1996), 132-159 (p. 133).

but also attempts to revise the event according to the way it wants the event to be remembered by the masses. Memory, then, is not something inflexible and definitive. Under the influence of political expediency, memory turns out to be a contested site subject to amelioration.

Remembering plays a far less significant role in collective memory, however. For the dominant ideology, remembering in the face of traumatic events usually breeds trouble, insofar as it exposes the inadequacy of the present. Forgetting, by contrast, can help the authority 'get away with […] a great deal, suppressing any public memory that might challenge it, so long as it wears the cloak of remembrance'.[40] *Henry V*, for instance, eulogises the English army's momentous victory over the French force at the Battle of Agincourt and presents Henry V himself as a ideal warrior king. For Baldo, this kind of memorialisation is a flimsy veneer that helps hide the workings of forgetting from public view. *Henry V*, in other words, promotes forgetting rather than remembering. It is a play that demonstrates how the hegemonic discourse choreographs the way in which the national past is supposed to be remembered and the concomitant advantages of such manoeuvring: '[t]he play quietly subverts Henry's rhetoric of remembrance by building a case for Henry and his nation's debt for forgetting'.[41] The so-called national memory dramatised in *Henry V* is the fruit of tendentious selectivity: 'the product of cunning and artful manipulation practiced by monarchs, conquerors, and colonizers against dissidents, the vanquished, and the colonized'.[42]

---

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 144.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Isabel Karremann's *The Drama of Memory in Shakespeare's History Plays* arrives at similar conclusions. Like Sullivan and Baldo, Karremann believes that forgetting is not a passive process that stands diametrically opposed to remembering. What we call memory or historical truth demands the active presence of forgetting in the continuous process of its 'reconstruction'.[43] For example, as Karremann shows in her analysis of Falstaff, self-forgetfulness does not produce a simple 'loss of identity' but instead an endless chain of subjectivities, enabling one 'to adopt social roles or poses at will'.[44] In the case of collective identity, forgetting figures prominently in statecraft in the form of 'distraction', helping legitimatize sovereignty and promote national unity.[45] Turning to 'stagecraft', Karreman also argues that 'theatrical practices' in Shakespeare's history plays reconstruct collective memory in retrospect.[46] After being repetitively recalled, erased, and rewritten, memory acquires 'a palimpsest of meanings' along the way to becoming the so-called official history Elizabethan theatergoers come to find familiar.[47]

Key to understanding such retrospective rewriting of history is a pair of concepts that Renate Lachmann proposes: ' "designification" ' and ' "resignification" '.[48] For Lachmann, neither ideas nor cultural symbols ever really die. A symbol that loses its original significance in a new social context is not simply dismissed as obsolete. It is

---

[43] Isabel Karremann, *The Drama of Memory in Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 8.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

forgotten only to the extent that the meaning it previously carried is discarded. In keeping with this kind of 'designification', the act of iconoclasm, as Karremann argues, does not amount to an absolute erasure but only represents a remaking of a particular symbol, a 'resignification'.[49] The cultural symbol acquires a new significance that comports with the contemporary culture. Through this process, theatre shapes 'the semiotic and hence also the mnemonic economy of Elizabethan culture'.[50]

Shakespeare's early history plays, however, Karremann cautions, do not simply serve the whims of the dominant ideology. While helping promote cultural forgetting, they can also be critical of the way in which memory is re-worked. Either through a 'contrapuntal sequencing and framing' of a series of 'interspersed scenes and figures', or through an examination of 'the affecting spectacle of nostalgia', they establish 'a locus for important counter-memories' and reminds the Elizabethan theater-goers that 'not all is true that can be seen on stage'.[51]

2. Traumaphobia and the insufficiency of forgetting.

By assigning forgetting a formative role, studies of memory in Shakespeare's history play in some respects try to distance themselves from trauma theory. Williams and Ivic, for instance, observe that 'locating cultural forgetting (is not) synonymous with examining the passage from psychic pain to full remembering'.[52] Sullivan presents

---

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

[52] Williams and Ivic, pp. 1-17 (p. 3).

his take on self-forgetting as a view which differs from the psychoanalytical approach. Rather than being a form of 'repression […] a symptom of a foundational trauma or unconscious desire', forgetting, he argues, is 'a discursive presence in its own right'.[53] In a word, it seems that to place oneself diametrically opposed to trauma study, and, indeed, to the theory of psychoanalysis, has become a common disclaimer.

This unease with trauma theory is worth calling into question. Embracing forgetting as a generative force runs the risk of subjecting the historically repressed to further suppression. Although these scholars are quick to insist that forgetting does not necessarily serve the interests of the dominant discourse, in most cases it is the ruling ideology that exploits forgetting and manipulates public memory: 'it is the victor who writes the history and counts the dead', as Sir William Butler writes.[54] Compared to what we know now of the historical record, Shakespeare's *Richard III*, for instance, vividly reveals the limitation of forgetting and the importance of dealing with historically marginalised material.

Wakened by the nightmare of a ghostly visitation on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth, Richard finds himself forced to introspect.

KING RICHARD:

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,

And every tongue brings in a several tale,

And every tale condemns me for a villain.

[…]

---

[53] Sullivan, p. 21.

[54] Sir William Francis Butler, *Charles George Gordon*, (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 6.

There is no creature loves me,

And if I die, no soul shall pity me.

[….]

Methought the souls of all that I had murdered

Came to my tent, and every one did threat

Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.[55]

The speech reveals a dramatic villain who, after the consummation of his ambition, is belatedly besieged by moral accusations with which his conscience makes against him. The speech also counterpoises the future with the past, the possibility with the certainty.Richard conjures up in his imagination a possibly miserable posterity in which his name will be hated. Killed on the battlefield, deserted by all the world, no one will remember him with sympathy.

In making such a prediction, Shakespeare's Richard departs, however, from the historical record. Although officially condemned as an arch-villain by the Tudors, Richard in his own time was respected and, even after his death, fondly remembered by his subjects. As the news of his defeat in the Battle of Bosworth spread across the country, the citizens of York, for instance, received it with 'unprecedented outpouring of grief'.[56] The citizen's lynching of Northumberland, the man who remained inactive and failed to show up with his army for Richard on the battle, during a tax revolt in April 1489 clearly demonstrates that the English people's respect for the memory of their late king was far from ephemeral.

---

[55] William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. by James R. Simeon (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2009), V. 3. 193-95, 200-01, 204-06.

[56] Michael Jones, *Bosworth: 1485* (London: John Murray, 2014), p. 203.

The image of a Richard unpopular during his lifetime and spurned by the public after his death is a myth that the Tudors cultivated after the Battle of Bosworth. In saying, therefore, that 'no soul shall pity me', therefore, the dramatic Richard forgets or at least, diverges from, the historical record, falling into the trap of the memory game played by the central authority.[57] Rather than being 'constant as the northern star', public memory proves amenable here to manipulation by the hegemonic discourse. As David Lowenthal observes, in this process of re-formation of public memory, forgetting plays an active and formative role: 'deliberate, purposeful, and regulated', it makes 'astute judgement about what to keep and what to let go, to salvage or to shred or shelve, to memorialize or anathematize'[58]. In the case of public memory in Shakespeare's own lifetime, it is on the very basis of the Tudor erasure of a much respected Richard is replaced by the legend that the last Yorkist king was hated and despised.

Like the Tudor authorities who created his persona, the dramatic villain in *Richard III* is a master manipulator,uses the power of forgetting to draw public memory over to his side. In order to reach the crown, Shakespeare's Richard III transgresses all kinds of moral and social rules. He does so, however, in such a way that his transgressions remain unknown to the public sphere. Even if they happen to be revealed, Richard uses various means to suppress the news, either designating such revelations insignificant unofficial hearsay or subjecting them to supersession, through which he retroactively re-inscribes the primal memory. He re-interprets his murdering of Prince Edward and of Henry VI, for instance, as acts of love, prompted

---

[57] *Richard III*, V. 3. 201.

[58] *The Art of Forgetting*, ed. by Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. xi.

by Anne's beauty and her heavenly face. Intercepted by his victims, he bids his followers to drown out their accusations:

KING RICHARD

A flourish, trumpets! Strike alarum, drums!
Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women
Rail on the Lords' anointed. Strike, I say![59]

As an authority, Shakespeare's Richard III is deeply aware of the benefits of forgetting. As Richard's unnatural birth, born with teeth and coming to the world with head forward, presages, he is always eager to run ahead of time and more concerned with forthcoming possibilities than with past certainties. For Richard, then, oblivion, rather than being obstructive, is immensely generative, capable of producing a wide range of fruitful possibilities in a way that remembering cannot. In pursuing royal power, he adopts another shape, pretending to be a holy saint deeply immersed in his ecclesiastic meditations, for it is only by temporarily casting away his identity as an unscrupulous pretender to the throne and lulling himself to 'the mildness of […] sleepy thoughts' that he can bring his cause 'to a happy issue'.[60]

Forgetting, again, is his strategy when he tries to woo Queen Elizabeth's daughter. 'Plead what I will be, not what I have been. | Not my deserts, but what I will have'.[61] To the sad and bereaved mother, he gives the same prescription, asking her to forget his killing of her two sons: to cast 'the sad remembrance of those wrongs' in the Lethe,

---

[59] *Richard III*, IV. 4. 149-51.

[60] *Ibid.*, III. 7. 122, 53.

[61] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 414-15.

and to imagine those previous crimes as things done in necessity.[62] Although ill-advised and imprudent, that is, they contribute not only to the prosperity of the kingdom but also to a greater gain of Queen Elizabeth herself, since, as Richard slyly suggests, for the loss of her kingly son she will be handsomely compensated: her daughter will be made a queen, and there will be a king (meaning Richard himself) calling her mother and her son Dorset brother.

Memory can be resistant to external manipulation, however. In spite of Richard's attempts to rewrite or repress history, past wounds cry for vengeance and refuse to remain silent. Forgetting can help Richard delay, but not actually avert, retribution. His power, then, wanes as the limitation of forgetting is gradually exposed. When Buckingham comes to ask Richard to remember the past, claiming his 'earldom of Hereford and the moveable', Richard, as is his wont, tries to forget the unfulfilled promise by contemplating the future possibilities.[63] This time, however, his strategy fails to work; in spite of his attempt to divert Buckingham's attention, he is nonetheless dragged back to the past: reminded of the personal trauma that he, on his way to reach the golden crown, has been attempting to forget. He is forced to remember the unhappy incidents. According to prophecy, Richmond would be king and he would 'not live long' after he sees Richmond.[64]

In terms of Richard's own individual trauma, the historically repressed, represented by the vengeful souls' heavy curses and Richard's discovery of his conscience, emerge on the eve of his confrontation with Richmond. Public forgetting is not the panacea. No matter how hard he tries to suppress history and manipulate memory, the

---

[62] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 252.

[63] *Ibid.*, IV. 2. 89.

[64] *Ibid.*, IV. 2. 105.

past does return and 'summon up remembrance of things past'. Conscience, as it turns out, is not 'a word that cowards | Devised at first to keep the strong in awes.'[65] Richard is so frightened by the self-discovery of his vulnerability to retribution for his past wrongdoing that he even strays in imagination into the possibility of his death in the forthcoming battle, a thought that has never occurred to him for a single moment theretofore in his whole villainous career. Richard is weighed down by his eager embracing of forgetting and deliberate ignoring of the unrelenting nature of the past trauma. To highlight the productivity of oblivion, then, appears dubious, as it fails to register Richard's downfall and the nature of the ghosts that haunt the play. Rather than leading to an erasure of the past, a revision of trauma can only delay such ghosts' return. One must, therefore, try to recover the historically forgotten and learn to listen to the voice of the unassimilated.

3. Trauma: the historical wound and the structural insufficiency.

The study seeks to redress an imbalance, then, in the study of memory in Shakespeare's plays, which in recent years has been concentrated intently on reimagining forgetting as a generative force. An extensive investigation of Shakespeare's early history plays through the lens of trauma theory, by contrast, is still wanting. Although few would contend that the first tetralogy is a trauma narrative, as Cahill points out, 'we have yet to find a way of articulating the powerful psychic breaches that these martial texts represent'.[66] This study, then, tries to fill this gap. Arguing that Shakespeare's first tetralogy and first Roman play, *Titus Andronicus*, are

---

[65] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 309-10.

[66] Cahill, p. 210.

in many respects haunted by the unassimilated historical trauma, it explores here how these plays address historically unintegrated wounds. Tolling the knell for England's medieval past, the Wars of the Roses ushered in what was for England the beginning of modernity. Many of those living under the rule of the Tudors, however, were still troubled by the memory of the first major civil war in England's history. As Trevor Royle observes, it 'passed into the national consciousness as a byword for calamity'. Both common soldiers and the nobility suffered extraordinary losses; the conflict, as Royle explains, 'accounted for the violent deaths of three kings, two Princes of Wales, eight royal dukes and countless more members of the aristocracy and landed gentry'. The huge number of casualties not only led to a further decrease in England's population, which had already suffered a sharp plung as a result of Black Death, but also profoundly unsettled England's previous medieval system of governance. Wars and the collapse of body politic inevitably generated 'lawlessness and violence, with thieving, robberies and murder commonplace'.[67]

So devastating were the Wars of the Roses that later generations found themselves still haunted by its dreadful influence. As Cathy Caruth explains, history 'is not only a passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation'.[68] Refusing to stay within the bound of any specified time, trauma unsettles rational communication: moving from one time to another in such a way that even those who not directly exposed to the primal experience are affected by it.

---

[67] Trevor Royle, *The Wars of the Roses* (London: Abacus, 2010), pp. 16-17.

[68] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 71.

For Elizabethan England the unresolved ghost is the Wars of the Roses, manifesting itself through the popularity of the English war plays in the Elizabethan commercial theatre. The repeated appearance of Richard III, in particular, on the Elizabethan stage amounts to drama acting out trauma. One of the most significant enigma produced by the Wars of the Roses is the true nature of the historical Richard III. In Tudor England, Richard was depicted in a highly unfavourable light: unanimously declared to be a completely crooked villain in chronicles, verses, and biographies. For Henry Tudor, brutally impugning the reputation of his predecessor seemed necessary, for his very survival as the legitimate English monarch was dependent on scapegoating the former alternative as an absolute evil. In doing so, however, the Tudor national narrative is guilty of bearing false witness: although it acknowledges the fact of the historical event of the war as real, it never properly deals with its traumatising impact. Dramatic invocations of Richard III suggest, then, in effect a return of the repressed. The last Yorkist king is the historical character most frequently invoked on the Elizabethan stage, featuring, as Philip Schwyzer points out, 'in six extant plays […] as well as in at least two lost works.[69] Such an obsession with this historical figure reflects the complexities of that part of history and testifies to its traumatic impact on Elizabethan culture. The Wars of the Roses were not wholly grasped as they took place. Frequent dramatisation of that part of history in later Elizabethan England stages a repetition of the trauma of that series of events, trying to makes sense of a historical crisis that simultaneously defies comprehension and demands witness.

---

[69] Philip Schwyzer, *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 196.

How do Shakespeare's early history plays respond to the haunting influence of historical trauma, and how do they register and understand historical vicissitudes? This study draws upon psychoanalytic theories developed by Sigmund Freud, Robert Jay Lifton, Cathy Caruth, and Dominick Lacapra as its conceptual framework. As a result of its overwhelming and shocking nature, trauma, when it happens, cannot be comprehended by the psyche: as Lacapra observes, it 'cannot be localized in terms of a discrete, dated experience'.[70] Unassimilated, it returns to haunt the victim through various intrusive symptoms, in keeping with Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit,* ('afterwardsness'). In dramatising ancient Rome and late medieval England, Shakespeare stages in effect a return of the repressed. Opening a breach for engagement with historical ghosts, his early Roman and English history plays allow him and his Elizabethan contemporaries to explore the psychological complexities of historical transmission.

The usefulness of trauma theory in making sense of early modern drama is yet to be fully recognised, in part as a result of resistance arising from a partial, or an insufficient exploration of the theory itself. In *Trauma: A Genealogy*, Ruth Leys observes that there are two models of trauma. The first, an anti-mimetic tendency, views traumatic experience 'as if it were a purely external event coming to a sovereign if passive victim'. Trauma, according to this hypothesis, refers to devastating violence coming from without to a subjectivity that is preexisting and already fully formed. And it is this anti-mimetic postulation that informsmany popular

---

[70] Dominic Lacapra, *Writing History Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 86.

'positivist or scientific interpretations of trauma'.[71] Representative of this paradigm is Bessel Van der Kolk's neurological construction of trauma, as well as Caruth's deterministic view. Van der Kolk treats trauma as a past event which, leaving an indelible imprint on mind, brain, and body, fundamentally reorganises the way through which the mind functions.[72] Meanwhile, Caruth views it as 'an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed […] appearance of […] intrusive phenomena'.[73]

The anti-mimetic model represents one side of trauma theory, however. As Leys points out, trauma always oscillates between two poles, so that anti-mimesis is counterpoised by mimesis. The mimetic tendency appears less positive about trauma's provenance. When hypnotised, the patient enters into a state of intensified responsiveness. Dissociated and absent from his conscious self, he 'unconsciously imitated, or identified with, the aggressor or traumatic scene'. Understood as 'an experience of hypnotic imitation or identification', trauma, then, becomes 'unavailable for a certain kind of recollection'.[74] Given that the traumatic repetition is contaminated by subjective revision and personal meaning, the nature of the so-called primal scene of trauma becomes suspicious: is it real in an objective sense, or is it but a performance of a subjective fantasy? Is trauma, in a word, something trans-historical that can only be lived with?

---

[71] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 10.

[72] Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin, 2014), p. 21.

[73] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 11.

[74] Leys, pp. 8-9.

Leys' study draws attention to trauma theory's balanced and non-reductive account of the formation of subjectivity. By emphasizing the oscillation and interaction between the two paradigms, mimetic and anti-mimetic, Leys illuminates trauma theory's acute awareness of the complexity and sophistication of the relation between the self and the other. On one hand, one should be aware of the dangers of the mimetic paradigm. To attribute every traumatic symptom to the patient's phantasy not only leads one to ignore some problems whose cause may actually have a historical root, but also tends to create a traumatised and deterministic culture that denies the role of individual agency.

A qualified embrace of the mimetic paradigm, however, should be tempered with a critical awareness of the dangers of the anti-mimetic. Anti-mimesis, especially at moments of historical rupture, is subject to manipulation and likely to cause victimisation. By generating what Leys calls 'a strict dichotomy between the autonomous subject and the external trauma', the anti-mimetic paradigm indiscriminately precludes the possibility of a trauma victim's complicity with an aggressor.[75] An outsider's disruptive intrusion becomes the source, then, of any insecurity and traumatic disintegration of the self; and the banishment, or even violent expulsion of what is designated as the impure and threatening other becomes the apparent prerequisite for the recuperation of the trauma victim. When pushed to the extreme, therefore, the anti-mimetic paradigm creates psychological victimisation and breeds social injustice.

Trauma, in a word, always amounts to an oscillation between the two paradigms. It should be understood 'in such a way', Leys argues, 'as simultaneously to invite resolution in favor of one pole or the other of the mimetic/antimimetic dichotomy and

---

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

to resist and ultimately to defeat all such attempts at resolution.'[76] There is no closure, therefore, for trauma; trauma, to slightly anticipate what is to come, is always haunted by the future.

In keeping with trauma's non-reductive conception of the formation of subjectivity, trauma theory does not regard memory and forgetting as a pair of incompatible antithesis; it does not view forgetting as 'a violence, a negative cultural force subordinate to memory', as Ivic and Williams claim.[77] What causes this misunderstanding, it seems, is trauma theory's very different understanding of what it means to forget. According to Freud, the invocation of forgetting is inextricably bound up with the notion of complete erasure. The 'very impressions which we have forgotten', as Freud observes in *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 'have nevertheless left the deepest traces on our minds and have had a determining effect upon the whole of our later development.' The memories of childhood, therefore, cannot be eradicated. There can only be 'an amnesia similar to that […] of which the essence consists in a simple withholding of these impressions from consciousness.'[78] In this discussion of the phenomenon of infantile amnesia, forgetting is associated with permanent and complete 'abolition', but in fact the conscious mind's seeming loss is only partial and temporary;traces of those supposedly forgotten memories continue to influence 'our later development' and can be summoned up by the conscious mind under certain favourable circumstances.

---

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[77] Williams and Ivic, pp. 1-17 (p. 3).

[78] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage, 2001), VII, pp. 125-244 (p. 175).

In *Wild Analysis*, Freud again points out that '[e]verything essential is preserved; even things that seem completely forgotten are present somehow and somewhere […] we have no reason to doubt whether any psychological formation ever suffers really complete destruction'.[79] From a psychoanalytical perspective, then, the concept of forgetting is at best an awkward fit for discussions of memory, as it connotes a finality and negation that belies the active and formative function repressed material can assume in the course of individual and national history. As the second chapter here will show, trauma theory does in its own very different way take into account the importance of repression, or forgetting. Rather than an alien other, forgetting plays a significant role in the construction of national identity.

Optimism about the possible working through of the trauma produced by war should be tempered, moreover, given the unending interaction between trauma's two paradigms. The vision of a safe containment of trauma, as Leys points out, is predicated upon the conception of a structurally sufficient self. When pushed to the extreme, it can generate psychological victimisation, as the last chapter here will show. In order to work through a trauma, one must dig deep and go through multiple layers of screen memories to locate the primal scene that causes the neurosis. In the case of war, the death instinct, as Freud argues in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, as well as his reply to Albert Einstein, *Why War*, seems to be the ultimate cause.[80] It is hardly

---

[79] Sigmund Freud, *Wild Analysis*, ed. by Adam Philips, trans. by Alan Bance (London: Penguin 2002), p. 214.

[80] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, in *The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), XII, pp. 243-340 (pp. 302-03, 313); Sigmund Freud, 'Why War', in *The Penguin Freud Library*, (see Freud, above), XII, pp. 341-362 (p. 358).

possible, therefore, to work through the trauma caused by war, given that civilisation is not only haunted by the structural insufficiency but also by the future and its endless possibilities.

In 'Différance', Derrida argues that the unconscious is a 'radical alterity […] characterized by irreducible aftereffects'.[81] In keeping with Derrida's theorisation of the unconscious, the death instinct can never come up and be grasped as such. 'It was not always easy', as Freud points out, 'to demonstrate the activities of this supposed death instinct'.[82] Rather than showing itself in its pure form, this instinct tends to work alongside and amalgamate with the love instinct, so that its manifestation can hardly be unalloyed and stark. The primal scene of the death instinct, moreover, is a scene of sheer incomprehensibility. Preceding life itself, it is beyond the power of description within the language of being. The primal scene of wars is a non-presence to which a master-name cannot be assigned. Any war is but a trace that is always already haunted by its ghosts and refers beyond itself.

There is little possibility, then, of working through the trauma of the Wars of the Roses, because there is no absolute presence or source of the Tudor dynasty's founding trauma. The Wars of the Roses as the primal scene is haunted by other spectres, that is, by historical ghosts manifesting themselves through other wars that happened before that period, the mythical ghosts of the myth of Romulus and Remus and of the burning of Troy, the biblical ghost of Cain's killing of Abel, and the Freudian ghost of the primal horde, all of which are themselves haunted by death instinct, a thing older than life itself. These specters are traces of an impossible primal

---

[81] Jacques Derrida, 'Differance', trans. by Alan Bass, *Bulletin de la Société francaise de philosophie*, 63 (1968), 73-101 (p. 82).

[82] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 310

scene which cannot be reduced to any form of graspability and presence. Shakespeare is keenly aware of the problem of man's inborn tendency toward violence. As the ideas of the key Christian figures, such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Calvin, show, the death instinct haunts the Christian world in the form of a structural insufficiency: original sin.

Civilisation is haunted by the future, however, as well as by the past. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida argues that there is no such a thing as the end of history; the West, despite the fall of the former Soviet bloc, remains haunted by the ghost of Marx.[83] Shakespeare's Elizabethan England was likewise haunted by the possibility of war. Peace, rather than being the end, only amounts to a kind of detour or delay of further war. The pair's relation is inscribed within what Derrida calls 'the economy of *différance*'.[84] In keeping with the Derrida's concept of *différance*, Shakespeare is pessimistic about his culture's containment of war and discredits the stability of peace. As his early history plays show, civilisation is ever trapped in an unending cycle predicated on the possibility of war.

The first chapter examines Shakespeare's treatment of the traumatic impact of war on soldiers. George of Clarence, I argue, is a war veteran traumatised by his wartime experience: he amounts to a prototype of the modern shell-shocked soldier. In *Achilles in Vietnam*, Jonathan Shay argues that, compared to a death encounter itself, moral damage is more likely to produce psychological trauma.[85] In *3 Henry VI* and

---

[83] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 100.

[84] Derrida, 'Differance', pp. 73-101 (p. 78).

[85] Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 2003), pp, 20, 27.

Richard III, Shakespeare seems to present a similar view: Clarence, as a result of his commander's moral wrongdoing, suffers a degradation of his personality. His character is destabilised by Edward's transgression of social norms and breach of honour; after the murder of Prince Edward, he suffers a traumatic breakdown. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare dramatises the medieval veteran's post-war dilemma. Haunted by his wartime experience and contaminated by the death taint of war, Clarence, as his insulation in the Tower of London shows, becomes a downright social outcast, shunned and persecuted by his society. Clarence suffers traumatic symptoms, moreover. Much as the Freudian veteran find themselves plagued by compulsive dreams after the Great War, Clarence is belatedly besieged by nightmares, the horrible vision of which catapult him, rather than into a hopeful future, back into the troubling times of past.

The second chapter examines the cultural and socio-political forces that lead to the revision of primal trauma and how this kind of revision triggers a disconnect between the past and the present. In his recollection of the emotional effect of Shakespeare's representation of the renowned warrior Talbot, Thomas Nashe imagines a revival of a former age of chivalry. Shakespeare himself, however, seems more pessimistic about any such prospect. Over the course of his first tetralogy of English history plays, Talbot, like Queen Margaret, is entirely superseded. Such characters have no place in the emerging new world of the court Machiavel; their grand sense of themselves shipwrecks on the indifference and even outright scorn of a younger generation of calculating courtiers, chief among them the future Richard III. In his depiction of these older characters' reception, Shakespeare stages, in effect, an irreparable disconnect between the medieval past and his own early modern present. The primal wound of his own cultural moment, England's loss to France, becomes instead an

instance of an inevitable decline: Norbert Elias' 'civilizing process', re-imagined as a moral rather than a material transformation. This alienation from a more matter-of-fact, humiliating explanation of the events in question, England's practical failure to match French military might, although no doubt consoling, renders Shakespeare's representation of the events in question oblique, cryptic, and uncanny: in a word, traumatography.

The third chapter examines Shakespeare's representation of structural trauma. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud argues that life is not the absolute centre. It is anteceded and haunted by what he calls the death instinct: an instinctual nostalgia that amounts to a kind of structural void.[86] Freud's concept of the death instinct serves as a synecdoche for Western civilisation's pessimistic view of human nature: variously known as the Socratic *aporētikos* or original sin, in contrast to Rousseau's vision of humanity's natural goodness. In his first tetralogy, Shakespeare himself stages a similar skepticism about mankind's capacity for moral goodness. The possibility of full self-knowledge comes up short in light of the haunting other, here, Joan Puzel, who always precedes and dwells within the self. Through horticultural metaphors, Shakespeare presents a corrupt medieval English court. In keeping with an Augustianian sense of human nature as fallen, the English noblemen are invariably ambitious and self-serving, including even the seeming saint Henry VI. Like his mortal enemy Richard III, Henry has no scruples about sacrificing those close to him when his self-interest is concerned. Rather than being an antithesis of his murderer,

---

[86] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* in *The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), XI, pp. 269-338 (pp. 310-11, 336).

Henry is only better than Richard to the extent that there is in him less of a diminution of the good.

The fourth chapter considers how Shakespeare stages his disbelief in the possibility of a lasting peace. *In Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argues that the love instinct cannot cure humanity of its intrinsic aggressiveness. Civilisation, then, is always haunted by the possibility of war: by what Derrida calls hauntological spectres. Shakespeare holds a very similar view. For the playwright, peace is at best a transient state. War, although disagreeable, is unavoidable. It is therefore advisable to brace oneself for war, rather than indulging oneself in unrealistic pacificism, which in its complacency can prove dangerous. Over the course of the first tetralogy, Shakespeare repetitively criticises such naïveté. Edward IV, due to his inordinate pursuit for sensual pleasures, becomes for the playwright an image of the latent dangers of concord; his corpulent body, in particular, renders him a figure of malady, in keeping with popular Elizabethan belief, which tended to see peace as a kind of disease. Shakespeare does not give up the hope for a sustained peace without a fight, however. A strong worldly authority, he proposes, is key to keeping man's instinctual aggressiveness in check. Such a solution, however, fails to free humanity altogether from the likelihood of future bloodshed. Shakespeare's pessimism about a sustained peaceful state haunts his hope for a successful recovery, therefore, from historical war trauma.

The fifth chapter continues to examine Derrida's concept of hauntology in Shakespeare's early history plays. In *Specters of Marx*, written amidst the euphoria following the collapse of communism, Derrida notes a paradox at the heart of Western society's messianic view of end of history: insofar as Marxism is still relevant in a Western world plagued by multitudinous cultural and socio-political problems, the

West's 'good riddance' to its nemesis' corporeal form, the former Soviet Union, leads to a future, not free of, but paradoxically haunted by the ghost of Marxism. Shakespeare presents an analogue of the Derridean hauntology in his early history plays: the intense material, instead of exorcising, conjures up the immaterial. In *1 Henry VI*, the artillery's debilitating assault on human agency compromises the Christological economy of suffering and renders Salisbury's wound illegible. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare stages, in effect, a condition of spectrality. Like a séance, the play provides a hermeneutic key through which the audience can read back into *1 Henry VI* and decode the overwhelming intensity of technology; the anachronistic appearance of the ghostly Margaret belatedly responds to the representational dilemma created by the explosion of artillery. Rather than conjuring away superstitious belief, the emergence of the new technological modernity finds itself entwined with its otherness.

Turning to Shakespeare's early Roman play, *Titus Andronicus*, the last chapter considers the playwright's reflections on the transmission of empire as well as the disturbing scenes of victimisation that underpin its founding. In *The Broken Connection*, Robert Jay Lifton regards the course of human history as the course of humanity's struggle for the image of life. When it feels its sense of connection to life is threatened by historical aberrations, a community can resort to radical measures, such as violence and killing, to achieve its own regeneration.[87] In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare dramatises this kind of psychological mechanism. For the traumatised Roman community, human sacrifice and the killing of scapegoats, rather than mourning and an integration of death, become the norm to deal with historical crisis.

---

[87] Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), pp. 3-4.

Victimisation fails to contain the overwhelming death anxiety that trauma unleashes, however; instead it further breaks down the victimiser's sense of connection to life. To prevent ghosts from returning, the tendency to resort to murder becomes ever more pronounced. In this sense, Rome's reconciliation with its historical losses amounts to a transmission of trauma. What appears to be an ending amounts to a re-enactment of disturbing violence.

1
Clarence: The Medieval Shell Shocked Soldier

Shakespeare's George of Clarence is a veteran severely traumatised by his war-time experience. He amounts to a prototype, or a medieval counterpart of the modern shell-shocked combatant. As Peter Saccio writes in *Shakespeare's English Kings*, the historical Clarence was notoriously 'greedy, skittish, perpetually discontented, perpetually engaged in foolish schemes'.[88] Without principle and honour, he directed his action according to his personal interests. His foolish campaign of sabotage eventually led to his execution in February 1478 in the Tower of London, presumably drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine.

In his early history plays, Shakespeare, however, casts Clarence in a very different light. In representing Clarence's defects, the playwright does not ascribe the character's inconsistency to a desire for personal gain. Quite the opposite: Shakespeare not only marginalises those personal flaws which the historical figure was said to possess but also introduces an external cause for Clarence's instability of character. For Shakespeare, Clarence is a character who struggles within what might be called a semi-tragic paradigm. On one hand, in the duke's military career the audience can clearly perceive a trajectory of sustained descent in terms of fortune. At the outset a loyal and devoted Yorkist warrior, he turns renegade during the war, then is imprisoned and finally murdered in the Tower of London. On the other hand, his tragic potential is never fully realised. Clarence's fall comes across as a result of his military leader's depraved moral norms, over which he exerts no control, rather than

---

[88] Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 167.

his own more immediate misjudgment. Unlike more central protagonists in Shakespeare's tragedies, Clarence, moreover, is far less constant: incapable of maintaining moral dignity in the face of trials and tribulations, he sometimes transgresses moral laws simply to accommodate himself to the corrupted environment. This predisposition to yielding to external pressure breaks the bounds of tragedy and suggests his story might be better understood as a representation of traumatic experience.

One of the key elements of tragedy is its intelligibility. A tragedy, as Aristotle describes it in his *Poetics*, is supposed to arouse pity and fear in the audience. Through the fall of the tragic hero, the audience is educated and senses a larger will working behind the hero's misfortune. A tragedy, then, 'depends on the general intelligibility of life and the larger "rationality" of existence', a 'rationality' which becomes apparent as a result of the moral inflexibility of the protagonist.[89] The signature integrity of the tragic hero is nowhere to be seen, by contrast, in the case of a character suffering from trauma. During the war against the Lancaster family, Clarence chooses to conform to the degenerate military ethos of the Yorkist army to such a degree that his very character spirals downward in a non-stop descent. The treachery of his profligate brother Edward sets in motion the course of his moral degradation. Unsettling his character, it directly leads to his sudden desertion of his family. His cooperation in the murder of Edward of Lancaster marks then the final stage of his moral undoing. The scene of infanticide is a point of non-referentiality at which Clarence's character eventually explodes and ceases to be. *Richard III* thoroughly dramatises the consequence of this collapse of personality: in keeping with

---

[89] Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 174.

the example of the war neurotic whom Freud observes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Clarence is compulsively-repetitively brought back into his wartime experience. Rather than enabling him to rejoice in the 'piping time of peace', Clarence's survival into a post-war era paradoxically catapults him into an incomprehensible future haunted by an unresolved past.[90]

By altering the historical record, then, Shakespeare manages to spotlight something characterological and exemplary about Clarence. As *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* demonstrate, he showcases an analogy between the collapse of *themis*, a set of ethical values indispensable in maintaining good and stable character, and the haunting effects of wartime trauma. Shakespeare, in other words, dramatises a certain kind of modern psyche shaped by psychological damage. And in so doing, he challenges genre conventions as well as conventional moral frames for considering historical action. Such action, he suggests, can only be contained in and accommodated by a more radical paradigm: a traumatological vision.

1. Transgression of *themis* and Clarence's fall

In *3 Henry VI*, a bitter clash breaks out between the Yorkist brothers. Despairing of convincing Edward that it will prove a mistake for him to marry Lady Grey, a lower ranking noble woman, Clarence decides to 'go speed elsewhere' and to combine forces with Warwick.[91] Rather than being motivated by avarice, however, Clarence's renouncement of the Yorkist cause reflects his emotional retreat: a shrinking of his

---

[90] *Richard III*, I. 1. 14.

[91] William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 3*, ed. by John D Cox and Eric Rasmussen (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2001), IV. 1. 49.

social horizons brought about by Edward's breach of *themis.* An English equivalent for the word *themis* can hardly be found. In ancient Greece, *Themis*, daughter of Uranus and Gaea, was a goddess who was said to possess prophetic powers. She was known for being a counsellor of Zeus and an instructor teaching laws to humankind. In keeping with this lineage, her name invokes a sense of 'a right order established by nature itself for the living together of gods and humans'.[92] As an ideal of harmony, order, and righteousness, the concept of *themis* served as a beacon in the chaos that followed the collapse of Mycenaean civilisation, embodying, as M. I. Finley writes, 'right custom, proper procedure, social order'.[93]

In the *Odyssey*, Homer uses *themis* to represent what is held to be just, praiseworthy, and virtuous. In *Achilles in Vietnam,* Jonathan Shay, for example, translates the word into 'what's right'. *Themis*, he explains, 'takes in the whole sweep of a culture's definition of right and wrong'. For Shay, *themis* is particularly germane to the study of wartime trauma. An army, be it ancient or modern, 'is a social construction defined by shared expectations and values'. This system of ethical rules – some codified, some unwritten yet taken for granted – constitutes an army's *themis:* 'a moral world that most of the participants most of the time regard as legitimate, "natural", and personally binding'. Given that it helps to uphold what is good and virtuous in a person, it is hugely important that everyone observes this set of rules: 'good character is dependent on good-enough stability and reliability of *thémis*.' It is

---

[92] Pamela Donleavy and Ann Shearer, *From Ancient Myth to Modern Healing: Themis: Goddess of Heart-soul, Justice and Reconciliation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.1.

[93] M. I. Finley, 'Household, Kin, and Community', in *Homer: Critical Assessments: The Homeric World*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1999), II, pp. 145-173 (p. 172).

the awareness of *themis* that allows a soldier to retain a sense of his own personal dignity as a human being and can motivate him to perform heroic deeds: 'to get up out of a trench and step into enemy machine-gun fire'.[94]

Themis is vulnerable to manipulation, however, especially by those in a superior social position. A commander's infringement of soldiers' sense of moral justice can cause grievous moral injury and blight the lives of the war participants. Moral injury, as Nancy Sherman explains, 'refers to experiences of serious inner conflict arising from what one takes to be grievous moral transgressions that can overwhelm one's sense of goodness and humanity'.[95] For Shay, injury of this kind, compared to the violent encounter commonly on battlefield, is more likely to produce long-lasting combat trauma. Although initially adopted to define the phenomenon of a soldier suffering from some nerve injuries caused by being physically exposed to exploding shells in WWI, the notion of shell-shock contains in itself a wider scope of possible application. As Charles S. Myers observes, shrapnel, for instance, 'may play no part whatever in the causation of "shell shock': excessive emotion, e.g. sudden horror or fear --- indeed any "psychical trauma" or "inadjustable experience" --- is sufficient'.[96] In his study of Vietnam veterans, Shay, arguing in a similar vein, emphatically underscores the formative role of moral injury in triggering psychological trauma. It is usually the moral wound, he explains, that 'leads to lifelong psychological injury.' While veterans can usually 'recover from horror, fear, and grief once they return to

---

[94] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 5, 6.

[95] Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 8.

[96] Charles S. Myers, *Shell Shock in France: 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 26.

civilian life', the collapse of *themis* induces dire consequences, overwhelming the victim with 'indignant wrath'. According to Shay, this kind of rage not only ruptures the victim's 'social attachments' and triggers a shrinking of 'moral vision and emotional responsiveness' but also converts 'subsequent terror, horror, grief, and guilt into lifelong disability for […] combat veterans'.[97] The rage caused by a leader's violation of moral order, in other words, cripples good character and ushers in traumatisation.

Shakespeare's Clarence thoroughly demonstrates the drastic repercussions triggered by a commander's breach of moral principles. Initially a stout supporter of his family's cause, Clarence, suffering a breakdown of character, is driven to the extremity of betraying his own family by Edward's breach of socially and culturally prescribed norms of propriety and responsibility. At the time, it was considered customary and even a kind of moral duty for a medieval or an early modern monarch to marry for political advantage. To forge an alliance, a monarch should try to secure a politically advantageous deal. As a rare and highly prized commodity, royal marriage was to be traded at a premier price. For a monarch to pursue his own wayward course in deciding on a match regardless of national interests was, by this standard, an outrageous act.

It is no surprise, then, to see that Yorkist supporters such as Clarence infuriated by Edward's disgraceful union. For a king to marry a woman of inferior social status was an infringement of justice: a stain on his family's honour. In terms of notoriety and impropriety, Edward's union was groundbreaking: he was, as Saccio writes, 'the first English king since the Norman Conquest to marry a subject, let alone the widow of a

---

[97] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 20, 21.

commoner'.[98] In the play, Clarence and Richard derisively jest that the marriage 'would be ten day's wonder at least'.[99]

In marrying Lady Grey, Edward brings dishonour to his ambassador, moreover, and to the French royal family, by breaking his earlier promise to marry Lady Bona. Historically speaking, when the news of Edward's inglorious marriage transpired in September 1464, a month before the prospective marriage negotiation with France, Warwick was still in England. To highlight the deplorable nature of Edward's conduct, Shakespeare, however, alters the timetable of historical events. After the Battle of Towton, Warwick suggests a union with Lady Bona, the sister of the French King Lewis. The alliance, Warwick points out, would hugely benefit the newly-established regime:

WARWICK

So shalt thou sinew both these lands together;
And, having France thy friend, thou shalt not dread
The scatter'd foe that hopes to rise again.

Edward makes no objection to this proposal; instead, his answer in the moment shows his faith and trust in a man who has played a vital role in seating him on the throne:

EDWARD

For in thy shoulder do I build my seat,
And never will I undertake the thing

---

[98] Saccio, p. 143.

[99] *3 Henry VI*, III. 2. 113.

Wherein thy counsel and consent is wanting.

Edward then gives his full and explicit consent to the proposed match: ‘as thou wilt, sweet Warwick, let it be’.[100]

With full knowledge, then, thereafter that Warwick has gone to France to negotiate his marriage, Edward nevertheless approaches Lady Grey and takes the widow as his queen. And as might be expected, Warwick, the erstwhile stout supporter and close alley, find himself grievously insulted. To seek alliance for Edward’s sake and then be flouted in the face! The kingmaker immediately switches sides: ‘I came from Edward as ambassador | But I return his sworn and mortal foe.’ Lewis takes it as an affront to his royal dignity. Lady Bona also finds her maiden modesty dishonored, as the stark contrast between her behavior before learning about the news of Edward’s marriage and after shows. At first she is a meek, modest, and unassuming lady, speaking only when her opinion is sought; after receiving the news, however, she becomes a vengeful, incensed, and outspoken nemesis. Not only does she repetitively urge her brother to grant the Lancastrian’s request for army, but she also sends special greetings to Edward: ‘Tell him, in hope he'll prove a widower shortly, | I'll wear the willow garland for his sake’. Combining forces, the injured parties resolve to avenge themselves by ‘replant[ing] Henry in his former state.’ King Lewis immediately grants Margaret the military aid, and Warwick, ‘let[ting] former grudges pass,’ becomes her ‘true servitor’.[101] Edward’s infidelity not only turns France, a potentially valuable ally, into England’s enemy but also lends strength to his domestic rivals, the Lancastrians, who until that moment had been on the verge of collapse.

---

[100] *Ibid.*, II. 6. 91-93, 100-03, 99.

[101] *Ibid.*, III. 3. 257-58, 227-28, 198, 195, 196.

Given Edward's dishonourable action and its dire political consequences, it is not surprising to see Clarence gradually withdraw from emotional engagement. Edward, in acting unfaithfully, had irretrievably transgressed the norms of *themis*. Edward appears to be oblivious to the consequences, moreover, of his abdication of responsibility, showing no respect to those who have been fighting and continue to fight for the House of York. Richard of York loses his life for the family's cause; Clarence himself and other Yorkists work together to plant Edward on the throne. The king, however, egoistically 'matching more for wanton lust than honour, | Or than for strength and safety of our country', then behaves as if that hard-won power were less important than the affections of a lower-status widow. It is only natural, then, that Clarence gradually becomes emotionally unresponsive, numbing himself to the call of family honour and responsibility.

Upon learning of his brother's marriage to Lady Grey, Clarence begins to show signs of emotional detachment. Becoming 'pensive, as half malcontent' and sardonic, he vents his indignation by making sarcastic comments. Sounded by Richard about his opinion on the union, he derides Edward's lust and lack of self-discipline: 'Alas, you know, 'tis far from hence to France; | How could he stay till Warwick made return?'. Queried by Edward himself, Clarence mocks the king's irresponsibility and political misjudgment:

GEORGE OF CLARENCE

> As well as Lewis of France, or the Earl of Warwick,
>
> Which are so weak of courage and in judgment
>
> That they'll take no offence at our abuse.

Failing to pick up on these signs of his brother's alteration, Edward then worsens the situation through his insolence. When Clarence suggests that Lord Hastings, rather than any member of the Woodville family, should marry the heiress of Lord Hungerford, Edward falls back on his kingly authority and rudely gainsays the proposal. 'Ay, what of that? it was my will and grant; | And for this once my will shall stand for law.' According to Edward's depraved moral vision, he, as the 'true sovereign', must be, and shall be obeyed by his followers.[102] His kingly wish has taken the place of moral laws and becomes the sole measure of righteous behaviour.

2: 'Ingratitude is the essence of vileness': non-recognition and the further degradation of Clarence's character.

Clarence's inner ideal of *themis* is further eroded by Edward's ingratitude. Gratitude is an important tool that helps maintain a smooth personal interaction and a proper function of social network. As Sherman argues, human relation is reciprocal. When one confers a benefit on another person, one naturally expects from the beneficiary a response of one kind or another that shows the latter's acknowledgment.[103] This sort of gratitude is indispensable in that it shows the recipient's respect for the benefactor's individual worth and importance.

In Plato's dialogues, what we now call 'recognition' appears as *thymos*, which can be translated more literally as 'spirit' or 'spiritedness'. The third element within Plato's tripartite division of the individual*, thymos* demands 'self-regard […] (ranging)

---

[102] *Ibid.*, III. 3. 210-11, IV. 1. 10, IV.1. 4-5, 11-13, 49-50, 78.

[103] Sherman, p. 33.

from self-assertion, through self-respect, to our relations with others […] and our concern for our reputation and good name'.[104] In Hegel's master-slave dialectic, this impulse reappears as the desire for recognition (*Anerkennung*). It prompts the Hegelian first man to fight another man he meets at the risk of his own life in order to pursue his counterpart's recognition, which is indispensable in Hegel's account for the achievement of self-consciousness. In Kant's philosophical system, *thymos* appears in the language of 'respect'. According to Kant, 'respect' in the sense of 'recognition of a dignity' is a duty one must diligently observe. Gratitude plays an important role here: for Kant, heartfelt benevolence shows one's 'respect for the benefactor (who puts one under obligation)', and thus 'deserves to be called a duty of virtue'.[105]

In keeping with Kant's view, Sherman assigns an important role to gratitude in the formation of community and the fostering of 'mutual respect and a sense of humanity'. The fact that one is grateful for what another has done is an 'expression of respect toward another person and the reciprocation of the goodwill that the person has shown […] through some deed. In showing our gratitude, Sherman continues, 'we are letting another know that we are not taking for granted her assistance.' When gratitude is wanting or 'instrumental', however, the benefactor 'can rightly feel 'used,' sacrificed, exploited'. What this ingratitude engenders, Sherman argues, is a sort of 'moral resentment', which is 'a reactive anger grounded in a belief, thought, or perception of being wrongly injured by another'.[106] In other words, the giver's *thymos* is grievously damaged.

---

[104] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by H. D. P. Lee (London: Penguin, 1955), p. 185.

[105] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by Lara Denis, trans. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 225, 218.

[106] Sherman, pp. 33, 31.

Through his dramatisation of Clarence, Shakespeare shows how a benefactor can come to feel morally injured when a receiver shows no or inadequate reciprocal appreciation. Although wealth and promotion could well be the agencies that prompt Clarence's grievances, the fundamental cause for his resentment is his commander's ingratitude. When Edward tries to pacify the indignant Clarence by promising him a marriage, for example, Clarence contemptuously spurns the offer, citing Edward's choice as an example of his vulgar taste and insensitivity to social decency:

GEORGE OF CLARENCE

> In choosing for yourself, you show'd your judgment,
>
> Which being shallow, you give me leave
>
> To play the broker in mine own behalf.[107]

What Clarence means by Edward's 'shallow' judgement here is not merely his decision to marry someone far inferior in terms of lineage. In addition, he is bitterly accusing Edward of being ungrateful: Edward, being shallow, is unable to recognise his comrade's merits and denies his brother's due. And Clarence, in fairness, has every reason to complain. After taking Lady Grey as his wife, Edward begins to see about the affairs of his wife's families, raising a large number of them to undeservedly high positions. In particular, he gives the daughter of Lord Scales to his wife's brother and the heiress of Lord Bonville to Sir Thomas Grey, the son of Elizabeth's first husband.

---

[107] *3 Henry VI*, IV. 1. 61-63.

In doing so, however, Edward neglects his own brothers' interests. For Clarence as well as anyone, one might imagine, implicated in such an unhappy situation, Edward's preference for his wife's relatives over his own blood, including especially those who risked their lives supporting the Yorkist cause, is monstrous: a gross violation of natural law and generally understood social norms. By prioritising the Woodville family over his own, Edward shows ingratitude and lack of respect. It is no wonder then, that Clarence feels unfairly exploited. For Clarence, to be slighted in this way is as if being bluntly told by his commander: 'you don't deserve the noble heiress whom my wife's son has married'; or, worse still, 'thank you for what you have done for my cause. You are less important to me, nonetheless, than my wife's son. His minimal contribution notwithstanding, he is more valuable to me than you are on account of my relationship with his mother.'

Much as Achilles does in becoming emotionally numb, withdrawing, as Shay argues, 'his moral, emotional, military commitment from the army' after Agamémnon's scandalous appropriation of Brisêis, 'Achilles' prize of honor', Clarence, rather than becoming incensed at his commander on account of his loss of the heiress of Lord Bonville and the wealth and power that this match might have brought to their family, finds himself stung by Edward's lack of gratitude. Edward's promotion of his wife's family at the cost of his brother's interests is tantamount to a denial of Clarence's past contribution and personal dignity, a moral violation that damages his *thymos*, that is, his desire for recognition. 'When ruptures are too violent between the social realization of "what's right" and the inner *themis* of ideal, ambitions, and affiliations,' Shay points out, 'the inner *themis* can collapse', followed by destabilisation of an individual's personality.[108] It is not surprising, then, that

---

[108] Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, pp. 24, 36.

Clarence gradually turns acrimonious as the play continues. Edward's betrayal of moral justice and denial of Clarence's worth trigger an unsettling of his character that culminates in his becoming a renegade.

3: "My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent': killing to conform and the breakdown of character.

By cold-heartedly murdering Edward of Lancaster after the Battle of Tewkesbury, Edward pushes his transgression of *themis* to the extreme. It is this crime that eventually causes Clarence' breakdown of character as well as his traumatisation. To appreciate fully how irretrievably cooperating with this murder unravels Clarence's personality, which had already been damaged by Edward's ingratitude, it is necessary to take into account a distinctive aspect of Clarence's personality: his aversion toward unnecessary violence. At the beginning of *3 Henry VI,* the triumphant Yorkists gather in the parliament and reflect on their victory at the first Battle of St Albans. Prominent in this discussion is the flaunting of bloody deeds, recounting with relish the ruthless way in which the Yorkists treated their fallen enemies. As the leader of the Yorkist army, York, having himself cruelly mocked Somerset's decapitated head, gives credit to Richard for outbidding all the others in the performance of bloody deeds: 'Richard hath best deserved of all my sons'.[109] As conspicuous as Richard's prominence here, however, is Clarence's absence, distinguishing him from the other, more bloodthirsty Yorkist soldiers.

Historically speaking, the first Battle of St. Albans, which ushered in the Wars of the Roses, took place on 22 May 1455. Clarence was born on 21 October 1449, which

---

[109] *3 Henry VI*, I. 1. 17.

means that at the time the battle was actually fought, the historical Clarence, a mere six years old, was almost certainly not involved. In his dramatic world, Shakespeare, however, does not commit himself to preserving strict chronological order. For instance, Edward and Richard, both historically absent from the Battle of St. Albans, appear in the play as pillars of the Yorkist army. Given that Shakespeare anachronistically includes both Edward and Richard as participants, there might seem to be no reason, then, to leave out Clarence, the third surviving son of York and senior to Richard. One possible explanation for this omission, however, is that Shakespeare aims to depict in Clarence a soldier whose disposition and ethical principles differ from his brothers: a Yorkist who is, by contrast, averse to undue violence. From the perspective of a playwright, including Clarence in the first Battle of St. Albans only to exclude him from the scene at the parliament thereafter in which the other Yorkists indulge in gratuitous violence would risk incongruity. The compromise solution, then, which Shakespeare hits upon is to omit Clarence from both the battle and the parliament scene, even though his two brothers anachronistically participate in both.

Given his disinclination to gratuitous violence and his disapproval of mistreating prisoners of war, it makes sense that after the Battle of Tewkesbury, Clarence is the last one to stab Edward. Having been brought before his captors, the defiant prince refuses to bow his head and behaves by treating them as treasonous subjects. Edward and Richard, callous and bloodthirsty as usual, taunt the defenceless prisoner and make cruel jokes about his relative youth. Clarence, however, remains for the most part silent, speaking up only when the tension between captors and captive seems to reach a breaking point: '[u]ntutored lad, thou art too malapert.'

Unlike his brothers' deliberate efforts to humiliate Edward, Clarence's intervention here is more like a warning: given that Edward and Richard have already insinuated

that they intend to have him executed, threatening to 'plague' him for his insolence and 'charm' his tongue, Clarence admonishes the prince to restrain himself, lest he lose his life. The young prince refuses to heed this sensible advice, however, and instead proceeds to defy his captors:

PRINCE EDWARD

> Lascivious Edward, and thou perjured George,
> And thou mis-shapen Dick, I tell ye all
> I am your better; traitors as ye are.
> And thou usurp'st my father's right and mine.[110]

Responding to this rebuke, Edward stabs the captive. Since the prince's derision of the three brothers follows a descending order, one might expect that Clarence would then follow Edward's lead. It is Richard, however, who stabs him next.

What leads to this inversion of order is Clarence's antipathy toward unnecessary violence. From the duke's perspective, there is scarcely any need for such extreme measure, given that the political situation is no longer as volatile as it was before. His army has won the battle and secured all of the key political prisoners: Margaret, Prince Edward, and Henry VI. It goes against all codes of chivalry code to strike down a defenceless prisoner. Moreover, the prince in *3 Henry VI* is repeatedly described as a child. By drawing our attention to the victim's youth, Shakespeare emphasizes the egregious and traumatic nature of the murdering. For Christians,

---

[110] *3 Henry VI*, V. 5. 33, 27, 31, 34-37.

especially, infanticide is a mortal sin and therefore strictly prohibited.[111] Whereas the world of adults is rife with vice and political machination, throughout the Shakespearean corpus, as Ann Blake points out, children are symbols of innocence: "tender-hearted and loyal, brave, and idealistic'.[112]

In *Richard III*, when Richard insinuates that he wishes to get rid of Edward's son, Buckingham immediately becomes 'all ice'.[113] Despite his support Richard's cause, he is horrified by the act of villainy Richard proposes to commit. 'Give me some little breath, some pause', Buckingham says.[114] In *King John,* Hubert, hired by the usurper king to assassin Arthur, eventually relents and even decides to undergo much danger in order to shield the child from harm. When a child dies, which sometimes does happen in Shakespeare's plays, the moment is rendered with extreme pathos; even those who are themselves responsible for killing the child can be stricken with grief and regret. In *Richard III*, the two murderers Tyrrel hires, for instance, to dispatch the Princes in the Tower are said to be 'Melted with tenderness and mild compassion'.[115]

Given the enormity of infanticide in the context of the medieval and the early modern culture, it is understandable that Clarence is reluctant to stab the young prince. The situation has already spun out of control, however, leaving him no easy alternative. The vendetta between the two families and the captive's insults leave little

---

[111] See, e.g., '[…] Thou shalt not murder a child […] when it is born', in *Epistles of Barnabas*, 19.5.

[112] Ann Blake, 'Children and Suffering in Shakespeare's Plays', *The Year Book of English Studies*, 23 (1993), 293-304 (p. 296).

[113] *Richard III*, IV. 2. 22.

[114] *Ibid.*, IV, 2. 25.

[115] *Ibid.*, IV. 3.7.

room for a peaceful resolution or more dignified treatment of the prisoner. By stabbing the prince, Edward, moreover, forces Clarence to negotiate an extremely unpleasant dilemma. To follow his brothers' example would be a downright breach of his *themis*, yet to stand inactive could be interpreted as a sign of sympathy for his former sovereign, calling into question his presumed loyalty to the Yorkist brotherhood. Eventually, Clarence succumbs to the pressure of his political moment and follows his brothers' example.

His behaviour, (pretend to) kill in order to conform, is not a rare case. Human beings can be easily swayed by peer pressure. In a social environment, the desire to fit in and to be regarded as normal can lead to departures from moral principles; all the more so in extreme situations such as war, where danger, isolation, and a desire for companionship compound social pressure. In *Home from the War*, Robert Lifton narrates an analogous incident. During the mass killing of defenceless civilians in My Lai, some soldiers, although deeply troubled by the atrocity, still pretended to fire in deference to 'group pressures'.[116] Like these reluctant soliders, Clarence is a passive perpetrator: he feels that he has to become complicit in murdering the prince in order to preserve his brothers' approval and acceptance.

Although Clarence sacrifices the ideal of his *themis* to conform to a majority position, he also tries to do it in such a way as to salvage a residue of his sense of honour. This is why, even though he is the second one on the prince's insulting list and a senior to Richard, he lags behind and is the last to strike. In dramatising the Yorkist brothers' collaborative murdering, Shakespeare intentionally inverts the order. And in doing so, he reveals Clarence's inner struggle. From a certain perspective, Clarence's compromise is helpful. Technically speaking, Clarence does not actually

---

[116] Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from the War* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 58.

kill the prince, as it is very likely that Richard has already irretrievably dispatched the victim. Edward's thrust completely incapacitates the prince, making him drop to the ground in pain, even though he is still alive. As Richard asks, just before stabbing him, 'Spral'st thou?'. In keeping with Richard's bloodthirsty nature, he comes across as keen to take the captive's life himself: aiming a fatal blow at the victim's heart, he says 'take that, to end thy agony'.[117]

Even if Clarence does not actually kill the prince, however, the moral injury that the wrongdoing causes to his personality proves irreparable. To a conscience that is severe and rigorous, it does not matter whether one actually commits such an act or not. Even the slightest intention of doing something nefarious disturbs the ego and overwhelms it with compunction. The renunciation of immoral desire, as Freud explains, cannot sufficiently shield the ego from the superego's severe reprimand, for nothing that the ego entertains can 'be concealed from the super-ego'. Notwithstanding 'the renunciations that has been made, a sense of guilt comes about' in the same way as if the deed has actually been done.[118]

So far as Clarence is concerned, the fact that he intentionally let himself lag behind in stabbing the prince does not exempt him from the strict censure of conscience. To have participated at all is to suffer a sense of degradation. The act itself, moreover, comes to seem meaningless and repetitive, as well as painful. As Lacapra observes, acting out denotes a sense of different temporality: a re-enactment of another time.[119] Given that, in the eyes of an outside observer, it is in no way connected to the present existentiality, the duke's act of violence is incoherent and senseless; it is disconnected

---

[117] *3 Henry VI*, V. 5. 39.

[118] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 320.

[119] Lacapra, *Writing History Writing Trauma* , pp. 89-90.

from the reality because, from a practical point of view, it does not make any contribution to the ostensible purpose of ending the victim's life. Yet the stabbing does nonetheless very much resemble the behaviour of a trauma patient, who, as Freud notes, 'repeat(s) all of those unwanted situations and painful memories'.[120] The stabbing is repetitive and painful in that Clarence, caving to external pressure, passively *follows* and *repeats* his two brother's behavior, a repetition that can in no way be said to purchase for the duke any kind of pleasure, given his deep-rooted aversion to unjustified and unnecessary violence.

4. 'What's done cannot be undone': a medieval veteran's post-war dilemma.

What does it mean for a soldier to survive the fearful times of war with his *themis* irreparably damaged? As Caruth emphatically argues, the story of trauma is not a story of escape from death but rather a story that 'attests to its endless impact on life'. At the core of this endlessness is the 'oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life; between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival'.[121] By emphasising trauma's belatedness, Caruth sets out to question the notion of a straightforward textual referentiality. Rather than being a smooth and progressive movement accessible and intelligible to successive generations, history is an enigma that constantly eludes comprehension yet perpetually demands attention.

In keeping with this view of history, although Shakespeare's Clarence manages to to survive the tumultuous war in *3 Henry VI*, he finds himself engulfed by trauma's

---

[120] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, p. 291.

[121] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 7.

backward temporality. Although the last scene of *3 Henry VI* and the beginning of Richard's soliloquy in *Richard III* seem to proffer a burial of past events and a vision of progress, Clarence's very existence testifies to trauma's repetitiveness and challenges the assumption that the transmission of history will be smooth. The burden of unresolved tragic events weighs on Clarence's well-being: 'God […] wilt be avenged on my misdeeds […] My soul is heavy.'[122] His sense of history's unruliness prevents him from adapting himself to a time that Richard and other Yorkist members mistakenly perceive as more entirely contained in the present.

Clarence is not the only traumatised veteran that appears in Shakespeare's history plays. Hotspur is another, better-known case of a soldier suffering from PTSD or, more precisely, what has come to be known as 'constriction'. As one of the cardinal symptoms of trauma, constriction refers to an altered state of consciousness. As Lifton explains, it is a form of dissociation, prompted by a victim's sense of overwhelming danger: 'a radical but temporary diminution in his sense of actuality in order to avoid losing this sense completely and permanently […] a reversible form of symbolic death in order to avoid a permanent physical or psychic death'.[123] The victim feels as if he is watching events from outside his own body: a detached spectator, watching something happening to another person. Herman quotes a veteran of World War II: 'I was numb, in a state of virtual dissociation […] I felt almost as if I hadn't actually been in a battle'. Taking refuge in the sense that the person suffering is not actually

---

[122] *Richard III*, I. 4. 69-70, 74.

[123] Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 500.

'me', the victim manages to maintain a final shred of integrity. It is, as Herman writes, 'one of nature's small mercies, a protection against unbearable pain'.[124]

This adaptive strategy can become toxic, however. For Janet, for instance, as Herman notes, the neurotic's 'capacity for trance state' is pathological. Although helpful *in extremis*, dissociation becomes destructive after the danger that prompted it ceases to exist. To enter into a dissociative state means 'suspension of initiative and critical judgement […] altered sensation, including numbness and analgesia, and distortion of reality, including depersonalization, derealization, and change in the sense of time'.[125] This series of derealized defensive stances insulates but also isolates the self from ordinary consciousness and normal life. Ruled by fear, the victim can become incapable of pursuing an ordinary life, even long after the threat once prompted their retreat is no longer a danger.

In keeping with the inimical effects of such constriction, Shakespeare's Hotspur is consumed by war to such a degree that he becomes incapable of re-adapting himself to domestic life. The fighting mode that helps him survive fierce struggles and win fame on the battlefield becomes irrelevant, even toxic, in a more peaceful and secure milieu. Attachment to his wife becomes impossible. His emotional blankness, a successful but too persistent adaptation to combat, leads his baffled wife to complain of isolation:

LADY PERCEY

O my good lord, why are you thus alone?

For what offense have I this fortnight been

---

[124] Herman, p. 43.

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

A banished woman from my Harry's bed?[126]

As Shay argues in *Odysseus in America,* for a soldier, to be really 'home' is 'to be emotionally present and engaged'. Physical presence notwithstanding, as a result of his 'emotional shutdown', Hotspur, by contrast, is in every way far away from home.[127] Like Odysseus after the Trojan War, Hotspur becomes in effect a social outcast, a living corpse whose soul has already died in battle.

Much as Hotspur is in his own home, Clarence in *Richard III* finds himself isolated: although one of the most prominent Yorkists, he becomes a downright social outcast. With the exception of a few exchanges with Richard, Clarence does not have any direct access to his royal family or brothers. Any communication with his kin must be effected through the means of a third party, and in all cases without success. Although one of the major powers in the York family, he fails to make a single appearance in the new regime's court life. When he first enters the stage he is already on a street in London, waited upon by an 'armed guard' and escorted as a prisoner to the tower, to which he is confined until the end of his life.[128]

Clarence's insulation is a metaphor: it registers Shakespeare's idea of the psychological state of a veteran, as well as society's attitude toward a soldier returning from war. Although the term combat trauma only emerged in the twentieth century, Shakespeare's dramatisation of Clarence demonstrates that the playwright is

---

[126] William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2002), II. 3. 32-34.

[127] Jonathan Shay, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York: Scribner, 2002), p. 39.

[128] *Richard III*, I. 1. 41.

well aware of the experience that gave rise to the concept. For a combatant such as Clarence whose sense of right and wrong has been damaged, it can be very difficult to return to civilian life.

In *Odysseus in America*, the sequel to *Achilles in Vietnam*, Shay explores the difficulties that many American Vietnam veterans faced in re-adapting themselves to normal life. Much as the Homeric hero Odysseus spends ten years finding his way physically back home, a majority of veterans, Shay argues, are still '[p]sychologically and socially' far away from home. The marginalisation is in part a result of damage to the veteran's *thymos,* having experienced a collapse of their own moral principles while they were at war. But it is also a result of their reception by civilians, who can prove unwilling to accept such soldiers on account of the 'taint of a killer, of blood pollution'.[129] What causes Clarence's insulation is likewise both his own emotional constriction as a result of his inner sense of guilt and society's aversion to reincorporating him as one of their own.

Much as *3 Henry VI* shows how the moral dignity of a soldier can be devastated by his commander's misdeeds, *Richard III* reveals the after-effect of that violation in the soldier's civilian life. Reflecting on his infringement of the holy sacrament, as well as the laws of chivalry, Clarence finds to his regret that the perjury he has previously committed keeps coming back to gnaw his conscience. After recounting his nightmare, a remorseful Clarence tells the keeper, 'I have done those things, | That now give evidence against my soul'.[130] Very much like Hotspur, as well as the Vietnam veterans Shay describes, Clarence dies morally in the war against the Lancastrian family. The sense of guilt that plagues him thereafter renders him ill-suited to civilian

---

[129] Shay, *Odysseus in America*, p. 1, 152.

[130] *Richard III*, I. 4. 66-67.

life. Symbolically, then, Clarence's internment can be said to be self-imposed. His emotional disengagement represents a medieval combatant's difficulty reintegrating with his community.

Clarence is not the only one responsible for his isolation, however. The community to which he previously belonged also plays a significant part. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud notes primitive people's fear of dead relatives, whom they imagine are 'transformed into demons'. This emotional ambivalence, Freud proposes, 'arises […] from the contrast between conscious pain and unconscious satisfaction over the death'.[131] To defend oneself against this satisfaction, which amounts to an expression of former 'hostility' to the deceased person while they were alive, one displaces 'it on to the object of the hostility, on to the dead themselves'.[132]

Bystanders likewise feel ambivalent about the prospect of close contact with a trauma survivor. On one hand, they feel sympathy for a victim's suffering. This feeling is complicated, however, by what Freud identifies as 'hostility'. By unleashing violence on the victim, chance accomplishes what bystanders' intrinsic human aggressiveness naturally, if perhaps secretly, yearns for. Censored by the superego, the instinctual satisfaction of violence tends to be seen as morally deplorable. To relieve himself of moral ambiguity, the bystander displaces his animosity, therefore, onto the victim. Through a process of psychic projection, the bystander cleanses himself of the moral fault caused by his instinctual wish: now it is the victim who is the deplorable one, a bane of the community who must be excluded as filthy.

---

[131] Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *in The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), XIII, pp. 43-224 (p. 115).

[132] *Ibid.*,, p. 117.

The taint of death that a survivor is believed to carry with himself also plays a part in his exclusion. To be traumatised is to be contaminated by death. For the bystander, a survivor becomes what Lifton calls a '"world-destroyer", capable of "infecting the whole world" '.[133] In seeing the 'death taint' that the victim carries, 'outsiders experience a threat to their own sense of human continuity or symbolic immortality, and feel death anxiety and death guilt activated within them'.[134] Isolating victims of trauma helps bystanders avoid this symbolic breakdown of their sense of connection to life: a breakdown that would be induced by closer contact with the victim.

A community's isolation of a trauma survivor amounts, in other words, to a ritual of purification. In *Richard III*, the Yorkist community performs this ritual by isolating Margaret and Clarence. Margaret's appearances, for instance, do not receive any sign of welcome. Even Queen Elizabeth, who has been the target of Richard's ruthless verbal attack, slyly changes her position and joins in the anti-Margaret camp led by her erstwhile accuser, making sure that she does not miss an opportunity to persecute the widow. After Richard castigates Margaret for killing his father York, for example, Elizabeth quickly jumps in: 'So just is God, to right the innocent'.[135]

The Yorkists associate Margaret, moreover, with phrases that in themselves bear signs of stigma. Richard calls her '(f)oul wrinkled witch' and 'hateful withered hag'; others try to explain her away by consigning her to the obscurity of madness, dismissing her as a'lunatic'.[136] These phrases give association with Margaret a taboo-like quality. Much as Christians in medieval England prohibited witchcraft,

---

[133] Lifton, *Death in Life*, p. 517,

[134] *Ibid.*, 170.

[135] *Richard III*, I. 3. 181.

[136] *Ibid.*, I. 3. 163, 214, 253.

which, as Jeffery Russel writes, is 'centered upon the explicit worship of the Devil', the Yorkists transforms Margaret into a demonic outsider: a bearer of their own death anxiety.[137]

Like Margaret, Clarence, too, falls prey to victimisation. An important form through which this process of scapegoating operates in many societies is that of 'class-caste', by which evil and impurity are associated with a particular group of people whose occupations are deemed despicable and defiling.[138] Being the carrier of death, the members of this group become social outcasts, banished by society as something filthy that must be kept out of the area of life. In *Richard III*, Clarence is degraded from a noble duke to a political prisoner, neglected by his former community. This inferiority of status is further emphasized within the play by the fact that most people to whom he is connected and whom he appears alongside are of loathed occupations. With the exception of Richard and Sir Robert Brakenbury, with whom he manage only a few words of conversation on his way to the Tower, the others are of inferior caste: 'centered fairly constantly around blood, death, and dirt', as Hebert Passin writes.[139] The nameless jailer spends his life dealing with condemned prisoners in ghostly and dark prisons forgotten and shunned by the elite society; the two murderers, scavenger-like, trade in blood and feed on the refuse discarded by the upper class.

The process of cultural purification is amplified by 'a spatial polarization'. In *Richard III,* Clarence spends the majority of his time in the Tower of London, a place

---

[137] Jeffery Burton Russel, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 253.

[138] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 293.

[139] *Ibid.*, pp. 283, 309, 330; for Passin, see Lifton, *Broken Connection,* p. 306.

frequently associated in the play with images of the unpacified past, of seclusion, and of death. Clarence, that is, has been cast out of the domain of life; he has become someone ' "beyond the pale" '.[140] To sum up, the connection of the veteran, Clarence, to people of low caste and to the physical location of the Tower symbolically invokes a social ritual of purification. Scapegoating the York family, Clarence has to be excluded from the 'glorious summer' of York, to be regarded as the filth of death, and to do penance for the atrocities that the York family has committed during the war.[141] True, the House of York does temporarily enjoy the delightful measures of peace, but at the cost of the rejection of its faithful soldier. What Shay diagnoses in modern American society appears here, as well, as a shadow hanging over the medieval age and Shakespeare's own time. Shakespeare's representation of Clarence's degradation and demise reveals the predicament a veteran faces after the war that he fought in comes to its conclusion.

5. 'And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er': Clarence's repetition of the unassimilated.

At the beginning of the second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud notes a phenomenon that he observed in WWI veterans. Soldiers return from the battlefield of WWI only to find themselves plagued by unresolved traumatic encounters in the form of nightmares. 'The terrible war which has just ended gave rise to a great number of illnesses of this kind'.[142] As the dream he recounts in the Tower

---

[140] *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 312.

[141] *Richard III*, I. 1. 2.

[142] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, p. 281.

demonstrates, Clarence, like Freud's veteran, is also haunted in his sleep by his wartime experience. Historically, the Battle of Tewkesbury was fought in 1471. A few days later, Edward entered London and started his legitimate reign, a landmark which Richard refers to in the familiar opening lines of the play: 'Now is the winter of our discontent | Made glorious summer by this son of York'.[143] Clarence was not imprisoned in the Tower of London until 1478, however, when irrefutable evidence of his treachery as well as the Woodville family's persistent antagonism sealed his tragic fate. Historically, therefore, there was an interval of seven years between the end of the war and Clarence's imprisonment.

In Shakespeare's dramatic world, however, this gap in time is erased; Clarence's imprisonment happens as if in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. Through this alteration of historical chronology, Shakespeare invokes the image of a veteran, whom, even when asleep, remains in the grip of wartime trauma, tormented by the repetitive nightmarish intrusion characteristic of traumatic disorder. The nightmare's traumatic nature and 'the compulsion to repeat'[144] typical of neurotic dreams can be discerned from the very beginning of Clarence's dream:

CLARENCE

> Methoughts that I had broken from the tower,
> And was embarked to cross to Burgundy;
> And in my company my brother Gloucester.[145]

---

[143] *Richard III*, I. 1. 1-2.

[144] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, p. 290.

[145] *Richard III*, I. 4. 9-11.

At face value, the three introductory lines seem to manifest an innocuous wish for liberation, which Richard has earlier promised. The mentioning of crossing over the sea to Burgundy breaks the illusion, however. Here Shakespeare refers to a historical event not mentioned in his history plays. In 1461, shortly after the execution of York after the Battle of Wakefield, Clarence and Richard were sent to Utrecht, where they were looked after by Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy. By invoking this historical event at the very outset, Shakespeare suggests that the dream, rather than presaging a possible future of liberation, actually signals a reenactment of the disturbing times of the unpleasant conflict. What follows confirms this backward temporality:

CLARENCE

> [...] There we looked toward England,
> And cited up a thousand heavy times,
> During the wars of York and Lancaster,
> That had befall'n us.[146]

Unable to resist the backward gravity of trauma, Clarence is doomed to a ceaseless replaying of past events.

As Freud observes, a trauma victim usually suffers severe symptoms of intrusion: repeatedly brought 'back into the situation of his accident', he 'is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience'.[147] In his history plays, Shakespeare captures the experience of this kind of intrusive symptom through his depiction of some memorable veterans. In *1 Henry IV*, Lady Percy, recounting her

---

[146] *Ibid.*,, I. 4. 13-16.

[147] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, pp. 282, 288.

husband's nightmare, gives a vivid description of a victim labouring under traumatic repetition:

LADY PERCY

In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars,
Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed,
Cry "Courage! To the field!" And thou hast talk'd
Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
Of prisoners' ransom and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late-disturbèd stream,
And in thy face strange motions have appeared,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest.[148]

Lady Percy's speech, as Cahill points out, 'evokes a performance of trauma': it 'represents the spectacle of a figure calling for order even as he himself [Hotspur] is

[148] *1 Henry IV*, II. 3. 47-62.

out of control'.[149] Hotspur's dreams, in other words, are a belated acting out of his wartime trauma. What he dreams about is a replica of warfighting: an automatic reproduction that reflects traumatic memory's inflexible and unadaptable nature. He gives commands to his horse, issues orders to his soldiers for charging or making retreat, demands ransoms for prisoners he has taken, and witnesses the death of numerous soldiers. Fragments of battlefield experience also overwhelm his sleeping self. He talks in his sleep of military objects and combat weapons: 'trenches, tents | Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets | Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin'.[150] Traumatic nightmare obliterates the distinction between past and present; losing its dreamlike quality, Hotspur's dream blends with the grim reality. Perspiring heavily, he behaves like a man who is really engaged in combat; his facial expression, manifesting 'strange emotions',[151] indicates the immediacy of the fighting scene even though he is in reality lying safely in a comfortable chamber of his own house.

Very much like Hotspur, Clarence experiences his nightmare with terrifying immediacy. Upon waking up, the duke, trembling, cannot even differentiate the dream from reality and for some time really believes himself in hell. Fragments of traumatic scenes also pervade his nightly vision, so that he compulsively re-encounters scenes of his traumatisation: 'sights of ugly death', and dead bodies of 'A thousand men', some of which have been subject to horrible decomposition, as well as the avenging ghost of his father-in-law Warwick, a reminder of his violation of his own personal moral code.

---

[149] Cahill, p. 2.

[150] *1 Henry IV*, II. 3. 48-49.

[151] *Ibid.*, II. 3. 3.

Those gory but faithful reproductions of his soldierly experiences culminate in the vivid image of the unappeasable prince with 'bright hair | Dabbled in blood'.[152] The image of the bloodstained prince foregrounds Clarence's grief and guilt at being caught in the untenable position of a convicted sinner. It is Clarence's 'ultimate horror': an image that comprises the suffering of the defenceless and that generates in the survivor, as Lifton explains, 'particularly intense feelings of pity and self-condemnation'.[153] This concept of the 'ultimate horror' helps explain why the image of the prince in Clarence's dream is so obtrusively vivid, given the outrageousness of the murder and the damage that it dealt to Clarence's *themis*.

After experiencing a night 'of fearful dreams, of ugly sight', Clarence ends up condemned to endless 'torment' in the 'legion of foul fiends'.[154] The conclusion, however, does not signify the end of the nightmare. Like his war trauma, the nightmare also reaches and refers beyond itself; refusing to be fixed to a specified point of spatiality, it engulfs the past, the present, and the future, rendering the very act of awakening a re-entering into the same nightmarish situation. Much as the WWI veteran does in 'wak[ing] up in another fright',[155] Clarence comes around 'trembling' and devastated by 'dismal terror'. From the fright of the nightmare, that is, he is catapulted into the fright of awakening. He finds himself compelled, moreover, to repeat the nightmare and the concomitant fright through the act of recounting the dream, replaying his terrifying experience earlier the same 'miserable night'.[156] This

---

[152] *Richard III*, I. 4. 23, 25, 54.

[153] Lifton, *Death in Life*, p. 48.

[154] *Richard III*, I. 4. 3, 57, 58.

[155] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, p. 282.

[156] *Richard III*, I. 4. 61, 7.

sense of compulsive repetition is underscored by the fact that the conversation between Clarence and his keeper is predominated by the past tense. Suggesting a fixation on the traumatic past, it renders the living of the present a reliving of the past. At the heart of Clarence's post war experience, then, has always been a question of recitation, replay, and reenactment of his unresolved wartime encounters.

2
Traumatography in the First Tetralogy

Recalling with enthusiasm Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI*, Thomas Nashe writes:

> How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and have his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at severall times), who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.[157]

Nashe's praise suggests that for a contemporary audience, Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI* recalled a tradition of English heroism; the play served as belated testimony, rescuing Talbot and the martial prowess that he represents from the shroud of silencing time. Personifying in Talbot a familiar chivalric ideal, one that in his own time had become obsolescent, Shakespeare transforms the dauntless Earl into a kind of monument, to which audiences are invited to pay due homage. His courage fills them with pride and respect; his participation in spectacular stage combat sets him 'fresh bleeding' before their sight; and his death, which he meets calmly and with dignity, moves them to tears. In short, Nashe recounts, the play allows the audience to engage empathetically with a fading vision of a glorious, warlike past.

Yet Nashe's view is not the whole story. Taking Shakespeare's Talbot out of context, Nashe overlooks or at least underplays here the broader import of

---

[157] Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 113.

Shakespeare's distinctive vision of the Wars of the Roses. Rather than bringing history together, Shakespeare's first tetralogy of English history plays introduces a radically new form of historiography, an example of what could be described as traumatography, where the verbal is displaced by the physical, much as meaning itself gives way to a troubling sense of incoherence. Paradoxically, Shakespeare suggests, the process of attempting to portray the history of a civil war live on stage hinders as much as it enables the possibility of that history actually being understood by his audience and incorporated into their own narrative sense of themselves. To perform Shakespeare's texts is to present the transmission of history as in no small measure a passing-on of indecipherability, conveyed through puzzling and extreme gesticulation. The audience's physical presence in the theatre, moreover, turns out to register their absence; Shakespeare introduces gaps or moments of disconnect between the spectacle and the spectators that complicate their assumed rapport.

What produces this failure of reciprocity? And what does it mean for the transmission of meaning to be blocked and disappear in the very act of theatrical performance? At the heart of these questions lies the problem of giving testimony to trauma. What makes a historical event traumatic, as opposed to merely unfortunate, painful, or unwanted, is its resistance to transmission: its apparently incorrigible incompatibility with a traumatised subject's deeply-held beliefs about themselves, history, and the general order of the world at large. The separation that emerges as a result of this dissonance when recounting the trauma to an audience that shares these assumptions, the same world-view that the trauma itself places under duress, causes further trauma to both the teller and the audience; the transmission of history becomes in effect the transmission of an upsetting enigma. Shakespeare's early history plays

dramatise precisely this kind of disconnect: cryptic gesticulation comes to take the place of meaningful patterns.

Shakespeare's Margaret of Anjou, in particular, alerts us to the more general process at work. In the last play of Shakespeare's first tetralogy, *Richard III,* Margaret is an anachronistic relic, existing at the mercy of the Yorkist dynasty. Her mission of telling proves impossible to fulfil, because the society around her refuses to acknowledge her trauma. The inaccessibility of the recognition that she seeks is exacerbated, moreover, by the collapse of her inner addressee, in keeping with what Dominic Lacapra calls 'traumatropism'. All that remains, therefore, is for her story to play itself out repetitively as an enigma and an example of what Freud describes as 'the uncanny'.

Margaret's gradual disappearance as a character serves as a synecdoche, moreover, for a historical development: the displacement of one kind of audience by another. As the age of chivalry fades, and its codes of honour become ever more obviously out-of-date, the assumed audience is no longer able to identify as easily, if at all, with a figure such as Talbot. Former desire for restitution gives way to a new apathy. In the face of such an audience, Talbot's due cannot be recognised, let alone returned; dramatic re-enactment of his claim on exemplary honour does not lead to a commensurate recognition of his worth, but instead to a sense of the chasm between then and now, Talbot and his audience, Shakespeare's audience: in a word, to trauma.

Shakespeare's Talbot, in this sense, is a representative example of the more general Elizabethan chivalric revival. Impelled by what Cathy Caruth calls 'archival desire', early modern English neo-medievalism helped to paper over the trauma of England's

ultimate loss to France in the Hundred Years' War.[158] And it is this trauma to which Shakespeare draws our attention over the course of his first tetralogy. Language, the tool of traditional historiography, proves inadequate; incomprehensible gesture comes to serve instead as an index of trauma that is not and perhaps can never be worked through.

1. Trauma's inauguration: the impossibility of telling.

As is well known, a kind of Catch-22 inhibits the recounting of trauma. Trauma prompts a need to tell the story of what happened; by its very nature, however, such a catastrophic experience proves very difficult, if not in fact impossible, to communicate.[159] The telling of trauma, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub explain, is 'inhabited by the impossibility of telling'.[160] Ideology contributes to this aporia: most societies, as Judith Herman notes, prefer 'to see, hear, and speak no evil'.[161] Central authorities tend to fear such testimony as a potential disruption of hegemonic

---

[158] Cathy Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 78.

[159] On the importance of giving testimony to trauma, see Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* IX, p. 289; Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 78; Lacapra, *Writing History Writing Trauma* , p. 90; Herman, p. 175.

[160] Felman and Laub, p. 79.

[161] Herman, p. 7.

discourse.[162] By its very nature, investigation into trauma, as Herman observes, introduces 'realms of the unthinkable', leading it to founder on 'fundamental questions of belief'. Freud's study of hysteria, for example, led to his 'discovery of childhood sexual exploitation', which in turn triggered such an overwhelming outcry from the Vienna elite that he was eventually forced to drop what has since become known as his 'seduction theory'.[163]

What a survivor recounts, moreover, is not a traumatic event *per se* but instead, as Caruth explains, the breakdown of their epistemological framework: the story of 'the

---

[162] On trauma's capacity to cause socio-political disruption, see Jenny Edkins, 'Trauma Time and Politics', in *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present*, ed. Duncan Bell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 99-115 (p. 107).

[163] Herman's pro-feminist and positivist reading of trauma fails to fully capture the predicament in which Freud finds himself when studying trauma. In identifying the external patriarchal system as the sole suppressor of the trauma victim's voice, Herman somehow neglects the relation of real trauma to the hysterical lie, which is a key part of Freud's seduction theory. How much can one credit a victim's story as it relates to the empirical truth? To what a degree can the narrated trauma be said to be not physically experienced but fantasized by the victim as a result of hypnotization? Can this incertitude of the real account for the disappearance of the teller's voice? Freud's dilemma cannot simply be reduced to the effect of the workings of the patriarchal suppression. That said, Herman's insight is still relevant, nonetheless, insofar as hegemony does play a role in the suppression of trauma's voice, especially, as in the case of Shakespeare's Talbot, when it comes to the transmission of history.

impossibility of grasping the threat to one's own life'.[164] As a crisis of representation, an impasse (Gk, *aporia*), the act of giving testimony leads to what Lacapra calls 'traumatropism', an unwelcome modification engendered by the 'perplexing question of how to represent and relate to limit events'. As LaCapra points out, traumatic 'limit events', inaccessible to language, are uniquely difficult to represent or verbally reconstruct. The incomprehensibility that is the distinguishing feature of a traumatic event leads, therefore, instead to a 'sacralization of the event which may prompt a foreclosure, denigration, or inadequate account […] of representation'. Transformed into 'the sublime or the sacred', traumatic memory is now 'valorized as a limit experience or as stigmata demanding endless melancholy or grieving, whose mitigation or rendering in narrative is perceived as objectionably consoling or even as sacrilegious'.[165] 'Traumatropism', in other words, is the establishment of a cryptic primal pattern that remains a mystery to both the traumatised teller and their uncomprehending audience: an acting-out of their memory of the original event, rather than a working-through.

Insofar as such testimony falls short of narrative and remains unrecognised, the result of its repetition is not healing but instead further traumatisation, re-inscribing the original wound. Compared to the devastating event *per se*, Juliet Mitchell argues, the victim's inability to secure recognition from their social environs is in fact more liable to cause trauma. '(W)hat in fact haunts is the memory of not being recognized or noticed […] (T)he breaching instance is the only weapon that pierces to this human

---

[164] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 62.

[165] Lacapra, *Writing History Writing Trauma*, pp. xiv, 91-93, xiv-xv.

level of the need for recognition'.[166] For Mitchell, the process of the exchange with the past requires an empathetic audience; without such a sympathetic, understanding sounding board, retelling merely proves an occasion for further trauma.

In keeping with Mitchell's observation, Ellinghausen proposes that 'failed recognition' is key to triggering trauma. Rather than being 'the direct result of any particular incident', trauma, Ellinghausen argues, 'stems from a sense of the self's absence, brought on by the failure of others to properly recognise and thus validate the victim in the terms of his own ethos'. If trauma amounts to a breach, then this breach lies exactly in the fact that a victim's 'sense of self' is challenged, repudiated, or remain unacknowledged by his audience.[167]

Turning to the larger scale of cultural history, Mitchell's observations raise a question. What are the implications for the transmission of historical narrative when new cultural norms displace traditional assumptions? As Shakespeare's early history plays reveal, what emerges most immediately is a new form of writing practice, which in its cryptic lacunae resembles traumatic testimony. As in the case of a more personal crisis, the supercession of one cultural moment by another can, as Caruth suggests, call into question underlying assumptions about the teleology of history and the possibility of progress. According to Caruth's ambitious, speculative re-interpretation of Freud's concept of the death drive, the entirety of human history can be understood as a traumatic repetition of a primal trauma, the trauma of birth, 'an awakening out of a "death" for which there was no preparation'.[168] How can we testify to a history to

---

[166] Juliet Mitchell, 'Trauma, Recognition, and the Place of Language', *Diacritics*, 28 (1998), 121-33 (p.125).

[167] Ellinghausen, pp. 264-82 (p. 266).

[168] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 65.

which no one can sufficiently and adequately bear witness? The only answer, it seems, for Caruth at least is that we are doomed to be repeatedly confronted by the return of incomprehensible violence.

Understood figuratively rather than necessarily literally, in keeping with Stephen A. Mitchell's re-imagining of Freud's emphasis on infant experience as what he calls 'the metaphor of the baby', Caruth's concept of primal trauma becomes useful for understanding what happens when an author such as Shakespeare tries to represent a traumatic historical event such as the Wars of the Roses, the civil war that had torn England apart only two or three generations in the past and that he and his contemporaries feared, not without cause, might break out again, given disagreement over royal succession and especially, the ongoing, hotly-contested English Reformation.[169] Given the constraints imposed by ideology, the primal trauma, in this case, civil war, cannot be received on its own terms; the 'limit event' or series of events can only be approached obliquely through means of representation and articulation that, as Shakespeare shows, uncannily replicate the trauma itself, displacing and distorting its actual provenance. Fright or more precisely, as Caruth describes it, 'lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly', not only obscures, even erases, unassimilated nuances of first-hand testimony, but also generates layers of further distortion, writing over the original event like a palimpsest.[170]

2. 'Have done, have done': Richard III.

---

[169] Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 125-50.

[170] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 62.

In the first three plays of the first tetralogy, *1-3 Henry VI*, Margaret of Anjou is the quintessential virago, wielding considerable political and military might. In *Richard III*, however, she is reduced to a mouthpiece for relentless, substantial, and unsparing expressions of grief and indignation. She states her purpose clearly in her first appearance, when she tells Richard that she stays in England only to recall the many wrongs that she has suffered on his account: 'But repetition of what thou hast marred'.[171] And in her attacks on the Yorkists, her memory of their misdeeds is amazingly exact. Like Echo's cries to Narcissus, however, her 'speaking truth to power' proves futile. Margaret's voice is not heard, at least not by the characters on stage, but instead drowned out. The nobility collaborates to marginalise her testimony.

As Judith Herman argues, progress in the study of trauma requires the support of 'a political movement powerful enough to legitimate an alliance between investigators and patients and to counteract the ordinary social processes of silencing and denial'.[172] Otherwise and more ordinarily, dominant socio-political forces which have benefited from past violence tend to stifle the voices of its victims. Margaret, a relic of a past they would just soon rather forget, disrupts the Yorkist family that serves as her reluctant host and serves in this sense as a symbol of the unruliness of history more generally considered, out of sync with the hegemonic ambitions of such dynasties, as well as other forms of inevitably transient, finally unstable central authority.

Those in sovereign power, here, Richard III, tend to promote readings of historical events as linear narrative, culminating in their own ascent, by virtue of which the past can be safely laid to rest: 'all the clouds that loured upon our house | In the deep

---

[171] *Richard III*, I. 3. 164.

[172] Herman, p. 9.

bosom of the ocean buried'(1.1.3-4). Margaret, by contrast, is unsettling. The House of York proclaims, 'Farewell, sour annoy | For here I hope begins our lasting joy'.[173] Meanwhile Margaret, however, unwilling to forget, insists that past crimes demand their due. Those implicated in the deaths of those she loved will pay blood for blood: 'none may live his natural age | But by some unlooked accident cut off'.

As Herman notes, perpetrators can use a great variety of means to ensure that victims' voices go unheard, ranging 'from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization'.[174] And Shakespeare's Richard, master of sophistry, is a paradigmatic example. In the first act of *Richard III*, the eponymous Machiavel rapidly neutralises the threat posed by Margaret's demand for remembrance of the past. When Margaret confronts him with his murderous deeds, Richard recalls the death of his father, as well as his brother Rutland:

RICHARD

The curse of my noble father laid on thee
When thou didst crown his warlike brows with paper,
And with thy scorns drew'st rivers from his eyes,
And then to dry them, gav'st the Duke a clout
Steeped in the faultless blood of pretty Rutland —
His curse then, from bitterness of soul
Denounced against thee, are fall'n upon thee;

---

[173] *3 Henry VI*, V. 7. 44-45.

[174] Herman, pp. 7-8.

And God, not we, hath plagued thy bloody deed.[175]

By deflecting the focus of the conversation to the death of his own father, Richard reminds the audience that he, too, is in a sense a victim of trauma. Margaret's grief loses its distinctiveness and individual import. Her family's death, Richard maintains, answers to her own crime, including not only murder but also outrageous cruelty, mocking his father with a paper crown and giving him a 'clout' stained with the blood of his son to wipe his tears. This 'bloody deed', Richard suggests, violated natural law, to the point that God was bound to punish her. In other words, craftily undermining Margaret's potential to arouse empathy, and in keeping with the strategy Eric Santner calls 'narrative fetishism', Richard uses the Christian concept of divine providence as a legitimating framework, so that Margaret's wrongdoing, cast here as a primal crime, sanctions any ensuing violence.[176]

On account of her tendency towards 'traumatropism', Margaret herself, however, also contributes to the separation between her testimony and her audience. When other female characters such as the Elizabeth and the Duchess of York gather to recount their losses, Margaret interrupts their collaborative mourning and insists, by contrast, on the singular severity of her tribulations in particular: 'If ancient sorrow be most reverend, | Give mine the benefit of seniory, | And let my griefs frown on the

---

[175] *Richard III*, I. 3. 173-80.

[176] Eric L. Santner, 'History beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma', in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 143-154 (p.144).

upper hand'.[177] All other 'griefs', she maintains, are but poor replicas of hers, unable to match her pattern of 'high perfection'.[178] In keeping with this sense of privilege and 'seniory', Margaret urges the women to adopt her testimony as a replacement for their own: 'Tell over your woes again by viewing mine'. She calls for repetition akin to that of the Christian liturgy, which commemorates Christ's Passion, as well as quasi-religious ascetism: 'forbear to sleep the night, and fast the day', she urges Elizabeth.[179] In framing her trauma as primal, Margaret recasts it as a myth: 'sacralizes' it, to use Lacapra's term.

Margaret's effort to recast her trauma as an earthly analogue of religion also informs the rebuke she levels at the Duchess of York for giving birth to Richard: 'From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept | A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death'.[180] Like the descent of Lucifer, or the fall of Man, Richard's birth serves here for Margaret as the *fons et origo* of all the subsequent trauma that bedevils (pun intended…) the Houses of both York and Lancaster. This vindictive indictment places Richard within a version of Christian providential history popularized by medieval biblical drama, in keeping with a pattern John Parker identifies as 'the typology of Antichrist', and which Patrick Gray, for example, finds at work in the structure of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar.* Shakespeare's Caesar, Gray argues, like Augustus Caesar in medieval cycle plays, as well as characters such as Lucifer and Herod,

---

[177] *Richard III*, IV. 4. 35-37.

[178] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 66, 39,

[179] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 118.

[180] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 47-48.

serves as ‘a foil for the future Christ’; his fall and Christ’s rise ‘can be seen as the polar opposite of the other, at once similar and diametrically opposed’.[181]

Richard by this light is, at least for Margaret, the opposite of Christ. Whereas Jesus, the son of God, descended to the earth to bring about man’s reconciliation with God, Richard is ‘hell’s black intelligencer | Only reserved their factor to buy souls | And send them thither’.[182] Christ’s Incarnation, born of the Virgin Mary, is heralded by angels and supernatural portents; Richard’s birth is also prodigious, but of a more mundane, less appealing character: he comes into the world, as he himself says in *3 Henry VI*, ‘legs forward’ and ‘is born with teeth’.[183] Margaret takes these omens as proof that Richard is an agent (‘factor’) of the devil: ‘sealed’ in his ‘nativity | The slave of nature and the son of hell’.[184] By his Passion and his Resurrection, Christ undoes the Fall of Man and reopens the possibility of a messianic future, albeit only after his Second Coming. Richard, too, by Margaret’s account, changes the course of history, but only to introduce, by contrast, a cycle of repetitive violence, recreating in each subsequent generation the tragic death of Prince Edward.

---

[181] John Parker, *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); cp. Patrick Gray, *Shakespeare and the Fall of the Roman Republic: Selfhood, Stoicism, and Civil War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 202-03, 183. See also Susan Snyder, ‘Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* as an Inverted Saint’s Life’, *Studies in Philology* 63 (1966): 565-77.

[182] *Richard III,* V. 4. 71-72.

[183] *3 Henry VI*, V. 6.71, 75.

[184] *Richard III*, I. 3. 228-29.

The typology of Antichrist allows Margaret to press Christian providential history into service as a means to try to articulate her trauma, much as Richard does in the opening act of the play when he reminds her of her torture and murder of his father. This transformation of her trauma into myth, however, renders it both enigmatic and insoluble. The cost of casting herself, as well as Richard, as abiding and unsurpassable archetypes is that Margaret abandons all hope that any representation of her trauma might allow her to work through it and move on, as opposed to re-enacting it *ad infinitum*, both in her own person and by proxy in the person of those generations whom she imagines will come after her.

On stage, Margaret's attempts to arouse compassion on her behalf elicit little more than irritation and indifference. When she tries to recount the story of her son's death, Buckingham, for example, stops her impatiently: 'Peace, peace, for shame, if not for thy charity'. When Margaret tries to resume, he dismisses her again: 'Have done, have done'. His refusal to listen to her serves as an apt symbol of the failure of communication characteristic of efforts to articulate the experience of trauma. In keeping with the ideology of a central authority which prefers to suppress the memory of past acts of violence, acts which helped to establish its own hegemony, Buckingham sees the boundary between present and past, himself and Margaret, spectator and spectacle, as firm, fixed, and impenetrable. When Margaret exempts him from the compass of her curse, Buckingham professes himself unconcerned: 'For curses never pass / The lips of those that breathe them in the air'.[185]

'Why should she live, to fill the world with words?'[186] the future Richard III asks at the end of *3Henry VI,* when Margaret asks to be executed, and Edward stays his

---

[185] Ibid., I. 3. 272, 278, 284-85.

[186] Ibid., V. 5. 44.

hand. In the play that follows, *Richard III*, Margaret is not a spirit of justice returning from the past, like the ghost of Hamlet Senior, to spur others into action. What she symbolises can be better understood instead as the painful difficulty, even impossibility, of adequate communication that haunts victims' attempts to articulate their experience of trauma, as well as the desire for recognition that drives them to continue trying to do so, nonetheless. Margaret embodies a more general, inevitable, and immaterial disconnect between traumatic events and the audience that attempts to make sense of them at more than one remove, separated as well as brought closer by their representation. She is the personification of historiography as traumatography, in which a 'limit event' or series of events such as a civil war resists assimilation within a shared, familiar narrative, yet cannot be dispelled altogether: history as an uncanny remainder, like a ghost, repeatedly returning to trouble more comfortable accounts of collaboration and linear progress.

For Freud, 'the uncanny' is 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression'.[187] Freud associates the uncanny with compulsive repetition, as well as the unsettling phenomenon of the perceived double or *doppelgänger*. The experience, by his account, is by its very nature anachronistic; its source is not the present but the past, for which its present and apparent impetus or 'trigger' is merely a proxy. In *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, references to the death of a child tend to fit this description: sweet and tender plants 'untimely cropped'. And one possible source of the uncanny import of such images was the mystery of the Princes in the Tower, still unsolved to this day. Within the plays, however, it is the death of Prince Edward that is invested

---

[187] Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', in *The Penguin Freud Library*, (see Freud, above) XIV, pp. 335-376 (pp. 363-64).

with the gravity of a primal scene, akin to the Fall of Man. Although the Battle of Tewkesbury had in fact taken place when this prince was seventeen, by no means too young for combat by the standards of the day, Margaret, for example, speaks of Edward as a 'child' and emphasises his 'youth', as well as his innocence. 'Men ne'er spend their fury on a child', she protests.[188]

Historical accounts of Prince Edward's death differ. Although some contemporary sources recall that the prince died fighting at Tewkesbury, most later sources adopt a more sentimental and sympathetic colour. Edward in these versions does not die on the battlefield itself, but instead is cruelly murdered afterwards by dastardly Yorkists. For Freud, the distinguishing feature of the uncanny is '"perpetual recurrence of the same thing"'.[189] And at the end of Shakespeare's first tetralogy of English history plays, that 'thing' is the death of Prince Edward, as described in tragic vein in later revisionist accounts of the Wars of the Roses. The curse that Anne levels at Richard in *Richard III*, 'If he ever have child, abortive be it',[190] re-enacts Margaret's parting curse in *3 Henry VI*: 'if you ever chance to have a child, | Look in his youth to have him so cut off | As, deathmen, you have rid this sweet young prince!'[191] The Duchess of York, as well, describes herself to Richard as 'she that might have intercepted thee, | By strangling thee in her accursed womb'.[192]

Another mark of the uncanny in these plays is Elizabeth Woodville's reprise as unwitting *doppelgänger* of the earlier rise and fall of Margaret of Anjou. Like

---

[188] *3 Henry VI*, V. 5. 62, 57.

[189] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, p. 292.

[190] *Richard III*, I. 2. 21.

[191] *3 Henry VI*, V. 5. 65-67.

[192] *Richard III*, IV. 4. 137-38.

Margaret, Elizabeth marries an English king at a considerable cost to the dignity and financial interests of the English crown. Like Margaret again, she enjoys a moment of superlative fortune, including the birth of a promising male heir, only in the end to lose, not only her high status, but also her children, who are murdered by her nemesis, Richard. Margaret sees in Elizabeth a repetition of her own trauma: 'vain flourish of my fortune', she calls her; 'poor shadow' and 'the presentation of but what I was'. More generally speaking, Elizabeth serves as a synecdoche for history as cycle rather than progress, akin to the turning of Fortune's proverbial wheel: 'the flattering index of a direful pageant', Margaret calls her, 'heaved a-high, to be hurl'd down below'.[193]

3. 'I know not where I am or what I do': Talbot as enigma.

Margaret of Anjou is the only character who appears in all four of the plays that together comprise Shakespeare's first tetralogy of English history plays. By the end, in *Richard III*, she comes to personify a new form of historiography: Shakespeare's early modern proto-traumatography. Margaret embodies the compulsion to repeat and to see double characteristic of the uncanny, as well as the disconnect between spectacle and spectator characteristic of attempts to represent traumatic events such as civil war and the death of one's own children. She lives on in this last play of the series as an unwanted, unassimilated, and unrecognised remainder, and in this sense represents, as well, the experience of being historically superseded; the disorientation and alienation that arises as one cultural moment gives way to another.

By this light, Margaret bears comparison to another overdetermined character who looms larger, by contrast, at the beginning of the tetralogy: Talbot. Successor to an

[193] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 82-84, 85-86.

obsolescent chivalric tradition, witness to that ideal's ongoing degeneration, Talbot pursues what he sees as honourable, only to be met, like Margaret, with dishonour and incomprehension. Talbot is the linchpin, moreover, in a screen memory that serves to bolster the claims of the Tudor dynasty. His story, as Shakespeare presents it in *1 Henry VI*, re-imagines a kind of primal wound, England's loss to France in the later Hundred Years' War, and personifies the supersession of a former cultural order.

Despite his martial prowess, Talbot in this play ultimately proves a victim. The story he enacts is one of obsolescence and eventual, inevitable death, including not only his own, but also that of the chivalric ideal he represents. And like Margaret's testimony, Talbot's meets by and large with silent apathy: an index of a world that has changed beyond all recognition. The underlying crisis appears straightaway at the very beginning of the play at the funeral of Henry V, where we encounter English lords attempting to explain the formidable warrior king's unexpected, early, and 'dishonourable' death. (He was thought to have died of dysentery, although Shakespeare glosses over this final, less-than-storybook detail.)

Most critics to date see Henry's death as an unbearably painful gap, a hole in the fabric of the nation upon which a meaning must be conferred. John Wilders, for example, finds in the scene a microcosm of the function of all of Shakespeare's history plays, considered as a genre. The nobles' speculation, he argues, is an instance and an analogue of Shakespeare's own 'analysis of the causes of social and political crisis'.[194] R. A. Foakes draws attention to Shakespeare's exploration here of what he

---

[194] John Wilders, *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1978), p. 29.

calls 'the politics of violence'.[195] Political contention is apparent in the enmity between the Bishop of Winchester and the Duke of Gloucester, who attempt to prevail over each other by offering opposite 'interpretations of Henry's death'. Edward Burns reads the scene as an epistemological crisis, a 'clash of self-inventing centers of meaning' as a result of a 'panic consequent on the absence of an authority to validate meanings'.[196]

At once social, political, and epistemological, the crisis posed by Henry V's unexpected death can be most immediately understood as traumatic. Trauma can be social as well as personal; as Kai Erikson points out, 'sometimes the tissues of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of the mind and body'.[197] Attempts to confer meaning on his death are an act of mourning, through which the English lords attempt to assimilate a traumatic blow. As he is represented here, Henry V was the nonpareil of English martial prowess; the zenith of medieval chivalry; Talbot stands in relation to him in what follows as an epigone or *doppelgänger*, like Elizabeth Woodville to Margaret of Anjou. Nor is he the only one; already in the first act of the play, the death of Salisbury, whom A. L. French identifies as another such 'exemplar of Old English Chivalry', heralds a new round of

---

[195] R. A. Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 39.

[196] William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 1*, ed. by Edward Burns (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare), p. 87.

[197] Kai Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp.183-199 (p.185).

mourning.[198] Much in contrast to the so-called Whig vision of history, progress is by no means underway; not even a prospect out on the horizon; instead, through an uncanny cycle of repetitive decline, the English nation falls here ever further from its former moral fibre and martial success.

For a trauma survivor, telling the story of their experience, difficult though it may be, is indispensable, insofar as it allows them, not only to work through their own experience and piece together a shattered sense of self, but also to fulfil the responsibility that they feel afterwards to those who did not survive, a sense of duty that Jay Lifton, for instance, calls 'survivor mission'.[199] It is this impulse that drives Talbot, as a survivor of the same unexpected cannon fire that killed Salisbury, to dedicate the English victory over Orleans that he leads thereafter to Salisbury's memory. 'Now I have paid my vow unto his soul', Talbot tells himself.[200] Talbot asks his men to place Salisbury's body 'in the market-place' and announces plans to build a tomb for him in captured city's 'chiefest temple'.[201]

TALBOT

> And that hereafter ages may behold
> What ruin happened in revenge of him
> Within their chiefest temple I'll erect

---

[198] A. L. French, 'The Mills of God and Shakespeare's Early History Plays', *English Studies*, 55 (1974), 313-323 (p. 313).

[199] Robert Jay Lifton, 'An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', in *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*, (see Erikson, above), pp. 128-147 (p. 138).

[200] *1 Henry VI*, II. 2. 7.

[201] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 5, 12.

A tomb wherein his corpse shall be interred,

That everyone may read,

[…]

The treacherous manner of his mournful death.

And what a terror he had been to France.[202]

When Talbot himself dies, however, he receives no such treatment. Sent to learn what prisoners the French have taken and 'survey the bodies of the dead', the English lord Sir William Lucy asks the French lords for 'valiant Lord Talbot', 'the great Alcides of the field', 'great marshal to Henry the Sixth', and learns forthwith from Joan la Pucelle that 'him that thou magnifies with all these titles | Stinking and fly-blown lies here at our feet'.[203] Charles the Dauphin grants Lucy permission to bear the body away, but we hear few particulars of what is to follow: 'burial as beseems their worth'.[204] Lucy vows to rear a 'phoenix' from 'their ashes', but what rings in the mind in closing is Joan's thorough disdain: 'let him have 'em; to keep them here, | They would but stink and putrefy the air'.[205] Not least because it is preceded by the death of his son, young Talbot, the death of 'old Talbot' here signals the irrevocable demise of the age of chivalry and the advent of a different kind of history.[206]

---

[202] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 10-14, 16-17.

[203] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 169, 172-73, 183, 187-88

[204] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 198,

[205] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 205, 204, 201-02,

[206] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 199.

4. The crisis of the aristocracy: obsolescence, nostalgia, and incomprehension.

In his account of what he calls 'the civilizing process', Norbert Elias argues that gradual centralisation of military might and financial means within what would become the various present-day nation-states of Europe gained momentum 'towards the end of the Middle Ages' and culminated in the absolutism characteristic of seventeenth-century monarchies on the Continent. The consolidation of power under the Tudors in England in the sixteenth century is an apt example of this process, and with it a transformation of the nobility, as Elias notes, from 'warriors' to 'courtiers'. As the crown acquired a monopoly of force, and the nation-state developed an ever-more complex 'network of interdependence', the nobility's former tendency to act spontaneously on their own emotions, not only physically through acts of summary violence, but also verbally, came to be seen as intolerably dangerous. In order to retain their hold on power, if only now more indirectly, former warriors found that they had to adapt themselves to 'multitude of intertwining chains of interdependence which run through every single social function'. Power, they discovered, now belongs, not to would-be self-sufficient, intemperate warlords such as Shakespeare's Hotspur, Coriolanus, or King Lear, but instead to the ruling monarch's much more calculating, socially attuned entourage, as well as clever, prudent bureaucrats. After centuries of defining themselves as a distinct martial class, Shakespeare's aristocrats learn to their chagrin that their status now depends less on personal martial prowess than on their capacity for emotional self-control.[207]

---

[207] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), pp. 389, 379.

Shakespeare was keenly aware of the ongoing centralization of sovereign power in his own lifetime: the process social historian Laurence Stone memorably describes as 'the crisis of the aristocracy' in England from, in his account, 1558 to 1641. In light of his representation of the changing role of the nobility, and with a nod to Elias, David Quint, for example, aligns Shakespeare with other seventeenth-century playwrights such as Corneille: his Roman plays, Quint argues, as well as his second tetralogy of English history plays are a 'schematic treatment' of ''a nobility losing its status before the pressure of a new historical force'. Elias' contrast between 'warrior' and 'courtier' can be seen, as well, in sharp relief in the contrast between characters such as Oswald and Kent in *King Lear* and Osric and Laertes in *Hamlet.* 'Greatness must curb itself', Quint explains: 'the new style' is 'mediocre deference'.[208]

In *1 Henry VI*, the difference between warrior and courtier underpins the contrast between England and France, and in particular between Talbot and Joan la Pucelle. Standing at the walls of the city of Rouen, Talbot dares the French to come forth and 'take up arms like gentlemen'.[209] Faced with assured defeat, he refuses to flee for life, even though doing so would be militarily advantageous; instead, he and his son, 'seal'd the son of chivalry', agree that they will 'side by side together live and die'.[210] These decisions seem in one sense grand, but in another suspect. As Talbot admits, his son's assistance will not turn the tide: 'the help of one stands me in little stead'.[211] Nor does his own stubborn last stand accomplish anything of note.

---

[208] David Quint, 'The Tragedy of Nobility of the Seventeenth-Century Stage', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 67 (2006), 7-29.

[209] *1 Henry VI*, III. 2. 69.

[210] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 84, 54

[211] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 86.

Why does Talbot accept his son's refusal to abandon him? Why not flee with him instead? Like Hotspur, Coriolanus, and Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Talbot falls prey to what Wayne A. Rebhorn calls 'the imperial self'.[212] 'Let's die in pride',[213] Talbot concludes: in Christian discourse, a mortal sin, rather than a virtue. Joan la Pucelle's contemptuous treatment of their bodies in the scene that follows hammers home the point. 'What is honour?' Falstaff asks. 'Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday'.[214] As in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Mark Antony insists on fighting at sea rather than land simply to spite his rival Octavian, despite the disadvantage that he knows he and his troops will incur, Talbot's reckless courting of honour comes to seem in the end short-sighted: a relic of a bygone age.[215]

Typical of the emerging class is the French side, represented by Joan la Pucelle. Pragmatic and calculating, Joan stands a stark contrast to her fierce but imprudent English opponent. When the French lose Orleans, she keeps herself cool, unlike the lords around her; rather than arguing about trifles, she advises them to gather soldiers and 'lay new platforms to endamage' the English army. Having won back Rouen, she scoffs at Talbot's challenge to combat, as it would secure no military advantage. 'Dare ye come forth and meet us in the field?' Talbot cries. 'Belike your lordship takes us then for fools', Joan replies, 'To try if that our own be ours or no'.[216]

---

[212] Wayne A. Rebhorn, 'The Crisis of Aristocracy in Julius Caesar', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 43 (1990), 75-111.

[213] *1 Henry VI*, IV. 4. 112.

[214] *1 Henry IV*, V. 1. 134, 136-37.

[215] On the decline of dueling in Shakespeare's lifetime, see Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[216] *1 Henry VI,* II. 1. 77, III. 2. 60-62.

Octavian responds in like vein to Mark Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* when the defeated Antony challenges him to single combat. 'That he and Caesar might / Determine this great war in single fight!' Cleopatra muses, when her lady-in-waiting, Charmian, asks her to retire to her chamber. 'Then Antony, -- but now – well, on'. As Cleopatra knows, Octavian has no interest in 'personal combat'. 'Let the old ruffian know | I have many other ways to die', the future Augustus Caesar tells his lieutenants to reply; 'meantime laugh at his challenge'.[217]

Burgundy calls Joan a 'shameless courtezan', and she does indeed seem indifferent to traditional norms of martial honour. When Lucy lists Talbot's dozen or so grand titles of nobility, Lord of this and Lord of that, 'created, for his rare success in arms', Joan mocks his 'stately style' as 'silly' and 'tedious'.[218] Like Buckingham with Margaret of Anjou, she dismisses Lucy as well as Talbot out of hand. Their sense of their own importance finds no purchase; as in Falstaff's better-known soliloquy, '[w]hat is honour?'[219] Shakespeare represents on stage the same disconnect that he discerns in his own cultural moment between nostalgia for the age of chivalry and a new dynamic: the inexorable displacement of the warrior by the courtier.

Securing recognition of a traumatic experience through the process trauma theorists tend to refer to simply as 'telling' requires an understanding addressee. Martial feats of derring-do such as those of Talbot and his son, designed to fulfil the requirements of a stringent honour code, can be understood as an analogous attempt to win recognition from an audience. What happens, however, if the addressee does not

---

[217] William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by John Wilders (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995), IV. 4. 36-7, 38, 1. 4-6.

[218] *1 Henry VI,* III. 2. 44, IV. 4. 174, 184, 186.

[219] *1 Henry IV*, V. 1. 134.

understand? If the audience, like Joan, does not share the warrior's code? The performance in that case becomes cryptic, uncanny, like the form of historiography I describe here as traumatography. The scorn that Talbot's grand gestures meet with from not only Joan, but also the Dauphin, presage Margaret's later, futile expressions of grief and outrage. The early modern mindset that Joan represents becomes more pervasive over the course of the tetralogy, until at last we see an analogous Machiavel seizes the English throne: Richard III.

5. Archival desire: Reinterpreting early modern England's primal wound.

The evanescence of England's primal trauma further complicates the disappearance of audience that the demise of the medieval heroic tradition sets in motion. What the vanishing trace produces is a screen memory. Working in the form of the confrontation between two different classes, it further obfuscates the cultural meaning of *1 Henry VI*. Talbot, in this process of political rendition, plays the role of a suppressor who works in collusion with hegemonic power. What is known as trauma is subject to a process of manipulation; censorship, informed by an interplay of cultural and socio-political forces, produces a tendentious representation, rather than a truthful reproduction, of the catastrophic event.

In his account of cultural trauma, Jeffrey Alexander emphasises the 'gap' between 'event and representation'. What communities take to be traumatic is not events *per se*, he argues, but instead versions of those events constructed by 'carrier groups', 'collective agents of the trauma process' who fashion social pain so as to ensure that

its reception remains in conformity with their interests.[220] Given that the representation of repressed events is subject to this kind of manipulation, he concludes, claims about the origin of trauma are likely to be suspect. In keeping with Alexander's view, Caruth argues that the role of psychoanalysis or its analogues in the recovery of such material may in fact further obscure its true nature. 'Archival desire' for 'return to the origin' superimposes further layers of repression 'in its very act of interpretation'.[221] The psychoanalytical excavation, in other words, can produce a palimpsest: a layer of meaning spawned by the contemporary exigency covers the pure genesis.

In the case of cultural trauma, the community itself, as Shakespeare shows, can change over time: new interpretations rewrite older representations of traumatic events in keeping with new and possibly very different assessments of value. 'To perform history in the Elizabethan theatre', is thus, as Brian Walsh observes, 'not to render the past more accessible but to stage a confrontation with the past's elusiveness'. Playwright, players, and audience together 'signify and resignify the past as "material for labour" for the present'.[222] What emerges is a retrospectively reworked version of self-erasing history, in keeping with what Lacapra calls the 'textual trauma': 'cryptic dimensions […] resist ready understanding'. In the play, the textual aporia manifests itself through the incongruity between the play's central plot:

---

[220] Jeffery C. Alexander, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma', in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 1-30 (p. 11).

[221] Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History*, p. 78.

[222] Brian Walsh, '"Unkind Division": The Double Absence of Performing History in *1 Henry VI*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55 (2004), 119-147 (p. 120).

England's defeat in the Hundred Years' War, and the comparatively want of emotions and pathos that the play invests in the topic. By paying attention to this inconsistency, one can detect the 'affective and ideological forces'[223] which are at pains to work over those undesirable and traumatic historical contents.

Historically speaking, the Hundred Years' War ended in 1453 with a decisive French victory over the English at the Battle of Castillon. England lost all of its territory on the Continent other than Calais, which it then lost about a hundred years later in 1558, when Shakespeare was a teenager. Practical reasons for England's fifteenth-century defeat are not difficult to find: after the 1444 truce of Tours, France added artillery and more companies of calvary to its military, whereas England not only failed to undertake any such reform or expansion but also cut back on expensive maintenance of its overseas fortifications.[224] Shakespeare omits any such embarrassing, albeit decisive, military history. Instead, his focus is a confrontation between two value systems, the residual culture of the warrior, which he associates with the English, and the emergent culture of the courtier, which he associates with the French. As in Ovid's story of the Ages of Man, degeneration, moreover, from the better to the worse, warrior to courtier, seems inevitable: gold to iron, Talbot to Joan, Henry V to Richard III. In psychoanalytic terms, Shakespeare uses the dynamic Elias describes as 'the civilizing process', and which, like Elias, he presents as irresistible, as a screen memory, allowing him to revisit the primal wound of the English defeat

---

[223] Dominick Lacapra, *Understanding Others: Peoples, Animals, Pasts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 94-97.

[224] Anne Curry, *The Hundred Years' War: 1337-1453* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), p. 86.

without the trauma of acknowledging any more mundane and thus more humiliating national mistake. Practical miscalculation in a conflict between nations becomes instead a more mysterious moral decline. England in particular is not so much to blame as the inevitable failure of what St. Augustine calls 'the City of Man'.

6. Historiography without words: traumatography as image and gesture.

As is now familiar from many studies, traumatic experience tends to inhibit its own articulation. Language, in particular, comes to feel inadequate. As Freud's contemporary, Pierre Janet, was among the first to suggest, 'dissociated nuclei of consciousness' lead traumatic memories to haunt victims outside and beyond the comfortable conceptual framework of language.[225] In later studies, Bessel A. van der Kolk, for example, has demonstrated that traumatic events or, more precisely, 'high sympathetic nervous system arousal' leads to impairment of Broca's area, a region in the frontal lobe of the dominant hemisphere of the brain responsible for speech production; 'sensory and iconic forms of memory' prevail over 'the linguistic encoding of memory'. In other words, as he explains, every trauma is by its very nature 'preverbal'.[226] The compulsive repetition, moreover, that trauma generates tends to regress to the same condition, eschewing verbal narrative in favour of more

---

[225] Otto van der Hart and Rutger Horst, 'The Dissociation Theory of Pierre Janet', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 2 (1989), 397-412 (p. 401).

[226] Bessel A. van der Kolk, 'The Trauma Spectrum: The Interaction of Biological and Social Events in the Genesis of the Trauma Response', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 1 (1988), 273-90 (p. 283).

direct physical action and arresting visual images. Without language, however, such activity, howsoever urgent it may feel, can be more than usually difficult to decipher.

As a form of historiography, much of the distinctive character of traumatography lies in its exposure of the limits of language. Physical activity displaces verbal explanation, which at its best somehow seems to fall short. In keeping with this tendency, and in contrast to much of Shakespeare's later work, *1 Henry VI* in particular, as R. A. Foakes observes, is highly dependent on physical gesture, blocking, and stage business.[227] Burns likewise notes that a successful performance of the play requires more than usual 'virtuoso hand-to-hand combat', as well as 'explosions and other pyrotechnic effects'.[228] Meanwhile words as such come in for depreciation: Joan mocks Lucy's 'stately style', after he enumerates Talbot's titles, much as Joan's own 'high terms' earlier fail to convince the Dauphin of her divinity. Verbal debates break down into violence: Joan's trial by combat, for example, as well as the confrontation between Gloucester and Winchester.

The same kind of collapse of language itself into violent action recurs in the next part of *Henry VI*, reaching a kind of nadir in Jack Cade's rebellion. 'The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers', his henchman, Dick, suggests. 'Nay, that I mean to do', Cade replies. He then sentences a clerk to death for being able to read and write: 'Away with him, I say! Hang him with his pen and ink-horn about his neck'.[229] The third and final part of *Henry VI* returns to frequent stage combat: editors John D. Cox

---

[227] Foakes , p. 43.

[228] *1 Henry VI*, p. 45.

[229] William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI Part 2*, ed. by Ronald Knowels (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1999), IV. 2. 71-72, 100-01.

and Eric Rasmussen describe it as a 'battle play'.[230] Physical reproduction of the most important final battles of the Wars of the Roses displaces language as the engine of the plot. As Oxford says, as he and Somerset are led off-stage to be beheaded, 'I'll not trouble thee with words'.[231]

7. Talbot's end: decline as consolation.

As Freud argues in *Moses and Monotheism*, what seems to be a disappearance of a community value-system such as chivalry does not necessarily entail its final and entire annihilation. On the contrary, some traditions, he observes, become 'more and more powerful in the course of centuries'. Those who find themselves 'dissatisfied with their present surroundings' look to history for alternatives: 'they turn back to the past and hope they will now be able to prove the truth of the unextinguishable dream of a golden age'.[232] Thomas Nashe, for example, in his recollection of the emotional effect of Shakespeare's representation of Talbot, seems to hope for just such a revival. Shakespeare himself, however, seems more pessimistic about any such prospect. Over the course of his first tetralogy, Talbot, like Margaret, is entirely superseded. Such characters have no place in the new world of the Machiavel; their grand sense of themselves shipwrecks on the indifference and even outright scorn of a younger generation. In the plays themselves, in other words, in his depiction of these

---

[230] *Ibid.*, p. 421.

[231] *Ibid.*, V. 5.5.

[232] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism,* in *The Penguin Freud Library*, (see Freud, above), XIII, pp. 237-386 (pp. 311-14).

characters' reception, Shakespeare stages a disconnect between the medieval past and his own early modern present. The primal wound of his own cultural moment, England's loss to France, becomes instead an instance of an inevitable decline: Elias' 'civilizing process', re-imagined as a moral rather than a material transformation. This alienation from a more matter-of-fact, humiliating explanation of the events in question, England's practical failure to match French military might, although no doubt consoling, renders Shakespeare's representation of the events in question oblique, cryptic, and uncanny: in a word, traumatography.

3

The Insufficient Self in *1-3 Henry VI*

In *1 Henry VI*, Shakespeare stages what is arguably one of his most memorable female characters, Joan Puzel. This figure, however, as Jean E. Howards argues, 'is built of contradictions'.[233] She can be a 'miracle worker', an Amazon, 'a shepherd girl', or a devil's concubine.[234] For Shakespeare, such shift of the character's identities is a necessary, although expedient, narrative strategy, as it serves to showcase his bleak vision of human nature. Mankind, as Shakespeare suggests in the three parts of *Henry VI*, is ineluctably incapacitated by its inborn moral inadequacy. Such pessimistic view, although no doubt disturbing, seems to occupy a salient place in these plays. As opposed to the more popular view of trauma that postulates a historical and external violence, Shakespeare, in keeping with Freud's post war thinking, shows that what appears to be a modern analogue of trauma can be embedded within in the form of self-insufficiency. In so doing, the playwright sets up a series of dialogues with a philosophical tradition that can be at least traced back to the Socratic *aporētikos* and finds itself culminating in the coalition between the Freudian meta-psychology and Derrida's postmodern thought, his concept of *différance* in particular. In presenting a less sure footed view of human nature and delineating the collapse of the idea of self-hood, then, Shakespeare sets out to cast

---

[233] *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), pp. 465-474 (p. 471).

[234] *Ibid.*, pp. 471-72.

doubt on the concept of pure origin and thus emerges as a radical figure whose view of mankind can can best be described as proto anti-humanistic.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud brings to readers' attention a kind of 'daemonic force' that lodges in the psyche. Working against the pleasure principle, it manifests itself through a ceaseless compulsion to repeat experiences that the conscience perceives as painful and unpleasurable. This force, to which Freud gives the name 'the death instinct', tuns out to be an instinctual nostalgia: 'inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces.'[235] The postulation of this concept generates a sense of doom and pessimism typical of Freudian meta-psychology. For Freud, the death instinct is an impassable barrier that limits psychoanalysis' hopes of acquiring a full knowledge of man's psychic world. Amounting to a transhistorical void, it precedes the provenance of life and defies psychoanalytical and cultural attempts at working through. From an art of remembering, then, Freudian psychoanalysis becomes an art of forgetting; from a technique of doing away with trauma, one of learning to live with trauma.

The Freudian death instinct in effect serves as a synecdoche for a kind of pessimism about human nature that recurs frequently in Western culture, variously described by Socrates as our inability to achieve full self-knowledge, by Christianity as 'original sin', and by Derrida as the 'dangerous supplement'.[236] In his trilogy of *Henry VI*, Shakespeare stages a similar pessimism, reflecting the influence of this intellectual tradition. What would become the Romantic or Rousseauian notion of

---

[235] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, XI, pp. 308-09.

[236] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), p. 153.

natural goodness has no foothold in what St. Augustine calls 'the City of Man'; idealistic confidence in our ability to acquire full self-knowledge collapse in the face of the haunting other, Joan Puzel in particular, who always precedes and dwells within the self. Through horticultural metaphors, Shakespeare presents a corrupt medieval English court in which the desire for power over others St. Augustine calls *libido dominandi* reigns supreme. Given mankind's inborn depravity, there is no one capable of conjuring away the desire to compete and dominate, not even the seemingly unworldly saint Henry VI.

1. The death instinct and *différance*.

The death instinct is the most haunting spectre that Freud conjures up. Initially described as a masochistic trend that forces the ego to replay distressing experiences, it refers more precisely to an inborn urge to return to a prior state whose magnitude and profoundity cannot be measured by the principle of life: 'an old state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or another departed.' By putting forward this concept, Freud introduces an indelible mark of pessimism within his meta-psychological theory. As an intrinsic insufficiency, a manifestation of 'the conservative nature' of living matters, it approximates to what Derrida would later call '*différance*': a non-presence without a master name which thwarts attempt at any compete closure of trauma.[237]

As Derrida explains, *différance* signifies an arch-trace that simultaneously sets in motion the possibility of being and, being itself an elusive gesture, denies any ontological effort at stabilising it: '[t]here is no support to be found and no depth to be

[237] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, XI, pp. 309-10.

had for this bottomless chessboard'. In order to assess the concept, one must abandon the familiar measurement of spatiality; one should place it, Derrida explains, beyond the 'concept of epochality' and regard it as something '"older" than the ontological difference or the truth of being'.[238] Rather than invoking the normal sense of time, 'older' here refers, however, to a very different kind of time ontologically prior to the conception of being itself: a primordial time that precedes the very formation of life. In the light of this time before time and of no time, language, a tool produced as humanity comes to life, proves inadequate; language cannot properly signify an impossible presence that antedates being itself. To tell what *différance* is becomes an interminable task.

Turning to the Freudian notion of the unconscious, given that the unconscious predates consciousness, any definition of the psyche, Derrida maintains, amounts to a trace that 'dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself'. As Gayatri Spivak notes in the introduction to *Of Grammatology*, 'the establishment of permanent traces in the psychic apparatus precludes the possibility of immediate perception.'[239] Since what Spivak calls 'the psychic apparatus' is not directly accessible to the psyche, the stimuli that the former have received from the outside world do not necessarily become conscious. Reserved in the unconsciousness, some of these memories may by chance be energised into conscious awareness long afterwards. In the light of this belatedness, what the conscious self perceives are not in effect things *per se* but only memory-traces: simulacra of the real. In this sense, what Freud designates as the unconscious, Derrida concludes, is not 'a hidden, virtual, and potential self-presence', but a 'radical alterity'. Being itself irreducible, it 'holds us in a relation with what

---

[238] Derrida, 'Differance', pp.73-101 (p.87).

[239] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. lxiii, lx.

exceeds […] the alternative of presence or absence'.[240] The unconscious, therefore, is a profound and unfathomable myth that always lies beyond the detection of the conscious and haunts the perceiving self. As Freud himself argues, man, rather than being a 'master in his own house', 'must remain content with the veriest scraps of information about what is going on unconsciously in his own mind.'[241] One can never know himself properly as such.

Much as the unconscious haunts self-perception, the death instinct indefinitely suspends the full-presence of life. Like the unconscious, the death instinct is a hidden and ungraspable non-presence beyond the horizon of ontology and time: a *différance* to which a master name cannot be properly assigned. Always elusive and 'operat(ing) silently within the organism', it never manifests itself fully and purely. Only through cooperation, rather, with 'an extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment', as in the case of sadism or war, Freud explains, does this aggressiveness now and then betray itself.[242] Like a spectre, it blurs the boundary of the proper, between what is and what is not, and invalidates the logic of antithesis.

The death instinct is transhistorical, moreover, preceding life itself. The inception of id, the matrix of man's earthly existence that signifies his awakening to the call of life, fails to account for what Freud describes as the daemonic phenomenon of the 'fixation to the moment at which the trauma occurred.' Faced by a conundrum, the fact that the pleasure principle is 'opposed by certain other forces or circumstances',

---

[240] Derrida, 'Differance', pp.73-101 (p. 89).

[241] Sigmund Freud, 'Fixation to Trauma-The Unconscious', in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, in *The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), I, pp. 313-326 (p. 326).

[242] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, pp. 301, 313.

Freud argues that there must be something 'more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual': something inanimate that strives for 'an old state of things'.[243] The death instinct amounts to a structural void, in other words, dating back to humanity's prehistory to which no historical explanation can be properly assigned. As Ned Lukacher explains in *Primal Scenes*, it is a figure 'for the "already written" '; a non-event 'whose indeterminant temporality precipitates the temporal ordering of subsequent events'. Instead of claiming 'the original impression, one has access only to its nonoriginary revision'. The postulation of this always already is revolutionary: it turns psychoanalysis from the art of remembering to the art of forgetting; from then on, an analyst must remind the analysand and himself that 'what is most essential has always already been forgotten'.[244]

Speculative claims such as these about the existence of a prehistorical abiotic state undermine the unshakeable ontological surety of life. Perpetually haunted by an unlocatable and profound spectre, life is no more the metaphysical center, the absolute origin from which subjectivity develops. The provenance of life only amounts to a possibility of infinite possibilities: a belated trace of an unknowable and vast reserve that sets life itself in motion. Life becomes a trace; and the love instinct is relegated to what is known as a mere 'component', which exists to serve its spectral master, the death instinct, and to ensure that the organism shall 'return to the quiescence of the inorganic world' according to its own path.[245]

---

[243] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, pp. 310, 294.

[244] Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 43, 48, 57, 98.

[245] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* ,XI, pp. 311, 336.

It may well have been an epiphany as regards the ungraspable and haunting nature of the death instinct that lead Freud to abandon the fight against death. In a letter written to Mr Carrington, he muses, '[I]f I were at the beginning rather than at the end of a scientific career […] I might possibly choose just this [psychic] field of research, in spite of all difficulties.'[246] One can detect here a hint of defeatism. Whereas ghosts and spirits might perhaps be conjured away, it seems quixotic to try to fight against ghosts from the future comprised of an infinite play of unknown possibilities. The idea of the self-sufficiency of being is in effect a theoretical fiction. Spectralised by an always already that precedes and resides within life, it only amounts to a detour: a trace in an infinite chain of supplement inscribed within the system of *différance*. For Freud, therefore, human nature is hopelessly doomed. There is little hope of working through the arch-trauma, the trauma that lies beyond the comprehension of this life.

2. The Socratic *aporētikos* and the enigmatic Joan Puzel in *1 Henry VI*.

The Freudian death instinct is symptomatic of much older trend of pessimism notable throughout Western civilisation's understanding of human nature. Western culture, it seems, is unable to rid itself of this kind of self-doubt. From the time of the pagan Greeks and Romans to the age of Christianity, legions of thinkers and philosophers have lamented humanity's intrinsic ignorance and destructiveness. The Socratic *aporētikos*, a profession of incapability of knowing oneself and a suspension of judgement, fittingly bears out such moral self-questioning: 'I tell myself off for my utter ignorance about excellence. And if I don't know what a thing is, how can I know

[246] Sigmund Freud, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by Ernest L. Freud, trans. by James Stern and Tania (New York: Dover, 1992), p. 334.

what sort of a thing it is?'[247] To be really wise, Socrates argues, is to admit one's limitation 'as far as wisdom is concerned'.[248] During his conversation with Phaedrus, Socrates confesses to the latter that he is 'incapable of obeying the Delphic inscription and knowing' himself; it is beyond his knowledge whether he is 'in fact a creature of more complexity and savagery than Typhon, or something tamer and more simple'.[249] What is man? This seemingly simple yet endlessly complicated ontological question eludes Socrates. As his colloquy with Phaedrus shows, he finds it implausible that we will ever attain a complete understanding of human nature.

Another story, which Plato narrates in *The Republic*, also bears out Socrates' skepticism. '[O]n his way up from the Peiraeus, outside the north wall,' a young man named Leontius accidentally runs into a site of execution and noticed the dead bodies of the executed. In spite of a sensation of disgust, Leontius can't help feeling attracted to looking at the corpses. After a short time of unavailing struggle to restrain himself, he eventually gives himself up to his desire. Running to the corpses and 'opening his eyes wide', he exclaims, '[t]here you are, curse you—a lovely sight! Have a real good look!'[250]

Plato uses this story to illustrate his tripartite theory of man: the rational part, the non-rational part (the appetitive part), and the spirited part. The rational and the

---

[247] Plato, *Meno and Other Dialogues*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 99.

[248] Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*, trans. by Harold Tarrant and Hugh Tredennick (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 125.

[249] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 6-7.

[250] Plato, *The Republic*, p. 191.

appetitive part struggle for the control of the soul. Although for Plato the rational part can cultivate and temporarily subjugate the non-rational part, there is no way to root out the non-rational part, as the story shows. For Leontius, to look at the dead bodies is an sact ignoble and beneath himself, as he is supposed to be a pure and innocent creature 'with a naturally divine and un-Typhonic nature'.[251] According to ancient Greek mythology, Typhon, born of Gaia and Tartaros, is a giant monster with a shape half human and half beast: 'down to his thighs he was human in form […] Below his thighs, he had massive coil of vipers, which, when they were fully extended, reached up to his head and emitted violent hisses.'[252] The invocation of Typhon, even though preceded by a negative prefix, introduces the infinite possibility of an aggressive propensity in man. The presence of this beastly part, elusive as it may seem, explains why Leontius, despite his strenuous effort to restrain himself from looking at the corpses, eventually yields to the temptation. His desire to look at the bodies is the desire for degradation. In spite of social education and the painstaking disciplining of his rational self, this instinct remains unpurged and tempts him to jump into the abyss of vice. The site of execution becomes the site of a seance; the lifeless corpses conjure up in Leontius the always already: an undying desire for decadence that the youth had been trying to exorcise. Given that man is always haunted by this Typhonic aspect of the self, unadulterated purity of selfhood is forever out of reach.

In *1 Henry VI*, Joan Puzel serves as an analogue of the Socratic *aporētikos*. Through this character, Shakespeare presents his belief in the ambiguity of human nature. As Edward Burns points out, Joan is not 'a substantive realist character, a

---

[251] Plato, *Phaedrus*, pp. 6-7.

[252] Apollodorus, *The Library of Greek Mythology*, trans. by Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 35.

unified subject with a coherent identity.' Instead, she can be better understood as a spectre that stands outside any binary opposition. The fact that it is impossible to categorise her clearly and completely is reflected most immediately in the incertitude of her name. The historical figure calls herself Jeanne la Pucelle. In *1 Henry VI*, however, Shakespeare shortens her surname into Puzel. This act of alteration partly serves to disparage the French army. But Pucelle in particular, as represented in the play, also introduces a tone of ambiguity. The name (pucelle/puzel), as Burns notes, 'is a notably unstable term.'[253] Even though *puzel* answers to the purpose of denigrating the French, insofar as it implies promiscuous sexual activity, the full form, *pucelle*, signifies purity and virginity, and thereby revokes or at least undermines the word's ostensible, hegemonic import. In other words, puzel, or rather, the hegemony that generates this disparaging word, turns out to be insufficient, given that it is haunted by a void concealed within the word itself; another form precedes any hegemonic attempt at an ontological closure.

In keeping with the ambiguity of her name, the character is recalcitrant, resisting others' efforts to pin her down or dismiss her. Joan's very first appearance registers an epistemological tension. While Charles is unreservedly convinced of her sanctity and heavenly power, other French lords disagree. What is interpreted by Charles as a trial of Puzel's alleged saintly power is interpreted by these lords as more likely sexual intercourse. 'Doubtless he [Charles] shrives this woman to her smock— | Else ne'er could he so long protract his speech.' Women, those lords argue, are distrustful, whorish, and ruinous: 'shrewd tempters with their tongues.'[254] Siren-like, they allure man to the abyss of annihilation. Puzel, as one of '[t]hese women', is intelligent only

---

[253] *1 Henry VI*, p. 26.

[254] *Ibid.*, I. 2. 119-20, 123.

to the extent of being shrewd and cunning: whatever wisdom she may have is deleterious. Much as the Sirens in the *Odyssey* employ their prophetic knowledge to tempt Odysseus away from his journey home, Puzel uses her prophetic power, perhaps inspired by Heaven, perhaps bestowed by demons, to spin a story of a messianic future that beguiles France into launching itself down a path of self-destruction.

Joan's first appearance introduces, in other words, rival visions of her identity: heavenly saint vs. daemonic temptress. Over the course of the play, these two possibilities are repeatedly tested, without either side ever fully prevailing over the other. To the perplexity of what pucelle/puzel actually is, Shakespeare, rather than giving a definite reply, leaves it to the play of possibilities. For the playwright, the possibility of working through such conundrum is a fictional idea. In keeping with the Socratic *aporētikos*, this fictionality allegorises the over-determinedness of our human condition and the impossibility of our ever gaining complete self-knowledge.

The irreducible enigma of Joan's identity is further borne out by the scene of her trial. At the outset of the trial, a shepherd comes forward to claim Joan as her offspring. Joan, however, refuses to acknowledge the shepherd as her father. To all appearances, Joan's denial is self-contradictory. When she introduces herself to the French lords, she assigns herself a humble genealogy: 'by birth a shepherd's daughter'.[255] Confronted by the shepherd, she seems to forget her earlier assertion, however, and claims that she is 'descended of a gentler blood.'[256] The facade of what appears to be an unresolvable contradiction melts away, however, if one takes into account Joan's spectral quality. When she first gives a putative definition of what she

---

[255] *Ibid.*, I. 2. 72

[256] *Ibid.,* I. 2. 74

is, she never intends to invite her audiences to interpret what she says literally or naturalistically. Rather than promising a centre of certitude, her self-definition of 'I am', which by itself is but a trace among an infinitude of traces, signals a possibility placed side by side with another one that she immediately introduces.[257] 'Shepherd's daughter' is juxtaposed with 'Heaven and Our Lady gracious', 'majesty' with 'contemptible estate', and 'black and swart' with 'clear rays' and 'beauty'.[258]

As opposed to Joan, who keeps herself playing between the possibilities, indefinitely deferring the question about her absolute origin, the shepherd, driven by an ontological desire to arrest anything elusive, eradicates any possibility of incertitude. Trying to pin down the ambiguous character, he claims Joan as his daughter. Given that the peasant, like the English nobles, is driven by hegemonic exigency to fix her identity, Joan is right in accusing York of suborning the shepherd to pretend to be her father. Both, to borrow Derrida's words, are in a joint-conspiracy to 'attempt both to destroy and to disavow a malignant, demonized, diabolized force.'[259] Occupying the moral high ground and regarding themselves as God's chosen, the English preclude other possible interpretations of Joan's identity, insisting instead that she is witch-like and devilish. Receiving Burgundy's report about the victory of the French army under Joan's leadership, Talbot immediately rushes to the conclusion that Joan is in league with the Satanic force and practicing black magic: 'Well, let them practice and converse with spirits'. Having been routed out of Rouen, Talbot again falls back on his wonted logic and attributes his army's defeat to Joan's

---

[257] *Ibid.*, I. 2. 79

[258] *Ibid.*, I. 2. 75, 84, 85, 86.

[259] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 59.

witchcraft trickery: ‘Puzel, that witch, that damned sorceress, | Hath wrought this hellish mischief unawares.’

In keeping with the hegemonic mindset, the French peasant, although appearing late in the play, does not lag behind in showing his desire to know and stabilise the spectre: ‘I did beget her.’ Fearing that this claim is not convincing enough, the shepherd begins to summon witnesses by recalling past details: ‘all the parish knows. | Her mother liveth yet, can testify | She was the first fruit of my bachelorship.’[260] He must prove the validity of his claim and ensure that other possibilities are excluded; that Joan can be nothing but his sweet daughter. For a shepherd cultivated in the ontological tradition, and thus what Derrida calls a ‘traditional scholar’, the thought of a beyond in which ‘there is […] only the hypothesis of a school of thought, theatrical fiction, literature, and speculation’, is unbearable, even sacrilegious.[261] For the French peasant, then, it is a matter of life and death to know and to ascertain the other: he must classify the identity of the spectre, reveal its past secret, and purge any vagueness that surrounds it.

Incapable of conceiving the possibility of a realm of the ‘beyond’, the shepherd presses on. He must in the first place summon up the spectre, and, having given his command and stabilised it, conjure it away and bury it deep. ‘Deny me not, I prithee, gentle Joan’. When his request is repudiated, he persists in his suit, this time resorting to what he believes to be a figure of great authority, a churchman. He naively believes that God’s earthly representative is capable of exorcising the ghost: ‘[t]is true, I gave a noble to the priest | The morn that I was wedded to her mother.’ He even attempts to exact from Joan the acknowledgement of his parenthood by enjoining her to go

---

[260] *1 Henry VI*, II. 1. 25, III. 2. 37-38, V. 3. 11-13.

[261] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 12.

through a series of ritual performances: '[k]neel down and take my blessing, good my girl.'[262] This piece of compact, a gesture of exorcism, is devised to ensure that the spectre can be completely driven away and dispelled beyond any doubt. Yet the two precautions, invoking ecclesiastical assistance and resorting to rituals, fail to achieve their intended effect; the ghost that confronts the peasant is not the kind of ghost familiar from traditional folk tales. The peasant fails to comprehend this this disruptive figure because it does not appear in any kind of ontological education. The more rigorously he perseveres in stabilising the spectre, the more defiant and irresponsive it becomes. Thus, thwarted repeatedly in his endeavour to claim Puzel as his daughter, the shepherd can in the end only drop his suit and leave in chagrin.

What I am describing here as the ontological perspective does not permit any middle ground. By definition, ontology is the study of being. Ontological standards of measurement such as Aristotle's categories subject anything that come within their apparent scope to ruthless scrutiny. They address a being by trying to understand its substance [what], its qualitativeness [how], its quantitativeness [how much], and its relatedness [where]. Among these different characteristics of a being, 'what-it-is', as Terence Irwin points out, is the most important, given that it 'signifies substance'.[263] In keeping with this tradition, a traditional scholar approaches a thing by looking at its substance, that is, by determining what it is. He tries, in other words, to stabilise things. '[A] world of becoming,' as Nietzsche points out, 'could not […] be

---

[262] *1 Henry VI*, V. 3. 20, 23-24, 25.

[263] Terence Irwin, ed, *Classical Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 166.

"understood", would not be "known" ' What man regards as the truth can only detected in ' "things at rest" ': in a centre of the ontological certitude and being.[264]

Given the urgency to know and to specify, compromise becomes scandalous: ambiguity cannot be tolerated. If the French peasant cannot establish Joan as his daughter with absolute certainty, then it follows naturally that he must have her cursed and condemned. What she is must be juxtaposed against what she is not. In this sense, Joan's death is doomed and ineluctable. As a spectre, she is not allowed to blur the distinction between being and non-being; she must be put to death, and moreover, die in a specified and designated manner. Not beheading, nor hanging, for these methods of execution are 'too good', to the extent that they would leave some physical traces of the spectre and pave the way for its possible returning in the future. Instead, there must be a closure; there must be no such possibilities remaining; she *must* be burned. The shepherd emphasises the significance of this means of execution as he urges the English soldiers, 'O burn her, burn her': to have her incinerated and reduced to 'ashes',[265] to nothing. The hegemony must eradicate and cleanse this disturbing incertitude, so that, in the future, it will not be able to disturb what Derrida calls the 'dialectic between actual effective presence and its other'.[266]

In spite of the hegemony's painstaking effort, however, one has every reason to doubt the effectiveness of this gesture of exorcism. Even judged on the basis of the the ontological tradition itself, the line of demarcation that is vital in upholding any binary has been gnawed away by the tension of uncertainty. In the light of this

---

[264] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by Michael A. Scarpitti and R. Kevin Hill (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 302.

[265] *1 Henry VI*, V. 3. 33, 92.

[266] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 48.

conflation, it is no longer possible to distinguish with confidence the good from the bad or what is from what is not; one tends to live with the other, and live on the other. During the trial, Joan's identity undergoes a play of rapid transformations: initially a sibyl, she then becomes a shepherd's daughter, then a pregnant woman. The transformation, it should be noted, is not only vertical but also horizontal. Each of her identities, that is, is subject to a binary interpretation as both good and evil. Faced with irreconcilable opposites, one is incapable of confidently placing Joan on either side without invoking the possibility of the other.

Possibly a holy prophetess, possibly a witch who relishes in the practice of black magic, Joan can either be a messiah inspired by 'Heaven and Our Lady' to save her country 'from calamity' or a sorceress in league with fiends, practicing 'charming spells and periapts'. By the same token, a shepherd's daughter can either be a 'sweet daughter', or a 'cursed drab'. A pregnant woman invokes the image of virginity and virtue that Mary represents in the Christological tradition: when Joan asks the English soldiers to spare her life, she makes full use of Catholic admiration of 'virginity and pregnancy', grounded in the veneration of Mary.[267] 'The rhetoric Puzel uses of herself is biblical', Burns notes, 'and refers persistently to the Catholic doctrines associated with the Virgin Mary'.[268] Trying to extricate herself from her predicament, Joan implores the English soldiers not to murder 'the fruit within […] [her] womb'.[269] In saying so, she associates herself with the biblical Mary, whom, according to St. Luke, was told by Elizabeth, '[b]lessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit

---

[267] *1 Henry VI*, I. 2. 74, 81, V. 2. 23, V. 3. 6, 32, 47.

[268] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[269] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 63.

of your womb'.[270] The condition of pregnancy, however, can be subversive: a sign of a woman being 'liberal and free'.[271] The English nobles, for instance, interpret Joan's claim of pregnancy as confirmation of her sexual incontinence. Charles, Alencon, and Reignier are all implicated as her possible sexual partners.

Joan's radical ambiguity amounts in effect to what Derrida describes as the 'helmet effect'. According to Derrida, this effect occurs when one is confronted by an irreducible other that can see the spectator clearly without itself being seen. When the old Hamlet appears, he shows himself in an armour and beneath a helmet, which 'permits the so-called father to see and speak […] without being seen'. The helmet, then, acts as a sort of screen, which 'prevents perception from deciding on the identity that it wraps so solidly in its carapace'.[272] Like the ghost of Hamlet the senior, Joan is an unfathomable enigma that thwarts ontological attempts to inspect and arrest her. Assuming the place of chairman, she adjures the English and the French alike to learn to listen and to speak to her in the manner of a spectre. They must do so, can only do so, given that this talk will be unilateral, unsymmetrical, and desynchronised. The question of what and who she is can only receive from the other side a dead silence, or, to the utmost, a contemptuous gesture of dismissal. To the English nobles, then, Joan says that looking is not necessarily sufficient, and that what one fails to perceive is not necessarily devilish and wicked: '[y]ou judge it straight thing impossible | To compass wonders but by help of devils'; and, to the peasant, '[t]hou art no father, nor no friend of mine.'[273]

---

[270] Luke 1.42.

[271] *1 Henry VI*, V. 3. 82.

[272] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 6-7.

[273] *1 Henry VI*, V. 3. 9, 47-48.

To conclude, Joan's refusal of a fixed characterisation amounts to a moment of impasse, of ontological undecidability. It exposes the insufficiency of traditional philosophical thinking and calls for a radically new way of thinking: a hauntological reasoning that always allows the play of spectres. This spectral figure is an injunction to break free from the 'see to believe' mindset. It is only after one manages to get rid of this dangerous reasoning that he can be 'in the most competent position to do what is necessary: speak to the specter', as Derrida puts it.[274] Meanwhile, the spectre serves as a warning against the temptation pledging one's allegiance. In the name of justice and responsibility, one must suspend his judgement; one is always haunted by a possibility of the other: an always already whose identity can never be fully arrested.

3. 'Some vicious mole of nature' in the age of Christianity.

Christianity has produced a plethora of thinkers keenly aware of humanity's innate moral incapacity. In his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul describes mankind's tenacious crookedness as a tension between an inner self and a physical self. St. Paul admits that he is unrighteous and sinful: 'sold as a slave to sin' and 'unspiritual' (7:14). The grace of Jesus Christ redeemed man and bound him by the Law of God. Yet this act of redemption, however, does not altogether purify of the older self: his physical body, St. Paul observes, still longs to indulge in 'sinful passions'. The struggle between the spiritual self and the corporeal self leads to a theological impasse and eventually drives St. Paul to adopt a compromise: 'with my mind I serve the law of God, but

[274] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 11.

with my flesh I serve the law of sin'.[275] God's commandment cannot completely wash away mankind's iniquity.

St. Augustine's view of human nature echoes St. Paul's. '[I]n his fallen condition', St. Augustine argues, man cannot 'rely on his own powers to achieve virtue'. Human will, which shares what William Bouwsma calls a 'corporate democracy' with reason in the human personality, always has earthly 'energies and impulses of its own'.[276] To be able to do good, as John M. Rist explains, one 'requires the "assistance" [*adiutorium]* of God'.[277] Even with the aid of divine instruction, man's corrupted nature still strives to assert itself. An unshakable part of the very essence of humanity, evil is always ready to ambush us and tempt us to follow its lead.

In this sense, virtue and vice, rather than irreconcilable binary opposites, can be understood as intermixed, feeding on each other. As St. Augustine observes in *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, 'nothing evil exists in itself, but only as an evil aspect of some actual entity […] There can be nothing evil except something good'. For St. Augustine, goodness is the very basic element that constitutes all creatures on earth as such. They are supposed to be good, given that the trinity, the cause of all creations, is 'supremely, equally, and immutably good'.[278] As he explains in *The City of God*, 'God in his goodness created good things, and that all things which do not

---

[275] Roman 7. 4, 25.

[276] William Bouwsma, *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 26.

[277] John M. Rist, 'Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 20 (1969), 420-447 (p.431).

[278] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love,* trans. by Thomas S. Hibbs (Washington, D.C.: Gateway, 1996), pp. 8, 9, 7.

belong to God's own being, though inferior to God, are nevertheless good.' Since earthly creatures are 'the creation of God's goodness', they bear an imprint of the virtue left by the hand of the maker and 'consist a universe of admirable beauty'.[279]

St. Augustine's panegyric of God's goodness and his relative optimism here do not entail, however, a complete exorcism of the possibility of human vice. In what follows, St. Augustine raises the question of the possibility of human depravity. Although created by the Trinity, a human being, to the extent that 'it is not supremely and immutably good as is the Creator of it', is inevitably subject to the temptation of evil. St. Augustine's formulation of the notions of good and evil is economic: 'the good in created things can be diminished and augmented'. This quantitative evaluation means that an increase of good necessarily entails a decrease of evil, and vice versa: '(f)or good to be diminished is evil […] Where there is evil, there is a corresponding diminution of the good'.[280] In *The City of God*, '[t]he loss of good has been given the name of evil […] "evil" is merely a name for the privation of good.'[281] The fact that man is inferior in terms of goodness to God, however, means that there is an infinite space in man for the play of iniquity. Put another way, our human susceptibility to sin always already has inscribed itself at the very core of our creation.

As a thing out of nothing that haunts the act of creation itself, depravity amounts to a transhistorical void, a gap or space of possibility that cannot be removed by any earthly means. As St. Augustine explains, 'whatever defects there are in a soul are privations of a natural good. When a cure takes place, they are not transferred

---

[279] Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. by G. R. Evans, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 455.

[280] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love,* pp. 7, 8.

[281] Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 440, 454.

elsewhere but […] they no longer exist at all'.[282] By saying 'they no longer exist at all', the theologian seems to suggest that one can completely conjure away evil, which is in itself not a substance. To construe evil as such, however, leads to an aporia. A total purification of evil means an unadulterated capacity for good: a state St. Augustine describes as 'simple' and 'unchangeable'.[283] Yet this state of absolute perfection is reserved only for 'the one and the true God'. Man, a mere simulacrum of the supremely Good, is changeable and is therefore unable to attain the changeless state. Goodness constitutes the very basic existence of man as God's creation. To be entirely consumed by corruption would mean the disintegration of this substance: '[w]henever a thing is consumed by corruption, not even the corruption remains, for it is nothing in itself, having no subsistent being in which to exist'.[284] Meanwhile, evil is a mark of man's fallen status. The fact that he is inferior to his creator precludes the possibility of the complete eradication of imperfection. To be entirely cured of the tendency toward depravity would be tantamount to elevating man's status to that of God: an inconceivable situation in St. Augustine's thinking. By describing evil as a void that lack substance, therefore, St. Augustine conjures up a scenario haunted by endless possibilities. Although one might be able to cure a specific disease of the soul, there is no way to prevent a soul from turning back to evil in one form or another in the future, much as psychoanalysis cannot prevent a patient from acting out his trauma through another symptom, as Freud admits in 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable'.

---

[282] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, p. 7.

[283] Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 440.

[284] Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, pp. 7, 8.

An incident that St. Augustine narrates in his *Confessions*, bears out the haunting nature of moral corruption. Thinking back on his 'past foulness', St. Augustine finds himself troubled by an act of theft that he committed when he was an adolescent. This incident disturbs him not only because theft is punishable by the conscience, 'the law written in the hearts of men' but also because it is a grave offence against the law of God. What troubles him most, however, is the fact that he is unable to discern any particular motivation for his misdeed. Judged from an ontological point of view, a crime is supposed to be done for some reason: '[w]hen, then, we ask why a crime was done, we believe it not, unless it appears that there might have been some desire of obtaining some of those which […] are beautiful and comely'. People become vicious, by this light, as a result of identifiable causes. To satisfy one's lust, St. Augustine reasons, one may commit homicide in order to get the victim's wife; for the sake of livelihood one may resort to robbery; to avenge oneself one may become an arsonist; even the savage Catiline does not love 'his own villainies', but instead employs them for a purpose. It is simply unthinkable to do an evil deed without any cause: no one loves evil for evil's sake.

A ghost nonetheless disturbs St. Augustine's ontological efforts to stabilise the self: a memory of the young Augustine at the age of sixteen, who, driven by a force unknown, ransacked a pear tree near his vineyard. No particular motivation, as the sinner admits, can adequately explain away this case of theft. He was not propelled by any physical want: 'I stole that, of which I had enough, and much better'. Nor was he driven by avarice: after gathering them from the tree, he immediately flung the stolen

pears ‘to the very hog’.[285] What prompted this misdeed if not spectrality itself: the indeterminacy that for generations has been haunting the human race?

Once may recall at this point St. Paul’s meditation on man’s tendency to backslide into sin: ‘I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.’ For all the desire to do what is good by Law, St Paul continues, ‘I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing’.[286] In keeping with St. Paul’s unrelenting self-questioning, St. Augustine, reflecting on the theft, says, ‘[I]t was foul, and I loved it; I loved to perish, I loved my own fault, not for that which I was faulty, but my fault itself […] not seeking aught through the shame, but the shame itself![287] Both thinkers seem to suggest that iniquity holds an abiding and ineradicable appeal. Existing in a state of what Robert R. Williams calls ‘self-imposed bondage’, man is not capable of consciously choosing good over evil: he is ‘predisposed and inclined toward evil […] [a] bias […] which precedes and shapes conscious and deliberate choices’.[288] The disease of the soul is incurable. Man is always susceptible to the possibility of evil; he does not need an external motivation to prompt him to sin.

St. Augustine’s pessimistic view of human nature was pervasive in the Renaissance. According to Protestant Reformers, in particular, it is impossible for man to achieve

---

[285] Augustine, *The Confessions,* trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 28, 34-37.

[286] Romans 7. 15-20.

[287] Augustine, *The Confessions*, p. 35.

[288] Robert R. Williams, ‘Sin and Evil’, *Christian Theology An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks*, ed. by Peter Hodgson and Robert King (London: SPCK, 2008), pp. 194-221 (p. 202).

unmitigated, lasting moral goodness. For these theologians, as William Bouwsma observes, every earthly thing is tainted by evil: 'subverted by human wickedness'.[289] Luther's doctrine *sola fide*, faith alone, bears out this pessimism. According to Luther, salvation is purely the work of God. Man can do nothing for his part to improve his spiritual lot but place his absolute trust in redemptive action of his Saviour. For Luther, any synergistic cooperation between God and man is a theological fiction. Given that the core of man is corrupt and that he is morally incapable of committing himself to virtue, it is not sufficient for God to give the Law and devolve the rest of the job upon man. Left to his own devices, man would retrogress to his previous state: a slave to iniquity.

Trying to make sense of human nature, Luther finds himself confronted by the same kind of ghost that haunts St. Paul. 'Behold, therefore, the wickedness of the human heart!'. The human will, rather than answering the call of God and abiding by the instructions of Scripture, seems to him to be subject to an unceasing urge to travel ever further down a path of crookedness: 'we will sin and evil, we speak sin and evil, we do sin and evil', he writes. Following the fall, man is indissolubly bound up with depravity: 'since we all lie under the same sin and the damnation of the one man Adam, how can we attempt anything which is no sin and damnable?' The seed of depravity inhabits within man and precedes his very self-identity: '(o)riginal sin itself […] does not allow "free-will" any power at all except to sin and incur damnation'.[290]

---

[289] William Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 113.

[290] Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Ada: Baker Academic, 2012), pp. 234, 196, 297, 298.

The bondage of the will, then, is the bondage of an always already through which man is predisposed to the possibility of sin.

Like Luther, Calvin is dismayed by man's inborn corruption, a condition he describes as 'total depravity'. By 'total depravity', Calvin does not intend an entire repudiation of all possibility of human goodness; to construe 'total' as 'absolute' would unavoidably lead to another kind of exorcism. What the phrase suggests, rather, is that sin completely pervades our human existence. '[T]he whole of man's being', as David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas explain, 'has been affected by sin. The corruption extends to every part of man, his body and soul; sin has affected […] man's faculties-his mind, his will, etc'.[291] According to Calvin, to fall from the grace of God entails an inherent and unshakeable corruption: we find ourselves incapable of abandoning the path of evil and obeying the voice of good.

Biographer William Bouwsma finds that for Calvin the profundity and intricacy of human nature 'suggested "darkness and disorder"', and that, perhaps as a result, 'he generally drew from the mysteries of human being the banal lesson that the appearance of virtue is likely to be hypocrisy'.[292] Opening infinite possibilities, the complexities of human nature renders it impossible to root out the potential for evil altogether. As what John Gillies calls the 'bicameral view of self-knowledge' suggests, our human condition is always a mixture of two opposing parts: the 'piano nobile level of the self' that produces good deeds and the Hydra, the lower level of the self, ' "with which we struggle in the Lernean swamp of this life till the very day of our

---

[291] David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2012), pp. 18-19.

[292] William Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 133.

death" '.[293] The entanglement of good and evil is borne out by Calvin's perception of the Christian church. For Calvin, as Bouwsma explains, the church ' "must always be mixture" […] of "permanent citizens" and "transients". In this life we must "endure evils impossible to correct until the ripeness of time brings purification." ' The same kind of mixture applies to Christians: 'every Christian, even among the elect, is also a mixture of good and evil. "We all have many vices, many weaknesses and corruptions." '[294] For Calvin, therefore, the familiar claim that 'we are all sinners in the eyes of God' is a universal truth: an *a priori* that precedes any attempt to understand ourselves.

In his first tetralogy, Shakespeare manifests similar Augustinian skepticism about human being's moral capacity, developing the theme of mankind's inborn depravity through horticultural metaphors. In his commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, for instance, Calvin sees the virtues of the Gentiles as nothing but 'branches' grafted on to 'some noble tree'. The root of the Gentiles, by contrast, is inextricably corrupt: 'as it were from some wild and unfruitful olive, as nothing but a curse was to be found in their whole race'.[295] In like manner, the first tetralogy frequently uses the image of a flawed natural plant to illustrate mankind's susceptibility to sin. In *1 Henry VI*, an embryonic encounter which will develop into what is known as The Wars of the Roses takes place in the temple garden. During this conflict, the Lancastrian and

---

[293] John Gillies, 'The Question of Original Sin in *Hamlet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 64 (2013), 396-424 (p. 402).

[294] Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, p. 229.

[295] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. by Rev. John Owen (United Kingdom: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), p. 427.

Yorkist partisans show their hostility to their opponents 'in dumb significants' by picking either red or white roses. Much as mankind's inborn aggressiveness does in seeking self-expression by driving one to do injuries to his fellows, a briar, 'sharp and piercing', inflicts serious lacerations. 'Prick not your finger as you pluck it off, | Lest, bleeding, you do paint the white rose red', Somerset threatens Vernon.[296] *2 Henry VI* continues to compare aggressiveness to plants: Suffolk, for instance, sees his ambitious political enemies as wild plant, 'weed', he says, which he must get rid of. In lecturing Henry, Margaret exhorts her husband to be wary of people's ambitions: if he allows the 'weeds' to grow, she warns, 'they'll o'ergrow the garden | And choke the herbs for want of husbandry'.[297]

4. The dangerous supplement: Rousseauian natural goodness.

Not everyone is as pessimistic about human nature as St. Augustine, however. For some thinkers, man did once possess an unadulterated purity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one of the most steadfast proponents of this view. 'The fundamental principle of all morality about which I have reasoned in all my writings,' he confidently proclaims, 'is that man is naturally a good being, loving justice and order, and that there is no original perversity in the human heart.'[298] Rousseau's optimism is premised upon his understanding of the concept of self-preservation. He begins his exploration of human

---

[296] *1 Henry VI*, II. 4. 26, 70, 50.

[297] *2 Henry VI*, I. 3. 100, III. 1. 31-33.

[298] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letters to Beaumont*, ed. by Christopher Kelley and Eve Grace, trans. by Christopher Kelley and Judith R. Bush (Lebanon, New: University Press of New England, 2012), p. 28.

nature by assuming an earthly Eden in which nature is in its most pristine and unsophisticated condition:'[w]hen the earth is left to its natural fertility and covered with immense forests that were never mutilated by the axe, it offers storehouses and shelters at every step to animals of every species.'[299] Born blessed with such natural abundance, man lives in a self-sufficient state as a being simple and null. The first sentiment that seizes this innocent creature is the awareness of his own existence. For Rousseau, this self-awareness is of the highest importance: the very basis upon which man develops his cognition and comprehends his relation to the external world. For Rousseau, as Arthur M. Melzer explains, 'prior to all desire and all relation to the other,' 'there exists an absolute self accompanying sensibility or awareness as such.'[300]

The knowledge of one's existence is closely followed by the 'animal instinct'[301]: *amour de soi,* or self love. Rather than a simple form of dull existence, this impulse of self-preservation constitutes the very essence of Rousseauian goodness. As what Rousseau calls 'positive love of life', this notion of existence contains an infinite pleasure and is the 'the source of all our passions'.[302] It is neither the disillusionment of Macbeth's 'tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' nor the weariness of 'this

---

[299] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men', in *The Basic Political Writings*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011), pp. 27-120 (p. 47).

[300] Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 39.

[301] Rousseau, 'Discourse on Inequality', p. 48.

[302] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. by Barbara Foxley (Milton Keynes: Lightning Source), pp. 222, 176.

muddy vesture of decay' but instead a positive assertion of self-agency to seek and to find pleasures of existence, a longing and insatiable desire for 'more life: to be more awake, more vital, more intensely there', as Melzer puts it.[303] Life, Rousseau argues, is the 'use of our senses, our mind, our faculties, every part of ourselves which makes us conscious of our being. Life consists less in length of days than in the keen sense of living'.[304]

According to Rousseau, the sole purpose of living is to maintain and prolong this kind of existence. For Rousseau, Melzer explains, anything that helps to 'extend or strengthen our existence flatters us'.[305] In this regard, one can well imagine Rousseau raising an eyebrow upon reading Hamlet's famous soliloquy: 'What is a man | If his chief good and market of his time | Be but to sleep and feed?'?[306] For Shakespeare's Hamlet, such laziness is opposed to moral duty, whereas for Rousseau, this very inaction, together with the very fact that one exists, comprises the core of human virtue: '[t]o do nothing is the primary and the strongest passion of man after that of self-preservation'; man 'lives only to sleep, to vegetate, and to rest'.[307] Indulging oneself in this indolence, one can find the 'natural sweetness to mere life', which for

---

[303] Melzer, p. 44.

[304] Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 10.

[305] Melzer, p. 44.

[306] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016), IV. 4. 32-34.

[307] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau: Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, ed. and trans. by John T. Scott (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 38-39.

Rousseau, as Melzer points out, is 'the final end of life and root of all happiness'.[308]

The concept of *amour de soi* lays the foundation for Rousseau's promotion of man's natural goodness. If, as Melzer observes, man is 'motivated by self-love […] naturally neutral toward others and good for himself,' if 'the source of his happiness and of his being' only resides within oneself, if, in a word, the plenitude of being is purely self-contained, how can man come to be associated with anything evil?[309] For a being solely self-concerned and living in an 'asocial and solitary' state, to entertain any aggressive feeling toward another primitive man, whom he may by chance encounter in his wandering and who lives in the same kind of primitive state, would disturb his inner peace and equanimity and contradict the principle of self-preservation.[310]

In this sense, Rousseau's claims about our innate moral goodness aim to emancipate man from the fetters of original sin. Christian doctrine holds that human beings are doomed, sinful, and intrinsically aggressive. Primal sin entails an inborn lack: our human depravity. Given the structural void that has arisen as a result of Adam's disobedience, one has to unceasingly wrestle with this inner crookedness by clinging to God's commandments. Born to atone for his sin, man must assiduously seek the approval of an external other: God. Rousseau, by contrast, refuses to acknowledge such lack and instead maintains that man by nature is absolutely good and pure. Man does not need any form of exterior approbation: everyone is a God to himself. Transforming the biblical Eden into a secular account of man's nakedness, he turns Christianity's structural insufficiency into an absolute fullness; stripping man 'of

---

[308] Melzer, pp. 40-42.

[309] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

[310] Rousseau, 'Discourse on Inequality', p. 42.

all the artificial faculties he could have acquired' from society, he finds the full presence in the plenitude of the unravished nature.[311]

Having reached back to what he believes to be the absolute provenance of all things, Rousseau says: 'the first impulses of nature are always right […] The only natural passion is self-love or selfishness taken in a wider sense. This selfishness is good in itself and in relation to ourselves.' He concludes what appears to be an optimistic diagnosis with a gesture of exorcism and waves away the spectre of degradation that he sees as having haunted Western society since the advent of Christianity: 'there is no original sin in the human heart, the how and why of the entrance of every vice can be traced.'[312] Unlike the Christian self, which searches for fullness by turning outward to God, the Rousseauian man is born intact; any evil, if it ever happens to be found within, is acquired from without and can in principle be traced to some external source. Lack can only come from outside; the interior of the self is by nature an intact fullness.

According to Rousseau, then, nature 'makes all things good'.[313] Unlike St. Augustine, who believes that earthly goodness is subject to the possibility of 'privation' due to its innate inferiority, Rousseauian goodness, that is, the desire for self-preservation, is full and absolute.[314] What Melzer calls a 'sufficiency of mediocrity', a sufficiency to which Rousseau sees every man as entitled, is a 'natural heritage' that characterises man as such: 'all human beings are equal to the task of

---

311 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

312 Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 56.

313 *Ibid.*, 55.

314 Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 454.

life.'[315] In summary, man is blessed with an unadulterated natural goodness. He is not a born sinner, nor in any sense troubled by the kind of moral perversity which Christian theology construes as an indestructible trace of human nature. Rousseau's theory of man's natural goodness, it would seem, banishes the ghost of depravity that formerly haunted human nature.

Rousseau's problem, however, is, to cite René Descartes, that 'the will extends further than the understanding'.[316] Belonging to the ontological tradition, Rousseau is an inflexible conservative who cannot tolerate the idea of possibilities.[317] This prejudice of what Derrida calls the 'traditional scholar' limits his faculty of understanding and renders him incapable of confronting the hauntological ghost.[318] Derrida's deconstruction of the *Second Discourse* and *On the Origin of Languages* in *Of Grammatology* leaves no doubt with respect to Rousseau's ontological tendency. As Derrida argues, Rousseau, belonging to the tradition of metaphysics of presence, is always eager to assume a center of certitude through which he can hold on to a binarity, juxtaposing what is with what is not. In his quest for origins, Rousseau establishes a state of what he regards as untainted nature; death and absence, forcefully segregated from the inside, are set up as dreaded alien others to whom the guardian of the inside must deny entrance. Thanks to a supposed plenitude of nature,

---

[315] Melzer, p. 22.

[316] Rene Descartes, *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, trans. by Desmond M. Clark (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 48.

[317] See, for instance, the first part of 'Discourse on Inequality', in which Rousseau finds himself unable to build up his argument without an a priori assumption. 'Discourse on Inequality', in *The Basic Political Writings*, p. 47.

[318] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 12.

Rousseau can indulge himself in a fantasy Derrida describes as 'the simple exteriority of death to life, evil to good, representation to presence, signifier to signified, representer to represented, mask to face, writing to speech'.[319]

By creating such simple binaries, Rousseau commits the injustice of victimisation; doing violence to that exteriority that actually precedes and stands within the so-called center. A provenance is far from simple and pure. It is rather, as Derrida points out, inextricably bound up with 'writing in general': haunted by absence and dearth, by the 'deployment of space and time that is not its own', and by the uncanny and the familiarly alien. What has been known as the 'proper', or the centre, presupposes a 'functioning […] within a system of differences' which always already resides in 'the non-self-sameness [*non-propriete*] at the origin.' Clinging to the prejudice of the presence of an unadulterated origin, Rousseau, however, fails to see this intermediary; habituated to condemning exteriority as evil and degenerate, he is at pains to exorcise the spectral condition of the 'interiority of exteriority'. [320]

According to Derrida, the notion of 'supplement' is key to understanding Rousseau's gesture of exorcism of evil. Concealing 'within itself two significations', a supplement can add itself to an already self-sufficient fullness as an excess: 'a plenitude enriching another plenitude'. Alternatively, it can take the place of the thing being supplemented, thereby indicating a void, an insufficiency of the original state. Nature according to Rousseau is a state of self-sufficiency and plenitude. Living in this primitive condition, man is supposed to be intact and intrinsically virtuous. In the light of nature's purity, any kind of corruption can only be attributed to an external cause: a result of man's estrangement from his natural state. Given that exteriority,

---

[319] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 343.

[320] *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 118, 342.

which takes 'the form of supplementarity', is an evil that destroys 'what is by nature innocent and good', supplement can only be an excess: a surplus that ruthlessly penetrates into the interior wholeness and violently breaks its innate unity.[321]

Rousseau's line of argument becomes aporetic, however, when he tries to establish the sensation of pity as an integral part of man's natural state. This sensation, he argues, is purely spontaneous, inborn, and unreflective: 'the only natural virtue' and 'the pure movement of nature prior to all reflection.' It is so constitutive that it is ineradicable: 'the most dissolute manners have as yet found it so difficult to extinguish'. In a 'state of nature', pity precludes any potential confrontation between primitive men; 'stand[ing] for laws, for manners, for virtue', it rules out the possibility of erpution of aggression. In a 'state of reason', pity is the arch-virtue from which other social virtues are derived: '[w]hat are generosity, mercy, and humanity […] if not pity applied to the weak, to the guilty, or to he human species in general?'?[322]

It is at this very moment when Rousseau tries to insert pity into the pristine condition of nature that he fails as an exorcist; the supplement that he introduces here winds up unsettling his more general theory of man's natural goodness. As Derrida explains, although Rousseau insists that pity is the most natural sensation, he also tends to use it as a tool, a *différance* to recover and maintain the presence of nature when it comes to practice. For Rousseau, the most primitive sensation is *amour de soi*. Following in the wake of this most immediate passion, that is, self love, pity, 'the root of the love of other', can itself be understood as a form of self-preservation, insofar as loving others amounts to an act of identification: a sympathy with those who share the same image as the self. What Rousseau claims to be the most natural, Derrida writes,

---

[321] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-58.

[322] Rousseau, 'Discourse on Inequality',pp. 62-64.

turns out to be a continuum: a 'derivation from the love of self'. The 'most necessary consequence' of the primitive condition and a supplement of love, pity is not the absolutely primitive but only stands close to the primitive; it is a ghost that haunts nature: residing both in and outside it.[323]

The play of *différance*, of supplementarity, has already been set in motion as soon as the sensation of pity arises. If, as Rousseau argues, nature is completely self-contained, then pity can only appear as an excessive sensation added to an already full entity: a surplus, an overabundant addition. Coming to practice, however, pity assumes a more portentous role. Turning from superfluity to necessity, pity proves a detour through which man re-appropriates and maintains the presence of nature, that is, that primitive state in which man is supposedly blessed with natural goodness and free from even the possibility of depravity. Tempering the sensation of *amour de soi*, pity, Rousseau writes, 'contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species'; acting as 'laws, more, and virtue' in primitive nature, it 'prevent[s] every robust savage from robbing a weak child or an infirm old man of his hard-earned subsistence, if he himself expects to be able to find his own someplace else'.[324]

Much as the Freudian reality principle does in preserving the ego by indefinitely deferring the satisfaction of pleasure, pity enables man to preserve himself by moderating his self-love, lest it grows so all-consuming that it becomes destructive. Without pity, the Rousseauian primitive state would be akin to the Hobbesian war of all against all, or a Hegelian master-slave dialectic in which the most dauntless fights to attain preeminence. Within this conceptual framework, pity as a supplement is

---

[323] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 189.

[324] Rousseau, 'Discourse on Inequality', p. 64.

unnatural, however, as well as indispensable. Pity, as Derrida observes, is derivative: 'almost primitive'.[325] Being a supplement, it supplements. To the extent that it is summoned to maintain a presence that lies in constant danger of extermination, it supplements *amour de soi* to supplant. As an outsider, it substitutes for the thing from which it is derived and fills a dangerous void that threatens the sensation of self-love.

Given that self-love, like the pleasure principle, is not genetically homogeneous and must be supplemented by another presence, goodness cannot be said to be inborn and self-contained. It requires an exterior aid, the law of pity that is not absolutely but only almost natural, to maintain its presence. The putatively Rousseauian first movement of nature has been spectralised: registered within the system of supplementarity. What is for Rousseau the proper, the center of certitude that guarantees fullness and plenitude, amounts to nothing but the ghost of the thing itself. Intrinsically insufficient, the Rousseauian self-love is contaminated from the very outset, even from before the beginning of the beginning, by the disruptive presence of the other: the so-called pure origin is haunted by an always already. By way of detour, then, Rousseau's gesture of exorcism only brings him face to face with the spectre that haunts Christian theologians.

5. Haunted by the other: Shakespeare's Rousseauian man.

'What exactly is the difference from one century to the next?'? Derrida asks in *Specters of Marx*. So far as the trans-historical void is concerned, there is scarcely anything different from one age to another. Like a ghost whose 'comings and goings' are not at all staged 'according to the linear succession of a before and an after', it

---

[325] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 189.

haunts no time, and haunts all time; it haunts Shakespeare's late medieval England, as well as Rousseau's plenitude of nature.[326] Preceding man's consciousness of himself as such, inherent insufficiency renders the binarity of good and evil inadequate; gestures of exorcism fail to free one from the haunting influence of the other. No one, it seems, is capable of maintaining unadulterated moral righteousness, not even the unworldly saint Henry VI.

In Writing History, Writing Trauma, Lacapra argues that there is a fundamental difference between loss and absence. Loss is historical. It presupposes 'specific and […] particular events', and can be reenacted: 'reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed in the present or future'. A victim who has undergone a loss, like a traumatic limit event, might act out scenes of the nightmarish experience. Insofar as traumatic symptoms stem from an original loss, these behaviours are traceable and can be dealt with. Feelings of disquietude and pathological symptoms generated by historical trauma, therefore, 'can conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part compensated for, worked through, and even to some degree overcome.' Absence, by contrast, refers to an absolute insufficiency not based upon any original fullness. Situated on a 'transhistorical level', it does not involve any degree of temporarily such as 'past, present, or future'. Given that it only relates to 'a condition of possibility of historicity', it cannot 'be cured but only lived with in various ways'.[327]

The contrast Lacapra draws between absence and loss provides a theoretical framework that can be read back into the two cities St. Augustine proposes in his *City of God*. According to St. Augustine, there are two cities, the City of God, which is

---

[326] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 48.

[327] Lacapra, *Writing History Writing Trauma*, pp. 47-51, 65, 84.

holy, quiet, peaceful, and inhabited by good angels, and the City of Man, which is the foul, selfish, trouble-making, and occupied by devils.[328] For those dwelling in the Earthly city, a place, as Patrick Gray points out, always related to 'secular government', the Celestial City is absent, not lost.[329] For Lacapra, Christianity is an absolute absence degraded and contextualised into a *idée fixe:* the Paradise Lost. Given its trans-historicity, one should regard Christianity as 'related to an affirmation or recognition of absence, not a postulation of loss.' In this sense, when it comes to historical problems, the concept of absence, or, in the present case, of Christianity, is relevant only to the extent that it rationalises certain kind of imperfections that exist in politics. It helps us understand, for instance, that humanity is violent, hostile, and selfish, not because we are inadequate in a historical sense, but because the odds are stacked against us from the outset. One must be wary, however, Lacapra warns, of fetishising the story of the Fall, as in doing so one can potentially unduly subordinate the play of historical factors and become preoccupied instead with 'misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics'.[330]

Turning to Shakespeare's first tetralogy, Henry VI's most griveous mistake is that that he misconstrues the void intrinsic to human nature as a retrievable loss, conceived in the form of a departure from God's grace. Rather than opening his eyes to humanity's abiding imperfection, the Fall becomes for him a historicised event, a trauma, which he believes can in one way or another be worked through. Assuming what amounts to the role of an exorcist, Henry VI naively believes, in other words,

---

[328] Augustine, *City of God*, pp. XI, 15, 20

[329] Gray, 'Shakespeare and War Honour at the Stake', *Critical Survey*, 30 (2018), 1-25.

[330] Lacapra, *Writing History Writing Trauma*, pp. 47-51, 65, 84.

that he can do away with mankind's inborn iniquity: as Gray observes, 'he treats the City of Man as if it were the City of God'.[331] Inhibiting him from properly reading and adequately coping with political events, this misperception is largely responsible for Henry's failure as a king. Hearing about England's loss of French territory, Henry responds submissively: '[c]old news, Lord Somerset; but God's will be done.' As *1 Henry VI* shows, however, it is the 'vulture of sedition', the English commanders' mutual distrust and competition for power, not God's will, that leads to England's defeat.[332] Visiting the dying Winchester, Henry asks the cardinal to make amends: 'if thou thinkst on heaven's bliss, | Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope.'[333] For his own part, however, the Cardinal gives scarcely any sign of any faith in God. While alive, he bustles in the political world in pursuit of earthly glory. His ecclesiastical position is only a tool to further his personal ambition: 'to pray against' his enemies.[334] The cardinal is too worldly, too Machiavellian, to have any hope, as Henry does, in the possibility of retrieving mankind's former purity. So, it comes as no surprise that he dies without responding to Henry's adjuration.

When Gloucester is about to be arrested, Henry, instead of taking take any action to save his ally, again withdraws into theological bromides:

Henry VI

[...] as the butcher takes away the calf

---

[331] Gray, 'Shakespeare and War: Honour at the Stake', *Critical Survey*, 30 (2018), 1-25.

[332] *1 Henry VI*, IV. 3.47.

[333] *2 Henry VI*, III. 3. 86; IV.1.26-28.

[334] *1 Henry VI*, I.1.43.

And binds the wretch and beats it when it strains,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughterhouse,
Even so remorseless have they borne him hence.

Much as the sacrifice of the Lamb of God does in reconciling man to God, the arrest of Gloucester, Henry seems to suggest, will wash away the sins of the world and restore England back to God's embrace. As it turns out, however, the arrest, instead of bringing the country closer to the Celestial City, only serves as a 'prologue' to more painful scenes of chaos and bloodshed.[335] With the 'shepherd', Gloucester, beaten from his side, Henry only makes himself, as well as his country, more vulnerable to ambitious courtiers' attacks. Skipping over historical factors and reading every problem as a disengagement from an intact unity, Henry is incapable of managing his own government. As a result, he finds himself stuck in a political world rife with selfish and uncaring lords.

Even Henry himself is susceptible to earthly ambition, moreover. Compared to his contentious courtiers, who are consumed by the lust for power, Henry seems the epitome of pacifism. For William Hazlitt, he is 'naturally averse to the turmoils of ambition and the cares of greatness'; he only wishes to 'pass his time in monkish indolence and contemplation'.[336] '[H]ow sweet, how lovely' it would be, Henry muses, to 'sit upon a hill', to 'carve out dials quaintly', and, in a word, to reject the evil society and enjoy his own existence in pure nature, much as Rousseauian man

---

[335] *2 Henry VI*, III.1.210-13, 151.

[336] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: John Templeman, 1838), p. 205.

does in his natural state.[337] Much in contrast to Henry's fantasy of quiet, untainted stillness is the English court: boisterous, sophisticated, and overflowing with selfish power-seekers. From the power-hungry Winchester to the calculating Suffolk and the contentious York, those figures eventually converge in the *ne plus ultra* of radical evil, Richard III.

Yet much as the sensation of pity does in unsettling the Rousseauian man's natural fullness, in Shakespeare's medieval world *libido dominandi* undermines Henry's putative aloofness. It does so through a kind of retrospective gesture, at the moment when Henry and the future Richard III, the two figures that appear to be totally antithetical in nature and temperament, confront each other for the first and the last time in the Tower of London. At the sight of Richard, Henry, well aware that his end is drawing near, brings into service his wonted antithetical paradigm to accuse his enemy. If he is to die, he could at least die with the knowledge that he gains a moral victory over his murderer. His opponent, he says, is a bloodthirsty homicide, a 'butcher', that is about to cut the throat of the 'harmless sheep', that is, Henry himself. Yet as Richard observes, if his presence inspires fear, it might be due to Henry's own 'guilty mind' rather than his murderous intention.[338] In other words, Henry's dichotomy does not necessarily make sense, given that Henry could be guilty of the same misfeasance that he is accusing Richard of.

Having pointed out the flaw of Henry's assumption, Richard invokes a pagan myth:

Richard of Gloucester

Why, what a peevish fool was that of Crete

---

[337] *3 Henry VI*, II.5.41, 23, 24.

[338] *Ibid.*, V. 6. 9, 8, 11.

That taught his son the office of a fowl!

And yet for his wings the fool was drowned.

King Henry

I, Daedalus; my poor boy, Icarus. [339]

What they are actually talking about is the death of Prince Edward. Yet approaching the event through the medium of this classical myth appears malapropos, or at least ironic. According to the myth, Icarus is a symbol of ambition, his daring deed represents man's desire for power. Whereas in the myth it is his father Daedalus who, having equipped him with wings devised from feathers and wax, renders possible Icarus' ambition of achieving a superior status of self-consciousness, in *3 Henry VI* Daedalus' counterpart does nothing of the sort. In many instances, Henry appears to be more of a hindrance to than a facilitator of his son's advancement. 'I would your highness would depart the field', is Clifford's advice to Henry before the Battle of Ferrybridge, as the royalists would perform far better without the faint-hearted Henry there nearby to dampen soldiers' spirits.[340]

The Icarus myth calls up an event in which Henry does exactly the opposite, moreover. Earlier in the play, Henry strikes a notorious bargain with York. In exchange for York's loyalty and obedience, he disinherits his own son and designates York as his heir apparent. This political *modus vivendi* shows that Henry is not altogetehr different from those power-seeking Machiavellian politicians. Like York and Suffolk, who, in the pursuit of their own individual glory, betray the national interest, or Winchester, who, driven by the love of earthly power, ruthlessly hunts

---

[339] *Ibid.*, V. 6. 18-21.

[340] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 73.

down his kinsman Gloucester, Henry, in order to retain his regal status (even if it is *de facto* nominal), does not hesitate to sacrifice his 'dearest heart-blood.' In Henry's defense, it might be said that he is 'enforced' into the bargain by his enemies, who, with armed forces at their bidding, do everything they can to bully him into submission. Yet there is no denying that even in the face of extremity Henry does not forget to attend to his personal interests: to be honoured as 'King and sovereign' without being overthrown 'by treason nor hostility'. True, Henry may be weak, indolent, and 'timorous', yet he is by no means free from the lust for dominion that pervades Shakespeare's depiction of late medieval England. One might even argue that, compared to other schemers' crimes, what Henry does is more nefarious, unnaturally depriving his own son of his natural 'birthright'. In this sense, Henry paves the way for the rise of a more depraved version of himself: the unscrupulous Richard. Both of them, to '[b]e round impaled with a glorious crown', have no scruples about betraying their own families.[341] Henry and Richard are not, by this light, an absolute antithesis; they differ, one might say, in degree rather than in kind. To borrow St. Augustine's terminology, both reside in the City of Man.

[341] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 223, 229, 198, 199, 231, 218, III. 2. 171.

4

Shakespeare the Pessimist: Hauntological Spectres in the First Tetralogy

In his first tetralogy, Shakespeare delineates an orthodox view of historiography. More commonly known as the Tillyardianism, this approach manifests a redemptive understanding of history that seeks to contain historical trauma by foregrounding a traditional sense of law, divine justice, linearity, and historical restitution.[342] Such view, however, is but part of the story. It suppresses or at least understates here the presence of the other, although more unorthodox and pessimistic, Shakespeare. Rather than seeking to bring in unification and conclude history, the first tetralogy ushers in a new historical sensibility, a form of writing history that could be described as hauntology, where the ideal state of presence is indefinitely deferred by absence and lack. As opposed to the redemptive view of historical writing, the first tetralogy, Shakespeare suggests, offers an account of cultural transmission in which the possibility of war always haunts the hope for a sustained state of prosperity and peace. To perform those martial texts, moreover, is to be confronted by a sense of the insufficiency of the present, which calls into question the concept of historical causality and continuity, as characters here now and then find themselves assailed by ghosts of past trauma whose origin lies beyond their own age.

---

[342] For E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's first tetralogy manifests a 'general philosophy of history' largely informed by the Tudor dynasty's interpretation of history. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 323; for Irving Ribner, the Tudor myth is 'incorporated into […] Henry VI plays'. Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1965), p. 104.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida conjures up a radical and unrelenting ghost, to the study of which he gives the name 'hauntology'. One must learn to 'speak to the specter', He urges.[343] By speaking to, he means an obedience to the injunction given by the voice from the other side: 'to speak to the specter, to speak with it, therefore especially to make or to let a spirit speak'.[344] Quite different from the ghosts of the past, which demand dialogue with the living world and whose provenance is locatable, the Derridean spectre introduces itself with a far less reconciliatory gesture: it comes, as Colin Davis puts it, not to be sent away, but to stay in the world.[345] Insatiable in its demand for attention and obedience, the hauntological ghost aims at cultivating the capacity to stay ignorant, to avoid rushing in with the sort of certainty that precludes possibilities for the always to come: knowing too much prevents the unshaped shadow from coming. An absolutely enigmatic other that eludes ontologisation, the ghost is unspeakable: lying beyond the boundary of knowledge, an always already and a still-to-come, its revelation of one secret leads not to epiphany, but only to another undeciphered secret. As a practice of not knowing, of refusing to understand what cannot possibly be known, the ghost signifies a radically new philosophy, a new perspective radically different from what is traditionally known as ontology, the philosophy of being: '[w]hat is a ghost? […] Let us call it a hauntology.'

For Derrida, the hauntological ghost confuses conventional binary opposites. To capture the ghost's spectral voice, one should attentively follow its steps and dissolve the confines laid down by the epistemological framework of ontology. In approaching

---

[343] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 10

[344] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[345] Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 70.

a thing one must refrain from imposing any hegemonic definition upon the object and reserve the privilege of speaking for the other. To set up a dialogue with the ghost is to abandon the metaphysical centre of certitude and to give up the attempt at pinpointing the so-called historical root: to 'doubt this reassuring order of presents and […] the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it'.

Characterised by the indeterminacy of being and non-being, the Derridean ghost subverts the traditional sense of temporality and bespeaks endless possibilities. Derrida writes *Specters of Marx* in response to the view that capitalism, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has effectively put an end to the influence of Marx, the most threatening ghost haunting Western society since the publication of the *Manifesto*. Can one really declare with confidence and certainty that capitalism has safely buried Marx? For Derrida, the answer is negative; the end-of-history mindset is dangerous. What appears to be the end point of history is merely 'an increasingly glaring hypocrisy'.[346] Liberal eschatology is a mirage: the future it proclaims is haunted by a ghost. 'How to comprehend in fact the discourse of the end or the discourse about the end?' Derrida asks, then answers, '(a)fter the end of history, the spirit comes by coming back.'

Given that there is no such a thing as a proper end, time itself, Derrida argues, is spectralised: 'the time is out of joint'. Marx haunts the western world; his legacy is still constructive, still relevant in the ' "new world order" ' of capitalism. Given that one can never thoroughly deal with Marx's inheritance, one must respect the ghost of Marx 'in the name of justice'.[347] Such responsibility entails learning to dissolve the

---

[346] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 100.

[347] *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 100, xviii.

temporality inherent in ontological grounding. As Christopher Prendergast points out, justice placed in the conventional mode of time presupposes a series of events concatenated by causality and sequence: bounded up at the two ends by 'reference to a past and a future'. While to seek justice through any nostalgic gesture by referring to an original wrong inevitably sets in motion 'the cycle of retaliatory violence', 'to establish justice by reference to a final solution' unavoidably engenders hegemony.[348]

The notion of a hauntological time, by contrast, is more complicated, eluding simple relation to a fixed past, an uninterrupted present, and a definite future. 'Repetition and first time, but also repetition and last time': a ghost, as Derrida observes, 'begins by coming back'.[349] One can no longer say with certitude what the thing on the other side actually is; 'this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge' of the philosophy of being.[350] In the same stroke a ghost returns and, through its returning, makes its spectral debut. It 'figures both a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself'.[351] It does not belong to the past, because it is not the same thing as it was while alive; nor is the specter a thing of the present, as it manifests itself as 'a dead man' returning.[352] To make sense of this spectral effect, Derrida argues, we should direct our attention to the future: not a definite and messianic future that promises any salvation or the end of history in any particular

---

[348] Christopher Prendergast, 'Derrida's Hamlet', *Substance*, 34 (2005), 44-47 (p. 45).

[349] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 10.

[350] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[351] *Ibid.*, p. 5

[352] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

sense, but an indefinite future that remains unshaped and unrealised. ‘At bottom, the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back’.[353] A specter, to sum up, is the stubborn possibility of the supposedly impossible: it represents an endless to come, calling into question attempts to comprehensively conceptualise historical events, and undermining hegemonic efforts to solidify and stabilise the past.

The Derridean hauntology serves as a conceptual tool to understand Shakespeare’s take on civilisation. Such an understanding, however, cannot be possible without bringing into context Freud’s post war texts, as the Freudian pessimism provides a paradigm of thinking that helps one read back into Shakespeare’s martial plays. For Shakespeare, as well as for Freud, civilisation is haunted by the possibility of war, by what Derrida calls the hauntological spectres. Much as Freud does in inaugurating an epoch of the death instinct in *Civilization and Its Discontents* as well as ‘Why War’, Shakespeare manifests in his first tetralogy, as well as his second, a very much analogical sense of pessimism about a successfully shared recovery from past cultural trauma. Edward IV, according to Shakespeare’s portrayal, assumes the shape of a moral character that serves to showcase the naivety of pacifism and the end of history mindset. For Shakespeare, as his staging of the two resourceful Lancastrain rulers, Henry IV and Henry V, suggests, a sustained peaceful condition, although very much hoped for, is unlikely to be achieved in this worldly state, where peace’s dreadful other, war, looms large as an undesirable yet necessary evil. Shakespeare and Freud, moreover, converge at the concept of trans-generational trauma. In keeping with the persistent returning of the other recorded by Freud in ‘The “Uncanny” ’, Shakespeare in his early history plays captures the disjunction of temporality by

[353] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

staging history plays' structural insufficiency, the motifs of alliance and locality, as well as probing the limits of the concept of historical departure.

1. Freud's pessimism and the doom of civilisation.

Civilisation cannot drive out the ghost of disunity from its mansion. As the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles observes, '[t]here is an oracle of necessity, an ancient decree of the gods, | eternal, sealed with broad oath.'[354] Necessity, as Jonathan Barnes explains, means the inevitability of the struggle between the two immortal gods, love and strife. The former attempts to bring everything to unity and harmony, while the latter strives to tear it apart. In keeping with Empedocles' view, Freud proclaims in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that 'civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration.' The essence of history amounts to a kind of duel between two instincts: the struggle for life vs. the struggle for death. While the love instinct, moving in a centripetal trajectory, strives to combine 'single individuals […] families […] races, peoples and nations, into […] the unity of mankind,' the aggressive force always seeks the dissolution of life.[355]

This destructive propensity, Freud continues, is so all-consuming that even 'reasonable interests' cannot counteract it. '[R]easonable interests': another Freudian detour.[356] Like St. Augustine, reflecting on his childhood crime, Freud in effect

---

[354] *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 115.

[355] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 302.

[356] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

echoes the Christian view of our human condition, not only insofar as he holds a pessimistic view of human nature, but also insofar as, like St. Augustine, he believes that our inclination toward depravity is instinctual, elusive, and ubiquitous. Much as St. Augustine learns from his spontaneous crime that 'I like what I might not, only because I might', so, too, Freud maintains that aggressiveness is beyond the management of reason, a destructive impulse that cannot be bribed by civilisation's promise of reward into reliable docility and obedience.[357] Our instinctual hostility is never fully detectable: rarely is there a case in which the manifestation of this instinct is 'unsupported by other motives'.[358] Nevertheless, our aggressiveness is all-pervasive, haunting the course of human history. It reigns in primitive society 'almost without limit' and persists into a future communists naively imagine can be a utopia, free from evil; it pervades every corner of man's life and becomes 'the basis of every relation of affection and love among people'; it is, in a word, ineradicable.[359] No matter what course any future civilisation may happen to take, Freud declares, 'this indestructible feature of human nature will follow it there.'

Would the giant of life eventually subdue its opponent and emerge victoriously from the debris? Instead of enlightening us with any definite reply, Freud concludes with a quotation from Heine: '[a]nd it is this battle of giants that our nurse-maids try to appease with their lullaby about Heaven'.[360] For Freud, the truth about human aggressiveness is too discouraging for most people to address explicitly. It is much

---

[357] Augustine, *The Confessions*, p. 39.

[358] Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* XI, p. 293.

[359] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 304.

[360] *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314.

more comforting to resort to 'antic fables' and find solace in 'shaping fantasies'.[361] Much as the ghost of Marx does in haunting Western democracy, the ghost of disintegration troubles cultural attempts to build a civilised future of peace, serenity, and universal love. Rather than entertaining hopes for a complete closure, one should remain open to the play of possibilities. One is always haunted by the future, by what is to come. War, even though a repulsive other to civilisation, is inevitable: 'cannot be abolished', as Freud says in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*. The wisest course that civilisation can adopt is to make itself habituated to war: '[I]f you want to preserve peace, arm for war.'[362]

For civilisation, moreover, war can even be unconsciously gratifying. So far as the conscious mind is concerned, war is a falling-off and a sign of decadence, indissolubly bound up with degeneration and deterioration. Mankind's original sin is described as a fall from the state of Grace; likewise, it is customary to say a nation at war has descended into an inferior state. At the beginning of *1 Henry VI*, when England is traumatised by Henry's death, Bedford attributes the sad event to some 'bad revolting star', associating England's condition following Henry's death with the trajectory of falling[363]. Even the phrase 'fall in love' denotes a state of inferiority. As Nietszche says, 'procreation is due to impotence'.[364] Love, then, as the prerequisite for the act of reproduction for mankind, introduces this kind of degeneracy. To seek

---

[361] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), V. 1. 3, 5.

[362] Sigmund Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death', in *The Penguin Freud Library*, (see Freud, above), XII, pp. 57-89 (pp. 88-89).

[363] *1 Henry VI*, I. 1. 3.

[364] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 369.

the gratification of libido by turning to an external object signals one's dependence and therefore seems a waning of life's power. Anyone capable of living in a state of absolute self-subsistence would never direct his libido to an outside object. After all, what is the origin of the formation of love for an external object? Is it not, as Freud points out, due to the infant's inability to feed itself on its own, and therefore has to turn to an external object, usually its mother, for nutrition?

To the conscious mind, therefore, falling is a dangerous movement toward an undesirable state, such as decadence and death, and therefore regarded as taboo. Labeled a dangerous exteriority, it must be driven out of the conscious mind's territory and vigilantly guarded against by its internal censorship. Whereas the conscious mind is afraid of falling, the unconscious, however, is drawn toward its gravitational force. To the unconscious mind, falling signifies nostalgia. It denotes a longing for a sense of security, an inertia interrupted by the business of life. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud argues that dreams about falling usually refer back to 'the age of childhood, which subsequently become prehistoric' in man's psychic life. For the conscious mind, infantile impressions, repressed yet active in the unconscious, are a subject of abhorrence, as the sense of regression undermines an individual's integrity. Dreams about falling are usually experienced by the conscious mind in association with 'terror'.[365]

Nevertheless, a sense of longing haunts this facade of dread. Dreams of falling, Freud argues, 'reproduce impressions made in childhood — that is, that they refer to the games involving rapid motion which have such an extraordinary attraction for

---

[365] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by A. A. Brill (Ware: Wordsworth, 1997), p. 165.

children.'[366] Such games cause such a delight to children that even in their adult life they look back with nostalgia at those merry moments. In this sense, the latent content that the dream of falling conveys is a hankering for the past. This kind of dream, banned by the conscious mind, transports the dreamer back to a time on the other side of an impassable abyss, a time when he felt secure and, surrounded by doting parents, was the lord of his little realm in which he could claim everyone's attention. To grow up means to depart from home, to be cut off from loving families on whose protection one has been accustomed to rely, to be laden with cares and troubles of life, and to be deprived of the sense of safety that one once possessed.[367]

So far as the act of falling is concerned, then, there is a fundamental contradiction between the manifest content and the latent content, for the very thing that is banned by the former is yearned for by the latter. Much as individuals, then, unconsciously long to fall, so, too, societies unconsciously crave war. Due to internal censorship, aggression, hate, and the desire decadence are deferred, but the prospect of war nonetheless is not without its attraction, as the fulfillment of an unconscious wish to die in life's own fashion. Given that any kind of exorcism ends up finding itself haunted by the spectre it seeks to dispel, peace's attempt at mastering war dissolves into a theoretical fiction. The manifest content's struggle for prevalence over the latent content, that is, for the strict observance of an ethics of compassion, is a detour for the possibility of a future fall that has always already resided within civilisation

---

[366] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

[367] For mankind's longing for home, see 'the mother's womb [is] the first lodging, for which in all likelihood man still longs, and in which he was safe and felt at ease.' Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*,XII, p. 279.

itself and haunts any form of civilisation to come. Put another way, even though one can work through a certain historical traumatic event, a particular war for example, one can never work through the possibility of war. The fact that the latent content always haunts the manifest content undermines the notion of the so-called progress of society, revealing it as endlessly and inevitably susceptible to a downward movement instead, a falling into the abyss of bloodshed.

2. 'We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns | And pass them current too': Shakespeare's criticism of pacifism in the first tetralogy.

Elizabethan England tended to view peace as a transient state, much as Freud does in many of his reflections during and after the First World War. As Paul A. Jorgensen argues in 'Shakespeare's Use of War and Peace', Elizabethan English authors place little trust in the possibility of any lasting peace. Instead, like Freud, as well as St. Augustine, they see human civilization, St. Augustine's 'City of Man', as by its very nature liable to unpredictable outbreaks of violence, resulting in a cycle of at best only intermittent peace predicated on the ineradicable possibility of war. Marston's *Historio-mastix* vividly illustrates how this cycle works. A moral allegory, the play shows how human society gradually descends from peace to war through a process of plenty, pride, and envy. Notwithstanding the last act sees peace restored, the fallenness of human nature makes it clear that the cycle will continue. The spectres keep coming back. As what Freud describes 'the derivative and the main representative of the death instinct', war haunts peace itself.[368] With a nod to Marston's play, Shakespeare's first tetralogy treats peace as at best mercurial.

---

[368] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 314.

Although the playwright does not present the stage of peace in the tetralogy, the intense nostalgia that the nobles show before the corpse of the Henry V during the funeral procession indicates the prosperity, transient though it proved, that England enjoyed under its former, seemingly invincible sovereign. With the death of Henry V, however, England, as well as Henry's young orphan, Henry VI, find themselves in a changing world; peace proves treacherous, engendering unrest and uncertainty.

As key catalysts for war, pride and jealousy pervade the English court. Some nobles are envious of others' power and wealth, while others set their eyes on royal power and plot to replace the infant king. Gloucester and Winchester are engaged in an unceasing fratricidal strife. Being 'supreme magistrates' in charge of the realm, they nevertheless 'contumeliously […] break the peace'. Due to personal grudges and mutual distrust, York and Somerset deliberately withhold the reinforcements that Talbot urgently wants. Their personal quarrel, as Shakespeare shows in *1 Henry VI*, is mainly responsible for the defeat of the English army as well as the death of Talbot, the scourge of France and the flower of English chivalry. In order to gratify his personal ambition, to 'rule both her [*Margaret]*, the King and realm', Suffolk persuades Henry to marry a daughter of a poor nominal king at the cost of the English crown's interests.[369] And the York family, not content with what they possess, make numerous attempts to dethrone Henry VI through a series of violent conflicts now known as the Wars of the Roses.

As a result of the nobles' ignoble strife, England loses the French territory it regained under the reign of Henry V and, still worse, descends into civil war. Ties formed by nature and social institutions are snapped asunder. Fathers and sons kill

---

[369] *1 Henry VI*, I. 3. 57-58, V. 4. 108.

each other on the battlefield: 'O heavy times, begetting such events!'![370] Commons rebel. Ruin, devastation, and chaos run riot: 'let's kill all the lawyers', the rebels say.[371] As the civil war goes, poverty creeps in. Soldiers fight for money, not glory. Left to look after themselves, they turn to robbing dead bodies. 'This man, whom hand to hand I slew in fight, | May be possessed with some store of crowns', one soldier says; another: (t)hou that so stoutly hath resisted me | Give me thy gold […] For I have bought with an hundred blows.[372]

Although Shakespeare is fully aware of the horror of anarchy, as his depiction of the horrendous battle scenes shows, he also has his doubts about the possibility of a sustained peace. Such a state is preferable yet, in this fallen and earthly city, unattainable. As Gray writes, 'war is at times a necessary evil. War is on occasion the least-worst solution, given the fallenness of human nature.'[373] Since war always haunts peace, the wish for a perpetual state of concord amounts to a utopian absurdity that in practice proves politically destructive. Shakespeare's first tetralogy in particular criticises pacifism, which it depicts as naive and short-sighted. Gestures aimed at making peace are undermined by dramatic irony. Failed moments of exorcism pervade the tetralogy. Bedford's appeal to the ghost of Henry V for a reprieve from further combat, for instance, is answered by the news of English army's defeat in France; England has to fight another round of tough war on the French soil, concluding in England's defeat. Much as England's union with France at the end of

---

[370] *3 Henry VI*, II. 5. 63.

[371] *2 Henry VI*, IV. 2. 71.

[372] *3 Henry VI*, II. 5. 56-57, 79-81.

[373] Gray, 'Shakespeare and War Honour at the Stake', *Critical Survey*, 30 (2018), 1-25.

Henry V produces a short period of stability, the pact with the French army at the end of *1 Henry VI* fails to guarantee a lasting peace. This 'effeminate peace', as the despondent York predicts, will lead to the 'utter loss of all the realm of France'.[374] As it turns out, skirmishes continue in spite of the agreement, and England utterly loses its hold of the the French territory by the end of the beginning of *2 Henry VI.* As Somerset tells Henry: 'all your interest in those territories | Is utterly bereft you; all is lost.'[375]

In the last scene of *3 Henry VI*, Edward tries to invoke the blessing of lasting stability. The victory over the House of Lancaster, he seems to suggest, can from then on protect his house from external threats; with him seated on the throne, England has become the heavenly city and achieved a perpetual state of peace and a 'lasting joy' enacted in an infinity of time. 'Thus have we swept suspicion form our seat | And made our footstool of security.' For his newborn son, there will be an unending enjoyment of prosperity and peaceful rule: 'repossess the crown in peace | And of our labours thou shalt reap the gain.' Edward's vision of an eternity of happiness, however, proves only illusory. Standing ominously nearby, Richard, for one, subverts Edward's version of the end of history. Promising further mischief, he vows to 'blast' the harvest whose seed has been sown by Edward: (t)his shoulder was ordained so thick to heave | And heave it shall some weight or break my back.'[376] Actions, the open-endedness of *3 Henry VI* suggests, are granted a respite rather than a complete

---

[374] *1 Henry VI*, V. 3. 107, 112.

[375] *2 Henry VI*, III. 1. 83-85.

[376] *3 Henry VI*, V. 7. 13-14, 46, 21, 23-24.

closure; it is impossible, as David Kastan says, to isolate the 'action from its place on the temporal continuum'.[377]

As Jorgenson notes, many Elizabethan thinkers associate peace with disease: '[t]here is an important tendency to select a hidden type of disease to describe the sinister workings of peace.'[378] And Shakespeare, too, it seems, sees peace in the same light. The playwright portrays Edward IV, in particular, as an allegorical figure of disease revealing the latent danger of a static peace. From a robust leader of the fighting brotherhood in *3 Henry VI*, Edward is reduced to a sapless dependent: a very image of disease. In the only scene that he appears in in *Richard III,* he is so weak that he has to ask for assistance even in walking: '-Come, Hastings, help me to my closet.'[379] Like the historical figure, Shakespeare's Edward works his own ruin by indulging in a dissolute lifestyle.

There are also some points of difference, however. Historically, after the House of York's decisive victory over its opponent on the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471, Edward reigned in prosperity for twelve years. In Shakespeare's history plays, by contrast, Edward's infirmity seems to set in immediately. Omitting Edward's effective policies and management of the crown, Shakespeare presents the audience with a sickly dependent who brings ruin on himself through his own hedonism. Shakespeare's neglect of the period of Edward's rule is so striking that for Peter

---

[377] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), p. 48.

[378] Paul Jorgenson, 'Shakespeare's Use of War and Peace', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 16 (1953), 319-52.

[379] *Richard III*, II. 1. 133.

Saccio, '[t]he first historical injustice that Shakespeare commits' is not the demonisation of Richard III, but the victimisation of Edward IV.[380]

In eliding Edward's effective reign, Shakespeare in effect spotlights the corrosiveness of concord. Edward's fatness and his private life serve as symbols of the precariousness of peace. In a Christological context, overweight has always been subject to disparagement, associated with sin and lack of self-discipline. In describing his spiritual struggle against corporeal sins, for example, St. Augustine says that he 'struggle[s] every day against uncontrolled desire in eating and drinking'.[381] In the Elizabethan England, although direct evidence seems wanting, the abundance of extant literary texts suggests that the Elizabethans tend to view a corpulent body as a sign of idleness, an idleness that is largely bred by the soothing time of peace.

Obesity serves, for instance, as a symbol of a morbid state of peace in the alarmist play *A Larum for London*. While surveying Antwerp, a city sleeping in a falsely assumed sense of security, Danila, the Spanish captain who is about to attack the city, more than once describes the citizens and guards in a language that conjures up images of unhealthy corpulence. They are but 'swilling Epicures', the captain says. Falling 'a sleepe vpon full stomackes', they are 'fat for a slaughter'.[382] For Shakespeare, the association between overweight and idleness, as well as the insidious danger contained in the former, could be more obvious. In *1 Henry IV*, Falstaff's fat belly is pejoratively associated with inactivity in a strife-free state. Such indolence, as Prince Hal suggests, is dangerous in that it induces oblivion and

---

[380] Saccio, p. 159.

[381] Augustine, *The Confessions*, p. 207.

[382] *A Larum for London*, ed. by W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), 1. 22, 32, 50.

weakens an important connection with the objective world: our sense of temporality. Thus:

PRINCE

> Thou art so fat-witted, with drinking of old sack
> And unbuttoning thee after supper and sleeping upon
> benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to
> demand that truly which thou truly know.
> What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?[383]

Returning to Edward, one the most distinguishing features of the king is that of his corpulent body, the formation of which is ascribed to his lack of self-discipline and dissipated lifestyle. As Jeffery James writes in the biography, *Edward IV*, 'contemporaries certainly noted his corpulence and lethargy […]Dominic Mancini accused Edward of being "most immoderate" with respect to food and drink'.[384] Although not explicitly dramatising Edward's obesity, Shakespeare repeatedly draws attention to his lack of self-restraint.. At the end of *3 Henry VI*, Edward eagerly bans the presence of conflict and introduces a holiday mood. '(W)e spend the time', he declares, '[w]ith stately triumphs, mirthful comic shows | Such as befits the pleasure of the court.[385] A court, a king's household and council, is multi-functional: it is where a king's daily life is unfolded; a site of patronage of art; and, more importantly,

---

[383] *1 Henry IV*, I. 2. 2-6.

[384] Jeffery James, *Edward IV: Glorious Son of York* (Stroud: Amberley, 2017), p. 261.

[385] *3 Henry VI*, V. 7. 42-44.

a bureaucratic institution in which a king and his servants can discuss state affairs and issue policies. By focusing on nothing but harvest, security, and enjoyment, Edward, neglects a vital part of the court's function: settling disagreements and matters of state. He ignores the world's susceptibility to conflict. In keeping with its prequel, *Richard III* continues to underscore Edward's predisposition toward an Epicurean lifestyle. According to Richard's account, the Edwardian court loses its administrative role and becomes a voluptuary centre for sensualists' pleasure-making; even war 'capers nimbly in a lady's chamber | To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.'[386] The political executive function of a court becomes peripheral. It must transform itself, renouncing its stern demeanour and putting on the dress of entertainment, dress incongruous with its fundamental function, in order to make way for the hedonist mood prevalent under Edward's reign.

Edward's weak willpower also manifests itself through his scandalous lechery. In medieval England, it was customary for kings and princes to maintain mistresses. The fact that Edward nevertheless became notorious for doing so attests to his exceeding the bounds of social norms. As John Ashdown-Hill says, Edward is 'one of the promiscuous Plantagenets, so much at the mercy of his own libido.'[387] The means that he employed to satiate his lust was outrageously unscrupulous, moreover. 'The king was held to have lured reluctant partners to bed by falsely promising matrimony', James notes; 'several women may have been suckered into some form of pre-nuptial arrangement by him, dishonored once the king had satisfied his lust.'[388]

---

[386] *Richard III*, I. 1. 12-13.

[387] John Ashdown-Hill, *The Last Days of Richard III* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2013), p. 19.

[388] James, p. 131.

Like the historical figure, Shakespeare's Edward is held in ill-repute: almost everyone associates him with excessive and illicit sexual desire. People talk about his licentiousness even in public, often in a disdainful and dismissive way. Prince Edward calls him 'lascivious Edward'; Margaret describes him as 'wanton'; Warwick berates him as driven by 'wanton lust rather than by reason and good judgement; and Richard regards him as 'lustful'.[389] In *Richard III*, the quick-witted Richard improvises a pointed joke to make fun of Edward's private affair with Mistress Jane Shore.

Edward's lust is destructive in many ways. Unrestrained promiscuity was likely to cause venereal disease, to begin with. As Thomas Gascoigne writes in *Loci et libro seriatim*, Henry IV's father, John of Gaunt, for example, eventually 'died of a putrefaction of his genitals and body, caused by the frequenting of women, for he was a great fornicator'.[390] In Shakespeare's early history plays, Edward's lechery engenders a similar possibility. Richard's curse strikes home this point: '[w]ould he were wasted, marrow, bones and all | That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring.'[391]

Edward's lust is politically deleterious, moreover. Royal marriage at the time was inseparable from politics. Yet in choosing his partner, Edward disregards the political significance of his choice. Historically, Edward's imprudence in this respect caused him no small trouble. It alienated his stout supporter Warwick, and his brothers George and Richard took great offence, outraged by the Woodville family's undeserved power and position. In the long run, the scandalous marriage led to his son's loss of the English throne. Given that the marriage was bigamous, the children,

---

[389] *3 Henry VI*, V. 5. 34, I. 4. 74, III. 3. 210, III. 2. 129.

[390] Royle, p. 70.

[391] *3 Henry VI*, III. 2. 124-26.

as Ashdown-Hill explains, became 'technically illegitimate'. Edward V's claim to the English crown became invalid 'by reason of bastardy'.[392] As it turned out, the illegitimacy provided a strong theoretical basis for Richard's claim for the English crown. As also happened historically, Shakespeare's Richard 'infer[s] the bastardy of Edward's children' in order to seize the crown. He instructs Buckingham to play on Edward's immoral and licentious conduct to insinuate the young prince's illegitimacy:

RICHARD

> [...] urge his hateful luxury
> And bestial appetite in change of lust;
> Which stretched to their servants, daughter, wives,
> Even where his lustful eye or savage heart,
> Without control, listed to make his prey.[393]

Edward's susceptibility to the charms of women makes the kingdom politically vulnerable. During the Renaissance, women were deemed incapable of handling political affairs, so that a female ruler was considered a troubling of disruption of a natural hierarchical order. '[A]mong the ominous signs of the times', as Bouwsma explains, a man being ruled by a woman is a major one.[394] In 1558, John Knox , for instance, describes Elizabeth' succession to her half-sister Mary Tudor as ' "the

---

[392] Ashdown-Hill, p. 15-16.

[393] *Richard III*, III. 5. 75, 80-84.

[394] Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance*, p. 115.

monstrous regiment of women' ".[395] *Richard III* thoroughly explores the unwelcome consequence that the waning of patriarchal authority engenders. Influenced by a woman's opinion, Edward becomes incapable of handling state affairs. Meeting Clarence on his way to the tower, Richard cunningly insinuates to the prisoner that Elizabeth is the cause of his predicament:

RICHARD

Why, this it is, when men are ruled by women:
'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower:
My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
That tempers him to this extremity.

Richard's accusation has a historical foundation: George of Clarence and the Woodvilles entertained deep animosity toward each other. George was resentful of the Woodvilles' promotion on account of Elizabeth's marriage to his brother Edward, while the Woodvilles for their part held a grudge against Clarence for his role in the Readeption of Henry VI, which cost several lives within the Woodville family.[396] Although in the play it is Richard who is responsible for Clarence's imprisonment, it is clear that women, Queen Elizabeth in particular, hold sway in King Edward's court. Lord Hastings' imprisonment and delivery, for instance, are ascribed to women's

---

[395] Anne Laurence, 'Women in the British Isles in the Sixteenth Century', in *A Companion to Tudor Britain*, ed. by Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 381-399 (p. 381).

[396] For the vendetta between Clarence and the Woodville family', see Paul Murray Kendall, *Richard III* (London: Norton), pp. 144-45.

interference. This inversion of the hierarchical order, deemed morbid by most Elizabethans, is aptly captured by Hastings. ‘More pity that the eagles should be mewed, | Whiles kites and buzzards play at liberty’. Likewise, Richard also gives a panorama of this kingdom’s infirmity:

RICHARD

> [...] the world is grown so bad
> That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch
> Since every Jack became a gentleman
> There’s many a gentle person made a jack.[397]

3. ‘Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more’: a last stand.

Although his attitude toward civilisation in general is pessimistic, Freud does not give up the fight against mankind’s instinctual destructiveness without a struggle. In ‘Why War’, a correspondence written in 1932, two years after the publication of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud held a thorough discussion with Einstein about the possibility of containing the violence that was then overwhelming the world. Replying to Einstein’s inquiry about the possibility of completely exorcising evil, of ‘discovering ways and means to render all armed conflicts impossible’, Freud, although fundamentally pessimistic, decides to make an effort to find some means to minimise humanity’s destructiveness. ‘[T]here is no question', he says, ‘of getting rid entirely of human aggressive impulses; it is enough to try to divert them to such an extent that they need not find an expression in war.’ A short meandering, however,

---

[397] *Richard III*, I. 1. 61-65, 132-33, I. 3. 69-72.

brings Freud to a dead end, for none of the methods he proposes can lead to the desired result.

It is not sufficient to play *eros* against the destructive instinct, to begin with. To invite men to learn to love their fellows, or to establish a common emotional tie 'by means of identification', is something 'more easily said than done'.[398] Even if a set of shared values can unite a community, Freud explains, inborn aggression would still find an exit by directing itself against alien members, whom the community holds in contempt. The Jewish people, long considered by communities in the West an outsider and a minority, becomes the target of persecution in every society in which they settle down, and 'communities with adjoining territories', such as the English and the Scottish, the English and the French, and the Chinese and the Japanese, 'are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other.'[399] In the light of this inter-community aversion and enmity, one banishes the ghost of destructiveness, so to speak, from a small group only to find it haunting the peace and stability of a larger area.

It is not practical, furthermore, Freud argues, to try to prevent civilisation from indulging in aggressiveness by establishing the leviathan of a ruling class. To expect that a governing body might be created which is 'not open to intimidation' but instead 'eager in the pursuit of truth' is 'utopian'. There could be some other 'indirect methods', which, although more effective, do not guarantee immediate success. The grim prospect forces Freud to admit that human race will be exterminated by their own intrinsic violence long before any method of conciliation, if there is any, begins to take effect: '[a]n unpleasant picture comes to one's mind of mills that grind so

---

[398] Freud, 'Why War', XII, pp. 348, 358-59.

[399] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 305.

slowly that people may starve before they get their flour'. The impracticality of securing a way to diverge man from the path of destruction forces Freud to throw up his hands in resignation. Dashing the gleam of hope which he has promised earlier of diverting mankind's instinctual tendency to war, he concludes that he may not be the right person to ask to for a solution: it is not 'fruitful when an unworldly theoretician is called in to advice on an urgent practical problem'.[400]

As Freud does in 'Why War', Shakespeare in his history plays tries to come up with a means to secure sustained social cohesion. Can civilisation deflect violence, or at least make it less overwhelming? A strong earthly authority, Shakespeare suggests in his first tetralogy, is a viable way to curb man's inherent struggle for power. In *1 Henry VI*, Bedford identifies the lack of a central authority as the fundamental cause of conflict. 'Henry is dead, and never shall revive', he laments in the funeral procession. *Le roi est mort*. Yet there is no sign of its immediate sequel: *viv le roi*. The power vacuum left by Henry, Bedford predicts, will plunge England into the abyss of incessant discords: there will be 'wretched years', he says, '[w]hen at their mothers' moistened eyes babes shall suck | Our isle be made a nourish of salt tears.'[401]

In *2 Henry VI*, Clifford echoes Bedford's view. Dying on the battlefield, he blames Henry's weakness for his tragic ending and England's political division.

CLIFFORD

And Henry, hast thou swayed as kings should do,

Or thy father and his father did,

Giving no ground unto the house of York,

---

[400] Freud, 'Why War', XII, pp. 359-60.

[401] *1 Henry VI*, I. 1. 18-19, 48-50.

> They never then had sprung like summer flies;
> I and ten thousand in this luckless realm
> Had left no mourning widows for our death,
> And thou this day hadst kept thy chair in peace.
> For what doth cherish weeds but gentle air?
> And what makes robbers bold but too much lenity?[402]

Richard III again stresses the importance of a mighty sovereign in maintaining social order. The death of Edward IV, like the death of Henry V, generates disquiet. A child prince, surrounded by lords engaged in 'emulation', will touch the land 'all too near'. As a citizen laments, '[w]oe to that land that's governed by a child.'[403]

A strong and powerful authority, it seems, is for Shakespeare an effective check on man's lust for dominion. As the second tetralogy shows, the rise of the two resolute patriarchal figures does bring England peace and stability. Yet the halcyon state of prosperity is not free from hauntological specters of disunity. On a horizontal dimension, the cohesion is but regional. Much as man as Freud describes him preserves his community's integrity by victimising an alien other, Henry IV and Henry V can only manage to avoid internal struggle by 'busy[ing] giddy minds | With foreign quarrels'. In *1 Henry IV*, Henry is preparing a Crusade. Yet the purpose of this impending expedition is not altogether pious. Rather than 'chas[ing] those pagan in these holy fields', its aim is to turn 'those opposed eyes' into 'one nature', that is, to achieve internal unity, ensuring that the nation marches 'in mutual well-beseeming

---

[402] *3 Henry VI*, II. 6. 14-22.

[403] *Richard III*, II. 3. 25, 26, 11.

ranks […] no more opposed | Against acquaintance, kindred and allies.'[404]

With a nod to his father, Henry V frequently resorts to the technique of diversion. Indeed, he manages it so well that domestic hostility nearly disappears. Under his rule, patriotism, a form of narcissism on a national level, '(r)eigns solely in the breast of every man'. Yet Henry only manages to repress internal disagreement through the designation of an external enemy: the 'vast fields of France'.[405] Although disciplined by morality and forbidden to carry out any act of violence single-handedly, an individual can nevertheless satiate his innate desire to inflict harm by joining in state-organised violence, which exonerates the individual from what he does through obedience, oath, etc.[406] Under the banner of patriotism, homicides become heroes. Acts done to the French neighbour that appear violent and anti-social *per se* become justified; even laudable. Verbal threats can be hurled against the French without reserve, as Henry does when he vows to the French ambassador that he will kill thousands of Frenchmen and destroy thousands of French towns. These threats are then realised by the English army's invasion of the continent. Before the wall of Harfleur, Henry, again, does not hesitate to threaten that, if the town refuses to surrender, he would turn the town into a living hell: mowing down its 'fresh-fair virgins and […] flowering infants' and giving rein to his soldiers 'licentious wickedness'.[407]

On a vertical dimension, the solidarity that a strong ruler is capable of imposing

---

[404] *2 Henry IV*, IV. 3. 342-43; I. 1. 25, 10, 12, 15-17.

[405] William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by T. W. Craik (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995), II. 0. 4; I. 0. 13.

[406] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 408.

[407] Henry V, III. 3. 14, 22.

upon a nation is subject to the relentless power of time, given that even a king has to walk 'the way of nature'.[408] In *Henry V*, Queen Isabel's invocation of a universal love, '(t)hat English may as French, French Englishmen, | Receive each other' is immediately gainsaid by the chorus: 'mighty men' are but granted 'small time'[409]; peace will soon fade away like 'insubstantial pageant' conjured up by Prospero, and 'leave not a rack behind.'[410] As David Kastan writes in *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time*, the ending of *Henry V* 'reveals an open-ended structure which forces us to see the history of his reign as a mere episode carved from the continuum of human time.'[411] This open-ended conclusion, as Joanna Bellis argues in *The Hundred Years' War in Literature*, demolishes the illusive vision of immortality, marking 'a cycle of disintegration […] in which the glory was inevitably undercut by the defeat and humiliation'.[412] Henry V, the strongest patriarchal figure that Shakespeare produces, only leads civilisation by way of detour back to the dark time of England's internal division. To the question whether civilisation can escape the destructiveness of human aggression, the playwright, it seems, can only reply with a heavy sigh of despair.

4. The ghost of trans-generational trauma.

---

[408] William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 2*, James. C. Bulman (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016), V. 2. 4.

[409] *Henry V*, V. 2. 361-62, 3, 5.

[410] *The Tempest*, IV. 1. 155-56.

[411] Kastan, p. 51.

[412] Joanna Bellis, *The Hundred Years' War in Literature: 1337-1600* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016), p. 233.

In ‘The “Uncanny” ’, Freud records an anecdote which very much testifies to the persistence of the hauntological ghosts. Wandering ‘one hot summer through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy’, he walked into a quarter where ‘[n]othing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses.’ Realising that he had run into an area of brothels, he ‘hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning.’ After having walked around without inquiring his way, however, he suddenly found himself ‘back in the same street.’ He ‘hurried away once more, only to arrive by another detour at the same place yet a third time.[413]

Having accidentally (one has every reason, however, to question Freud’s assumption that walking into the place of discredit is an incident of pure accident) stumbled into a street lined by brothels, Freud tries to extricate himself: to conjure away the disreputable. The exorcism of the filthy, the ‘I hasten to leave the narrow street in the next turning’, only achieves an incomplete closure, however. What appears to be successfully driven away insistently returns to haunt Freud’s more civilized, sublimated self, tempting him through detour time and again to return to the same area. With a gesture that uncannily invokes the Pauline binarity of the physical and the spiritual self, Freud transforms an Italian provincial town into an interminable play of possibilities for which there is no resolution: a deserted, disreputable quarter is haunted by the father of psychoanalysis, who is himself haunted by what he believes he has safely conjured away.

Much as Freud’s unconscious self does in haunting his civilised self in the form of sexual desire in that Italian town, Shakespeare’s pessimism about a sustained social cohesion haunts his hope for a complete recovery from the past cultural trauma. A tragic event, as the first tetralogy shows, holds an unrelenting grip on the present and

---

[413] Freud, ‘The “Uncanny” ’, XIV, p. 359.

the future. It replicates and replays itself in such a way that the future generations becomes affected. Trauma, in this sense, is trans-generational. Being an experience simultaneously individual and beyond the individual scope, trans-generational trauma amounts to a hauntological ghost. The ghost dissolves the confines of the epistemological framework of ontology: as Derrida observes, it throws doubt on the 'reassuring order of presents and […] the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it'. The ghost, in other words, manifests itself through the indeterminacy of being and non-being, confusing the conventional binary opposites.

Like the hauntological ghost, trans-generational trauma undermines the metaphysical centre of certitude. Insofar as it refers to a specific limit event and happens to a person, a group, or a community, it is historical. To the extent, however, that it also haunts future generations through what Freud calls an 'archaic heritage […] innately present'[414] at birth or, to cite the term proposed by Abraham and Torok, an artificial 'crypt'[415] constructed as a result of impossible mourning, it is also trans-historical. A simulacrum of what Nick Hodgin and Amit Thakkar calls 'the original tissue', trans-generational trauma, like scar, 'exist(s) for an indefinite period'. It raises doubts about the prospect of 'simplistic offers of closure' and demands

---

[414] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, XIII, p. 343.

[415] Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. by Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xiv.

workings with trauma 'in an ongoing process'.[416] Simultaneously an event and a non-event, a being and non-being, trans-generational trauma is a spectral figure that probes the very limit of historicity itself. It is, in a word, a Derridean spectre that is always to come and always haunts history itself, as well as the possibility of identity.

There are four ways through which trans-generational trauma manifests itself in the first tetralogy. The first is the history plays' fragmentality. Shakespeare's first tetralogy is intrinsically lacking and cannot stand as a self-sufficient whole. As Kastan observes, the history plays always 'acknowledge the uninterruptible process of history itself, exerting pressure upon an audience to recognize […] [plays'] formal limits as arbitrary and contingent.' In a similar vein, Wilders argues that each play is 'a fragment of a long, continuous, chronological sequence, an unbroken series of causes and effects'. Unlike comedies, whose central conflict, rather than inherent, reside in specific events, history plays usually depict a larger process over whose course they are incapable of exerting control. As Wilders observes in the *The Lost Garden,* given that the provenance of the conflicts they depict precede the history plays themselves, later generations usually labour under '[t]he burdens […] created and handed on to them by their ancestors'.[417]

Shakespeare's late medieval England delineates an unruly pattern, in keeping with the history play's intrinsic insufficiency. According to E. M. W. Tillyard, the first tetralogy 'cannot be understood without assuming a larger principle of order in the background.' This 'order', however, does not necessarily bring about the vision

---

[416] Nick Hodgin and Amit Thakkar, 'Introduction: Trauma Studies, Film and the Scar Motif', in *Scars and Wounds: Film and Legacies of Trauma*, ed. by Nick Hodgin and Amit Thakkar (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.1-30 (pp. 15, 17).

[417] Wilders, p.17.

Tillyard proposes of the 'providential and happy ending of an organic piece of history'.[418] Instead, these plays, as Wilders points out, come across as 'frequently unjust'.[419] In this world, the innocent often suffer the consequences of their ancestors' crimes. Such order as they convey comes across, therefore, as traumatically repetitive, rather than than reassuringly redemptive. Beyond the horizon of the order crafted by Tudor hegemonic discourse, there is a larger history in which, as the Bible puts it, the sins of an ancestor haunt a third and even a fourth generation.

The blood feud between the Clifford family and the House of York, which begins at the first Battle of St Albans, bears out the theme of inherited sin and guilt that is at work in Shakespeare's early history plays. By killing Clifford Senior at the Battle of St Albans, York begins a cycle of sanguinary struggles akin to vendetta. Finding Clifford Senior's lifeless body, the young Clifford vows to avenge his father: 'York not our old men spares; | no more will I their babes'. With 'heart's on future mischief set', Clifford manages to exact his revenge on the York family on the Battle of Wakefield.[420] Not only does he kill York, but he also murders York's youngest son. Whereas the death of York answers the call of justice, the killing of Rutland, by contrast, does not appear to be historically justified. After all, as the victim himself argues, he is not personally responsible for Clifford Senior's death: '[l]et my father's blood open it again […] 'twere ere I was born'. In spite of his earnest plea for innocence, Rutland falls victim to the repetitive pattern of the two families' mutual enmity: doomed by a trans-historical mark beyond his own control. 'No cause?'

---

[418] Tillyard, p. 323.

[419] Wilders, p. 71.

[420] 2 *Henry VI*, V. 2. 51-52, 84.

Clifford replies. 'Thy father slew my father; therefore die.'[421] In Shakespeare's representation of dynastic warfare, the pattern of revenge and counter-revenge acts out the biblical adage that God will visit the iniquity of fathers upon their descendants. Much as Adam's original transgression condemns his posterity, York's homicide becomes a bloody legacy, stamping an ineffaceable sanguinary mark upon his descendants. At the core of history, Shakespeare suggests, lies an encounter with the unexpiated and unresolved violence of the past.

Second, marrying foreign princesses proves rife with danger. Although a royal union is supposed to bring peace and stability, in Shakespeare's history plays it assumes the role of a harbinger of chaos. As Ellinghausen argues, such matches are 'a kind of invasion, more subtle than the arrival of troops onto English soil, but more productive of the cycle of trauma in the sense that it is not so easy to detect'.[422] For England, a royal alliance is particularly damaging when it is with a French princess. Like trauma whose symptoms emerge belatedly, matrimonial alliance with France breeds dreadful disturbances in the long run. Henry V's marriage with Katharine, for instance, rather than resolving the Anglo-French territorial dispute, sows the seed for further crisis by extending it to the next generation. Henry VI's marriage with the 'she wolf of France' ensues in England's loss of French territory and throws England into civil war; Edward's marriage negotiation with France ushers in another round of conflicts in England.[423] Rather than containing historical ruptures and generating peace, England's union with its neighbour becomes the very medium through which trauma becomes trans-generational.

---

[421] *3 Henry VI*, I. 3. 23, 39, 46-37.

[422] Ellinghausen, pp.264-282 (p. 274).

[423] *3 Henry VI*, I. 4. 111.

Locality is another medium through which trauma passes on from one generation to another. In *Richard III*, the Tower of London is the focal point through which Shakespeare explores the idea of tragic events' unappeased persistence. The Tower in its long history has assumed various roles: royal residence, armoury, treasury, fortress, and prison. It can be either a symbol of power generating life or a symbol of vulnerability generating death. In keeping with the historical tower's ambiguous identity, the Tower in *Richard III* is simultaneously a place of empowerment and a place of imprisonment. As Luckhurst points out in *The Trauma Question*, trauma 'disrupts memory, and therefore identity'.[424] Its dual identity suggests that the Tower can be a place where trauma freely circulates. At the beginning of the Tower scene, Clarence communicates to the jailer that he has passed a horrible night full of frightening visions: 'full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights.' The jailer, forewarned of the appalling nature of his prisoner's dream, nonetheless proves curious to hear more: 'What was your dream, my lord? I pray you tell me.'[425] In sharing his nightmare, which is a repetition of his war trauma, with the jailer, Clarence shows that trauma affects not only survivors but also those who come into contact with them.

Nor is his generation the only one affected. Clarence meets his end in the Tower when one of the murderers suddenly stabs him from the back. His death comes so suddenly that he barely has any time to say a final prayer. Rather than making his deathbed repentance, Clarence spends his last moment trying to conciliate his murderers: '[c]ome thou on my side, and entreat for me; | A begging prince, what beggar pities not.'[426] For Christians, it is highly important to make peace with God at

---

[424] Luckhurst, p. 1.

[425] *Richard III*, I. 4. 3, 8.

[426] *Ibid.*, I. 4. 265-66.

the final hour. For an Elizabeth English audience, it would have been disturbing to watch Clarence, a pious Christian, die in this manner. Brutally murdered, Clarence becomes what Lifton calls a 'homeless dead', one of the ghosts of those who died 'in precipitous or premature ways'.[427] Deprived of due time to make his peace with God, Clarence is denied the comforting hope of eternal rest and condemned instead to the horrible prospect of endless suffering.

Given the troubling manner of Clarence's death, it is no surprise to find his revenant haunting the living world and passing on his wartime trauma to his descendants. When York learns that his brother, the young Edward, has invited him to live in the Tower of London, he immediately expresses some misgivings. Clarence's restless and 'angry ghost', he protests, still lingers in the Tower. He cannot, therefore, 'sleep in quiet at the Tower.' By this comment, York alerts the audience to the Tower's menacing sense of claustrophobic incarceration. For York, the tower symbolises the unworked-through historical wound that lingers around at the site of its occurrence. Although Clarence is dead, his ghost may still come back to haunt and possess the Tower, as well as any person who takes up residence there.

Significantly, it is York himself who passes on the disturbing legacy he inherits from his uncle. Like Clarence, he also dies unpreparedly; together with his cousin Edward, he falls victim to the 'most arch deed of piteous massacre': 'smothered' to death by two 'fleshed villains' while sleeping. Inhabiting the Tower, he becomes another unappeased ghost. Given the precipitous manner of his death, York's 'I shall not sleep in quiet in the tower' assumes a much more disturbing meaning, foreshadowing the fate of his afterlife.[428] Haunted by the traumatic memory of

---

[427] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 95.

[428] *Richard III*, III. 1. 142-45, 142.

Clarence's murder, York, while living, cannot take a single night's good sleep at the place where his uncle meets his end; nor can he rest in peace in death because he, murdered without making repentance, becomes another homeless ghost.

The notion of departure, enacted at both the individual and historical level, is another means through which trauma passes on from one generation to another. Rarely directional and straightforward, the act of leaving subverts notions of progress and linearity. Individually, to leave invokes a sense of disruptiveness. As Freud's example of the train accident demonstrates, it is the very act of leaving, as Caruth notes, that constitutes the 'central and enigmatic core' of trauma.[429] Both Moses and Freud himself bear out how the act of departure is associated with rupture. For Moses, an 'ambitious and energetic' Egyptian aristocrat whose cause, the promotion of the Aten religion (or so Freud maintains), suffered setback, it was with a profound sense of disappointment and mortification that he led the Semitic tribe out of Egypt.[430] He perceived his leaving as the frustration of his personal ambition as well as the alienation from his native country. In a somewhat uncanny manner, Moses' trajectory is replicated by Freud himself. Freud himself, then, in a manner that could be called uncanny, then replicates the trajectory he ascribes to Freud. Like the Aten religion, which was abolished following the death of the Egyptian king Amenohotep III, psychoanalysis faced some danger of extinction in the 1930s, as Nazi Germany was bent on rooting out this emerging science in the Vienna academic circle.[431] As a

---

[429] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 22.

[430] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, XI, p. 266.

[431] See, for instance, 'On may 19, university students, following Goebbel's orders, burned over 20,000 books in the Bebelplatz.' Todd Dufresne, *The Late Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 142-43.

result, Freud was forced to leave Vienna for England, an exile that he met with great bitterness and regret. As he complains, 'I had to leave "the city which […] had been [my] home for seventy-eight years" '.[432] Like Moses, Freud had to forsake his homeland in order to preserve and transmit his intellectual legacy.

In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, the disruptiveness of departure is embedded in Tudor myth. For the dominant discourse, the passing on of history amounts to a smooth and linear transmission of power. To strengthen his status as the lawful king of England after the Battle of Bosworth, Henry Tudor, for instance, wasted no time in emphasising his link to ancient royal lineages. As Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas explain in *The Makings of the Tudor Dynasty*, not only did Henry 'present himself as the heir of Lancaster', but he also accentuated his Welsh ancestry, which enabled him to claim a descent from 'ancient Welsh kings, and especially to Cadwaladr, the last and most revered of them all'.[433]

The hegemonic discourse's reading of historical departure as redemptively progressive, however, disowns the possibility of rupture contained by moments of transmission. For England, the transition from the late medieval period into the Tudor era is disruptive in two senses. At the individual level, Henry's departure from the bloody scene of Bosworth field into the Tudor dynasty contains in itself traumatic notes. Consider, for instance, the moment Henry encountered Richard's cavalry charge. Brandishing his war-axe, the last Yorkist king, as Michael Jones writes in *Bosworth 1485*, launched an offensive operation with his entire division, amounting to more than 15,000 cavalrymen, in order to cut Henry down. The sight of such an

---

[432] Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, XI, p. 298.

[433] Ralph A. Griffiths and Roger S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1985), pp. 183, 189.

army charging with ferocity was terrifying, shocking, and caused mayhem within the Tudor force, who had not expected such an attack. At that moment, external excitation broke through the protective barrier of the Tudor organism and completely threw it into disarray. For Henry, an apprentice new to warfare who, as Jones explains, had been in constant fear of his life ever since his landing at Milford Heaven, this fierce and desperate charge must have been extremely traumatising.[434] Given that to be traumatised is to go through a devastating experience without actually knowing it, Henry's departure from the battlefield is an act that simultaneously gives birth to the Tudor dynasty and causes loss: the missing significance of that death encounter. From a historical perspective, the transmission, symbolised by Henry's triumph over Richard on the Battle of Bosworth, re-enacts Christianity's founding trauma, Cain's fratricide, which led to the building of the first city, Enoch. As in the case of that primal event, the Tudor dynasty, to maintain its authority, does not hesitate to shed their own family's blood. Both Richard III and Mary, Queen of Scotland, are killed by their Tudor cousins.

With a nod to the divisiveness contained in the act of historical departure, Shakespeare's first tetralogy casts doubt on the credibility of smooth transmission and progress of history. Rejecting what Kastan calls the 'providential and fundamentally linear' model of time, Shakespeare proposes here a very different paradigm, one that is traumatically repetitive, or, to use Kastan's words, 'essentially cyclic.' According to this model, history amounts to 'the record of an endless recurrence of events under more or less identical circumstances'.[435]

---

[434] See Jones, p. 166.

[435] Kastan, pp. 79, 12, 17.

Consider, for instance, Margaret's two acts of leaving. At the end of *3 Henry VI*, when England is at the threshold of a new era, Edward orders Margaret to be sent away to France. This departure, however, fails to get rid of tales of past war and loss. For Margaret as well as for the York dynasty, to depart from the warring world of the three parts of *Henry VI* to the ostensibly peaceful piping time of *Richard III* denotes a retelling of the traumatic past. Thus, Margaret, 'find(ing) more pain in banishment', returns to England to retell her loss; and Edward's England, sabotaged by Richard, who decides to blast the harvest and 'hate the idle pleasures of these days', becomes again a 'sickly land'.[436]

Like her first leaving, Margaret's second departure invokes a haunting sense of history's repetitiveness. Although, as Margaret says, having 'watch(ed) the waning' of her enemies, she will 'will to France', she has passed on history's unruliness that she represents to Elizabeth. From a 'poor shadow', Elizabeth, now a bereaved widow, has becomes the real substance of trauma. In this sense, Elizabeth has always been haunted by the future: by senility and decrepitude. In 'The "Uncanny" ', Freud narrates a personal anecdote in which he has the unhappy experience of unexpectedly meeting his own image. What the perceiver's image represents, as Stephen Frosh argues, is the unhappy truth 'of getting old and shabby', the truth which Freud himself has been trying to circumvent.[437] Freud's double, then, is a ghost that comes from the future, for what triggers the disturbing feeling of uncanniness is the external projection of the undesired elements of the self, the never-fully-repressed pending fear of being bereaved and brought into 'second childishness and mere oblivion'.

---

[436] *Richard III*, II. 3. 30.

[437] Stephen Frosh, *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 23.

In *Richard III*, when first encountering Margaret, Elizabeth, thoroughly rejects her. Although subjected only a moment before to Richard's verbal attack, Elizabeth, for instance, does not hesitate to second her accuser's antipathy to Margaret. 'Thus have you breathed your curse against yourself,' she tells Margaret. Elizabeth's initial dislike of Margaret is prompted in part by her significance as a future ghost of bereavement and senility. Much as Freud does in trying to bar the shabby elderly gentleman 'in a dressing-gown and a travelling cap' from entering his 'wagon-lit compartment', Elizabeth, standing in the ostensibly safe and familiar realm of the peaceful palace, loathes the idea of being intruded upon by an unbeckoned double.[438] In this first encounter, Margaret comes across as a totally unknown and an alien other. It is only after the initial shiver, after her court life has fallen out in the same way as that of the unwelcome ghost, that Elizabeth belatedly recognises in the unfamiliar her familiar self and takes in that disagreeable double. With the unhomely transforming to the homely, the detested alien other becomes the substance of the tell-tale woman: the erstwhile hag's instruction on cursing proves key for Elizabeth to maintain her sorrowful existence.

The end of *Richard III* conjures up again the disruptiveness of departure. Standing triumphantly on the Bosworth field, the merciful Richmond promises fair treatment to all soldiers dead and fled: '[I]nter their bodies as become their births' and '[p]roclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled | That in submission will return to us.'[439] A lenient and magnanimous Henry, however, is Shakespeare's invention. In contrast to Shakespeare's character here, the historical Henry was shrewd and unforgiving. After the battle, Richard's body, for instance, never received the treatment that became his

---

[438] Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', XIV, pp. 363-64.

[439] *Richard III*, V. 5. 15-17.

royal birth. After a few days of careless exhibition for public view in Leicester's central market, Richard was simply buried without any degree of pomp in the Franciscan Prior.

Those royalist soldiers who fought against Henry's invasion did not receive, moreover, anything like the generosity promised by Shakespeare's Richmond. In his first parliament, Henry retroactively dated his reign from 21 Aug 1485, a day before he defeated Richard's royal army on the Battle of Bosworth. Thus, history was rudely re-written. As a result of this notorious manoeuvre, the just became the unjust: Henry recast the 'bold yeomen' of England as 'scum[s] […] and base lackey peasants'. Through an unjust and unjustifiable manipulation of law, he retroactively redefined the historical event: from national heroes whom fought lawfully alongside their lawful king Richard III and rightfully defended their motherland from 'desperate adventures and assured destruction', the royalists soldiers became outlaws legally guilty of high treason.[440]

One cannot but feel seized here by a sensation of uncanniness. At the very outset of a putatively new age, words again lost connection to reality and were rendered teleologically dysfunctional. Henry's wilful distortion of historical truth catapults us back to the chaotic warring period dramatised in Shakespeare's first tetralogy. What A. L. French calls 'the rational use of language', again, is subjected to a process of deliberate sabotage, with 'verbal chicanery' triumphing over normality and justice.[441] With the unscrupulous historical Henry Tudor in mind, Shakespeare's character, Richmond, appears more clearly as an idealistic but insubstantial political vision: a

---

[440] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 83; V. 5. 15-18, 3. 319.

[441] A. L. French, 'The Mills of God and Shakespeare's Early History Plays', *English Studies*, 55 (1974), 313-324 (p. 313).

mere showy spectacle. In keeping with what modern psychology calls the mechanism of 'reaction formation', the magnanimous dramatic figure invites audiences to take some critical distance from belief in the directional progress of history.[442] The topic of departure is always bound up with the transmission of traumatic legacy, rendering inescapable the task of re-visiting historical wounds anew.

[442] In psychology, reaction fromation refers to a '[d]efensive process […] by which an unacceptable impulse is mastered by an exaggeration (hypertrophy) of the opposing tendency.' Charles Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 151-52.

5

Technology and Séance in *1 Henry VI* and *Richard III*

In *Specters of Marx*, written after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Derrida pinpoints a paradox at the heart of claims that Western society had reached the 'End of History'. Denouncing the contemporary mood of jubilation and complacency, typified by Francis Fukuyama's 'new gospel', as the 'the most blind and most delirious hallucinations', Derrida warns that the West is far any such state of self-sufficiency: '[t]he world is going badly, the picture is bleak, one could say almost black.'[443] He then lists ten plagues that harass the new world order of liberal democracy, plagues that, he argues, demonstrate the persistent relevance of 'Marxist "spirit" ', even though its corporeal form ceased to exist with the fall of the Soviet bloc.[444] The progress of history in terms of ideology, Derrida concludes, can never arrive at any so-called end point. The future is always to come in an indeterminate form. 'After the end of history', therefore, 'the spirit comes by coming back': overpowering capitalism paradoxically inaugurates a future, not free of, but haunted by, the ghost of Marxism.[445]

In his early history plays, Shakespeare presents what appears to be an early modern analogue of Derrida's hauntology: the intense material conjures up a future of the immaterial. *1 Henry VI* delineates a disintegrating world; amid anarchy and chaos, characters suffer grievous losses, in keeping with what R. A. Foakes identifies as

---

[443] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 70.

[444] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

[445] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

'primal scenes of violence'.[446] The popularisation of military science in warfare played a major part in generating this debilitating onslaught on human agency. A technical invention usually contains a traumatising potential. As Freud observes, technology, invented for the purpose of gratifying mankind's sense of self-omnipotence and of serving its will to power, can backfire, displacing its agency and subjectivity and creating a traumatological crisis.[447] Derrida regards invention in a similar vein. An invention, he says, 'always presupposes some illegality.' Insomuch that 'it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things', an invention 'frustrates expectations': amounting to a violent penetration into the *status quo*.[448] In keeping with this sense of technology's strange double nature, in *The Trauma Question,* Roger Luckhurst notes that modern technology plays a fundamental role in producing trauma. 'The expansion of railways', for instance, illustrates the ambivalent and strangely double nature of technology: whilst bringing people from different cities together and contributing to social and economic progress, the railway, through the 'speed of collisions', tears apart human psyche and undermines the traditional understanding of space and time. Although liberating, therefore, a new technology also contains a demonically destructive power, exposing humanity to devastating and overwhelming events inconceivable in a previous age.

Early modern warfare, where the widespread adoption of artillery generated an extreme of technological violence, registers this kind of technology-induced trauma. As the English militarist Paul Ive observes in *The Practice of Fortification,* the

---

[446] Foakes, p. 8.

[447] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, XII, p. 276.

[448] Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other,* ed. by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, 2 vols (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2007), I, p.1.

cannon is 'an Engine of much more force than any before invented'.[449] This new weapon seemed at the time an unreadable enigma. Extremely horrifying and erratic, it lies beyond the epistemological framework of combatants inured to the comparatively controllable and orderly era of colder, more limited weapons.[450]

A comparative reading of the wound of Prince Hal and that of Salisbury reveals the more general process at work. In keeping with Christ's Passion, the traditional paradigm of human agency holds that human wounds are understandable. As Shakespeare's Prince Hal on the Battle of Shrewsbury demonstrates, war wounds can be stimulating, even messianic. Such legibility is nowhere to be found, however, in the scene of Salisbury's death. A moment of extreme technological intensity overloaded with the material, Shakespeare's representation of this loss rejects the traditional conception of human wound as meaningful and teleologically constructive. The wound inflicted by modern technology happens with such speed and intensity that it loses symbolic meaning and becomes unreadable. More generally, Shakespeare suggests the intervention of artillery compromises the traditional idea of legibility. Snatching the wound out of historical narrative, a new form of warfare creates epistemological confusion, disabling the economy of causality.

How to represent history itself in the wake of the failure of the old economy of legibility? For Shakespeare, the solution lies in spectrality. In *Richard III*, the playwright stages a séance that belatedly responds to the representational dilemma generated by Salisbury's death. The ghostly figure Margaret provides a hermeneutic

---

[449] Cited in Nicholas de Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), p. 104.

[450] For a more specific example of the incomprehensible and erratic nature of gunpowder, see Cahill, p. 180.

key to accessing a different history: an anachronistic history that persistently compromises the notion of linear progress. The future of the material, like the capitalism in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, proves paradoxically intertwined with its ontological other: the immaterial.

1. The rise of artillery.

In the early modern period, artillery emerged as an indispensable combat weapon. Practical reasons for the cannon's popularity are not hard to find: among other advantages, it was especially effective in military blockage, as indicated by the gradually reduced reliance on traditional castles as fortifications. Machiavelli's *The Art of War* highlights the formidable strength of artillery. The only way to overpower the new weapon, as Fabrizio Colonna, one of the interlocutors, notes, is to forestall its destructive power: 'to want the enemy artillery to be useless, there is no other remedy than to assault it'. Gunpowder's unprecedented power of devastation exposes the fragility of human body. It no longer makes any difference if one wears a set of armour or not; hit by a cannonball, no one escapes serious injury or death. Man finds himself helpless in the face of a monstrously destructive machine: 'if you do not want the artillery to injure you, it is necessary to stay where it cannot reach you',[451] Fabrizio observes drily.[452] The French surgeon Ambroise Pare, much in the same vein, made a powerful testimony to the strength of artillery. As he writes in *Works*, as cited by John Hale in 'War and Public', artillery 'exceed[s] all the best appointed and

---

[451] Niccollo Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, trans. by Christopher Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.), p. 73.

[452] Machiavelli, *The Art of War,* pp. 72-3.

cruel engines which can be mentioned or thought upon in the shape, cruelty, and appearance of their operations'.[453]

Given its gruesome destructiveness, the new weapon confounded and horrified people's imagination. The dramatisation of artillery attacks on stage, which happens repeatedly in Elizabethan war plays, resembles a theatrical acting out of the unassimilated trauma generated by exposure to the dreadful new weapon. Salisbury's death in *1 Henry VI* captures artillery's horrific lethality. He gets one of his eyes and 'cheek's side struck off'[454] and can barely speak. For the playgoer, however, such disturbing moments far exceed their theatrical experience. 'Wounded soldiers', as Cahill points out, 'were one of the most visible consequences of England's substantial military commitments during the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign'.[455] Without any permanent standing army, Elizabethan England had to recruit volunteers in times of need. The provisional nature of this military system meant that disbanding was not an infrequent occurrence in the Elizabethan era. Given the large quantity of casualties, disbanded soldiers with horrendous facial disfiguration, as Cahill observes, 'may well have been a common sight in London'.[456]

2. The crisis of reference.

---

[453] John Hale, 'War and Public: War and public Opinion in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Past & Present*, 22 (1962),18-35 (p. 21).

[454] *1 Henry VI*, I. 4. 74.

[455] Cahill, p. 190.

[456] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Shakespeare's dramatisation of war wounds in his history plays is more extensive than Salisbury's and often inflected in different ways. Hal's facial scar, which the prince acquires at the Battle of Shrewsbury, also appears in Shakespeare's history plays. In *1 Henry IV*, Hal, shot by an arrow, refuses to leave the battlefield to attend to his wound. Although bleeding profusely, he dismisses the wound as a trifle: 'a shallow scratch' that he refuses to allow to deter him from completing his mission.[457] His equanimity and valour in the face of the serious wound mark his transformation from a profligate madcap to a national hero. The physical deformity, rather than exposing man's vulnerability, affirms its wearer's strength. Salisbury's wound, by contrast, causes nothing but horror and confusion: 'O Lord, have mercy on me, woeful man', Gargrave, another cannon-attack victim, moans.[458] What causes such a huge difference in people's reaction to war wounds? The most obvious answer is the different degree of injury that the victims suffer. Also at stake, however, is a problem of reference.

As Caruth argues, insofar as onward movement initiates the disintegration of older epistemological frameworks, history is an ongoing crisis. Newton's discovery of gravity, for instance, illustrates the insufficiency of reference that always resides at the heart of history itself. Insofar as, after Newton's discovery, 'the world of motion became […] a world of falling', 'the history of philosophy after Newton could be thought of as a series of confrontation with the question of how to talk about falling'. Whilst enabling natural science to 'explain aspects of the world it had not been able to explain previously', Newton's new laws of motion plunged the history of philosophical discourse into a predicament. A hermeneutic key with which natural

---

[457] *1 Henry IV,* V. 4. 10.

[458] *1Henry VI*, I. 4.70.

science could now explore the world, gravity ('a mathematical formula'), was to philosophical discourse a sheer incomprehensibility: an 'invisible entity that made no rational sense'.[459] Newton's discovery gave rise to representational crisis that crippled the economy of traditional philosophical discourse.

In early modern period, artillery, superseding older military weapons and disabling traditional defensive armours such as metal plate, gave rise to a similar crisis of reference within Elizabethan England. As Humfrey Barwicke laments in *A Breefe Discourse, Concerning the Force and Effect of All Manuall Weapons of Fire,* in the past 'a cloth jacket lined with small metal plates and helmet' was 'thought to be sufficient for arming of Souldiours'. Following the intervention of the new weapon, however, 'neither horse nor man is able to beare armours sufficient to defend their bodies from death.'[460]

The 'force of weapons' identified by Barwicke explains the contrasting reactions to the physical wounds of Prince Hal and those of Salisbury. A scar earned on battlefield, Jeffrey R. Wilson explains, is usually treated with reverence. Unlike other kinds of deformity that embody the bearer's inner perversity, physical deformity produced by war is an emblem of virtue. War wounds distinguish themselves because they contains an instructive connotation akin to Christ's suffering; they participate in what Wilson describes as 'an aesthetic of stigma that points back ultimately to the stigmata of Christ, the hideous body signifying the hero who wars against evil to his own suffering'.[461] Despite the mutilations inflicted by his Roman persecutors, Christ

---

[459] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 75-76.

[460] Cited in Cahill, p. 181.

[461] Jeffrey R. Wilson, 'Henry V's Ugliness', in *Stigma in Shakespeare* <wilson.fas.harvard.edu/stigma-in-shakespeare> [accessed 15 January 2018]

remains recognisable: he exists on the human plane and remains readable as a human agent.

According to Elaine Scarry, one of the most distinct differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the 'subjectivization' of pain. Inflicted randomly and incomprehensibly by a 'disembodied' God in the Old Testament, pain in the New Testament becomes a matter of subjectivity: 'embodied' in the figure of Christ.[462] This materialisation of God produces a plenitude of possibilities for Christians. The Eucharist and Christ's Passion, for example, become sources of instruction and inspiration for Christians, who can explore the nature of pain and draw meaning from senseless suffering. As Hannibal Hamlin points out, in the Eucharist, Christians re-enact the scene of Christ's Crucifixion and drink his blood 'transubstantiated from wine'. In doing so, the drinkers, it is believed, can cleanse their bodies and souls, as Christ's blood possesses the power to release them from the grip of curses and wash away their sins.[463]

Christ's Passion contains similar significance. As Patrick Gray argues, the Passion is a manifestation of 'divine power': a 'temporary setback' that is eventually overcome. For Christ, to be executed is a 'conscious choice', an exhibition of will that not only de-randomizes the nature of suffering but also sets the scene for life's triumph over death.[464] In the play *Last Judgement*, for instance, Christ, as Margaret E.

---

[462] Elaine Scarry, T*he Body in Pain: The Making and the Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 197, 216.

[463] Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 189-90.

[464] Patrick Gray, *Shakespeare and the Fall of the Roman Republic: Selfhood, Stoicism, and Civil War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp.188-89.

Owens writes, ‘ “stretch[es] out his hands and show them his wounds” ’. He then ‘proceeds to offer a verbal blazon of his mutilated body, explaining that the wounds are the price of humanity’s salvation’.[465]

As a concrete and physical embodiment of suffering, Christ transforms the way in which pain has been understood. No more an indication of an unsympathetic God, pain transforms into a manifestation of one’s own will. Willingly courted by the self rather than ruthlessly inflicted by the other, pain is no longer a sign of fate’s uncaring callousness, brutally exposing the body’s vulnerability, but instead paradoxically bears out the victim’s strength, becoming teleologically constructive. Christ’s Passion provides Christians with a system of significant stigmata to which later victims can refer. Insofar as corporeal disfigurement becomes readable, meaningful, forthcoming generations of martyrs can approach the prospect of humiliation and suffering with confidence and equanimity. Placed, as Matthew R. Martin puts it, ‘within the framework of God’s providential unfolding of human history’, being physically wounded ‘is no longer a senseless affliction but an opportunity, not a negation of being but the guarantee of future, eternal being’: it asserts one’s strength and paves the way for the eventual victory over evil.[466]

In *1 Henry IV*, Prince Hal, with his face hit by an arrow, apparently relates his wound to Christ’s pierced body. The wound paradoxically elevates him into the incarnation of justice and virtue. Much as Christ does when he forbids his supporters

---

[465] Margaret E. Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 57.

[466] Matthew R. Martin, *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 105-06.

to defend him from his captors and instead willingly embraces his crucifixion, Hal declines Westmoreland's assistance and refuses to be led away from the battlefield. Like the seemingly weak and lifeless Christ, he is capable of sustaining the 'shallow scratch' and re-asserting his power; like Christ, who bounced back from his temporary humiliation and eventually vanquished death, he too is capable of prevailing over the enemy's demonic force, leading the 'stained nobility' to reverse the situation and defeat the rebels who temporarily 'triumph in massacres'.[467]

Hal's heroism is nowhere to be found, by contrast, in the scene of Salisbury's wounding. The intervention of a new technological modernity – an extreme material experience that is more than human, but not simply divine – blows away the Christian economy of legibility. In a blink of an eye, Salisbury is struck half dead by the cannonball. 'Hear, hear, how dying Salisbury doth groan', Talbot laments.[468] Due to the sheer magnitude of destruction, the situation becomes unreadable. Admittedly, Christ was scourged, crucified, and pierced by a spear. Nevertheless, his body was not as disfigured as Salisbury's is here. The English lord's mutilated face is an incomprehensible void that the traditional narrative of the battle scar or wartime injury fails to explain away. Much as Newton's discovery of gravity unsettled the assumptions of natural philosophy, Salisbury's disfigurement compromises the discursive economy of the Christological tradition. Unable to cope with the physical trauma inflicted by artillery, the traditional paradigm is here superseded.

Talbot's reaction to the assault illustrates the obsolescence of the previous paradigm confronted by this new technology. In the scene that immediately follows the artillery attack, the dauntless lord is completely stupefied; his normally confident

---

[467] *1 Henry IV*, V. 4. 10, 12, 13.

[468] *1 Henry VI*, 1.4. 103.

speech is broken up by stuttering and repetition. ‘What chance is this that hath suddenly crossed us’, he asks.[469] Dumbfounded, Talbot then turns to Salisbury, acting as if his comrade is still the same person he was before being struck by the cannonball. It is only after Talbot has commanded the unfortunate victim to speak that he belatedly realises the traumatising fact he initially failed to grasp: Salisbury, now half dead, is barely able to utter a single word.

Having inspected Salisbury’s condition, Talbot moves on to curse the triggering agent of the explosion. ‘Accursed tower, accursed fatal hand | That hath *contrived* this woeful tragedy’. Contrive, according to the *OED* definition, means ‘create or bring about (an object or a situation) by deliberate use of skill and artifice’. Ironically, however, the play explicitly states that it is only through the randomness of fate that Salisbury is hit. Before the scene in which the English lords spy on Orleans on that fatal tower, there is a short conversation between Orleans’ chief master gunner and his apprentice. As the French boy admits, he ‘oft have shot at’ the English besiegers yet have ‘missed’ his aim in all of his previous attempts.[470] This poor record shows that the apprentice is green and inexperienced. Given that the boy is only superficially acquainted with the new technique and cannot aim properly, his taking down of Salisbury and Sir Thomas Gargrave cannot be counted a deliberate and premeditated action, effected by the employment of military skill. It is only through chance that Salisbury is hit; the contingency that claims him could befall anyone on site, or no one. Technology conceals and randomises agency. Talbot’s use of the word ‘contrive’ fails, then, to account for the situation; its inadequacy exposes the epistemological predicament generated by the rise of the new military technology.

---

[469] *Ibid.*, I. 4. 71.

[470] *Ibid.*, I. 4. 75-76, 3, 4.

3. The advent of traumatographical history.

Not only does Talbot fail to comprehend the cause, or the non-cause, of Salisbury's death, but he also seems to miss the very fact that the emergence of early modern technology transforms the idea of death. Still leaning on the old economy of restitution and revenge, Talbot says on behalf of Salisbury: 'remember to avenge me on the French'. Death, as Derrida observes, initiates a moment of unique individuality: it 'excludes every possible substitution'. Insofar as it preserves, rather than erasing, one's trace, death confirms one's 'irreplaceability'.[471] If one dies, that is, one retains his individuality and can be somehow remembered through mourning rituals. Such traditional memorialisation does not happen, however, in Salisbury's case. In the scene of the cannon attack, the rapid unfolding of the materialism inaugurates a kind of annihilation. To the extent that the cannonball blows away everything on the turret, no one can survive to remember and mourn the victim. Ripping historical event out of its own narrative, Salisbury's death renders historiography evasive, broken, and enigmatic: in a word, traumatographical.

The dissociative state into which Talbot is plunged showcases the traumatising effect of the cannon attack. Dissociation refers to a mental process in which one disconnects oneself from one's physical surroundings under extremely painful circumstances. For Pierre Janet, it tends to create 'traumatic memory […] an altered

---

[471] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. by David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 41.

state of consciousness'.[472] Encoded in subconsciousness, 'traumatic memory' remains outside the realm of narrative memory.[473] To the extent that it is 'not available for retrieval under ordinary conditions', it creates a temporality of its own.[474] Time, in this different domain, becomes disrupted: incompatible with traditional time, which is experienced as linear and successive.

Shakespeare's dramaturgy reveals his awareness of how the human psyche functions under extreme circumstances, in keeping with Janet's theory of 'traumatic memory'.[475] In *Macbeth*, for instance, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, immediately after murdering Duncan, hear repeated knocking at the gate. For Thomas De Quincey, the knocking serves as a distinct demarcation between two different worlds, a world of 'fiendish heart' and a world of 'human heart'. While the world before the knocking is one in which 'the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires', the knocking signifies the resumption of the normal life that has been suspended by the murderers' Mephistophelian activities.

What De Quincey means by the demonic domain cut off from the 'world of ordinary life' can be most immediately understood as 'traumatic memory'.[476] There is

---

[472] Bessel Van der Kolk and Onno Van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (see Erikson, above), pp 158-82 (pp. 160-64).

[473] *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

[474] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

[475] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

[476] Thomas de Quincy, 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', *Miscellaneous Essays* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 2, 14; Van der Kolk

no question that Macbeth's murdering Duncan is damnable: killing the lawful king under his own roof breaches the rule of hospitality as much as the idea of loyalty. To the extent that the king stands for the symbolic father, the deed also assumes the colour of patricide. The deed generates such an overwhelming sense of guilt in the murderers that it must be repressed: 'cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs, locked up and sequestered in some deep recess'. Insomuch that the 'the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested - laid asleep - tranced - racked into a dread armistice', the world before the knocking amounts to a world of trauma. It is only by entering into a dissociative state, with 'time […] annihilated; relations to things without abolished; and all […] pass[ing] self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion,' that the murderers can perform the horrendous act.[477]

In *1 Henry VI*, Talbot enters into a dissociative state during the cannon attack, much as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth do during and just after their murder of King Duncan. To the extent that the assault is isolated from the normal and narrative memory, the scene immediately after the assault, in which Talbot tries to makes sense of the explosion, from the dramatic point of view, entails a different representation. The stage direction '*Here an alarum, and it thunders and lightens'*, like the knocking in *Macbeth*, signals the resumption of the suspended life and catapults the survivor back to normal life.[478] Talbot's initial reaction upon hearing the martial sound indicates that he has been previously immersed in a subconscious state. 'What stir is

---

and Van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past,' in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (see Erikson above), pp. 158-182 (p. 163).

[477] De Quincy, p. 15.

[478] *1 Henry VI*, p. 155.

this? What tumult's in the heavens | Whence cometh this alarum and the noise?'.[479] A combat veteran is supposed to be well accustomed to the sound of alarm, which is a frequent occurrence on the battlefield. The three rhetorical questions, however, suggest that Talbot is more than usually startled by the sound. He is awakened, that is, by the alarm from a trance-like state: a state of trauma and dissociation outside the reach of the narrative memory.

One thing that the initiation of the traumatography does is to stretch language to its breaking point. He will 'do nothing but speak nothing, 'a shall be nothing here', Falstaff says of Pistol in the tavern scene, as the ensign's broken speeches, full of fragments of wartime experience, strike others as preposterous: bearing little relevance to the relaxing atmosphere of the Boar's Head Tavern.[480] There is an unrepresentable excess in the limit event, whose force, as Caruth says, lies exactly 'in the collapse of the understanding'.[481] In the face of trauma, language becomes limited and fragmented: incapable of fulfilling its descriptive function.

The post-rape scene in *Titus Andronicus* testifies to trauma's debilitating assault on language. Shakespeare's first Roman play, as Lawrence Danson argues, is 'about silence, and about the inability to achieve adequate expression for overwhelming emotional needs'.[482] In a similar vein, Deborah Willis writes that in the play 'traumatic experience exceeds language's ability to describe it', and that the attempt

---

[479] *Ibid.*, I. 4. 97-98.

[480] *2 Henry IV,* II. 4. 162-63.

[481] Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (see Erikson above), pp. 3-12 (p.7).

[482] Lawrence Danson, *Tragic Alphabet: Shakespeare's Drama of Language* (London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 12.

'to ease pain through language only intensifies pain'.[483] Discovering that his niece has lost her tongue, Marcus, for instance, offers to 'speak for' her. His lament, however, fails to realise the traumatising scene that disintegrates the traditional linguistic paradigm. Instead, the hyperbolically embellished, affected figurative language that he presents is strangely out of keeping with the sorry sight of human suffering with which he is confronted. After all, one can hardly associate the poetic speeches such as 'sweet ornaments' or 'bubbling fountain stirred with wind' with a young victim of rape who has witnessed the murdering of her fiance and whose body has been cruelly mutilated by the murderers.[484] In the light of the linguistic bewilderment caused by Lavinia's mutilated body, the victim's loss of her speech is the most powerful testimony to this traumatising scene: to be deprived of the ability to speak becomes, it seems, paradoxically the reasonable way to speak of the unspeakable.

In *1 Henry VI*, Talbot finds himself in a similar predicament, as he is incapable of adequately describing his comrade's physical wound. Salisbury's horrifying visual appearance is repulsive yet still forcefully commands his attention due to its very incomprehensibility:

TALBOT

Speak, Salisbury; at least, if thou canst speak.

[...]

One of thy eyes and thy cheek's side struck off?

---

[483] Deborah Willis, ' "The Gnawing Vulture": Revenge, Trauma Theory, and *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53 (2002), 21-52.

[484] William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare), II. 3. 33, 18, 23.

[...]

One eye thou hast to look to heaven for grace.

The sun with one eye vieweth all the world.

[...]

Sir Thomas Gargrave, hast thou any life?

Speak unto Talbot, nay, look up to him.

Salisbury, cheer thy spirit with this comfort.

Thou shalt not die while-

He beckons with his hand and smiles on me

As who should say, 'When I am dead and gone,

Remember to avenge me on the French'.

Plantagenet, I will: and like thee, Nero,

Play on the lute, beholding the towns burn.[485]

Throughout the speech, Talbot tries to craft a fantasy in which he can bring or at least pretend to bring everything back into the old epistemological framework that has already fallen apart. Attempting to speak on behalf of Salisbury, he tries to restitute his comrade's annihilated body, a body, however, unlike that of Christ, that can no longer be restored back to its former unimpaired state. Talbot mentions the noun 'eye' three times, and four times the act of looking. In doing so, he forces upon audiences' attention the appalling image of the one-eyed Salisbury. Imagining Salisbury as someone still capable of speaking, Talbot, moreover, repetitively urges the victim to speak. Through the very act of broaching the subject of speaking, he reminds himself and the audience of the painful fact of Salisbury's horrendous facial wound caused by

[485] *1 Henry VI*, I. 4.72, 74, 82-83, 87-95.

the explosion of gunpowder: the deformity of a side of his cheek, probably with badly damaged inner tissue, blood, and bones starkly exposed. At a time when people's understanding of the new destructive technology was only rudimentary, the condition of Salisbury's wound was indescribable and illegible. As an enigma and a gap in history, it refuses to be explained away by the Christological economy of the Passion; transcending the traditional paradigm of what Owens calls the 'cult of the wounds', it renders suffering, meaningless, enigmatic, and traumatological.[486]

4. Dramatising trauma: seance, ghost, and trauma aesthetic.

How can a play respond to a traumatograhical era, that is, an era within which the old economy of restitution no longer applies? One answer lies in the spectral notion of ghosts. As Peter Buse and Andrew Stott observe, there has been a continuous 'persistence of the trope of spectrality in culture'.[487] Since the 1990s, ghosts have gradually come to the foreground in various fields of cultural studies. As a 'conceptual metaphor', as Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren write, the spectre addresses itself to a wide range of social, ethical, and political questions: 'the temporal and spatial sedimentation of history and tradition […] the workings and effects of scientific processes, technologies, and media; and the exclusionary, effacing

---

[486] Owens, p. 57.

[487] Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: a Future for Haunting', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, ed. by Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 1-20 (p. 3).

dimensions of social norms pertaining to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class'.[488]

Trauma study, too, as Martin Jay observes, frequently resorts to the concept of ghosts as a trope for exploring 'repressed memory'[489]. Ghosts, as Davis argues in *Haunted Subjects*, haunt the human world, a world to which they do not belong, 'in order to be sent away again'. Their appearance is a sign that there is something wrong 'in the symbolic, moral, or epistemological order'.[490] Avery Gordon, arguing in a similar vein, observes that ghosts manifest themselves 'when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view'.[491]

Meaning 'wound' in Greek, the term 'trauma' first appears in English in the seventeenth century, denoting, at that time, a physical wound. In the late nineteenth century, it was introduced into psychology to denote by contrast the damage to the psyche that happens as a result of a, or a series of, stressful event[s]. For the human mind, to be traumatised means that an event was not comprehended as it happened. Unclaimed, the unassimilated acts itself out in a belated manner; haunting the victim,

---

[488] Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities', in *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, ed. by Maria Del Pilar Blanco and Ether Peeren (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp 1-27 (pp. 1-2).

[489] Martin Jay, *Cultural Semantics: Key Words of Our Time* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998) p. 62.

[490] Davis, p. 2.

[491] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. xvi.

it forces itself upon him through various intrusive phenomena without his consciousness or consent. Thematically speaking, then, there is a close affinity between ghosts and trauma: both are capable of addressing historical wrongs and ramifications otherwise marginalised by individual, social, and cultural forces. Much as a ghost does in returning to interrupt what Davis calls the'fabric of reality', traumatic experience returns to remind a community of its unpaid debt to bygone days.[492] Disrupting a community's sense of the present, it causes temporal disturbance and produces a conflation of the past and the present.

The study of ghosts and the study of trauma often share similar language. As Blanco and Peeren write, '[t]he mode of expression that many scholars use to describe the spectral […] is similar to, if not fully consonant with, the terms used to describe the affective qualities of trauma'.[493] When a property or a person is haunted by a ghost, they continue to explain, one would usually describe this condition as being possessed: seized by a daemonic force without the subject's consent. A trauma victim, likewise, serves as a kind of host for a symptom to manifest itself through the effect of *Nachträglichkeit*. The condition of traumatisation, as Caruth points out, is nothing but a condition of possession, for '[t]o be traumatized is precisely possessed by an image or event'; a ghost of the past, that is, that returns to haunt a victim's present life 'against the will of the one it inhabits'.[494]

If the uncaring hands of technological violence in *1 Henry VI* challenge Christological discourse and create a representational crisis, then the extremely intense materialism of the play itself can only be decoded in the afterworld of *Richard*

---

[492] Davis, p.3.

[493] Blanco and Peeren, p. 11.

[494] Caruth, "Introduction', p.5.

III. A representational fallout from what happens in *1 Henry VI*, *Richard III* is a séance play, responding to the representational predicament generated by the intervention of the intense materialism. Ostensibly, *Richard III* augurs a smooth transmission of history; 'stern alarums', as Richard says in the opening, have 'changed to merry meeting.'[495] Symptoms that betoken anachronism, however, are as many as, if no more than, moments of successful exorcism. Like a haunted house, the play becomes a host: a convocation of unassimilated historical wounds.

In *The Trauma Question*, Luckhurst argues that a trauma narrative should try to produce a traumatising condition: 'marked by interruptions, temporal disorder, refusal of easy readerly identification, disarming play with narrative framing, disjunct movements in style, tense, focalisation or discourse, and a resistance to closure that is demonstrated in compulsive telling and retelling'. The 'trauma aesthetic' attempts to capture the sense of the ungraspable and haunting event: a ghost repetitively returning and forcefully possessing the present without the subject's own awareness. *Richard III*, in keeping with Luckhurst's vision, aptly captures the kind of 'formal disturbance'.[496] Haunted by a persistent sense of temporal disorder, it is a séance visited by revenants of the trilogy of *Henry VI*.

When Richard intrudes upon the Henry VI's funeral procession, for instance, the wounds of the late king's corpse, much to the surprise of its mourner, Anne, '[o]pen their congealed mounths, and bleed afresh.' Admittedly, Shakespeare, in dramatising the scene, plays upon a folk belief still prevalent in his own time. Called Cruentation,

---

[495] *Richard III*, I. 1. 7.

[496] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 88.

it posits that the body of a victim would bleed in the presence of its murderer.[497] What is also at stake, however, is the notion of belatedness. There is a plenitude of pathos and poignancy: 'poor' Anne's 'lamentations' and 'helpless balm', together with the wounds of the victim, form a moving picture in which people groan under the burden of trauma.[498] Henry's death scene in *3 Henry VI*, in stark contrast, comes across as relatively unemotional: a religious allegory in which the vice temporarily triumphs over virtue.

Belatedly capturing the pathos, then, Henry VI's bleeding body in *Richard III* stages in effect a return of the ghost. With the old epistemological frame falling short of representing the unrepresentable, ghosts, conjured up by the new technology of gunpowder, offer the remains of traditional historical beliefs about legibility an alternative vehicle for dramatisation. *Richard III*, by this light, should not simply be read as a play that, as Phyllis Rackin claims, 'delineates a process of providential retribution and restoration'.[499] On the contrary, the play testifies to the urgency of conjuring up the traumatic past. The sound and fury of technology in *1 Henry VI* gives rise to spectres. Spectrality, manifested through the staging of temporal disorder and

---

[497] See, for instance, '[t]he belief that a cadaver that "died badly" would bleed in the presence of its assassin'. Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, 'Saving the Phenomenon: Why Corpses Bled in the Presence of their Murderer in Early Modern Science', in *The Body of Evidence: Corpses and Proofs in Early Modern European Medicine*, ed. by Francesco Paolo De Ceglia (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 23-52 (p. 24).

[498] *Richard III*, 1.2. 56, 9, 13.

[499] Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicle*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 56.

returning of the ghostly Margaret, becomes the only possible way to speak of the unspeakable.

5. Temporal disorder in *Richard III*.

Traditional historiography sets out a chain of objective events unfolding in linear order and made comprehensible by causality. At the very beginning of *Richard III*, this kind of discourse finds itself crumbling, however; challenged by a more radical mode. In a world of traumatography, the movement of history is scarcely smooth and linear: time is always out of joint. The notion of synchrony, as Derrida famously argues, 'does not have a chance, no time is contemporary with itself'.[500] The figure of war typifies the disjunction of time that is more generally at work in the play. War represents something aggressive and masculine: with his 'dreadful marches' and 'stern alarums', he is supposed to strike fear into the souls of enemies. Disconcertingly, however, war in this play is unsexed: deprived of its masculine trait. Put into the dress of wantonness, he is made to cater to ladies' whim: 'capers nimbly in a lady's chamber'.[501]

In keeping with the incongruity of war, Richard also observes a discord in himself. As Schwyzer argues, there is an 'irreconcilable antagonism' between Richard's body and his shadow: the latter is always ready to ambush its substance.[502] '[T]o see my shadow in the sun | And descant on mine own deformity', Richard says.[503] The

---

[500] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 139.

[501] *Richard III*, I. 1. 12.

[502] Schwyzer, , p. 215.

[503] *Richard III*, I.1.25-26.

Machiavellian protagonist's compulsive retelling of wartime trauma that was thought to be safely buried betrays a sense, moreover, of breached temporality, in addition to the disagreement between his body and substance. In describing how a war-torn past is replaced by a peaceable present, Richard uses nine lines to stress the same point:

RICHARD

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son of York,
And all the clouds that loured upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound up with victorious wreath,
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged War hath smoothed his wrinkled front.

On the face of it, these lines appear to suggest a smooth temporal supersession: a period of peace buries a period of conflict. The repetitive reference to a past traumatised by civil war calls into question, however, the validity of such a reading. The subject of each sentence, 'the winter of our discontent', 'all the clouds', 'our brows', 'our bruised arms', 'our stern alarums', 'our dreadful marches', and '[g]rim-visaged War' is drawn from the troubled past. Using the past as an indispensable medium to introduce the present, the speech reveals an unruly history in which the intrusive past is reluctant to be forgotten, as if the speaker were uncertain whether the past really has been safely buried or not. Things, then, are not 'in the deep

bosom of the ocean buried'.[504] Trauma is compulsively acted out; past experience is repeated by the survivor who himself may not be entirely conscious of such repetition. In addition to Richard himself, *Richard III* shows other characters, as well, struggling in the shadow of a historical legacy that remains acutely troubling and palpably intrusive. Hopes prove illusory; the beginning of Edward's reign proves instead a point of departure into a cyclic pattern of traumatic repetition: a pattern that the ghostly Margaret fittingly sets forth.

6. Ghosts and the collapse of spatiality.

In *Richard III*, Margaret is a revenant: she lingers in a present that is supposed to have already relinquished the past. This ghostly visitation casts its spectral shadow over survivors, who are possessed by a history that they cannot possibly comprehend. The spectral Margaret, then, reproduces a historical repetition: a return from the 'piping time of peace' to civil discord between Lancaster and York.[505] Through its very anachronistic presence, the conjured-up spirit challenges the traditional notion of space and the law of temporality.

The idea of haunting, Derrida argues, 'implies places, a habitation, and always a haunted house'.[506] In expounding the notion of transgenerational trauma, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, for instance, resort to the metaphor of a crypt. A trauma patient, they argue, tends to build within his psyche 'a sepulcher' to deposit the

---

[504] *Richard III*, I. 1. 1-9.

[505] *Richard III*, I. 1. 24.

[506] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 86.

unbearably shameful secret of his previous generation, which then haunts the victim in the form of a ghost.[507] Blanco and Peeren argue, as well, that haunting is a notion 'attached to a where'. Places, they point out, 'are simultaneously living and spectral, containing the experience of the actual moment as well as the many times that have already transpired and become silent […] to the present'.[508] Suggestive of spectral presence, places of residence are inextricably associated with revenants and particularly prone to ghostly visitations. They are, as Natalka Freeland writes, 'frightening and dangerous, conjuring fears of ghosts rather than circulating freely and without history'.[509]

In keeping with the close affinity between locality and spectrality, ghosts in Shakespeare's dramaturgy, when manifesting themselves, show a strong tendency to remain attached to their erstwhile place of residence. When the ghost of Hamlet senior returns, for example, it is in his former castle in Elsinore, an old and familiar place, (re)appearing either in front of the castle in combat armour or in the queen's closet in nightgown. Given that the royal residence is a centre of historical transmission and a witness to downfalls of kings, *coup d'état*, and numerous machinations, it is especially prone to being frequented by such spectral guests.

In *Richard III* Margaret shows herself twice: either in or before the palace, a place that is susceptible to being haunted. 'Here in these confines have I slyly lurked', she

---

[507] Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p. xxi.

[508] Blanco and Peeren, 'Possessions: Spectral Places/Introduction', in *The Spectralities Reader*, (see Blanco and Peeren, above), pp.395-401 (p. 395).

[509] Natalka Freeland, 'Theft, Terror and Family Values: the Mysteries and Deomesticities of Udolpho', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, (see Buse and Stott, above) pp. 144-162 (p. 157).

says.[510] She enters the stage without other characters' awareness. And it is only when she decides to come forward that her charm of invisibility is broken. This dissymmetry, that is, Margaret's seeing without being seen, hearing without being heard, calls into question basic assumptions about ownership, security, and privacy within the royal palace. Seemingly private conversations are in effect within earshot, secretly watched and surveilled by what the participants suppose they have already safely conjured away.

Ghosts' ability to teleport further undermines the sense of certitude and security that the idea of private space seems to offer. The immaterial spirit, it is said, is not fettered by physical laws. Free from the 'muddy vesture of decay', it is able to traverse back and forth through different places, much as Margaret does through her anachronistic presence in England in *Richard III*.[511] Historically, when Edward IV was lying on his deathbed in 1483, Margaret was already far from England. After the Battle of Tewksbury in 1471, Margaret, a distraught queen and a bereaved mother, was captured by her nemesis Sir William Stanley and sent to Edward IV at Coventry. She was then imprisoned under the order of the newly crowned king in the Tower of London; after a period of rigorous treatment, she was transferred to Windsor and then to Wallingford castle, where she was placed under the custody of one of her former favorites, Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk. Meanwhile, Margaret's father, King Rene's efforts finally brought the French King Louis XI to see to Margaret's emancipation. In 1475, an agreement, which stipulates a ransom of fifty thousand

---

[510] *Richard III*, IV. 4. 3.

[511] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by John Drakakis (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011), V. 1. 62.

crowns, paid 'at five installments', was reached between the two sides.[512] From Wallingford, then, Margaret was brought to Sandwich, where she embarked on her journey back to her native country, arriving at Dieppe in January, 1476.

Of these historical facts, Shakespeare was almost certainly not unaware: Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke,* both of which serve as the major sources for the playwright's history plays, provide detailed accounts of Margaret's fate after the Battle of Tewksbury. Given the importance of this *dramatis personae* (Margaret is the only character featuring in every part of the first tetralogy), Shakespeare must have been particularly meticulous when studying these historical accounts of her life and character and well aware of the vicissitudes of her fortune. In the last scene of *3 Henry VI*, for instance, Edward orders Clarence to have Margaret 'waft[ed] hence to France'.[513] Margaret's anachronistic presence in *Richard III*, therefore, can hardly be regarded as arising from the playwright's confusion. More plausibly, Shakespeare introduces her on purpose. By salvaging Margaret from the deep recesses of history and sending her back to England, he questions the demarcation between 'here' and 'there' and challenges the taken-for-granted notion of spatial integrity.

In *Richard III*, Margaret introduces a sense of temporal perplexity with her very first appearance, as well as some question whether she is human or some other, more supernatural creature. Confronted by Margaret, someone he believes has been consigned to France, Richard, for instance, is thrown into such confusion that he initially can do nothing but attribute her presence to the power of witchcraft: '(f)oul

---

[512] Agnès Strikland, *Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest*, 8 vols (Norderstedt: Hansebooks, 2019), III, p. 201.

[513] *3 Henry VI*, V. 7. 41.

wrinkled witch', he calls her.[514]. The denomination, moreover, appears fifty-five lines after Margaret's entrance. Such belatedness means that audiences are during the interval nonplussed: at a loss to rationalise Margaret's surprising appearance.

7. 'Oh, she's warm': Margaret's resuscitation.

Richard's reference to witchcraft hints at yet another Shakespearean anachronism. The association of witchcraft not only with teleportation but also with necromancy, the resuscitation of the dead, renders Margaret's appearance more unsettling, insofar as it reminds the audience that the historical Margaret had already died in August 25th, 1482, a year before her (re)appearance in *Richard III*.

After Margaret had reached the French shore in 1476, she 'lived in deepest seclusion' in her father's house at Reculée.[515] She then moved to the Chateau of Damprieree, under the care of Francis Vignolles, one of the late King René's officers. It was there that she closed the last chapter of her eventful life and departed from the giddy world at the age of fifty-one. When Margaret returns to the dramatic world of *Richard III*, therefore, she returns as a spectre. Free from the bondage of time, a spectre, as Derrida observes, not only problematises the 'reassuring order of presents and […] contemporaneity of the present to itself' but also undoes the dialectic between what was and what is. No time is contemporary with itself. 'Before knowing whether one can differentiate between the specter of the past and the specter of the future, of the past present and the future present', therefore, 'one must perhaps ask

---

[514] *Richard III,* I. 3. 163.

[515] Strikland, III, p. 203.

oneself whether the spectrality effect does not consist in undoing this opposition, or even this dialectic, between actual, effective presence and its other.[516]

In keeping with the spectral effect that Derrida describes, Margaret exposes the fragility of temporal order; coming back to a living present in which she is no longer recogniseable, she calls into question the historiographical idea of linear succession. Is this figure someone coming from the dead or someone lingering between life and death? The sense of disorientation generated by this spectral other seems to have been disturbing. Confronted by Margaret, even Richard is unnerved. Trembling and quaking, he tries to sneak out of her presence and is only forestalled by Margaret's taunt: ' -Ah, gentle villain, do not turn away'.[517] This scene, like the procession of ghosts he encounters just before the Battle of Bosworth, is a rare occasion in which Richard loses his wonted sense of self-possession. In a play in which the eponymous character exhibits firm mastery over himself and ruthless domination over others, only specters, it seems, are capable of unsettling his presence of mind.

The sense here of time being out of joint is seconded by the adjective 'old', which features in the stage direction of Margaret's entrances. According to the *OED*, in addition to the most common meaning 'having lived for a long time', it means 'belonging to the past; former'. The stage direction 'old QUEEN MARGARET',[518] combined with the knowledge that the historical Margaret has already died a year before, jars uncomfortably with assumptions about temporal integrity. Challenging the conception of linear progression and the taken-for-granted sense of the 'now',

---

[516] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 48.

[517] *Richard III*, I. 3. 162.

[518] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Margaret forces those characters living in the present to stand face-to-face with the inassimilable in its debilitating intensity.

8. Richard's representational bewilderment.

After Margaret storms out of the palace, Rivers expresses his amazement at her unrestrained freedom: 'I muse why she's at liberty.'[519] To characters and audiences, Margaret's liberty, as Rivers rightly points out, is indeed a considerable wonder: while everyone is subject to confinement, Margaret, not susceptible to any kind of restriction, enjoys uninhibited movement.

For the most part, Richard's strong personality controls the play's tempo; the Machiavellian hero is so menacingly omnipresent that the play's 'various counterpoints and subplots', as Schwyzer observes, become inconspicuous, paling into insignificance in the face of this forceful character.[520] Through means such as imprisonment and monitoring, Richard alters at his will the natural course of things and restricts other characters' movements. In doing so, he turns the court into a stifling institution: every royal member, put under strict surveillance, is in danger of persecution. By laying 'drunken prophecies', Richard sends Clarence to jail and later packs him 'with post-horse up to heaven.'[521] Intercepting Anne on her way to bury her late father-in-law, he persuades the mourner to drop her intended business and repair instead to his residence; 'the funeral baked meats | Did coldly furnish forth the

---

[519] *Ibid.*, IV. 4. 3; I. 3. 304.

[520] Schwyzer, p. 204.

[521] *Richard III*, 1. 1. 33, 146.

marriage tables.'[522] --- all on account of his cunning and casuistry. By means of a coup, he imprisons and then murders the Prince, who had come to London to inherit the throne. A deposed queen without any relative and friend to look after her, Margaret is as vulnerable as any of these royal victims. Yet throughout the play she is free from any constraint and interception. Roaming around 'these confines', she makes comments, cast curses and prophecies, and draws others' attention to the traumatic past.

To explain Margaret's surprising liberty, Richard reminds others of the wrongs she has suffered: 'She hath had too much wrong, and I repent | My part thereof that I have done to her.' Richard, it seems, is trying to suggest that Margaret owes her freedom to his benevolence and magnanimity: it is only through his compassion that the banished widow is allowed to roam around the palace freely. Shakespeare's Richard, however, is famous for his hypocrisy. A master of wordplay, he usually clothes his deeds of iniquity '[w]ith odd old ends, stol'n forth of Holy Writ,' self-consciously contradicting through his private professions of villainy his public vaunting of benevolence.[523] In *3 Henry VI*, Richard, through an aside, interprets the 'loving kiss' given to his nephew as a veneer of kindness disguising his villainy.[524] In *Richard III,* after Clarence is escorted away to the Tower, Richard immediately casts off his mask of amity. Deriding Clarence's simplicity, he reveals the dark intention of sending his brother's 'soul to heaven'.[525]

---

[522] *Hamlet*, 1. 2. 179-80

[523] *Richard III*, I. 3. 305-07, 336.

[524] *3 Henry VI*, V. 7. 32.

[525] *Richard III*, I. 1. 119.

The scene in question, however, is a rare instance in which Richard's habitual economy fails to function. In response to Rivers's implicit query, Richard loses his wonted command upon words and instead seems keen to extricate himself. Dismissing River's question with a passing comment, he eagerly resumes his accusation of Elizabeth's ungratefulness, a diatribe then interrupted by Margaret's entrance. What is happening here is a kind of hermeneutic bewilderment: a disconnect between language and reality as a consequence of a spectral apparition. Like Talbot's speech, in which the speaker attempts to bring things back within a disintegrated Christological discourse, Richard's speech is a fantasy woven to try to cover up the inassimilable. Much as Talbot's economy of legibility that falls short of restituting Salisbury's annihilated body, Richard's own economy of paronomasia fails to accommodate the spectral apparition. Crafted to serve his earthly ambition, his discursive strategy stutters in the face of the otherworldly.

Insofar as her visibility only resides in her spectrality, in 'not being visible in flesh and blood', to borrow Derrida's words, the untouchable Margaret cannot be adequately explained away by Richard's secular authority.[526] Roaming freely around the English court, the ghostly widow problematises the very idea of performance in a traumatographical era that emerges from the debris of the old Christological framework. To watch and to act in an age of intense materialism, the play seems to suggest, is to be constantly confronted by a representational enigma which appears here in the form of the old Margaret: a ghost who dwells in the liminal zone between the living and the dead.

---

[526] Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, 'Spectrographies', in *The Spectralities Reader*, (see Blanco and Peeren, above), pp. 37-51 (p.38).

9. Haunted by a ghostly future.

As Nietzsche proclaims in *The Will to Power*, ideas can only be vanquished temporarily, just as for an imperishable ghost, utter annihilation is a theoretical fiction: 'a vanquished idea is not annihilated, but rather driven to the background or subordinated'. For Nietzsche, the persistence of ideas means that the world is always in an anarchic state. Propelled by the will to power, different ideas of unequal strength contend for dominance, within which those that attain superior power temporarily emerge victorious from the chaos. In the light of this 'eternal recurrence', ever becoming without the prospect of being, the world, Nietzsche concludes, has no such thing as closure: ''the world has no such state […] (as) an end', and 'becoming ought to be explained without recourse to […] teleological tendencies […] the present must on no account be justified by a possible future.'[527]

Denouncing the West's desire for hegemonic closure to history, Derrida echoes Nietzsche's view. In his dialogue with the ghosts of Marxism, Derrida directs our attention to the future ghost: it comes from the future, 'it proceeds from the future.'[528] It is a ghostly future whose movement is always disjointing, disjunctive, and disproportinate. In keeping with the Derridean ghost, the emergence of technology in the early modern period does not necessarily entail the death of the old superstitious belief: with its sheer magnitude of the material, it can create a future of the immaterial. In his early history plays, Shakespeare impugns the notion of historical linearity and legibility. Staging the early modern crisis of reference and its belated haunting effect,

---

[527] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, pp. 346, 43, 402.

[528] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 10-11, 5, xix.

he invites us to rethink what it means to be catapulted to the future: a future, as *Richard III* shows, punctuated by visitations from ghosts.

6

Trauma and Victimisation in *Titus Andronicus*

In *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, Matthew R. Martin argues that the Shakespearean tragedy performs a containment of traumatic events. Attempting to 'come out the other side of the compulsive repetition triggered by trauma', it 'work[s] through the traumatic mode of mimesis toward the tragic mimetic containment of trauma safely in a coherently representable past.' Martin shows a considerable degree of skepticism toward Shakespearean tragedy's capability in this respect, however. Whereas conventional tragedy 'represents trauma as external event', Shakespearean tragedy tends to hold a less sure-footed view of trauma's origin. Quite different from the conventional tragedy, then, Shakespearean tragedy does not eventuate in redemption and 'complete closure' but instead achieves 'partial and perhaps only temporary success'.[529] *Titus Andronicus*, in particular, epitomises Martin's interpretation of Shakespearean tragedy. In his earliest Roman play, Shakespeare manifests a disturbingly pessimistic vision of history and, in particular, explores the psychological mechanism responsible for breeding this historical sense. In its performance of what amounts to a quasi-tragic mimesis, *Titus Andronicus* reaches in the end what is only a temporary and treacherous truce with historical strife. Chaos and conflict, rather than safely concluded, are at best allayed pro tem.

What causes this incomplete closure? And what does it mean for trauma to be transmitted in the very act of containment? At the core of these questions reside the notions of founding trauma and bearing false witness. A community's founding moment, associated with violence and bloodshed, usually implicates disruption and

---

[529] Martin, p. 44.

severance. Being itself traumatic and disruptive, such a moment triggers death anxiety within the community, which makes it feel vulnerable to assaults from all sides and cuts off its sense of connection to life. Encountering historical change thus can often lead the community to disown the feeling by projecting it onto the other, usually in an unjust and unjustifiable way. Through this act of victimisation, in keeping with what Robert Jay Lifton calls bearing false witness, the victimising community inscribes killing at the heart of its origin: the transmission of history becomes in effect a transmission of disturbing violence that has not yet been contained in a proper and just manner.[530]

Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* performs this kind of psychological mechanism: an emerging community, unable to bear its death anxiety, exploits external groups to assuage its sense of vulnerability. Through the motif of violence, Shakespeare engages with the classical tradition, Virgil's other voices in particular, and considers the complexities inherent in the transmission of history. According to the playwright, historical process is repetitive rather than linear, disruptive rather than redemptive. Much as the Virgilian hero Aeneas does in ruthlessly killing his prisoner at the founding moment of the Roman empire, Shakespeare's Roman community, whenever it faces severe losses, invariably projects its death anxiety onto an outside individual or group. Thanks to psychologically expendable victims, classified in keeping what Lifton calls 'a death-tainted group', Rome can claim the restoration of full life.[531] For the Roman community, then, the victimisation is tantamount to an opportunity. It allows the victimiser to salvage a sense of integration and agency that has been

---

[530] Lifton, 'An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', p. 138.

[531] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 293.

shattered by trauma. Through the reformulation of self, the victimiser can temporarily mend its broken connection to life.

Although it may help to alleviate the sense of vulnerability, the psychological mechanism of victimisation fails to contain the overwhelming death anxiety that trauma unleashes.[532] Insofar as a community does not go through the process of confrontation with and integration of death, the re-connection to life brought by killing is but temporary. Rather than leading the victimiser to reconnecting to life through the formation of new attachments, killing further breaks this connection. In consequence, death anxiety now and then re-emerges. To suppress the returning ghost, the tendency to resort to murder becomes unavoidable. In this sense, Roman society's reconciliation with its losses presupposes a transmission, rather than a successful containment, of trauma. What appears to be an ending becomes in effect a beginning of another round of tragic events: unresolved trauma unleashes itself through disturbing scenes of bloodshed.

1. Victimisation and civilisation's broken connection.

Human beings are perpetually in fear of the idea of death. As mortals, we tirelessly search for images that help maintain our sense of life and vitality. According to Lifton,

---

[532] For the limits of victimisation, see Lifton's discussion on bearing false witness, in 'An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', p. 138-39; see also Lifton's discussion on 'a perverse quest for meaning' in 'Giving Death its Due: An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', in *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory & Treatment of Catastrophic Experiences*, by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 1-22 (pp.12-13).

the process of making images constitutes the individual's life history. By arranging and reorganising different kinds of stimuli into metaphors, an individual constructs a highly complex and sophisticated web of life and death imagery to keep a sense of connection to life. In the continuous process of seeking images, it is highly important to maintain the interaction of the antithetical symbols of life and of death in a balanced and mutually inclusive manner. As Lifton points out, a sense of continuity of life by no means entails a 'denial of death'.[533] Quite the opposite, it involves an active confrontation with the concept of death. In doing so, an individual can procure the knowledge which enables him to connect the idea of the cessation of life 'to a principle of life-continuity'.[534] Instead of remaining 'numbed toward […] the fact of death', one can understand death 'and yet transcend it'.[535]

The meaning of continuity, then, is not as it is in Shakespearean comedy. It does not consider it just for protagonists to live in an eternal celebration of life in an earthly Eden at the expense of a scapegoat such as Shylock or Malvolio. On the contrary, it more closely resembles Shakespearean tragedy. Instead of projecting death anxiety upon an outsider, characters must engage in a face-to-face confrontation with death. They must reconcile themselves to death in a proper way by understanding, as well as amending, their past follies, so that survivors in their shattered communities can reconnect themselves to the flow of life, albeit with a heavy heart, acknowledging the limitation of the human condition. 'Rule in this realm, and the gor'd state sustain'.[536]

---

[533] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[534] *Ibid.*, p. 4

[535] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[536] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R. A. Foakes (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1997), V. 3. 360.

In summary, the sense of immortality involves what Lifton says 'a corollary of the knowledge of death itself'; it 'reflects a compelling and universal inner quest for continuous symbolic relationship to what has gone before and what will continue after our finite individual lives.' That is to say, to pursue a sense of immortality, adequately symbolising one's individual and historical connectedness, does not necessarily exclude and externalise the meaning of death. One must carry out the search for images of immorality in a responsible and just manner. In the journey of finding life-affirming imagery, one must acknowledge that death is an intrinsic part of oneself: one must learn to carry 'death within him like the good priest his breviary', as Lifton writes.[537]

Lifton bases his exploration of human history upon what he says the 'psychological relationship between the phenomenon of death and the flow of life'. The course of human history, he argues, is structured like that of an individual life: the imagery of life and of death mutually affects, but does not necessarily exclude, each other. A series of man-made events aiming at 'absorb[ing] the idea of death and creat[ing] lasting images of the continuity of life', human history attempts to 'achieve, maintain, and reaffirm a collective sense of immortality under constantly changing psychic and material conditions'.[538] Civilisation's thirst for the imagery of immortality can at times go awry, however. Aberrations such as changes of dynasties or mass confrontations between communities usually disrupt historical progress. From a psycho-historical perspective, episodes of bloodshed, injustice, and massacre divest civilisation of life and vitality. Enervated, it enters into a stage of 'dislocation' in which a community's symbolic unity is severely damaged. Trapped in 'collective

---

[537] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, pp. 17, 279.

[538] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

forms of destruction and self-destruction', civilisation becomes disconnected and de-symbolised.[539]

Faced with a crisis of symbolism, a community can sometimes resort to some radical measures. This is the dangerous stage at which totalism can arise. Characterised by an 'all-or-nothing subjugation of the self to an idea-system', totalism is a fanatic and radical exploration of life symbols.[540] Given that it entails the establishment of a radical antithesis: an 'experiential world […] sharply divided into the pure and the impure, into the absolutely good and the absolutely evil', vistimisation becomes an ineluctable consequence of this radical mindset.[541] Victimisation, as Lifton explains, means a "creation of a death-tainted group (of victims) against which others (victimizers) can contrast their claim to immortality'.[542] The radical polarisation of the inside and the outside enables the victimiser to eliminate his psychic numbing and feel reinvigorated. By imposing a strict dichotomy upon the boundary between the self and the other, he externalises his sense of insecurity and projects it onto an outsider. Any form of impurity is held to originate from outside sources, 'from the ever-threatening world beyond the closed, totalist ken'.[543]

---

[539] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

[540] *Ibid.*, p. 298.

[541] Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China Thought Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North California Press, 1989), p. 423.

[542] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 302.

[543] Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 425.

For a community to bring about its regeneration through a cult-like worship of life is dubious, however, in that it fails to confront its own death anxiety. By premising the recovery and re-invigoration of a traumatised society upon the extermination of an outside group, the warped plan for regeneration calls for perpetrating violence and inflicting injustice on a scapegoat. With the establishment of the clear-cut mindset of 'us' against the purportedly evil and the degraded 'other', the victimising community embarks upon a sanguinary journey in which there is no way to turn back. '(T)he experience of totalist polarization of good and evil,' Lifton explains, 'makes it very difficult to regain a more balanced inner sensitivity to the complexities of human nature.'[544] The community could find itself in an unwelcome and wretched dilemma in which, should it 'wade no more | Returning were as tedious as go o'er'.[545] In order to maintain its sense of immortality, the radical explorer of life imagery can do nothing but push further the process of victimisation. Eventually, 'the psychological tendency toward projection', Lifton concludes, 'is nourished and institutionalized', producing antagonism, slaughter, and genocide on a wider and greater scale.[546] In other words, the bond of civilisation is completely shattered; human society is irretrievably reduced to a state of repetition of violence, perpetually killing in order to achieve the fictional idea of regeneration.

2. Rome's life-symbol crisis.

---

[544] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

[545] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), III. 4. 143-44.

[546] Lifton, *Thought Reform*, p. 425.

In *Titus Andronicus,* Shakespeare sympathises with Virgil's 'further voices'.[547] The play begins where Virgil's *Aeneid* ends. Like the Rome that Aeneas is going to build, Shakespeare's fictionalised Roman community finds itself at a moment of extreme historical dislocation. Internally, with the death of the old king Caesar and the issue of legitimate heir undecided, it lies in the dreadful shadow of civil war. *Le roi est mort*, yet there is no *vive le roi*. The traditional ritual proclamation that helps ensure royal succession and serve as a symbolic bulwark against disintegration at times of crisis is cut short at the very climatic celebration that marks the regeneration of a nation. Saturninus, the late king's first born, vows to '[d]efend the justice' of his 'cause with arms', while Bassianus, the younger son who takes pride in his 'virtue', 'continence and nobility', refuses to give in and calls for a 'pure election'. Trying to contain the intestine discord, Marcus pronounces that Titus has been chosen 'by common voice' as the new king.[548] Rather than suturing the wound, however, this decision triggers Rome's further deterioration. Although courageous and noble, Titus fails as a competent political leader. In rashly bestowing the kingship upon Saturninus, a degenerate prince whom he fatally believes is full of 'virtues', Titus is more or less responsible for Rome's civil discord.[549]

Rome suffers the dreadful consequences of the ten years' war against the Goth, in addition to its internal division. Although Titus proclaims that Rome has eventually subjugated its enemy, the traumatic aftermath of this long war are far from contained. The Andronici family, in particular, finds itself lickings its wound. With the majority

---

[547] Craig Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: 'Pessimistic' Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. vi.

[548] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 21.

[549] *Ibid.*, 1. 1. 2, 14-16, 229.

of its 'valiant sons' killed during the war, the family faces the bleak prospect of an end to the family line.[550] According to Lifton, 'family continuity' serves as a major theme of the 'biological mode' that maintains a community's sense of symbolic immortality. Descendants help one assert perpetual life. Thanks to 'one's sons and daughters and their sons and daughters', one's death is not 'truth's and beauty's doom and date'.[551] As the *paterfamilias* who is 'both family monarch and priest of the family ancestor cult', Titus is responsible for safeguarding the unbroken and smooth transmission of his family's biological line.[552] The repeated death of his sons, however, appears to disrupt the prospect of living on through his descendants. Meditating on the prospect of being cut off from the shore of immortality, Titus, standing in front of the family tomb, laments his sons' death: '(h)ow many sons hast thou of mine in store | That thou wilt never render to me more.'[553]

In the face of historical dislocation, the Roman community attempts to deny its death anxiety by projecting it onto an outside group. In staging this psychological mechanism of victimisation, Shakespeare sympathises with Virgil's 'further voices'.[554] According to the Harvard School of *Aeneid* criticism, Virgil's *Aeneid* is politically subversive. Rather than celebrating the new-born imperial dynasty, Virgil's epic poem sees the notion of the *translatio empirii* as dubious: as Patrick Gray argues

---

[550] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 34.

[551] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 18; William Shakespeare, Sonnet 14, *Sonnets*, ed. by Katherine Duncan Jones (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 14.

[552] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 19.

[553] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 97-98.

[554] Kallendorf, p. vi.

in ‘Shakespeare and the Other Virgil’, Virgil’s ‘“public voice” of praise for Augustus’s pax Romanan’ is undercut by his ‘“private voice”’ of compassion and sympathy for the sufferings of Rome’s defeated enemies.[555] What does it take to establish the Roman empire? In exploring this question, Virgil, by presenting his private voice, draws readers’ attention to traumatic scenes of violence, bloodshed, and human sacrifice that lie at the heart of the empire’s founding moment. In doing so, the poem exposes the ambiguous nature of historical heritage. A narrative ostensibly intended as a celebration of a nation’s regeneration in effect subverts such an attempt, as there are narrative stutters which cannot be embedded within the hegemony’s historiography. One must give thought to ghosts of the past: unresolved violent encounters, tragic death, and moments of injustice are integral parts of a nation’s cultural legacy.

In Book Ten of the epic poem, Aeneas, possessed by a bloodthirsty frenzy, dedicates the lives of eight captive warriors to the ghost of Pallas. He then butchers a harmless priest of Diana. Aeneas’ cruelty has been open to criticism. According to Michael Putnam, this act of human sacrifice is an ‘action of someone deranged, driven by fury to violate not only his father’s injunction to behave with *clementia* but also a basic tenet of civilised behaviour’.[556] In a similar vein, Gray regards Aeneas’ carnage as iconoclastic: a troubling indication that ‘Aeneas might not represent an ethical ideal’.[557]

---

[555] Patrick Gray, ‘Shakespeare and the Other Virgil’, *Shakespeare Survey,* 69 (2016), 46-57.

[556] Michael Putnam, V*irgil’s ‘Aeneid’: Interpretations and Influence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 22.

[557] Patrick Gray, ‘Shakespeare and the Other Virgil’, pp. 46-57.

The human sacrifice is not the end of the story, however. At the end of the poem, Aeneas kills Turnus in spite of the victim's earnest supplication. The hero's violence here amounts to an act of victimisation: a rejection of death and an embrace of eternal life. To beg for mercy, Turnus resorts to phrases associated with the image of death such as 'stricken in years' and 'lifeless body'. He also yields up his claim to Lavinia: an act that symbolically cuts off the biological mode of continuity. Deprived of vitality, Turnus becomes a lifeless corpse, the very image of what Lifton calls 'life imitating death'. Bending defenselessly, he implores the victor to spare his 'lifeless body' for the sake of his father, who is 'now stricken in years'. The hapless Turnus, however, is undone by the sight of the belt that he took from Pallas earlier as a spoil of war. Driven to fury by this reminder of Pallas, Aeneas kills Turnus in the name of revenge: '[I]t is Pallas who wounds thee now, it is Pallas who takes | Revenge for his murder in this thine own wicked blood!'.[558] For Aeneas, to carry on the 'survivor mission' is to fulfil his responsibility toward the dead, as well as to recover his broken connection to life through witnessing. Aeneas perverts this process, however, by rejecting the death confrontation. Instead, by denying his own agency in the killing and by designating his victim as the wicked, Aeneas, driven by the desire for symbolic immortality, creates the bearer of the death taint and transforms the victim into a putatively absolute evil.

For an epic poem ostensibly intended as a celebration of the regenerated Roman Empire, ending with the protagonist ruthlessly killing a supplicant is subversive. Why does Virgil include Aeneas's troubling human sacrifices? Why does Virgil conclude the epic poem with a scene that highlights the hero's cruelty and lack of sympathy, when a new empire is going to rise from the ashes of the old? It is hardly possible to

---

[558] *The Aeneid*, pp. 312-13.

cope with these questions without taking into account Virgil's further voices. Rather than being an unqualified apologist for the Roman Empire, Virgil is a sceptic, to say the least. Through the depiction of human suffering, he subverts the panegyric nature of the poem and alerts the reader to the tragic and dark side of the *translatio empirii*. Hegemony, injustice, and victimisation, Virgil seems to suggest, reside at the heart of a nation's founding moments.

In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare presents what appears to be an analogue of Virgil's 'further voices'.[559] As Foakes observes in *Shakespeare and Violence*, Shakespeare's vision of Virgil's poem is 'chaotic, even apocalyptic'.[560] This is particularly true for *Titus Andronicus.* Scenes of cold-bloodedness and brutality that feature in a nation's founding moments appear repeatedly in Shakespeare's fictionalised Roman world. For the Romans, the 'sacrifice of expiation' at the time of individual and collective dislocation is indispensable, as the compensatory act of human sacrifice serves as the prerequisite for the community's recuperation. According to Marcus' account, for instance, every time Titus loses a son to war, he would, upon returning to Rome, kill the noblest prisoners of the Goths to commemorate a 'monument of the Andronici', much as Aeneas does in killing Turnus to avenge his friend Pallas.

Ruled by this psychological mechanism, Marcus, having described his brother's losses and the sacrificial rituals, moves on to envisage a prosperous future. "Renowned' Titus, 'laden with honour's spoils', will settle Rome's domestic dispute and lead the nation to a new era of greatness.[561] Fading away as a thing of the past,

---

[559] Kallendorf, p. vi.

[560] Foakes, p. 54.

[561] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 21, 39, 31-38, 38, 37, 39-41.

trauma is replaced by the prospect of social regeneration. It is as if a line of demarcation between life and death has been drawn. Having coped with losses through human sacrifice, Rome can safely circumvent its tragic history and move beyond it. The Roman's way of dealing with its loss is uncanny, on one hand. Giving one an impression of *déjà vu*, it conjures up deeds of similar nature, such as Aeneas' carnage, committed at times of historical dislocation. And on the other hand, it is also prophetic. To convert one's anxiety into cruelty and killing establishes a cyclic pattern and prescribes a disruptive future: the act of bearing false witness and of suppressing what Lifton calls 'elements of the death encounter in a dangerous way' will characterise the Roman's response toward loss.[562] In doing so, they pile fresh wounds upon the festering old and open the way to the invasion of another round of strife, rather than bringing about a safe closure of traumatic events.

A few lines later after Marcus' speech, Titus, having 'brought to yoke the enemies of Rome', returns to Rome.[563] As he has on previous occasions, however, he again resorts to the mechanism of victimisation to suppress the death anxiety. Asked by his son Lucius for a prisoner to be offered '*Ad manes fratrum*', he selects the eldest son of the queen of Goth, the 'noblest that survives', who is immediately dragged away and hacked to pieces.[564] For the Roman, the mourning ritual cannot be consummated without human sacrifice. Given that the kill-to-survive mode has become the optimal way of dealing with loss, Titus adamantly rejects Tamora's intercession for mercy:

TITUS

---

[562] Lifton, 'An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', p. 139.

[563] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 73

[564] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 105.

These are their brethren whom your Goths beheld
Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain,
Religiously they ask a sacrifice.
To this your son is marked, and die he must,
T' appease their groaning shadows that are gone.[565]

For Titus, the sacrifice of the victim is a 'must'. Although the last sentence does not mention the consequence of failing to fulfill the ritual, it is clear that, according to the Roman, the ghost of the dead would return to trouble the living if the blood offering were not performed. Earlier, Lucius expresses a similar concern. The unappeased, he says, would trouble the living with 'prodigies on earth'.[566] The Roman community's dread of ghosts here betrays a psychological polarisation of life versus death, in which the dead becomes a psychological asset on which the living can capitalise. As Freud argues in *Totem and Taboo*, the living's fear of the dead is in effect a form of the former's hostility: displaced 'on to the object of the hostility, on to the dead themselves'.[567] Due to this displacement, the erstwhile beloved is transformed into the vengeful evil spirit against whom the living must take measures to guard themselves.

In keeping with the process of projection observed by Freud, the Romans displace the death anxiety brought about by their wartime trauma onto their dead soldiers. This strategy, however, is but ad interim. This is becasue in a scapegoating formulation, as Rene Girard explains, the scapegoat's thorough similarity to the scapegoater tends to

---

[565] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 125-29.

[566] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 104.

[567] Freud, *Totem and Taboo,* XIII, p. 117.

cause ‘disastrous confusion’. As such, one should make sure that the resemblance of the victims ‘to the object they replace […] not be carried to the extreme of complete assimilation.’[568] Being a part of the Roman community, the dead warriors cannot permanently serve as bearers of the death-taint. To reclaim the power of life and maintain their sense of immortality, the Romans must draw a further demarcation between their own world and the world of the other; they must perform another ritual to transfer the death taint, which is temporarily borne by their own dead, to the Goth prisoners who are, by contrast, beyond the pale and therefore eligible to be sacrificed.

After completing the sacrifice, Lucius signals that his brothers’ burials can proceed: ‘[r]emaineth nought but to inter our brethren | And with loud ’larums welcome them to Rome’.[569] Titus’s response again betrays the Roman community’s reliance on victimisation at moments of historical aberration. ‘Let it be so, and let Andronicus | Make this his latest farewell to their souls’.[570] Rather than being a response to his son’s request for burial, Titus’ speech sounds more like a belated answer to his previous lamentation about the lack of issues:

TITUS

How many sons hast thou of mine in store

That thou wilt never render to me more!

[...]

Let it be so, and let Andronicus

---

[568] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 11.

[569] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 149-50

[570] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 151-52.

Make this his latest farewell to their souls.[571]

Read as a whole, the four lines seem to suggest that Titus has reconciled himself to his personal loss. Yet there is a narrative gap between Titus' lamentation for the death of his descendants and his putative working through of family trauma. It is only after the ellipsis, during which Alarbus is brutally murdered, that Titus'anxiety lets up. In other words, Titus' re-connection to the rhythm of life presupposes a ritual of human sacrifice that consigns a victim to death.

The Roman ritual of sacrifice amounts to what Lifton calls the 'scapegoating survivor formulation' that normally happens at moments of historical crisis.[572] It is in essence a perverse sacrificial offering, an extreme form of victimisation. According to Girard, a ritual of sacrifice functions as a 'deliberate act of collective substitution performed at the expense of the victim'. The scapegoat, 'absorbing all the internal tensions, feuds, and rivalries pent up within the community', helps the community regain social equilibrium and moral order.[573] The scapegoating survivor formulation, like the original ritual, entails an act of transference: it designates, as Lifton explains, 'a bearer of collective taint in order to bring about a general spiritual cleansing'. By designating surrogate victims, then, the Romans establish the Goth prisoner as the death-tainted group. Having cast their own death anxiety upon the hapless Alarbus, the victimiser can achieve a collective form of symbolic immortality.

---

[571] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 97-98, 151-52.

[572] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 303.

[573] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, pp. 5, 7.

The ritual elides the crucial process, however, of what Lifton calls the 'collective self-confrontation' and is therefore a perverted form of the original one.[574] Amounting to an act of bearing false witness, the psychological process of projection suppresses 'elements of the death encounter in a dangerous way': exploiting 'certain groups violently for the sake of coping with one's own death anxiety'.[575] Given that death 'is constitutive […] for all of us', the struggle toward immortality entails not a rejection of, but 'some degree of confrontation with the idea of death'. By absolving the victimiser, then, from the process of understanding and coming to terms with death, the scapegoating mechanism fails to repair Rome's lost connection to life and contradicts its claim to a complete closure of traumatic events. Rome only reaches a temporary truce with history. In the long run, its kill-to-survive mode will lead to another round of bloodshed. It is no surprise, then, to find Demetrius, a brother of the sacrificed victim, urging his mother to plot future revenge: '(t)o quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes.'[576]

Like the beginning of the play, the last act stages a moment of historical crisis: not only does intestine strife leave Rome '[b]y uproars severed', but the threat of Goth invasion has also come to a concrete shape.[577] Horrified by Titus's bloody banquet, a Roman lord laments:

A ROMAN LORD

Speak, Rome's dear friend, as erst our ancestor

---

[574] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 303.

[575] Lifton, 'An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', pp. 128-147 (pp.141, 139).

[576] *Titus Andronicus*. I .1. 144.

[577] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 67.

When with his solemn tongue he did discourse
To lovesick Dido's sad-attending ear
The story of that baleful burning night
When subtle Greeks surprised King Priam's Troy.
Tell us what Sinon hath bewitched our ears,
Or who hath brought the fatal engine in
That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound.[578]

Comparing Rome's recent tragedy to the fall of Troy, the speaker renders the banquet an uncanny repetition of the sack of that city. Initially, the lord keeps a relatively clear spatial-temporal distinction as he invites Marcus to follow Aeneas' example and to give testimony to the fall of Rome. As the speaker extends the comparison, however, the distinction gradually fades away. Sinon, the one who persuades the Trojan army to accept the horse, also becomes the one who facilitates the Goth's infiltration. The fatal engine, the Trojan horse that causes the fall of the city, becomes again the bane of Rome's degeneration. The speech on one hand stages a breached spatial-temporality in which Rome's founding trauma, the burning of Troy that paradoxically dispenses death and birth at the same time, is re-enacted. On the other hand, however, it amounts to a belated registration of Rome's trauma that happens in the first act, given that it is Saturninus who brings in the 'fatal engine' by marrying Tamora, and that it is in the collapse of Rome's moral order that the 'baleful burning night' of Troy is re-enacted.[579]

---

[578] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 79-86.

[579] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 85, 82.

Like his father, Lucius becomes another Aeneas responsible for building a regenerated empire upon the ashes of the old one. Much as Aeneas does in being forced to flee from his homeland at a time when the Trojan sleeps in a fatally miscalculated sense of security, Lucius is banished from his home country on account of his attempt to save his brothers, who in the treacherously lulling wood step unsuspectingly into a deadly trap laid by their family's enemies. During his wandering, Aeneas arrives at Carthage, where he receives help and hospitality from Dido. The erstwhile soothing amity, however, can transform into deadly enmity. Crossed in love, the queen says in despair:

> No love let there be, no league uniting our peoples.
> Arise from my bone, my avenger, whoever thou art,
> To follow the Trojan settlers with fire and with sword
> [...]
> May shore oppose shore, I pray, sea sea, and arms match mars;
> May they have warfare, they and their children for ever![580]

Very much in line with Virgil's epic, Lucius' exile testifies to the subtle line between friendship and enmity: at the time of great extremity, it is from Rome's enemy that he receives succour.

LUCIUS [aloft]

> Lastly myself, unkindly banished,
> The gates shut on me, and turned weeping out

---

[580] *Aeneid*, Book VI, 623-26, 628-29.

To beg relief among Rome's enemies,
Who drowned their enmity in my true tears
And oped their arms to embrace me as a friend.[581]

Another element that strengthens the link between the Virgilian hero and Lucius is the sequence of events. It is only after Aeneas has told the tale about the loss of Troy to Dido that he sets sail for Italy, where he shall build a new empire, given that giving testimony plays an important role in helping trauma survivors cope with loss. In a similar manner, telling is assigned a key role in Shakespeare's Roman world. Before being welcomed as the saviour of the traumatised nation, Lucius must perform the role devised by the Roman lord and testify and 'tell the tale' of Rome's tragedy. He becomes another Aeneas who acquaints those 'sad-attending' ears with the causes '[t]hat give our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound'.[582]

The way Lucius concludes the play's action also replicates the precedent, moreover. By premising Rome's recuperation upon the designation of an external enemy, he, like Aeneas and Titus, inscribes victimisation at the heart of his community's containment of trauma. In a degenerate world destitute of moral standards, it is dubious for someone like Lucius to assume the role of moral judge. Yet this is exactly what he does when talking about Tamora. In a pitiless use of the word 'pity', he says of Tamora: '[h]er life was beastly and devoid of pity | And being dead, let birds on her take pity'.[583] Lucius' description of the former Queen of the Goths as 'devoid of pity', however, is highly problematic. In the first act, in an attempt to save her son from

---

[581] *Titus Andronicus*, V. 3. 103-07.

[582] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 81, 86.

[583] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 198-99.

being sacrificed, Tamora crafts an impressively persuasive speech on pity. She begins her speech by giving her due to the victor and professing her lowliness. She then powerfully defends her sons' action in fighting against the Romans, arguing that it is rightful and valiant to fight 'in their country's cause'. After these preliminaries, she proceeds to beg for mercy. Gods, she contends, are merciful. and 'sweet mercy is nobility's true badge'.[584]

As her rhetoric shows, Tamora is well versed in the codes of behaviour practiced by the civilised world. A civic art and a badge of civilisation that generally flourishes in democratic states, rhetoric, begun as an oritorical skill of persuasion in ancient Greece, is later intorduced to the Rome and highly valued by Romans.[585] Pity is another quality that the Roman uses to distinguish itself from other lawless and savage barbarians.[586] In the play, however, it is the so-called barbarian who presents the only rhetoric of pity. While Tamora tries to introduce the virtue of pity to the Roman code of conduct, Lucius sets the example of being pitiless. After all, it is he who snatches Alarbus away to the altar of sacrifice; it is also he who, having completed the blood-offering, unfeelingly recapitulates the sacrificial scene in front of the bereaved mother. As such, Lucius' judgement of Tamora appears to be hegemonic,

---

[584] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 116, 122.

[585] For the Roman's apprecition of rhetorical, see, for instance, 'the Roman […] soon realized that rhetoric could be very significant.' Samuel Ijsseling, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict: An Historical Survey* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 34.

[586] For the Roman's view of pity as a sign of advanced civilisation, see Edward B. Stevens, 'Topics of Pity in the Poetry of the Roman Republic', *The American Journal of Philology*, 62 (1941), 426-440 (p. 431)

more akin to a psychological exploitation of a scapegoat. Creating a demarcation of the life and death area, a demarcation which is symbolically fulfilled by having Tamora's body thrown outside the wall, Lucius' victimisation constructs what Lifton calls an 'imagined symbolic balance'.[587] This scapegoating process calls into question Rome's social regeneration and subjects the community to the possibility of a cycle of violence in the future.

3. The Ovidian violence and Lavinia's traumatised body.

Like Tamora, Lavinia is another female figure subject to psychological victimisation at the hands of the Roman patriarchy. The aestheticism of violence in *Titus Andronicus,* it is well-known, is indebted to Ovid. In this 'quasi-historical mythical ancient Rome', Foakes observes, 'Shakespeare gives full imaginative scope to the culture of violence he had encountered in […] Ovid.' [588] The classical poet is distinguished for his minute and exquisite depiction of cruelty and human suffering. As David Hopkins observes, in his *Metamorphoses* Ovid 'trivialises his depictions of pain, anxiety, and suffering by prolixity, by a callous impassivity, and by displays of tastelessly inappropriate wit'.[589] With a nod to Hopkins, Patrick Gray observes that

---

[587] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 303.

[588] Foakes, p. 54.

[589] David Hopkins, 'Dryden and Ovid's 'Wit out of season', in *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art form the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.167-190 (p. 167).

Ovid is 'witty but cold-hearted, even outright sadistic'.[590] In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare matches Ovid's sadistic relishing of suffering; scenes of cruelty typical of his *Metamorphoses* are not wanting in Shakespeare's first Roman play. Consider, for instance, Lucius' description of the blood offering:

LUCIUS

> See, lord and father, how we have performed
> Our Roman rites: Alarbus' limbs are lopped
> And entrails feed the sacrificing fire,
> Whose smoke like incense doth perfume the sky.[591]

There is a tone of wistfulness and complacency in this speech. Lucius' gloating over the sacrificial detail is sadistic and callous, even more so since he does it in front of the victim's remaining relatives.

It is through the dramatisation of the traumatised figure Lavinia, however, that Shakespeare taps most into the rich reservoir of the Ovidian violence. In doing so, the playwright manages to show how Lavinia is exploited by Roman men and becomes the bearer of the death taint of the Roman community. In *Performing Early Modern Trauma*, Thomas Anderson argues that Lavinia is 'subject to the designs of more powerful men'.[592] In dealing with her uncle and father, Lavinia, rather than being

---

[590] Gray, 'Shakespeare and the Other Virgil', pp. 46-57.

[591] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 145-49.

[592] Thomas P. Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 43.

allowed to speak for herself, is reduced to a mere object through which patriarchal figures convey their own emotions and wills.

The depersonalisation of Lavinia, however, begins with the rape scene. Cold-hearted and sadistic, it is reminiscent of the sexual assault of Philomel in *Metamorphoses*. Like the prototype, Lavinia is '(r)avished and wronged […] Forced in the ruthless, vast and gloomy woods'.[593] Compared to Ovid, however, Shakespeare goes a step further. In the post-rape scene, he makes the victim suffer another round of violence as Lavinia undergoes a series of cruel jokes and, even more traumatising, a re-living of the rape experience through her uncle's description of her wounds. Forming what Jonathan Bate calls 'a sick comedy team', Chiron and Demetrius add salt to the wound by taking turns to taunt Lavinia and gloating over the freshly produced masterpiece of suffering.[594] 'She hath no tongue to call, no hands to wash', Demetrius complacently observes, making a point of dwelling on Lavinia's mutilation.[595]

Left wandering alone in the wood, the victim runs into her uncle Marcus. Horrified by what he sees, Marcus offers to 'speak for' his niece and to 'mourn with' her. His speech is charged with concern and sympathy: marked by 'emotional intensification': it is 'not flippant […] but rather one of pathos and sorrow', as Michelle Martindale points out.[596] As it turns out, however, its compassionate tone does not extenuate its callous connotation. Indeed, it is in this scene, as Lisa S. Starks-Estes argues, that

---

[593] *Titus Andronicus*, IV. 1. 52-53.

[594] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[595] *Ibid.*, II. 3. 7-8.

[596] Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity: An Introductory Essay* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 51-2.

Shakespeare returns to 'the raw energy and graphic brutality of Ovid' and fully explores 'the erotic dynamic of sadomasochistic'.[597]

The most unsettling part of Marcus' sympathetic yet paradoxically unfeeling speech takes place when, finding out Lavinia has been deprived of her tongue, he laments:

MARCUS

Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,
Coming and going with thy honey breath.[598]

The speaker's obsessive dwelling on the victim's mouth, with particular emphasis on the profusion of blood due to the loss of the tongue, is reminiscent of an Ovidian scene. Having raped Philoml, Tereus decides to cut off her tongue to prevent the disclosure of his atrocity:

And with a pair of pinsons fast did cathch hir by the tung,
And with his sword did cut it off. The stumpe whereon it hung
Did patter still. The tip fell downe, and quivering on the ground
As though that it had murmurd it made a certain sound,

---

[597] Lisa S. Starks-Estes, *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 89.

[598] *Titus Andronicus*, II. 3. 22-25.

> And as an adders tayle cut off doth skip a while; even so
> The tip of Philomelas tongue did wriggle to and fro.[599]

Ovid's sadistic depiction of even the most minute detail, such as the 'quivering' of the tip, renders the scene disturbing and repulsive; few readers would find the poeticisation of the 'pattering of the stump, with the remaining part of the tongue quivering on the ground' enjoyable. Compared to Ovid, Shakespeare avoids the depiction of extremely painful moments and spares audiences scenes of Lavinia's mutilation. Yet through deferred action he compensates what he has out of a sense of delicacy omitted. Marcus' detailed and graphic description of Lavinia's wounds not only recaptures the victim's nightmarish experience but also invites audiences to participate in a voyeuristic gaze of the mutilated body. In doing so, Marcus in effect exposes Lavinia's physique to another manipulation. Unwittingly becoming a kind of perpetrator, he metaphorically exposes Lavinia to a second rape and inflicts pain at a moment when what trauma theorists call crisis intervention, namely to provide the victim with a secure shelter, is the first priority.[600]

Not only does she suffer a second traumatisation at the hands of her uncle, but she is also exposed to the violence inflicted by her father. She eventually dies not as a proper human being, but as a voiceless 'actor in Titus's performance'.[601] During the

---

[599] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Arthur Golding (London: Penguin, 2002), XI, 709-714.

[600] In talking about trauma victim's recuperation, Herman identifies building a 'safe refuge' as the immediate task of crisis intervention. Herman, p. 162.

[601] Thomas P. Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 43.

banquet , the host Titus kills Lavinia. To justify this act, he introduces the topic of precedent. Virginius' slaying of his daughter, he argues, is '[a] pattern, precedent, and a lively warrant'. Following this 'mighty, strong, and effectual' classical story, to kill his ravished and mutilated daughter seems to be the only natural course of action.[602] It is in doing so that Titus, as he himself claims, can write off his own sorrow and the shame that Lavinia has brought to herself and her family.

Titus' grief is understandable. To find his biological continuity, the 'cordial' of his old age, in such a pitiable state jeopardises his own sense of immortality. His justification for the killing of his daughter, however, is problematic. By exclusively highlighting his own sorrow, he denies Lavinia the opportunity to express her own will. From the perspective of Lavinia, death might not be the only choice. Being violated does not necessarily reduce her to nothingness, nor does the state of her mutilation amount to depersonalisation. As the post-rape scene shows, Lavinia is still capable of human emotions. When her uncle finds her in the wood, she turns her face away for shame, with a cheek 'red as a Titan's face'; when her brothers' heads are brought back, it is she who shows a heartfelt sorrow by kissing the heads.[603] In a word, to be physically assaulted, instead of rendering her inhuman, only makes her more sensitive to human suffering and more capable of sympathising with others' miseries.

As Lavinia is gradually drawn into her father's revenge plot, however, she is deprived of the residual part that makes her human and becomes a psychologically expendable object that serves her father's wishes. Thus, in the banquet, Lavinia

---

602 *Titus Andronicus*, V. 3. 43, 42.

603 *Ibid.*, I. 1. 169; II. 3. 31.

appears 'with a veil over her face'.[604] Although the stage direction does not specify whom orders Lavinia to be veiled, it is most likely that Titus himself is the author, given that it is he that masterminds the revenge plot. Titus, moreover, has the power to unveil Lavinia, as he does before stabbing her to death. The fact that Titus can veil and unveil his daughter at his discretion suggests that Lavinia has lost her own identity and becomes a tool at her father's disposal. Exploited by the Roman patriarchal system, Lavinia becomes the bearer of its death anxiety, in keeping with the concept of what Lifton calls the 'designated victim'.[605] A scapegoat for what her father refuses to confront, she must be killed. It is only through her death, as Starks-Estes points out, that she can fulfill 'her destiny as a martyr and sacrifice'.[606] It is only this kind of ritual of sacrifice, a doing away of the impure, that the Roman patriarchy can manage to find a temporary sense of its own regeneration.

4. Aaron: an embodiment of the unrepresentable.

Aaron is another character exploited by the Roman community to embody the unrepresentable. As the play's arch-villain, the Moor very much resembles another contemporary dramatic villain, Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*. As Bate points out, the Marlovian hero in effect inspires Shakespeare's creation of Aaron.[607] Like Barabas, Aaron can 'pun and stab in the same breath'.[608] Like Barabas, Aaron relishes the idea

---

[604] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

[605] Lifton, 'An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton', p.139.

[606] Starks-Estes, p. 97.

[607] *Titus Andronicus*, p. 87.

[608] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

of being villainous: he is compulsively obsessed with monstrosities and sadistically addicted to the enjoyment of misery he causes. He masterminds the rape of Lavinia, frames Titus's sons and causes their death, cheats Titus out of his hand, and gloats over his victims' sufferings. More importantly, both Aaron and Barabas can be regarded as psychological scapegoats. As Martin points out in *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, Barabas is a victim. In recounting a full range of outrages of villainy, the Jew is transformed into an embodiment of 'everything his society doesn't want to know about itself'. Scapegoated, he is held responsible 'for a wide range of the deadly consequences of the large and seemingly agentless economic and technological transformations reshaping early modern Europe'.[609] Aaron, too, is a product of his time, created by the Roman ruling ideology at a time when its symbolic connection to life has been severed by social instability and moral disintegration.

In the eyes of the Romans, Aaron is '[s]potted, detested and abominable.'[610] A prisoner of war, he is expendable and can be sacrificed at any moment to carry out the victor's false survivor mission. His black skin feeds into the Roman patriarchy's scapegoating mechanism, moreover. As Lifton argues, blackness is normally associated at the time with degradation and brings up the image of 'darkness, night, and death'.[611] In deriding the Moor, for instance, Bassianus depicts him as 'swart Cimmerian'.[612] According to the Greek mythology, Cimmerians are a people that lives in a land of perpetual mist, at the entrance of the underworld and the edge of the

---

[609] Martin, pp. 101-02.

[610] *Titus Andronicus*, II. 2. 74

[611] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 310.

[612] *Titus Andronicus,* II. 2. 72.

world where the sun cannot reach. Amounting to what Mircea Eliade calls the 'other world, [and an] unknown and indeterminant space', Bassianus' description invokes the image of a spatially polarised distinction between life and death and casts the Moor to the realm of darkness.[613]

The psychological mechanism of victimisation reverberates far beyond the play itself, moreover. Like the Roman patriarchy in the play, the Elizabethan audience pushes Aaron to the position of scapegoating. The foreign and the exotic hold a strong appeal to the Elizabethan England. The Elizabethans' exploration of the outlandish other is characterised by a note of ambivalence, however, insofar as it is blended with no small degree of hostility toward and anxiety over the unknown from the uncharted land. Curiosity is an adaptive strategy in coping with the unknown, but enmity is more primitive: a manifestation of humanity's instinctive destructiveness, externalised and projected here onto an unfamiliar character.

In the last act, Aaon reveals a string of cruelties that he claims he has previously committed:

AARON

As kill a man or else devise his death,
Ravish a maid or plot the way to do it,
Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
Set deadly enmity between two friends,
Make poor men's cattle break their necks,
Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night

---

[613] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), p. 29.

And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves.
And set them upright at their dear friends' door,
Even when their sorrows almost was forgot,
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,
'Let not your sorrow die though I am dead.'[614]

Gruesome as it may seem, the outrageous yet stereotypical nature of Aaron's list of monstrosities raises some question as regards the authenticity of such heinous deeds. Rather than being crimes committed in actuality, they serve the function of playing upon the fears of the Elizabethan world. Put another way, in making Aaron enumerate these horrible crimes, Shakespeare turns him into a physical embodiment of contemporary anxieties.

Consider Aaron's bragging about digging up graves, for example. What it stirs up is more than fears of grave robbery itself. It reminds the audience of the limit event of the Protestant Reformation and its traumatising impact on contemporary English society. As what Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall calls 'a cult of the living in the service of the dead', pre-Reformation Catholicism contributed to mankind's meaningful engagement with death.[615] With its industry of intercession and remembrance, Catholic practice provided an important emotional link between the

---

[614] *Titus Andronicus*, V. 1. 128-40.

[615] Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, 'Introduction: Placing the Dead in late Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in *The Place of the Dead*, ed. by Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.1-16 (p.3).

living and the dead. Among its numerous beliefs, Purgatory betokens mankind's positive exploration of the meaning of death. Although not explicitly substantiated by any Scriptural evidence, the concept of Purgatory contributes to mankind's unceasing struggle for meaning in the face of unavoidable death: the thought that the living can still be of service to the dead brings solace to the bereaved; the belief that they can significantly reduce the time that their beloved spend in Purgatory by performing beneficiary act adds positive value to the survivors' life; and the assumption that the purgatorial spirit can return to the world to ask for suffrage and reveal to the living the state of the afterlife reinforces mankind's belief in the existence of an immortal soul. Due to the influence of this Catholic notion, death became far less frightening. Rather than life as the be-all and the end-all of life, death releases the soul from the 'muddy vesture of decay' and catapults it into a higher state of life.

The intervention of the Reformation broke this bond, however, distancing the dead from the memory of the living community. Expelling many Catholic features deemed essential to maintaining humanity's symbolic immortality, Protestant burial became a ritual of uncertainty. The doctrine of Purgatory was invalidated as fictitious; prayers for the dead were ruled out as being in no way profitable for the souls of the departed. At the height of iconoclastic zealotry, tombs were mutilated. In an extreme instance, the Duke of Somerset, a rigid Protestant, even ordered the emptying out of the charnel house at St. Paul. This anecdote typifies, as Steven Mullaney points out, Protestants' deliberate 'effort to dislocate the dead from human feeling as well as local habitation.' With the churchyard, an 'affective landscape' between the living and the dead,

unceremoniously ransacked, the dead were robbed of identity and converted into 'mere refuse or garbage'.[616]

In this sense, what the Reformation generates is an emotional deprivation of the living and an annihilation of the dead. A disintegration of epistemological framework, the dissolution of the old belief system amounts to a crisis that places people's sense of connection to life in jeopardy and leaves an emotional void yet to compensated. By having the Moor confess the horrendous crime of digging up graves and instructing the living to remember their sorrow, Shakespeare, rather than accentuating the character's characterisation as an outrageous villain, paradoxically depersonalises him and renders him an embodiment of the traumatic limit event. It is through this evil incarnate that the epistemologically unrepresentable can take concrete shape. As such, Aaron becomes an actual physical embodiment of the absolute monstrosity and assumes the role of a scapegoat upon whom the Elizabethan audience can project their anxiety and claim life and vitality at moments of social transformation.

In 'A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis', Freud argues that two things that appear totally different from each other are originally an ensemble. What appears to be diametrically opposed are usually fragments of an idea that initially contained both antithetical traits. It is only after a period of time that it is 'divided into two sharply contrasted opposites'.[617] In keeping with Freud's insight, the Roman community and Aaron, the putative evil, are originally a whole. The latter is but the former's projected other. The bearer of death taint, Aaron is a demonology inhabited

---

[616] Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p.3.

[617] Freud, 'A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis', in *The Penguin Freud Library*, (see Freud, above), XIV, pp. 377-424 (p. 401).

by all that Rome is averse to acknowledging about itself. Although professing itself to be the centre of civilisation and the paradigm of *virtus*, Rome is possessed by the daemonic proclivity for committing savage acts. Much as Aaron does in sadistically gloating over a series of crimes before his death, the so-called civilised Romans also draw sadistic satisfaction from bloody violence. After performing the 'cruel, irreligious' sacrificial ritual, for instance, Lucius returns to his family sepulchre and, in front of the victims' remaining families, gives a gratuitous recapitulation of the process; submerging himself in his study room, Titus, too, can devote himself to writing 'bloody lines' devised for revenge.[618]

The play's trapdoor serves as a synecdoche for the way through which the Roman civilisation is haunted by its putative otherness. Over the course of the play, the trapdoor appears several times and serves different purposes, both good and evil. In the first act, the pit is the Andronici family's tomb and the Roman war heroes' entrance to the nether world. Not only does it grant lasting peace to the dead warriors: '(s)ecure from worldly chances and mishaps. | Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells', but it also functions as a point for the living.[619] A monument of honour that preserves virtue and courage, the pit symbolises a continuity of life.

As the play proceeds, the pit assumes a darker colour, however. In the second act, it becomes a site of treachery and foulness, facilitating treason, deceit, and fabricated incrimination. Bassianus is brutally murdered and then thrown into the hole; Quintus and Martius are inveigled by Aaron into the pit and falsely accused of murdering Bassianus. From a sepulchre of virtue that preserves life, the pit transforms into a hotbed breeding death; a hollow indiscriminately devouring the living and the dead.

---

[618] *Titus Andronicus*, I. 1. 133; V. 2. 14.

[619] *Ibid.*, I. 1. 155-56.

No more a monument of sanctity and honour, it becomes an 'unhallowed and bloodstained hole'.[620] A 'detested, dark, blood-drinking pit', it fills the living with 'uncouth fear' and holds the dead 'betrayed in blood'.[621]

The binary opposition between purity and foulness is still further unsettled in the last act. When accused by Lucius of being a devil, Aaron defiantly retorts:

AARON

> [...] would I were a devil
> To live and burn in everlasting fire,
> So I might have your company in hell.[622]

In an act of sadomasochistic fantasy, Aaron casts both himself and the Romans into eternal sulphurous fire. In doing so, he foreshadows the dissolution of the dichotomy between between good and evil effected by Lucius. At the of the play, Lucius sentences Aaron to death. The Moor, he orders, is to be 'set breast-deep in earth'.[623] Yet a few lines later he instructs the bodies of his father and sister to be 'closed in our household's monument'.[624] Although the two actions are not actually performed on the stage, Lucius' explicit references to the hole, first as a site of torture and then of burial, again obfuscate the fundamental nature of the pit. A symbol of the maternal body and therefore of nurture, the pit paradoxically denies sustenance; a family

---

[620] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 210.

[621] *Ibid.*, II. 2. 224, 211, 222.

[622] *Ibid.*, V. 1. 147-49

[623] *Ibid.*, V. 3. 178.

[624] *Ibid.*, V. 3, 193.

receptacle of honour and peace, it nevertheless bespeaks restlessness, as the half-buried Aaron would cry for food and disturb the rest of the dead. Amounting to a liminal zone between life and death, the pit undermines the Roman civilisation's claim for moral superiority; it unsettles the boundary between good and evil and reminds the audience that the two are in effect interchangeable and indissolubly bound up with each other.

5. Richard III: A monster in tribute to its creator.

Aaron asserts a haunting afterlife through the survival of his bastard. In Act Five, Scene One, Lucius strikes a bizarre and unsettling bargain with Aaron. As the deal stipulates, in exchange for Aaron's detailed account of his heinous crimes, Lucius agrees to spare the life of the bastard: to 'nurse and bring him up'. The bargain scene, in this sense, assumes a highly menacing character: it foreshadows a disruptive future haunted by the repetition of violence and bloodshed. Much as the the serial killer in horror movies does in 'pick[ing] and hack[ing] and slash[ing] away at any attempt to conceal the nation's wounds', as Linnie Blake writes in *The Wounds of Nations*, the unstoppable Aaron stands beyond the reach of death.[625] Even though Aaron's corporeal form eventually rots away in the hole in which he is set 'breast-deep in earth', he can still live on through the life of his bastard.[626]

In reaching the deal with Aaron, Lucius has already manifested a tendency for compulsive repetition. Before being hanged, Aaron asks Lucius to spare his bastard.

---

[625] Linnie Blake, *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and national Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 76.

[626] *Titus Andronicus*, V. 3. 178.

'If thou do this, I'll show thee wondrous things'.[627] At this point, Lucius has already been sufficiently acquainted with Aaron's vile nature. After Aaron is captured by the Goth solider, for instance, Lucius introduces the captive as the 'incarnate devil | That robbed Andronicus of his good hand'.[628] As Lucius' speech shows, then, he has been aware of Aaron's participation in his family's disastrous downfall. With sufficient knowledge of Aaron's involvement in his family's tragedy, however, Lucius still insists upon hearing out the tale and decides to strike the bargain with Aaron: '(s)ay on, if it please me which thou speak'st' | Thy child shall live and I will see it nourished'.[629]

Why does Lucius expect to receive pleasing tales from one with whose villainous character he has already been fully acquainted? Does he intentionally say this as a sarcasm? Certainly not. If Lucius really makes the speech with a view to taunting Aaron, he would not accept the Moor's request to raise up the bastard, a child who, as Lucius himself fully recognises, is 'too like the sire for ever being good'; nor does Lucius expect to hear anything really pleasing from Aaron.[630] Even if Lucius is for the time being too clueless to form a conception of what it is he is about to receive, Aaron's following speech would definitely give him sufficient indication as to the dark nature of the story:

AARON

[...] Why, assure thee, Lucius,

---

[627] *Ibid.*, V. 1. 55.

[628] *Ibid.*, V. 1. 40-41.

[629] *Ibid.*, V. 1. 59-60.

[630] *Ibid.*, V. 1. 50.

> ’Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak:
> For I must talk of murders, rapes and massacres,
> Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
> Complots of mischief, treasons, villainies
> Ruthful to hear yet piteously performed.[631]

Fully forewarned of the dark nature of the Moor’s tale, Lucius, like one hypnotised, still persists in hearing out the story: ‘[t]ell on thy mind; I say thy child shall live’.[632] His responses are characterised by an obsessive stubborn insistence on knowing what he has already been at least partly acquainted with. His persistence in negotiating with Aaron and in hearing the latter recount his monstrous deeds amounts to a kind of compulsive repetition of the traumatic experience. As such, Lucius’ behavior appears uncanny, to the extent that there is a persistence in a verbal repetition of the traumatic encounter. The compulsive repetition of ‘say on’ amounts to a narrative stutter: it is a breach of spatiality through which unresolved trauma invades the present. In repetitively stating his request to obtain the knowledge of the unpleasant experience, Lucius compulsively acts out the Roman community’s previous death encounter and enacts a verbal re-visitation of the traumatic site at a critical moment of historical transmission when Rome is going to re-emerge victoriously over the body of its enemies.

Rome’s regeneration is not only troubled by the repetition of unresolved trauma, however, but also haunted by the future: a future that comes in the form of Aaron’s bastard. The play’s ending, then, assumes a highly ambiguous colour. It is Lucius who

---

631 *Ibid.*, V. 1. 61-66.

632 *Ibid.*, V. 1. 69.

puts a brake on Rome's degeneration; it is Lucius who will lead Rome into a putatively new golden age. Yet it is also Lucius who promises to raise his enemy's bastard. 'Even by my god I swear to thee I will'.[633] The unequivocal tone leaves little room to question his commitment to fulfilling the promise. The bastard remains mute throughout the play. As it grows up, however, it would be able to learn to speak the language of trauma. As such, Shakespeare's fictionalised Rome can be seen as an analogue of his medieval England. Like the ghost of Margaret and the traumatised veteran George of Clarence, Aaron's bastard alerts us to the complicated nature of historical transmission: the passing on of history also entails the passing on of historical disruptiveness and narrative stutter that call into question and undermine a nation's hegemonic discourse. The bastard exposes the limitation, moreover, of a strict demarcation between self and other. Given that one is always haunted by a structural insufficiency, one must learn to live with the structural void in the name of justice.

The psychological mechanism of victimisation also informs Shakespeare's production of the Machiavellian character Richard III. Shakespeare exaggerates Richard's deformity: 'Deformed, unfinished […] scarce half made up […] That dogs bark at me as I halt by them', the character grumbles.[634] This dramatic depiction appears to be more of what Schwyzer calls a 'full embodiment of the broader historical tradition' than a faithful representation of historical truth; as Paul Murray Kendall points out, the historical Richard, although a thin and frail figure, was not at all noted for his bodily disproportion.[635] There is scarcely any contemporary

---

[633] *Ibid.*, V. 1. 86.

[634] *Richard III*, I. 1. 20-21, 23.

[635] Schwyzer, p. 205

description that tends to portrays Richard as a misshaped monster. It is true that his body was disturbed by a small degree of dissymmetry, so that that his right shoulder was slightly higher than his left. This difference, however, could have been due to his 'rigorous training' in the art of combat during his apprenticeship in the Middleham Castle, rather than to any congenital deformity.[636]

It was only after the ascension of Henry VII that the rumour of a Richard physically marred by a distinct bodily deformity began to take concrete shape. This long process of posthumous denigration of Richard through political propaganda, chronicle, dramatic portrayal, and poetic account reached its peak and converged in Shakespeare's *Richard III*. As the eponymous character bitterly complains in his soliloquy:

Richard

I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty

[...]

I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,

Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,

Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time

Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,

And that so lamely and unfashionable

That doges bark at me as I halt by them.[637]

---

[636] Kendall, p. 52.

[637] *Richard III*, I. 1. 16, 18-23.

Why does Shakespeare choose to emphasise Richard's physical deformity?[638] According to Freud, the glaringly physical disproportion serves as a perfect reason for Richard to 'consider himself as an "exception" and claim privileges over other'. We all, Freud explains, tend to 'reproach nature and destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages; we all demand reparation for early wounds to our narcissism, our self-love'.[639] What is happening here is an early traumatic event and a belated and unceasing demand for compensation as a way to seek restitution. The Freudian paradigm of historicising the violence to a certain extent justifies or at least extenuates Richard's heinous crimes: he is a victim turning victimiser. Shakespeare's dramatisation of Richard's disproportionate deformity complicates the play, establishing a psychological basis for the appalling crimes that Richard goes on to commit.

In keeping with Freud's model, Richard perceives his physical deformity as an Edenic and repairable loss that he can restore by the expulsion of the impure other. This juxtaposition of the self with an outsider renders him incapable of confronting his own intrinsic insufficiency. As a result, victimisation ensues, as Richard establishes a totalist world in which he manages to project the anxiety generated by the inborn insufficiency onto external objects. According to Richard, then, the attainment of the crown amounts to a kind of final solution, 'the be-all and the end-all' that can eventually lead to the restoration of a putatively full and complete self-hood.

---

[638] As Schwyzer observes in *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III*, '[n]o previous poetic or dramatic account lays such stress on his (Richard's) deformity' like Shakespeare does, see Schwyzer, p. 204.

[639] Freud, 'Some Character-Types Met with in Psychoanalytical Work', in *Art and Literature*, (See Freud, above), XIV, pp. 292-319 (p. 297).

It is as if the kingship helps him write off his earthly dissatisfaction, embodied by his physical distortion. "Gaining the crown', Linda Charnes explains, 'will enable him to effect a kind of trade in which he imagines that he can exchange his misshapen half made-up body for the "king's Body" and its divine perfections.'[640]

Given that, for Richard, the attainment of the crown amounts to the end of history, anything that he does to bring himself to the throne can be categorised as amoral and stands beyond any moral condemnation. And those that stand between him and his putative reinstatement become dispensable. Scapegoats held accountable for Richard's trauma, they can be justifiably sacrificed through violent means. In his soliloquy in *3 Henry VI*, he repetitively invokes the image of the man whom, having lost his bearing in the tumultuous world, determines to hew his way back to the Edenic security and the fullness of home represented by the English crown:

Richard of Gloucester

[…]

Like one that stands upon a promontory

And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,

[...]

So do I wish the crown, being far off,

And so I chide the means that keeps me from it.

[...]

---

[640] Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 32.

And I, like one lost in a thorny wood,

That rents the thorns and is rent with the thorns.[641]

As Lacapra argues in *History and Its Limits*, violence, however, does not necessarily beget redemption: it does not 'invariably regenerate; it might just as well undermine […] the self'.[642] In keeping with the limitation of violence, Richard's warped plan for self-regeneration fails to bring about the desired outcome. Sin does not erase his bodily imperfection; it will only 'pluck on sin.'[643] Rather than restoring his imagined perfect self-hood, kingship, much to Richard's dismay, only generate more excruciating anxiety, which must then be allayed by further and newly devised unscrupulous villainies. 'Ha! Am I king? 'Tis so --- but Edward lives.'[644] The recently crowned Richard says in chagrin. Sending the prince to 'sleep in Abraham's bosom' in no way relieves his mind from disturbance, however.[645] Without further ado, he brings himself to consider his next move: 'I must be married to my brother's daughter | Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.'[646]

Although appearing to be the repulsed and defiled other, Shakespeare's Richard is not an anomaly of Tudor England. Rather, the abnormality that seems to characterise Richard lies at the core of the Tudor authority *per se*. His extravagant hunchback, as

---

[641] *3 Henry VI*, III. 2. 135-36, 140-01, 174-75.

[642] Dominick Lacapra, *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 120.

[643] *Richard III*, IV. 2. 65.

[644] *Ibid.*, IV. 2. 13.

[645] *Ibid.*, IV. 3. 38.

[646] *Ibid.*, IV. 2. 60-61,

Charnes points out, 'is a truth […] that reveals how persons are produced to fit the requirements of history's "traumatic events." ' The dramatic villain, in this sense, amounts to a cultural re-emplotment of trauma: he 'must be produced in order to enable and justify the "cure" that […] has always already preceded him.'[647] Put another way, the hunchback Richard is in effect a monstrosity localised in the House of Tudor who must be designated as the evil outsider in order to serve the victimiser's claim for perfection and social and cultural regeneration.

In this sense, the dramatic Richard assumes the shape of a political caricature. By exaggerating and exploiting the last Yorkist king's bodily dissymmetry, Shakespeare invites audiences to explore and investigate the psychological and political mechanisms that produce such appalling monstrosity: a monstrosity in proportion with the enormity of the death immersion that the House of Tudor undergoes at the moment of its birth. To accommodate death anxiety, the victimiser contrives to construct a hegemonic mechanism of what Lifton calls a 'restorationist' victimisation and to draw upon 'a gold age that never was […] as the absolute human goal.'[648] In order to assert eternal life and to recoup the so-called universal peace that Henry IV's usurpation supposedly disrupts, Tudor England must craft an imagined evil outsider. If it could purge itself of the haunting figure of the hunchback, the Tudor hegemonic reasoning goes, England would achieve a state of total purity: a 'smooth faced peace | With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days', as Henry VII proclaims.[649] Placed in this totalist ideology, Richard is ineluctably transformed into the symbol of absolute degradation: the bearer of the new dynasty's death anxiety.

---

[647] Charnes, pp.27-28.

[648] Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, p. 324.

[649] *Richard III,* V. 5. 33-34.

Coda: History beyond Bosworth

In his reading of *Richard III*, Tillyard, believing that Richard has performed his function as the divine scourge for England's previous transgresses, impatiently dismisses the character as being out of place and rushes to the play's final act. It is here, on the field of Bosworth and through the agency of Richmond, Tillyard suggests, that England achieves reconciliation with God and reaches the moment of what can be described as the end of history. Henry's invocation of peace in the play's concluding speech not only signifies that the country has regained its moral integrity, but also serves as a rallying point that unites mankind together by driving away its tendency toward waging warfare. The play's last act, particularly the 'great finale of the ghosts and of Bosworth', Tillyard concludes, displays 'Shakespeare's official self'.[650]

Perhaps more than Tillyard himself has realised, however, his bold venture of delineating a progressive and redemptive trajectory in Shakespeare's history plays somehow founders on the returning of the spectral figures on the Eve of the momentous battle. It is through the ghosts, as Cahill argues, that the unassimilated 'disrupts the claims of ordered space and time'.[651] Like what Cahill has done in *Unto the Breach*, the study has been trying to read Shakespeare's early history plays from a perspective very much different from the Tillyardian. As opposed to the Tillyardian view, it has been trying to argue that Shakespeare presents in his early history plays a radical and counter-intuitive form of historiographical writing that amounts to a kind of proto-traumatography. Providing accommodation for the historically repressed, this emerging *ography* allows audiences and readers to engage with the country's past

---

[650] Tillyard, p. 220

[651] Cahill, p. 214.

wounds and attend to the unappeased wailings which would otherwise be left largely unaccounted by a more traditional and hegemonic readings of history. If, as Tillyard argues, there is an official Shakespeare in the first tetralogy, then opposed to this presence one can perceive a no less disturbingly dissenting phantom: the other Shakespeare that haunts the hegemonic figure with its acute sense of history's unrelenting grip and its society's fundamental inadequacy in grasping and coming to terms with certain aspects of trauma.

To conjure up and engage with the other Shakespeare, the study has adopted the approach which is developed by Caruth in the early 1990s and which has since then shaped the filed of trauma studies. The approach premises that there is a direct and unmediated primal event that catapults the unwitting victim into a post-traumatic history of unconscious repetition of the catastrophic experience, which, due to the sheer intensity of the initial encounter, has become encrypted in a sub-conscious realm and thus inaccessible through the means of a logical and comprehensible narration.

Over the course of this study, the event-centred view of trauma has proven to be effective in salvaging the 'fearful wrecks' and articulating the psychic ruptures in relation to England's late medieval history.[652] Yet rather than merely focalising the uniqueness of physical confrontation in the formation of traumatic symptoms, the study considers the place of psychological injury, mainly as a consequence of the lack of recognition, in triggering off the disintegration of subjectivity. As such, a medieval soldier's traumatic breakdown, as Shakespeare's representation of Clarence has powerfully demonstrated, can be more of an ethical issue. It can be attributed not so

---

[652] *Richard III*, I, 4. 24.

much to a life threatening confrontation on battle-fields as to violations of his moral principles by his comrades over the course a war.

Non-recognition, as the study has pointed out, can also happen at the moment of historical transmission, as both an individual and a social class struggle with finding empathetic audiences to bear testimony to their historical losses. As such, Margaret's trauma lies in the death of her son and husband as much as in the apathy of the community that refuses to listen to her tale and mourn with her her losses; and the English warrior's tragedy lies in its ineluctable decline as much as in its value system being reduced to an object of a new generation's contempt and scorn. In exploring the traumatic undertones encoded in historical transmission, the work hopes to probe the limits of trauma theory. It hopes to show that trauma study, rather than confining itself to the conventional way of reading texts via trauma, can think toward the *ography*. And Shakespeare's early history plays serve as a model of reading that allows us to engage with this traumatological representation.

An underlying concern in this study is ethical responsibility. And this concern is manifested in the study's attempt at exploring different aspects of trauma as well as their relations to our understanding of history and of Shakespeare's early history plays. Though informed by an ethical awareness of the importance of seeking restitution, the attempt at historicising trauma, the study has argued, should be invigilated by the hauntological approach. This is because the event-centred view, especially at moments of historical rupture and aberration, can be subject to manipulation to such an extent that it becomes a legitimate discourse to assist and justify acts of violence and injustice. By presupposing a historically sufficient self and pinpointing the moment of the violent intrusion of the other as the provenance of a traumatological history, the event-centred view can facilitate the formation of psychological

victimisation by indiscriminately attributing one's anxiety, be it historical or trans-historical, to external scapegoats: the Roman empire in both Virgil's epic poem and in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, as well as the Tudor dynasty as conceived by Shakespeare, all in their own ways subscribe to this kind of scapegoating mechanism and designate a putatively evil other as the bearers of their structural anxiety.

Hauntology, as the study has demonstrated, helps trauma extricate itself out of the ethical dilemma by lending to it a more balanced conception of the relation between the self and the other. Derrida himself, it is well-known, is a Freudian. His works, like Freud's, are concerned about the unsettling of the metaphysical centre of truth. While Freud displaces the pleasure principle and inaugurates an epoch of the death instinct, Derrida initiates an epoch of writing and in so doing probes the limits of historicity. Proposed as a component of a larger deconstruction project to unsettle the concept ontological beginning, hauntology does not pledge its allegiance to any putative notion of the origin of world history. It does away with the idea of epochaliy of being by placing itself at somewhere older (in a trans-historical sense) than the provenance of Being.

A considerable part of this study has focused on exploring trans-historical trauma, as opposed to the historical one, as well as its relation to Shakespeare's early history plays. Much in consistency with hauntology, this kind of trauma tends to dehistoricise the traumatising (non)cause; it casts skepticism on the historical nature of the primal event and, in doing so, distances itself from the craving for the point of an ontological origin. In this sense, trauma is placed beyond the boundary of historical time and inextricably bound up with a sense of non-historicity. Embedded within the subject in the form of a self-insufficiency, it is not necessarily engendered by historical ruptures, nor does it have to implicate the external violence as the culprit for the disintegration

of an originally complete self. The hauntological approach provides us with a hermenutic tool to read back into Shakespeare's early history plays and gain a different understanding of his perception of the idea of self-hood. Meanwhile, the playwright's representation of characters such as Joan and Henry VI, as the third chapter has been trying to suggest, propels us to consider the complexity of trauma and explore what it means to write and read a traumatographical history.

Another no less prominent import of the hauntological approach to trauma lies in its critical awareness of future possibilities. As opposed to the end of history interpretation of historical events that regards the trajectory of history as linear, redemptive, and progressive, typified here, for instance, by the Tillyardian view of history, hauntology tends to spectralise the concept of time and embrace a future that can be haunted by the future, as well as by the past. It conjures up a situation of temporal disjunction in which the presence, being indefinitely deferred by non-origin, always manifests itself as possibilities and as what is to come. As a paradigm of this historical thinking, Shakespeare's history plays, read alongside Freud's post-war meditations, enable us to think through this endless becoming perception of history. Much as the death instinct undermines Freud's exploration for means to secure a peaceful state in human society, Shakespeare's pessimism about the sempiternal state of social and cultural unity haunts his hope for a shared and successful recovery from past trauma. As opposed to the hegemony's conception of transmission of history, historical departures, here in the plays represented as the act of peace invocation performed by Edward IV, the supercession of dynasty after the Battle of Bosworth, and, on a technical note, the emergence of the overloading material, paradoxically inaugurate a future that somehow becomes entwined with the other.

To conclude, this study has been trying to go beyond the orthodox practice of trauma study. It has tried to problematise the binary opposition between subjectivity and objectivity and articulate trauma in a more self-questioning and critical form of traumatology, as well as bringing this new form of historiographical writing to bear on Shakespeare's early Roman and history plays. In other words, it has attempted to use trauma theory not only as a means to explain in early modern texts certain behavioural patterns which modern trauma theory would identify as pathological symptoms, but also as a philosophical framework to experiment with and explore different forms of representation.The idea of traumatography entails an interplay between the endeavour at reconstructing and localising the primal event and bringing about restitution, and a critical awareness that trauma can be construed as an inborn dearth and deficiency of the subject, and thus can only at most be borne with as a sense of inherent anxiety.

Traumatography, on one hand, serves as a hermeneutic tool that enables us to read back into Shakespeare's early history and Roman plays, and interpret the playwright's practice of historical representation from a perspective that diverges from the more traditional ones. On the other, those early modern texts, as a model of reading, propel us to think ethically about our engagement with history: with Shakespeare's early modern England and, more immediately, with the contemporary society. Similar to the early modern culture, the modern civilisation is no stranger to human mind's proclivity for pursuing the putative idea of the purity of the subjectivity, manifested, for instance, in extreme fundamentalism's entrenched belief in the ideal self-hood and call for maintaining a rigid boundary between the in-group and the out-group. And the current Covid-19 pandemic only serves to aid this fundamentalist tendency. This

study, it is to be hoped, can act as a counterbalance to the fundamentalist mindset and help us think through the cultural trauma in a post-Covid era.

Bibliography

A Larum for London, ed. by W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913)

Abraham, Nicholas, and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel Vol.1*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994)

——*The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. by Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2005)

Anderson, Thomas P., *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (Abindgon: Routledge, 2016)

Apollodorus, *The Library of Greek Mythology*, trans. by Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Ashdown-Hill, John., *The Last Days of Richard III* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2013)

Baldo, Jonathan., 'Wars of Memory in *Henry V*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (1996), 132-59

Barnes, Jonathan., ed., *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Penguin Classics, 2002)

Bellis, Joanna., *The Hundred Years' War in Literature 1337-1600* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016)

Blake, Linnie., *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and national Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008)

Blanco, Maria Del Pilar. and Esther Peeren, eds., *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Bouwsma, William James., *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

——*A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)

——*The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640* (London: Yale University Press, 2002)

Buse, Peter. and Andrew Scott, *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999)

Cahill, A. Patricia., *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Calvin, John., *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, (United Kingdom: Calvin Translation Society, 1849)

Caruth, Cathy., *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory and Treatment of Catastrophic Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015)

——*Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013)

—— ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995)

——*Unclaimed Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

Ceglia, Francesco Paolo De., ed., *The Body of Evidence: Corpses and Proofs in Early Modern European Medicine* (Leiden: Brill, 2020)

Charnes, Linda., *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995)

Curry, Anne., *The Hundred Years' War: 1337-1453* (Oxford: Osprey, 2002)

Danson, Lawrence., *Tragic Alphabet: Shakespeare's Drama of Language* (London: Yale University Press, 1974)

Davis, Collin., *Haunted Subjects :Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

De Jong, J. F., ed., *Homer: Critical Assessments: The Homeric World*, 4 vols (London: Routledge, 1999), II

De Quincey, Thomas., *Miscellaneous Essays* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 2005)

Derrida, Jacques., *Archive Fever*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

——'Differance', trans. by Alan Bass, *Bulletin de la* Société *francaise de philosophie*, 62 (1968), 73-101

——*Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016)

——*Psyche: Inventions of the Other,* ed. by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabethan Rottenberg, 2 vols, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2007), I

——*Specters of Marx*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006)

Descartes, Rene., *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, trans. by Desmond M. Clark (London: Penguin, 1998)

Donleavy, Pamela. and Ann Shearer, *From Ancient Myth to Modern Healing: Themis: Goddess of Heart-soul, Justice and Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2008)

Eliade, Mircea., *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1968)

Elias, Norbert., *The Civilizing Process*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000)

Ellinghausen, Laurie., ' "Shame and Eternal Shame": The Dynamics of Historical Trauma in Shakespeare's First Tetralogy', *Exemplaria*, 20 (2008): 264-282

Felman, Shoshana. and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013)

Foakes, R. A., *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Forty, Ardian., ed., *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 2001)

French, A. L., 'The Mills of God and Shakespeare's Early History Plays', *English Studies*, 55 (1974): 313-324

Freud, Sigmund., *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by Ernest L Freud, trans. by James Stern and Tania (New York: Dover, 1992)

——*The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. by A. A. Brill (Ware: Wordsworth, 1997)

——*The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), I

——*The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), XI

——*The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1985), XII

——*The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), XIII

——*The Penguin Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (London: Penguin, 1991), XIV

——*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, XXIV vols (London: Vintage, 2001), VII

——*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, XXIV vols (London: Vintage, 2001), XXIII

——*Wild Analysis*, ed. by Adam Philips, trans.by Alan Bance (London: Penguin, 2002)

Friedlander, Saul., ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)

Frosh, Stephen Frosh., *Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmissions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Fukuyama, Francis., *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006)

Gillies, John., 'The Question of Original Sin in *Hamlet', Shakespeare Quarterly*, 64 (2013), 396-424

Girard, Rene., *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)

Gordon, Avery., *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)

Gordon, Bruce. and Peter Marshall, ed., *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Gray, Patrick., *Shakespeare and the Fall of the Roman Republic: Selfhood, Stoicism and Civil War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018)

——'Shakespeare and the Other Virgil: Pity and Imperium in *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 69 (2016), 46-57

——'Shakespeare and War Honour at the Stake', *Critical Survey*, 30 (2018), 1-25

Greenblatt, Stephen., *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Prince University Press, 2002)

Greenblatt, Stephen., Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus, eds, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008)

Griffiths, Ralph A., and Roger S. Thomas, *The Making of the Tudor Dynasty* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1985)

Halliwell, Stephen., *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002)

Hamlin, Hannibal., *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Herman, Judith., *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2015)

Hale, John., 'War and Public: War and public Opinion in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Past & Present*, 22 (1962), 18-35

Hart, Onno Van Der. and Rutger Horst, 'The Dissociation Theory of Pierre Janet', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 2 (1989), 397-412

Hazlitt, William., *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: John Templeman, 1838)

Hodgin, Nick. and Amit Thakkar, ed., *Scars and Wounds Film and Legacies of Trauma* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

Hodgson, Peter. and Robert King, ed., *Christian Theology An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks* (London: SPCK, 2008)

Ijsseling, Samuel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict: An Historical Survey* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976)

Irwin, Terence., ed., *Classical Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

Ivic, Christopher. and Grant Williams, ed., *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe's Legacies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004)

James, Jeffery., *Edward IV: Glorious Son of York* (Stroud: Amberley, 2017)

Jay, Martin., *Cultural Semantics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998)

Jorgenson, Paul., 'Shakespeare's Use of War and Peace', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 16 (1953), 319-352

Kant, Immanuel., *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. by Lara Denis, and trans. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Karremann, Isabel., *The Drama of Memory in Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Kastan, David Scott., *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1982)

Kendall, Paul Murray., *Richard the Third* (New York: Norton, 2002)

Lacapra, Dominick., *History and Its Limits: Human, Animal, Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009)

——*Understanding Others: Peoples, Animals, Pasts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018)

——*Writing History Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)

Laurence, Ann., 'Women in the British Isles in the Sixteenth Century', in *A Companion to Tudor Britain*, ed. by Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 381-399)

Leys, Ruth., *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

Lifton, Robert Jay., *Death in Life: Survivor of Hiroshima* (Chapel Hill: University of North California Press, 2012)

——*Home from the War* (New York: Basic Books, 1985)

——*The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979)

——*Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China Thought Reform* (Chapel Hill: University of North California Press, 1989)

Luckhurst, Roger., *The Trauma Question* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008)

Lukacher, Ned., *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989)

Luther, Martin., *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Ada: Baker Academic, 2012)

Macgregor, Neil., *Shakespeare's Restless World: An Unexpected History in Twenty Objects* (London: Penguin, 2014)

Machiavelli, Niccollo., *The Art of War*, trans. by Christopher Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)

Martin, Matthew R., *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015)

Martindale, Charles., ed., *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art form the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Martindale, Michelle., *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity: An Introductory Essay* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994)

Melzer, Arthur M., *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Michael, Johns., *Bosworth:1485* (London: John Murray, 2014)

Mitchell, Stephen. A., *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988)

Mitchell, Juliet., 'Trauma, Recognition, and the Place of Language', *Diacritics*, 28 (1998), 121-33

Mullaney, Steven., *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

Myers, Charles S., *Shell Shock in France: 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940)

Nashe, Thomas., *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works* (London: Penguin, 1978)

Nietzsche, Friedrich., *The Will to Power*, trans. by Michael A. Scarpitti and R. Kevin Hill (London: Penguin, 2017)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Arthur Golding (London: Penguin, 2002)

Owens, Margaret E., *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005)

Parker, John., *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007)

Plato, *Meno and Other Dialogues*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

——*Phaedrus*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

——*The Last Days of Socrates*, trans. by Harold Tarrant and Hugh Tredennick (London: Penguin, 2003)

——*The Republic*, trans. by H. D. P. Lee (London: Penguin, 1955)

Prendergast, Christopher., 'Derrida's Hamlet', *Substance*, 34 (2005), 44–47

Putnam, Michael C. J., *Virgil's Aeneid: Interpretations and Influence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

Quinn, S. Lance., David H. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2012)

Quint, David., 'The Tragedy of Nobility on the Seventeenth-Century Stage', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 67 (2006), 7-29

Rackin, Phyllis., *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990)

Rebhorn, Wayne A., 'The Crisis of Aristocracy in Julius Caesar', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43 (1990), 75-111

Renan, Ernest., *What is a Nation? And Other Political Writings*, ed. and trans. by M. F. N. Giglioli (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018)

Ribner, Irving., *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1965)

Rist, John M., 'Augustine on Free Will and Predestination', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 20 (1969), 420-447

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques., *Emile*, trans. by Barbara Foxley (Milton Keynes: Lightning Source)

——*Letters to Beaumont*, ed. by Christopher Kelley and Eve Grace, trans. by Christopher Kelley and Judith R. Bush (Lebanon, New: University Press of New England, 2012)

——*The Basic Political Writings*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011)

——*The Collected Writings of Rousseau: Essay on the Origin of Languages and Writings Related to Music*, ed. and trans. by John T. Scott (Lebanon, New: University Press of New England, 1999)

Royle, Trevor., *The Wars of the Roses* (London: Abacus, 2010)

Russel, Jeffery Burton., *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984)

Rycroft, Charles., *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin, 1972)

Saccio, Peter., *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Saint Augustine., *The City of God*, ed. by G. R. Evans, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003)

——*The Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

——*The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. by Thomas S. Hibbs (Washington, D.C.: Gateway Editions, 1996)

Scarry, Elaine., *The Body in Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

Schwab, Gabriele., *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010)

Schwyzer, Philip., *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Shakespeare, William., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017)

——*Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016)

——*King Henry IV, Part 1*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2002)

——*King Henry IV, Part 2*, ed. by James C. Bulman (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016)

——*King Henry V*, ed. by T. W. Craik (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995)

——*King Henry VI, Part 1*, ed. by Edward Burns (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2002)

——*King Henry VI, Part 2*, ed. by Ronald Knowles (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1999)

——*King Henry VI, Part 3*, ed. by John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2001)

——*King Lear,* ed. by R. A. Foaks. (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1997)

——*Macbeth*, ed. by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015)

——*Richard III*, ed. by James R. Siemon (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2009)

—— *Sonnets*, ed. by Katherine Duncan Jones (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2010)

——*The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by John Drakakis (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011)

—— *The Tempest*, ed. by Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2011)

——*Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995)

Shay, Jonathan., *Achilles in Vietnam* (New York: Pocket Books, 1995)

——*Odysseus in America* (New York: Scribner, 2002)

Sherman, Nancy., *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Somogyi, Nicholas de., *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998)

Starks, Lisa S., *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Stevens, Edward B., 'Topics of Pity in the Poetry of the Roman Republic', *The American Journal of Philology*, 62 (1941), 426-440

Strikland, Agnès., *Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest*, 8 vols (Norderstedt: Hansebooks, 2019), III

Sullivan, Garret., *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Tillyard, E. M. W., *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Penguin, 1991)

Van Der Kolk, Bessel., *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (London: Penguin, 2014)

——'The Trauma Spectrum: The Interaction of Biological and Social Events in the Genesis of the Trauma Response', *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 1(1988), 273-290

Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by Michael J. Oakley (Ware: Wordsworth, 1995)

Walsh, Brian., ' "Unkind Division" : The Double Absence of Performing History in *1 Henry VI*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55 (2004), 119-147

Whitehead, Anne., *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004)

Wilders, John., *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1978)

Wilson, Jeffrey R, 'Henry V's Ugliness', in *Stigma in Shakespeare* <wilson.fas.harvard.edu/stigma-in-shakespeare> [accessed 15 January 2018]