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Abstract

Rachel Fennell

The Transformation of the Sleeping Corpse Motif

In Medieval and Early Modern Literature

This thesis traces how the enchanted sleep motif common to both ATU 410 (*Sleeping Beauty*) and ATU 709 (*Snow White*) exists in the Bible and hagiography, before charting its subsequent appearance in medieval and early modern literature. Categorising the enchanted sleep and its various facets as the motif of the 'sleeping corpse', this thesis considers how two fairy tales, which appear to model Victorian patriarchal ideals of female passivity and male agency, have complex earlier iterations that undermine and subvert many of their contemporary core problematic tenets. Chapter One explores how the sleeping corpse motif can be considered analogous to the presentation of deceased saints in hagiography, examining how a sleeping corpse can also be an active, powerful, and often deadly member of a community. Chapter Two explores the motif in medieval romance, including in the first recorded written version of *Sleeping Beauty* and its subsequent European versions, where the motif is often used as part of rape narratives. Chapter Three examines how Elizabethan pastoral romance presents the male sleeping corpse as a product of the failure to self-govern passion, whilst Chapter Four explores how Shakespeare uses the motif to unpack ideas of familial loss and reunion, though not restoration. Finally, Chapter Five demonstrates how Jacobean revenge tragedy rejects past iterations of the motif in favour of using the sleeping corpse to portray murder and necrophilia on stage. Drawing together a vast and original corpus of genres and time periods, this thesis offers new ways of understanding two traditionally maligned fairy tales, as well as demonstrating how the motif speaks to our desire to pause time, delay the inevitability of death, and obtain a type of immortality.

The Transformation of the Sleeping Corpse Motif in Medieval and Early Modern Literature

Rachel Fennell

A thesis presented for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Studies

Durham University

2021

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For Miss Savage and Ms Ayers,

who championed my love of literature.

And for Nan,

who first read fairy tales to me.

An Introduction to the Motif of the Sleeping Corpse:

'Why must we be plagued with so much work all because of a dead maiden?'

In her essay 'Castration or Decapitation?' French feminist theorist Hélène Cixous writes:

> Woman, if you look for her, has a strong chance of always being found in one position: in bed. In bed and asleep - "laid (out)." She is always to be found on or in a bed: Sleeping Beauty is lifted from her bed by a man because, as we all know, women don't wake up by themselves: man has to intervene, you understand. She is lifted up by the man who will lay her in her next bed so that she may be confined to bed ever after, just as the fairy tales say.[1]

For Cixous, heterosexual womanhood is defined by a narrow trajectory across various beds in conjunction with woman's limited, or absent, agency whilst in them. Patriarchy constrains the cis, straight, fertile woman to a strict and predictable set of places in which she can exist, places delineated by passivity and tied to home and family. This progression of 'Bride-bed, child-bed, bed of death' is not only a lived experience, but a literary one.[2] Women-in-bed stories are told to women in beds, and Cixous identifies the fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty* as the prime example of the depiction of women as inactive, docile objects, subject to the mediation of men.[3]

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[1] Hélène Cixous, 'Castration or Decapitation?', trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs*, 7.1 (Autumn, 1981), 41-55 (p. 43) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173505> [accessed 20 April 2021].

[2] Hélène Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays', in *The Newly Born Woman*, by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement, trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986) pp. 63-132 (p. 66).

[3] When I refer to *Sleeping Beauty* or *Snow White,* unless an edition or author is specifically stated I am referring to the corpus of stories and media that constitute the narrative that English audiences would recognise. As Maria Tatar explains in reference to a different fairy tale: 'When we say the word *Cinderella*, we are referring not to a single text but to an entire array of tales with a persecuted heroine who may respond to her situation with defiance, cunning, ingenuity, self-pity, anguish, or grief'. See *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Maria Tatar, 2nd edn (London: Norton, 2017), ix.

Cixous is not the first feminist to take issue with the story of *Sleeping Beauty*. In her consideration of children's literature, Roberta S. Trites warns that for the heroine of a novel to be an appropriate feminist example for readers, she should 'reject the role of Sleeping Beauty'.[4] Trites argues that the Sleeping Beauty archetype is 'a movement from active to passive, from vocal to silent, [whilst] the feminist protagonist remains active and celebrates her agency and her voice'.[5] Sleeping Beauty is characterised as silent, still, and stripped of choice, a problem similarly shared by the eponymous heroine of *Snow White*. As such, both characters are seen as unhelpful, archaic role models for young readers, particularly girls. Jennifer Waelti-Walters sums up the argument succinctly that 'Fairy tales teach girls to be powerless and teach boys to take or win power'.[6]

Postmodern revisions of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* have attempted to correct this prescriptive depiction of women by emphasising that fairy tales are not innocuous tales for children. Some retellings, such as Angela Carter's 'The Snow Child' and 'The Lady of the House of Love' from her 1979 short story collection *The Bloody Chamber*, or Neil Gaiman's 1994 short story *Snow, Glass, Apples*, emphasise the horror and sexually exploitative aspects of the narratives. The protagonists of these stories actively desire the unnatural, or are witness to unnatural desires, and the tales themselves sit more comfortably within the genre of gothic horror. Other iterations attempt to reconcile the image of a passive sleeping princess with the promotion of female autonomy by radically rewriting the plot to give the princess more independence in line with current feminist critical theory.[7] Even the Hollywood film industry, long a bastion of stereotypical gender roles, realised a comatose

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[4] Roberta S. Trites, *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1997), p. 9.
[5] Trites, p. 8.
[6] Jennifer Waelti-Walters, 'Fairy Tales' in *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*, ed. Cheris Kramarae and Dale Spender (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 653-654 (p. 653).
[7] There are numerous texts on this subject, but for an insightful overview of feminist critical discourse on fairy tales see Donald Haase, 'Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship', in *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, ed. by Donald Haase (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), pp. 1-36.

heroine would struggle to win audiences, and so in *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012) Universal clad their Snow White in plate armour, complete with sword and shield, and sent her off to do battle against the wicked Queen.[8] Disney's revision of their own production of *Sleeping Beauty* resulted in the origin story *Maleficent* (2014), a film which overcorrects for its predecessor's perceived misogyny by creating 'a feminist hermeneutic, suggesting to audiences that social conditions of equality were achieved, then corrupted, and that feminist ideals are rooted in the medieval past', as Elan Justice Pavlinich argues.[9]

In recent years, the problem with *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* has increasing become a cultural issue as well as a theoretical one. The rise of the Me Too movement, in conjunction with the appearance of several high profile rape cases in the news, including those of the late convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein and Bill Cosby, has increased public awareness around issues of consent. In October 2018, British actress Keira Knightley made headlines when she revealed that she had banned her daughter from watching certain Disney films because of their perceived patriarchal and misogynistic messages. Her fellow actress Kristen Bell, most famous for her role as Princess Anna in Disney's *Frozen* (2013), agreed with her stance and was quoted in many of the same news articles, explaining that when her daughters had read *Snow White,* she had asked them '"Don't you think that it's weird that the prince kisses Snow White without her permission? Because you can not kiss someone if they're sleeping!"'[10] Two years later, in an interview with *Porter* to promote her latest film in

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[8] For a concise summary of the various re-brandings of Snow White for film and TV see Sara Stewart, 'Snow White becomes a Girl Power Icon', *New York Post,* 25 March 2012, <http://nypost.com/2012/03/25/snow-white-becomes-a-girl-power-icon/> [accessed 1 May 2017]. At the same time as heroines are being reconfigured, male rescuers are also under increased scrutiny and subject to more palatable revisions in light of modern sensibilities. See Carolina Fernandez Rodriguez, 'The Deconstruction of the Male-Rescuer Archetype in Contemporary Feminist Revisions of *The Sleeping Beauty*', *Marvels & Tales*, 16.1 (2002), pp. 51-70.

[9] Elan Justice Pavlinich, 'Modernity in the Middle: The Medieval Fantasy of (Coopted) Feminism in Disney's *Maleficent'* in *Studies in Medievalism XXVI: Ecomedievalism*, ed. Karl Fugelso (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), pp. 143-160, (p. 149). Cambridge Core ebook.

[10] BBC, *Keira Knightley bans daughter from watching some Disney films*, (2018), <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-45900794> [accessed 13th February 2021] (para. 13-14 of 21).

which she played feminist activist Sally Alexander, Knightley revealed that her daughter had actually watched the Disney films she had been so concerned about but had also taken on board her mother's cautionary warnings. '"When we watched *Sleeping Beauty*, she said, 'It's not OK that man kissed her without her permission!' I can't tell you how pleased I was. If I don't do anything else, I've managed to drum that in!"[11] Knightley's parental concerns about the passive role of women and their sexual exploitation by men in fairy tales, particularly within *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty*, were not met without backlash.[12] Behind the response to Knightley's claims, however, was the idea that these fairy tales were simply innocent stories for children from a Victorian golden age of children's writing. Any attempt to see them as potentially harmful was part of the pervasive current culture of political correctness that threatened to remove the joy of magic, imagination, and wish fulfilment from both children and society at large. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty were only problematic role models for girls if cynical adults chose to see them that way.

The hostile response to the suggestion that fairy tales contain damaging messages for children, particularly girls, is, however, inherently misguided. Arguably, one of the most famous collections of European fairy tales, the Grimm brothers' *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, was never written with the intention that it should be read by children in the first place, and their first edition of the stories, published in two volumes in 1812 and 1815, came complete with dense scholarly notes.[13] It was only when the tales were adapted by the English writer

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[11] Katie Berrington, *Acting out with Keira Knightly*, (2020), <https://www.net-a-porter.com/en-gb/porter/article-85ddc6e76cfdc2ac/cover-stories/cover-stories/keira-knightley 9th March 20202> [accessed 13th February 2021] (para. 12 of 17).

[12] One typically measured response by the columnist Jan Muir accused Knightley of leading children into 'the stifling grip of a fairy tale Taliban who would defile any form of art that does not conform to approved ideology'. See Jan Muir, 'Come off it Keira, you're the ultimate Cinderella! JAN MOIR says actress Knightley banning her children from watching Disney films is ironic', *Daily Mail*, 19 October 2018 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-6292907/JAN-MOIR-says-Keira-Knightley-banning-children-watching-Disney-films-ironic.html> [accessed 13th February 2021] (para. 17 of 29).

[13] In a letter in 1813, Jacob Grimm wrote "I did not write the story-book for children, although I rejoice that it is welcome to them; but I would not have worked over it with pleasure if I had not believed that it might appear and be important for poetry, mythology, and history to the most serious and elderly people as well as to myself"', quoted in T. F. Crane, 'The External History of the *Kinder- und Haus-märchen* of the Brothers

Edgar Taylor in his work *German Popular Stories*, first published in 1823, that the stories were changed to suit the expectations that middle class families had of reading material for children, Jack Zipes noting that Taylor removed 'anything that smacked of obscenity, irreverence, and violence'.[14] The original stories of *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty* were far darker in tone and theme than readers would expect today and were definitely not suitable for children.[15] The 1812 version of *Snow White*, for instance, has the prince, captivated by the beauty of the dead princess, beg the dwarfs for Snow White's body. Unhappy when he is not in the presence of the corpse and unable to eat without looking at her, he has his servants transport her in her glass coffin from room to room with him in his castle. Like the Disney version most people today would be more familiar with, Snow White does eventually wake once more, marry the prince, and live happily ever after, but this is not due to the cure of true love's kiss. Instead, the prince's servants tire of transporting the cadaver, cry 'Why must we be plagued with so much work all because of a dead maiden?' and assault the corpse, dislodging the piece of poisoned apple from her throat and waking her.[16] Whilst the tale contains no kissing, consensual or otherwise, the prince's unconsummated necrophilic desires and the understandable questioning by the household staff of the bizarre and uncomfortable situation in which they find themselves emphasise the many terrible aspects of patriarchy involved in this narrative: male possession of female bodies, male voyeurism of said bodies, and men transforming women into transactional, consumable items — the Prince initially attempts to buy the corpse of Snow White from the dwarfs, but they refuse and gift her to him

Grimm', *Modern Philology*, 14.10 (February 1917), 577-610 (p. 589) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/432799> [accessed 20 April 2021].

[14] Jack Zipes, *Grimm Legacies: The Magic Spell of the Grimms' Folk and Fairy Tales* (Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 34. Princeton Scholarship Online.

[15] For an overview of the many examples of cruelty, violence, and sex in the Grimm brother's first version of the stories see Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales: Expanded Edition* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 3-11.

[16] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 'Little Snow White', in *The Complete First Edition: The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. and ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 170-178, (p. 177).

instead. Likewise, the Grimm brothers' original version of *Sleeping Beauty* is disturbing, though seemingly less overtly. The princess, now only fifteen, falls asleep after pricking her finger on a spindle.[17] A large border of thorns grows to surround the castle, acting as a fatal deterrent to any young nobleman who might decide to seek out the sleeping princess, with potential suitors warned that 'many princes had come and had wanted to penetrate the hedge. However, they had got stuck hanging in the thorns and died'.[18] This euphemistic penetration of the hedge emphasises what the princes truly seek beyond the deadly foliage — a vulnerable and isolated female body with which to satisfy their sexual urges.

Despite being iconic figures of European fairy tale literature, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are not Victorian inventions, but representative of a much larger and older motif of women unwillingly and unknowingly falling into comatose states, magical or otherwise, that has existed for centuries, with literary predecessors stretching as far back as Chione in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and appearing in a diverse range of genres including hagiography, medieval romance, and revenge tragedies. Knightley and Bell's concerns about teaching their daughters that a man should have your permission before he kisses you is in fact the latest response to ongoing discourse about an enduring narrative which centres on the rape, or attempted rape, of a beautiful sleeping woman, often with explicit or implied necrophilic undertones. Nonetheless, rewriting or censoring the *Sleeping Beauty* or *Snow White* fairy tale in order to satisfy current feminist critical thinking is reductive in its simplification of the complex nuances of earlier versions of the motif. Reading the motif in terms of the binary of agency as good and passivity as bad ignores the numerous narratives where the sleeping body, whether male or female, functions as much more than just a victimised and sexualised figure at rest. Simply to dismiss *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*

[17] Disney would increase her age by a year for their 1959 film version.
[18] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 'Briar Rose', in *The Complete First Edition: The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. and ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 162-164, (p. 164).

as no more than antiquated tales of men forcefully waking sleeping women is to ignore their heterogeneous history and social contexts. This modern simplification was noted by Angela Carter in her translation of Charles Perrault's *conte*. Observing that in Perrault's seventeenth-century version of *Sleeping Beauty* the tale neither finishes with the marriage of the princess, nor is there a kiss from the prince that wakes the sleeping maiden, Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère comments that 'The disparity between popular perceptions of the story and the reality of Perrault's text must have alerted Carter to the fact that the fairy tale was a more complex document than most critics of the story were suggesting'.[19]

The strength of feminist criticism and current cultural discomfort around *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* narratives are predicated on five assumptions about the texts. First, that Sleeping Beauty is always a woman; second that she is woken by a man using true love's kiss; third, that sleeping is a negative state in which one has no agency; fourth, that *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* narratives end with marriage and a happily ever after; finally, that these types of stories are written by men and thus encoded with patriarchal messages for women. Over the course of this thesis all these suppositions are challenged, unpicked, and proven false.

If the figures of Sleeping Beauty and Snow White are not simply an outdated feature of patriarchal narratives, then it is especially important to identify what exactly they are. Technically, the stories are two different folklore tale types: *Sleeping Beauty* is ATU 410 and *Snow White* is ATU 709.[20] Whilst these categories are useful for folklorists, they are to some

[19] Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, '"But marriage itself is no party": Angela Carter's Translation of Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant"; or, Pitting the Politics of Experience against the Sleeping Beauty Myth', *Marvels & Tales*, 24.1 (2010), 131-151 (p. 132) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/41389031> [accessed 01 June 2021].

[20] ATU stands for Aarne-Thompson-Uther and is a folklore classification index named after the three men who created it. The index groups together stories which feature similar plot points and gives them a number. These tale type numbers are useful for comparative purposes and are the standard model to which most contemporary folklore academics refer. See Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, 3 vols (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004).

extent arbitrary, and their differences are far less interesting than the commonalities between them.[21] The two women do of course differ in the types of sleep that they experience and how that sleep is perceived externally. Sleeping Beauty, as her name suggests, is identified as asleep, with her sleep enchantment affecting not only herself but the other inhabitants of the castle for a century. Snow White, meanwhile, is viewed as dead and displayed as such in her coffin, although she is also actually asleep: her awakening via removal of the poisoned apple is not considered a resurrection by the narrator or the characters of the tale. The theme of the enchanted stasis experienced by both women, which preserves their bodies and their beauty as time passes, but blurs the boundaries between what is living, what is sleeping, and what is dead, is what I will be terming the motif of the 'sleeping corpse'.

At the heart of the motif is the difficulty of quantifying death and the liminal, unsettling status that the sleeping corpse occupies as a creature neither dead, nor possessing the necessary characteristics which we associate with the living.[22] All functions of the body are frozen in their preserved state: unlike a body in a coma there is no suggestion that a sleeping corpse needs to be fed, or cleaned, nor does it exhibit signs of visible aging, though the sleeping corpse is capable of reproducing and whilst it does not excrete ordinary bodily fluids, may produce miraculous liquids. Though the motif belongs to the larger theme of false death in literature and is associated more broadly with attitudes to death itself, sleeping corpses are corporeal bodies which are static as a result of mystical, magical, or medical means.[23] The body must be able to be seen or communicated with in its enchanted state.

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[21] See Peter M. Broadwell, David Mimno, and Timothy R. Tangherlini, 'The TellTale Hat: Surfacing the Uncertainty in Folklore Classification', *Cultural Analytics*, (February, 2017), 1-27 <DOI: 10.22148/16.012>.
[22] For further discussion of the 'expressive symmetries' between sleep and death see Megan Leitch, *Sleep and its Spaces in Middle English Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), p. 72.
[23] Ghosts, despite being liminal creatures, are therefore largely excluded from this study because they lack a physical, bodily presence. This thesis only considers ghosts when their appearance is directly related to the presence of a sleeping corpse within a particular wark, such as *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, discussed in Chapter Five. This thesis does, however, still contribute to scholarship on the medieval and early modern dead and the supernatural, of which much has been written. The following list is by no means exhaustive, but includes some of the more prominent scholarship on the subject: M.R. James, 'Twelve Medieval Ghost-Stories', *The English Historical Review*, 37 (July 1922), 413–422, R.C. Finucane, *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead and Cultural*

Bodies which are only reported as dead offstage or unseen in a text do not qualify as sleeping corpses, and there must be a genuine belief by one or more characters within the text in which the sleeping corpse appears that the body in question is dead or unable to wake. Additionally, sleeping corpses must remain in their enchanted stasis for a significant period of time, enough that their status is seen as unnatural, and that intervention is necessary. This intervention may take the form of an attempt to wake the sleeping corpse via a variety of means, or an attempt to dispose of it in some way, including burial.

Works that use the sleeping corpse motif very rarely concern themselves with the interior life or psychology of the sleeper, but rather with the external forces working upon the body as it is unconscious.[24] Literature containing the motif is more often focused upon the reactions of others to the corpse, especially that of both the beloved and the unwanted suitor, as well as the medical, chemical, spiritual, physical, and romantic interventions necessary in order to successfully — or otherwise — induce a state of consciousness once more in the body. As such, this thesis focuses on the changing use of the sleeping corpse by the people and communities that interact with it, from a conduit through which the sick are healed, to a vessel of vengeance and death. Ultimately, it reflects how a symbol of love and hope gradually changes over time to become representative of man's loss of belief in both an active God and the goodness of human nature.

Transformation (New York: Prometheus Press, 1996), Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), *Medieval Ghost Stories: An Anthology of Miracles, Marvels and Prodigies*, ed. Andrew Joynes (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), C.S. Watkins, 'Sin, Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm: The Evidence of Visions and Ghost Stories', *Past & Present*, 175.1 (May 2002), 3–33, *Three Purgatory Poems: The Gast of Gy, Sir Owain, The Vision of Tundale*, ed. Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), and Robert Easting, 'Dialogue between a clerk and the spirit of a girl *de purgatorio* (1153): a medieval ghost story', *Mediaevistik*, 20 (2007), 163-183.

[24] This thesis therefore dismisses psychoanalytical approaches to fairy tale narratives and their readers, as is espoused in Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

As a motif, the sleeping corpse naturally appears in works from around the globe, across multiple genres, and in different time periods.[25] The focus of this thesis, however, is on its appearance in English and French literature of the medieval and early modern period, which contains some of the earliest examples of its use. This thesis does occasionally also touch on the work of Italian writers such as Boccaccio, Bandello, and Basile, but only in so far as examining their influence as sources on sleeping corpse motifs in French and English writing. The influence of Italian authors such as Dante and Petrarch on English Renaissance writers is commonly known. More recent work by Melissa Walter, for example, has also demonstrated the close relationship between Shakespeare and his Italian sources.[26] As the relationship between Italian and English writers is of such longevity, it would be detrimental to the thesis not to demonstrate how this symbiosis helped to shape some of the most important works of the medieval and early modern period, and influenced the presentation of the sleeping corpse motif.

Northrop Frye argues that there are 'four primary narrative movements in literature. These are, first, the descent from a higher world; second, the descent to a lower world; third, the ascent from a lower world; and, fourth, the ascent to a higher world'.[27] Frye then goes on later to contend that the traditional beginning to a fairy tale of '"Once upon a time": […] invokes, out of a world where nothing remains, something older than history, younger than the present moment, always willing and able to descend again once more'.[28] In line with Frye's comments that the theme of death and re-birth is common across time and literature, and inherent to the fairy tale genre, it would be reductive to argue that the motif of the

[25] For a collection of international *Snow White* narratives see Maria Tatar, *The Fairest of Them All: Snow White and 21 Tales of Mothers and Daughters* (London: Harvard University Press, 2020). Fairy tale scholarship is increasingly moving towards intersectional, global approaches. See *The Fairy Tale World*, ed. Andrew Teverson (London: Routledge, 2019).
[26] See Melissa Walter, *The Italian Novella and Shakespeare's Comic Heroines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).
[27] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 97.
[28] Frye, p. 126.

sleeping corpse is of solely biblical origin. The constraints of the thesis, however, mean that though the motif has possible analogues in Celtic sources, including the fourteenth-century *Mabinogion*, (itself based on earlier oral tradition), there is no room to include them. This thesis also largely refrains from drawing on classical sources in considering the motif of the sleeping corpse. The rationale for this exclusion is due to first, the constraints of the word count; second, the largely negative portrayals and different functions of death, the afterlife, and the gods in classical literature compared to Christian theology; third, the focus in classical literature on transformation, rather than resurrection, as an alternative to, or escape from, death; and fourth, the relative infrequency in classical literature of a completely successful return from the underworld. Characters such as the eponymous heroine of Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 BC) and Aeschylus in Aristophanes' *The Frogs* (405 BC) do return from the underworld; I would argue, however, that the most famous classical myths about death demonstrate its inescapable nature, despite a husband's love (Orpheus and Eurydice), a mother's wishes (Demeter and Persephone, Thetis and Achilles), or a cunning mind (Sisyphus). This thesis, therefore, only references classical sources briefly and when there are clear and direct influences on the texts under consideration.

Building on the work of two important critical surveys of attitudes to death, the French medievalist Philippe Ariès' seminal study of Western attitudes to death, *The Hour of Our Death* (1981), and Kenneth Rooney's book *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (2011), this thesis traces the sleeping corpse motif in biblical sources through to its development in hagiography, chivalric romance, pastoral romance, Shakespearean romance, and Jacobean revenge tragedy. It explores how writers have variously responded to bodies which inhabit the threshold between life and death, becoming fixed points, first in religious spaces, then social and cultural ones. By examining how, over five centuries, successive writers have reacted to the motif in the work of their

predecessors, this thesis outlines how seemingly disparate literary texts chart an ongoing discourse about Christianity, gender, identity, rulership, and the natural, or unnatural, state of life and death through the use or subversion of the sleeping corpse.

During this period, events, in particular the Reformation, led to enormous changes and reshaped England's religious landscape, whilst the advent of the printing press and the influence of William Caxton in the fifteenth century dramatically altered English reading habits and the make-up of early modern readership. Theatre evolved from travelling religious and moral community productions in churches and town spaces, to the presentation of secular plays in purpose built theatres, whilst the Mystery Cycles were in turn supressed, and theatres themselves closed in 1642.[29] Politically, the country endured civil war in the fifteenth century, the Union of the Crowns under the accession of James I to the throne, as well as the subsequent Gunpowder plot. It would be reductive to view every iteration of the sleeping corpse motif as an allegory reflecting religious, political, or social contexts, but it is undeniable that these sweeping cultural changes did affect how writers used the motif. More importantly, this thesis shows that despite the radical transformations of Church and Crown, and the wider availability of literature for a growing reading public with changing tastes, writers consistently returned to a motif that endured despite these fundamental shifts in attitudes to God and government. This is largely because the motif explores how communities and individuals love and cope with loss. The movement of time, and history itself, is the process of loss. The sleeping corpse motif acts as a counterpoint by fixing a body against this onward motion, in what Patricia Parker calls 'the strategy of delay'.[30] Parker argues that '"Romance" is characterized primarily as a form which simultaneously quests for

[29] For further discussion on the complex and shifting nature of religion in England and its relationship with theatre see Musa Gurnis, *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) and Peter Marshall, *Invisible Worlds: Death, Religion and the Supernatural in England, 1500-1700* (London: SPCK, 2017)

[30] Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 5. De Gruyter ebook.

and postpones a particular end, objective, or object' and *Sleeping Beauty*, and more broadly the sleeping corpse motif, fit this theoretical framework.[31] *Sleeping Beauty* is, after all, a story about the deferment of death. The bad fairy's wish that the princess should die on her sixteenth birthday is negated by the good fairy's wish that changes death to an interminable sleep. What should be a story about endings, becomes instead about preventing that ending, and then somewhat paradoxically, about searching for a way to conclude the narrative by discovering how to name, wake, or communicate with the body.

Brian Cummings, looking at the effect of the Reformation of English literary history and the English language itself, remarks on the 'sense of a division from the past, which continues to this day to divorce the study of Chaucer from Shakespeare, the 'medieval' from the 'modern' (or at least 'early modern')'.[32] This thesis, however, resists the division of the medieval and early modern periods into separate periods, and builds on more recent scholarship which has begun to bridge the gap between the two periods, including seminal works by Helen Cooper such as *The English Romance in Time* and *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, as well as edited collections including *Medieval into Renaissance: Essays for Helen Cooper* and *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*.[33] Cummings quotes Sir Philip Sidney, who 'looked back on Chaucer as a poet lost in 'mistie time'', but in tracing the transformation of the sleeping corpse motif over time, writers engaged in a literary dialogue

[31] Parker, p. 4. Max Lüthi takes a more extreme position when he argues that fairy tales demonstrate an 'indifference to the passage of time', and that this indifference is embodied in *Sleeping Beauty*. See Max Lüthi, *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*, trans. John D. Niles (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 9. By indifference, Lüthi is not arguing that time does not exist in fairy tales, or that there are no young or old characters, only that time has no active presence or effect on the characters or the story. Thus, Sleeping Beauty exists both in and out of time, simultaneously sixteen years old and one hundred and sixteen years old.

[32] Brian Cummings, 'Reformed literature and literature reformed', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 821-851, (p.821). Cambridge Core ebook.

[33] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden, 2010), *Medieval into Renaissance: Essays for Helen Cooper*, ed. Andrew King and Matthew Woodcock (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), and *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper, and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

with the work of their predecessors that involved them reading, incorporating, revising, or parodying earlier narratives that were not, despite Sidney's assertion, lost in a foggy prehistory.[34] The motif serves to demonstrate how despite the span of centuries, writers as varied as Marie de France, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lyly, and Philip Massinger continued to be fascinated by and return to these miraculous bodies in their work, building on ideas of what had come before whilst reacting to the changing contexts of their own time that influenced how they perceived the motif. As John Watkins points out, it is important to 'avoid overestimating the Reformation as a decisive break with the medieval past, [recognising] Protestantism as among other things a continuation and intensification of cultural developments apparent in English life since the mid-fourteenth century'.[35] Sidney may have viewed Chaucer as a writer far removed from his own time, but that did not preclude his holding him in the highest esteem or reading him. Neither the motif nor the writers themselves are lost. Instead, they are in a constant process of being reintroduced to new audiences, so that the sleeping corpse motif recreates time as a cyclical experience, rather than a linear one.

It is important to acknowledge that exploring the existence of a fairy tale motif in medieval and early modern literature is not anachronistic. Instead, this thesis contributes to an ongoing debate within fairy tale scholarship as to when fairy tales were first created. Ruth Bottigheimer argues that the sixteenth-century Italian writer Giovanni Francesco Straparola is the originator of the modern fairy tale and rejects the idea that he borrowed from oral folk tradition in creating *Le piacevoli notti* (*The Pleasant Nights*, c. 1550).[36] Jack Zipes puts the creation of the fairy tale earlier, arguing that in 'its literary form, the fairy tale as genre did

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[34] Cummings, p. 821.
[35] John Watkins, 'The allegorical theatre: moralities, interludes, and Protestant drama', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 767-792 (pp. 787-788). Cambridge Core ebook.
[36] Ruth Bottigheimer, *Fairy Godfather: Straparola, Venice, and the Fairy Tale Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

not really begin to assume an existence until the fourteenth century in Italy, [but] even then its existence was precarious because there were very few writers and readers of fairy tales'.[37] He concedes that

> fairy-tale motifs can be found in ancient Indian, Chinese, and Arabic scripts, the Bible, and Greek and Roman literature, and there are numerous fairy-tale features and themes in medieval literature, especially in the Latin poems and stories, courtly romances, lais, legends, fabliaux, primers, and exempla.[38]

However, this acknowledgement still draws a line between what Zipes considers literary fairy tales and a range of older works that contain, to a lesser or greater extent, folk and fairy tale elements. This strict delineation is unhelpful, because, as Jan M. Ziolkowski points out, 'Zipes's distinction between folktale and fairy tale condemns medieval texts to a limbo, since they are too early to qualify as literary fairy tales but too literary to pass as oral'.[39] Ziolkowski points to some verses within the eleventh century Latin poem *Fecunda ratis* (*The Richly Laden Ship*) by Egbert of Liège, as an example of a work which does not simply contain fairy tale elements, but is a fairy tale. The verses give an explicitly Christian version of the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*, where a baptism gift of a red tunic saves a five year old child from being eaten by wolves. In dismissing the arguments of Zipes and Bottigheimer, Ziolkowski instead maintains that 'the corpus of "classic" fairy tales owes much to medieval storytelling, since the former absorbed the latter both directly (in the conversion of tales preserved in manuscripts into collections in books) and indirectly (in transmission in and out

[37] Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 20.
[38] Zipes, pp. 20-21.
[39] Jan M. Ziolkowski, 'A Fairy Tale from before Fairy Tales: Egbert of Liège's "De puella a lupellis seruata" and the Medieval Background of "Little Red Riding Hood"', *Speculum*, 67.3 (July, 1992), 549-575 (p. 551-552) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2863656> [accessed 19 August 2021].

of texts through many hundreds of years)'.[40] Thomas Leek agrees with Ziolkowski's assessment, using the romances *Le Roman de la Manekine* (c. 1230-40) and *Mai und Beaflor* (c. 1270) to argue that 'the distinctions Bottigheimer makes between a motif complex in medieval literature and a proper fairytale are arbitrary'.[41] Graham Anderson and William Hansen argue for an even earlier date for the appearance of the fairy tale, looking to works from classical writers to argue that fairy tales existed in ancient times.[42] In offering close comparative readings of works which contain the sleeping corpse motif, from its appearance in the Bible to Jacobean revenge tragedy, I therefore follow Ziolkowski, Leek, Anderson, and Hansen in arguing for the appearance of the fairy tale before the sixteenth century and in considering works not typically identified as traditional 'literary' fairy tales as precisely that. This allows for a more flexible methodology, and recognises, as Marina Warner does, that 'the nature of the genre is promiscuous and omnivorous and anarchically heterogeneous, absorbing high and low elements, tragic and comic tones into its often simple, rondo-like structure of narrative'.[43]

The assessment by Warner that fairy tale is 'omnivorous' is born out in the vast span of genres incorporated in this thesis. At first glance they may appear disparate and unrelated to a fairy tale motif associated with children's literature. As John Stephens acknowledges, however, the emergence of children's literature was predicated on

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[40] Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Wonderful Lies* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p. 6. See also Jan M. Ziolkowski, 'Straparola and the Fairy Tale: Between Literary and Oral Traditions', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 123.490 (Fall 2010), 377-397.

[41] Thomas Leek, 'On the Question of Orality behind Medieval Romance: The Example of the "Constance" Group', *Folklore*, 123. 3 (December 2012), 293-309, (p.294) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41721561> [accessed 10 August 2021].

[42] Graham Anderson, *Fairytale in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, 2000), Graham Anderson, 'Old Tales for New: Finding The First Fairy Tales', in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 85-98, and William Hansen, *Ariadne's Thread: A Guide to International Tales Found in Classical Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[43] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995), xvii.

> retelling and adapting the familiar stories of a culture – folktales, legends and stories about historical and fictional individuals memorialised for their heroism or holiness, adventurousness or mischief. When English-language children's literature emerged as a visible entity from the seventeenth century, it followed this route, with the publication of various fairy (or folk) tale collections and religious texts. Subsequently, the principal domains of retold stories in children's literature expanded to include myths and mythologies; medieval and quasi-medieval romance, especially tales of King Arthur's knights; stories about legendary heroes such as Robin Hood; oriental tales, usually linked with The Arabian Nights; and modern classics, from Shakespeare to Kenneth Grahame and L. Frank Baum.[44]

Returning to look at the sleeping corpse motif in hagiography, medieval and early modern romances, and revenge tragedy, is therefore not jumping from children's literature to unconnected earlier genres but is instead revisiting those stories by which early children's writing was inspired and retold.[45] Additionally, in tracing the motif back to one of its sources and its subsequent development over time, it is important to concentrate on following the influence the motif had on successive writers, rather than focusing on one type of genre. As it is reductive to argue that genres are strictly demarcated categories, when even the briefest consideration of a genre such as romance reveals the permeable nature of its boundaries,

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[44] John Stephens, 'Retelling stories across time and cultures', in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. M.O Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 91-107 (p. 91). Cambridge Core ebook.

[45] For example, Siân Echard explores late nineteenth and early twentieth century retellings of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* for children and the subsequent problems of interpretation and censorship that this necessitates. See Siân Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 126-161. Likewise, Seth Lerer discusses how '*Guy of Warwick*, *Havelok the Dane*, and many other Middle English romances had served as entertainment for the late-medieval household. So associated were these texts with family or childish reading that the early Tudor educators who sought to reform the education of the young were almost universal in their condemnation of this poetry as "childish follye"'. See Seth Lerer, *Chaucer And His Readers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) p. 95. DeGruyter ebook.

authorial influence has taken precedence.[46] While the thesis begins with saintly works and ends with revenge tragedy, all the texts under consideration are interested in holiness and holy bodies, although their responses to their presence differ wildly. All the sleeping corpses examined in these narratives offer a way for the characters and the readers to engage with the past, often in quite literal ways. More generally, all the works analysed in these chapters are interested in love, whether this is love of God, love for another, love of self, or lost love.

Chapter One considers the sleeping corpse motif by examining its presence in the two most widely read works of the medieval period: the Bible and Jacobus de Voragine's collection of hagiographic tales *The Golden Legend*. In the Old and New Testaments and in *vitae*, the intertwined themes of sleep and creation, death and new life occur again and again: in the raising of Tabitha; in the waking of Jairus' daughter; in the return from the grave of Lazarus. Each of these episodes prefigures the resurrection of Christ himself and underscores the importance of the soon-to-awaken sleeper and corpse as occupying co-existing states of being. For medieval Christians, the sleeping corpse is both a reality and a comfort in times of grief, as well as a liminal state in which the corpse awaits either future resurrection for ultimate judgement by God or awakening back to mortal life by the intercession of a saint.[47] Challenging the assumption that Sleeping Beauty is always a woman, and that apparently passive states of being such as sleep and death are negative experiences, this chapter situates the motif of the sleeping corpse in a Christian tradition that views death not as the end of life, but as continuing in another place, and saints' corpses as active members of their communities, able to intercede on their behalf with God, cure the sick, and punish those who

[46] Romance as a genre is difficult to define. Rosalind Field quotes Derek Pearsall in considering it 'the principal secular literature of entertainment of the Middle Ages', a definition so broad as to be nearly all-encompassing. See Rosalind Field, 'Romance in England, 1066-1400', *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 152-176 (p. 152). Cambridge Core ebook.

[47] For two fascinating accounts from the early modern period of the living going to extremes to preserve and keep close the beloved corpse for an anticipated future reunion see Valeria Finucci, 'Thinking through Death: The Politics of the Corpse', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 45 (2015), 1-6.

have committed wrongs. Smaller collections of *vitae*, such as Osbern Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, specifically focus on examples of female saints for the edification of female patrons. As powerful examples to their Christian readers, the saints presented in these works suffer patiently, challenge pagan rulers, miraculously endure lethal torments, resurrect the dead, and are formidable orators in life and death. Sleeping corpses in these works are often noble or royal figures, far removed from modern conceptions of Disney, or even medieval, princesses. Far from being passive, they are busy, helpful intercessors, even as their bodies lie inert. The chapter also considers the appearance of the sleeping corpse motif outside the confines of strict hagiography, including in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and the anonymous poem *Saint Erkenwald*, a subversive pseudo-hagiography, unusual in that the sleeping corpse at the centre of the poem is not actually the saint of the title. These literary texts are fundamental to a consideration of the sleeping corpse motif because they ask uncomfortable questions about the past and the role of the saint in the community. Both present sleeping corpses which trouble their respective communities rather than helping them, and which, of necessity, must be removed by the narrative's close. *The Canterbury Tales* and *Saint Erkenwald* blur the boundaries of the saintly and the secular, and the chapter concludes with further consideration of how the holy bodies of sleeping corpses begin to emerge in medieval romance, itself a porous and loosely defined genre.[48]

Chapter Two explores how pilgrimage to the sites of sleeping corpses becomes chivalric quest for the body of the sleeping princess, and relic worship transforms into narratives of rape. Building on Maria Tatar's brief discussion of the first written recorded version of *Sleeping Beauty* in the anonymous French romance *Perceforest* (c.1340), and its subsequent influence on works by Giambattista Basile and Charles Perrault, this chapter

[48] 'The indistinctness of the borderline between romance and pious tale, however, or between chivalric epic in the service of one's earthly or heavenly lord, prevents any attempt to make a clear division'. Helen Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 690-719 (p. 697). Cambridge Core ebook.

considers how the sleeping corpse motif continues to intersect with hagiography and romance, disputing the ideas that the sleeping corpse is woken with true love's kiss, that these stories end happily with marriage, and that all of these narratives are necessarily written by men.[49] Female solidarity becomes increasingly important in the face of patriarchal behaviour as explored in Marie de France's twelfth-century Breton *lai*, *Eliduc*, where the wife of the eponymous protagonist wakes the sleeping corpse instead of her husband. The sleeping corpse is transformed from a community touchstone to the founder of chivalric lineages through motherhood in John Gower's *Apollonius of Tyre* (c. 1386) and the anonymous *Perceforest*. Knowing and understanding who one's Christian, spiritual forebears are becomes less important than setting up secular family genealogies. Examining how medieval romance writers pushed or subverted many of the aspects of hagiography further, in order to incorporate themes of rape, cannibalism, and necrophilia in their work, the chapter concludes by exploring *The Squire of Low Degree*, a fifteenth-century parody of romance literature, which has a case of mistaken identity as its necrophilic punchline.

Chapter Three moves on to explore the sleeping corpse in early modern romances, where the motif of a loving kiss that wakes the sleeper finally appears. Unusually, all the works examined in this chapter place the sleeping corpse experience as a male one, challenging the idea that Sleeping Beauty is always a woman. Analysing Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (c. 1580), John Lyly's *Endymion* (1588), and Michael Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* (1599), the chapter explores worlds that are seemingly paradisical, but are really places troubled by death and stripped of miracles, qualities epitomised by the sleeping men in these texts and their relationship with divine figures. Through loving or rejecting heavenly figures, all three men eventually become sleeping corpses, although both Endymion and

[49] Maria Tatar, 'Show and Tell: Sleeping Beauty as Verbal Icon and Seductive Story', *Marvels & Tales*, 28.1 (2014) 142-158. Whilst Marie de France is the only named female writer to whom I give extended consideration, the thesis considers a number of anonymous texts which I am implicitly assuming could be written by women, rather than by men as is traditionally assumed.

Basilius in Sidney's *Arcadia* are put to sleep as a consequence of their own sexual or romantic immorality and thwarted female desire, unlike previous examples of female sleeping corpses who sleep as a result of accident, prophecy, or religious requirement. Both male bodies remain unmolested in repose, unlike their medieval romance female counterparts. In addition to the fundamental shift from female to male sleeping corpse, this chapter also explores why male bodies may not always remain young and beautiful whilst sleeping, the presentation of women as inaccessible virginal goddesses or as powerful, dangerous monsters with medicinal knowledge, and finally, the presentation of literary works which end abruptly or without conclusion by writers who have become tired of their own writing and risk becoming sleepers themselves. Though all of the texts end happily, each finishes with a lingering sense of disquiet that the presence of the sleeping corpse has created, but not eradicated through his awakening, or, in the case of *Endimion*, eternal slumber. In this way, the sleeping corpse is no longer a benefit to the community, or the mother of important chivalric and political figures, but a disruptive force in the face of society and the natural world.

Chapter Four continues this theme of disquiet and the sleeping corpse in its exploration of the work of Shakespeare, refuting the idea of happily-ever-afters and true love's kiss through contrasting the presentation of the sleeping corpse in *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595) with this in the late romances: *Pericles* (1608), *Cymbeline* (1610), and *The Winter's Tale* (1611). Shakespeare returns to what Rosalind Field characterises as 'the 'family' romances' which 'from the time of the Old English Apollonius gives a line through Gower to Shakespeare'.[50] As such, he reverts to using the female sleeping corpse in his plays. Whilst his contemporaries create increasingly modern productions which eschew interest in the past, Shakespeare increasingly retreats to consciously medieval worlds in his plays, where types of

[50] Field, p. 174.

the sleeping corpse as saint are refracted through his undead royal heroines: Thaisa, Innogen, and Hermione. Preoccupied with presenting the liminality of sleep, death, and resurrection on stage, Shakespeare explores what it means for the fractured families of old tales to be reunited at the close of the story, but also how those who can return are marked by their experiences. The joy of reunion is tempered by a sense of loss, whether this is caused by the passage of time, the loss of family members or position, or the psychological toll of the event. In these narratives of resurrection, audiences are forced to confront ways of living with the past instead of being haunted by it, and the attendant difficulties of this negotiation.

Chapter Five considers the appearance of the sleeping corpse in Jacobean revenge tragedy and the cynicism with which playwrights of that period treat the motif. At a time when the false death motif was prolific on the seventeenth-century stage, this chapter examines how Thomas Middleton's plays *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), and Philip Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* (1621), upset the conventions of the sleeping corpse motif by refusing to wake the corpse and instead avenging it. For these writers, the maiden is not expected to revive nor is her resurrection the aim. Whereas previously the lover broke into the tomb and found his mistress awake, the lover now breaks into the tomb specifically for her corpse. These works depict sleeping corpses that no longer establish noble lineages but destroy political figures through poisonous kisses, ironically embracing and returning to the use of negative miracles and relic worship in staging the lethal revenge of sleeping corpses through their proxy avengers. Despite the effects of the Reformation and the distrust of the religious past, this chapter shows how writers repeatedly engaged with the past and earlier beliefs about the dead in order to stage inventive, bloody, and horrifying theatrical spectacles that did not negate the power of the dead but amplified it.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the tropes of the sleeping corpse motif found in hagiography have been completely subverted. Rather than curing people, sleeping corpses kill, with doctors depicted as occasionally suitable alternatives to holy help. Negative miracles proliferate, with the sleeping corpse, in tandem with the avenger, righting wrongs rather than interceding for the pilgrim with God. Instead, the role of the divine is reduced, or subverted, or corrupted, and in place of relic worship is necrophilia. Sleeping corpses no longer function as foci of community memory or as tangible links to the past, but as haunting figures who demand recompense for past mistakes, and erase rules and establishments. They are still powerful figures, but that power is more often than not dangerous and destructive.

In conclusion therefore, whilst modern audiences and feminist theorists may think of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty as the ultimate icons of female passivity, their literary predecessors are complex, nuanced characters, unbounded by current questions of agency. Despite changing social and religious contexts, writers return to the motif again and again throughout the medieval and the early modern period because of its nature as a fixed point within the passage of time. From Christian sources to Jacobean subversions, and ultimately to presaging the revenant corpse in the Gothic Novel, the sleeping corpse traverses and transcends the boundaries of life and death. However, the dark thematic undercurrent running through these retellings of loss in all its forms, both physical and spiritual, eventually overwhelms the central narrative of hope. In its final reincarnation as a conduit for death, the sleeping corpse reflects more narrowly the keen loss of faith, not only in the miraculous, but in humanity itself.

Chapter One

Saints and Sleepers in Medieval Hagiography

> Dicebat recedite non est enim mortua puella sed dormit et deridebant eum et cum eiecta esset turba intravit et tenuit manum eius et surrexit puella.[51]
>
> (Jesus said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.) [52]

Life in medieval England could be hard, dangerous, and brutally short. In an era of poor harvests, rampant disease, frequent conflict, limited sanitation, and rudimentary health care, death created all men equal; it was capricious and indiscriminate regardless of wealth, rank, gender, or age.[53] Saint James depicted existence in these terms: 'Vapor est ad modicum parens; deinceps exterminabitur' ('a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth', James 4.15), as transient and insubstantial as steam, mist, or the final exhalation of breath from the dying body. Medieval Christianity presented the ideal life as one spent in contemplation and preparation for an imminent good death and ultimately the soul's eternal destination in the afterlife.[54] As the soul was immortal, it continued in an unseen plane of

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[51] *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Roger Gryson, 4th edn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), Matthew 9.24-25. All biblical references, unless stated otherwise, are taken from the Latin Vulgate and will be subsequently referenced parenthetically.

[52] *The Bible: Authorized Version*, ed. John Stirling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), Matthew 9.24-25. All biblical translations, unless stated otherwise, are taken from the Authorized Version and will be subsequently referenced parenthetically.

[53] For an in-depth study of medieval life, death, and the factors that contribute to calculating medieval life expectancy see Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c. 1300 - c. 1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

[54] An illuminating comparison of the change in Christian attitudes towards death from St. Ambrose to St Thomas Aquinas and beyond is given in David Albert Jones, *Approaching the End: A Theological Exploration of Death and Dying* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a comprehensive handbook to medieval

being even after the expiration of the body. This continuity offered comfort in the face of bereavement to those left behind and the hope of something better in the beyond for those approaching death. Consequently, as Patrick Geary observes, death was seen as 'a transition, a change in status, but not an end'.[55]

The concept of death as a continuation of life was embodied by medieval saints, a group Frederick S. Paxton calls

> the "very special dead," who acted as powerful, and powerfully present, patrons of individuals and families, both natural and spiritual. The integrity of their relics (their resistance to decomposition) and their power to cure the sick were both proof of the resurrection and a powerful antidote to the fear of disintegration in the face of death.[56]

Thea Tomaini recognises that human understanding of death is complex, muddied by 'Folklore and literary narratives […], academic traditions that analyze and interpret death, and theological traditions that rationalize its mystique'.[57] This chapter attempts to marry these various strands together by considering how the secular sleeping corpse motif has one of its sources in the records of Christian individuals who were specially chosen by God. Like Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, the bodies of the saintly dead are bodies not subject to the normal laws of time, remaining beautiful and beautifully preserved despite the passage of centuries. Like Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, they are objects of affection, reverence,

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Christian living and the fate of the soul see *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion,* trans. Albert C. Outler (London: SCM Press, 1955).

[55] Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 2.

[56] Frederick S. Paxton, 'Birth and Death', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Thomas F.X Noble and Julia M.H Smith, 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005-2009), III (2008), pp. 383-398 (p. 392).

[57] Thea Tomaini, 'Introduction', in *Dealing With The Dead: Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomaini (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 1-14 (p. 1). See also Christine Quigley, *The Corpse: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996), Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (Dover, N.H: Croom Helm, 1984), and Katharine Park, 'The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences,* 50.1 (1995), 111–32.

and pilgrimage. However, unlike the fairy tale princesses, medieval sleeping corpses are active, busy figures, working on behalf of the communities they live in to provide protection, cure illness, and intercede with God. They inhabit a powerful liminal space where their eternal sleep does not inhibit them from doing good deeds. In considering how a seemingly passive corpse can actually be an active body, this chapter looks at the sleeping corpse motif in some of the most popular works of the medieval period, including the Bible, Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, Osbern Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, two poems from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and the anonymous poem *Saint Erkenwald*. In exploring how the motif works both in and out of the strict confines of religious writing, it will become clear that many of the core tenets of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale function in very different ways in hagiography than they do in the fairy stories. Whilst the sleeping corpse of a saint is often a royal or noble figure, they are frequently defined by their defiance of mortal rulers and powers. They are characterised by their powerful oratory instead of their silence. It takes more than a spindle to pierce them and put them to sleep and many endure violent and extreme torture. Significantly, sleeping corpses are not always female. *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* are female centric stories, revolving around female fairies, wicked witches, and horrible stepmothers. Men only intrude into the story at the conclusion to wake the sleeping women with a kiss. In these fairy tales, to be asleep in this corpse-like fashion is to embody an inherently negative femininity that is passive, vulnerable, and inert in the face of male action. Narratives involving sleeping corpse saints, in contrast, are less concerned with such restrictive gender binaries or in seeing death sleep as a negative experience. As Lynda L. Coon notes

> Christian hagiographers incorporated Christ's rebellious, crossgendering style in their lives of holy women and men. Female saints cut off their hair, dressed as men,

> traveled as apostles, preached, taught, walked on water, and defeated Satan in battle. Male saints fed and clothed the poor, multiplied food and drink, renounced physical weapons in favor of spiritual ones, and acted as spiritual mothers for Christians.[58]

Both male and female saints could be sleeping corpses, could be objects of desire by pilgrims, and could wield enormous power. Saintly sleeping corpses may have been sought out to be worshipfully kissed, but this action was not about waking the corpse, but enabling access by the pilgrim to a higher power.

There is one further and significant way in which the sleeping corpse motif departs from its presentation in *Sleeping Beauty* narratives. In the fairy tales, sleeping corpses are always characterised as perfect, beautiful, and harmless. In hagiography, the dead, whether they are sleeping or not, are always capable of posing a threat to the living. Sleeping saints wielded enormous divine power which was able to heal and to harm in equal measure. A sleeping corpse was perfectly capable of hurting the living and even killing them if necessary. In many narratives this threat is never realised. A pervasive sense of unease at these unnatural bodies, however, is present in many of the later texts including 'The Prioress's Tale' and *Saint Erkenwald*, where sleeping corpses are depicted with a macabre fascination that in another genre might be classified as horror. This underlying threat of the body that is neither alive, nor the insensate dead, finds its truest expression in the appearance of the sleeping corpse motif in Jacobean revenge tragedy, discussed in Chapter Five. In hagiography, however, this threat is tempered by the fact that the sleeping corpse only punishes the unworthy and the sinful. The good Christian can still live, and die, happily ever after.

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[58] Lynda L. Coon*, Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 15. De Gruyter ebook.

Biblical Principles Concerning the Sleeping Dead

The Bible frequently equated death with the metaphor of sleep. Old Testament kings of Israel are buried and sleep with their fathers, the prophet Daniel speaks of the dead as 'multi de his qui dormiunt in terrae pulvere' ('many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth', Daniel 12.2), and in the New Testament, the dying martyr Stephen is recorded as euphemistically falling asleep at his stoning (Acts 7.59). The two terms are often used interchangeably, and even within the same sentence: 'surge qui dormis et exsurge a mortuis' ('Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead', Ephesians 5.14). Thus, the sleeper and the corpse occupy co-existing states of being in the liminal stage between consciousness and oblivion, asleep with the expectation of imminent waking. Death is therefore not only a transitional condition, but implicitly a reversible one too. The waking of the sleeping dead occurs across both Old and New Testaments, with nine accounts of specific individuals being resurrected, in addition to the resurrection of numerous unnamed saints at the Crucifixion, and the expectation of a future resurrection of all for judgement at Armageddon. In these biblical resurrections, waking a sleeping corpse involves any or all of the following aspects regardless of order: close physical and intimate contact with either the dead body or the place where the body rests, prayer, and communicating directly with the corpse through verbal command. This contact and communion with the dead body opposed earlier Western beliefs on appropriate interaction with the dead. Jewish texts categorised the corpse as a pollutant, a contaminant to be disposed of as quickly as possible as it defiled everything in its immediate surroundings, including the air. Those who touched the dead body were considered ritually 'inmundus' (unclean, Numbers 19.11-22) for seven days afterwards. For pagan Romans, personal belief varied widely concerning the possibility of life after death. Tombstone epitaphs reveal that some considered death as a shadow place where shades of the dead lived on as individuals who retained some semblance of their previous personality; others were more nihilistic about

the possibility of any post-mortem existence.[59] Regardless of belief, the corpse was always polluting; the dead were buried outside the city walls, physically removed from the living as a visible reminder of the permanent and irreversible separation between the two states of being.

Christianity changed the way people viewed and interacted with the dead. The corpse was no longer an empty vessel of contamination, but the locus through which to access the divine, a liminal space that functioned as a doorway from life through which one could pass, but, more importantly, also return. This new ideology, however, did not completely negate the anxiety concerning the corpse as object for both Christians and non-Christians alike. There are two occasions when Christ explicitly categorises the dead as asleep; the raising of Jairus' daughter and the resurrection of Lazarus. In both instances, those mourning the body are contemptuous and confused at Christ's claim that the corpse is merely sleeping, and in the latter example the mourners are additionally apprehensive and disgusted at the thought of re-encountering the body, specifically the body that has begun to decompose. Even Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, who verbally confirm to Jesus that they believe in resurrection, are puzzled and horrified at his order to remove the covering from their brother's tomb: 'Domine iam fetet quadriduanus enim est' ('Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days', John 11.39). Consequently, in the depiction of this scene in medieval media, at least one of the mourners is frequently rendered as holding his nose against the anticipated smell of the tomb.[60] Their fear of facing the rotting realities of resurrection, however, is unfounded. The Bible demonstrates that there is no limit in terms of the condition of the corpse or the length of time spent in the grave in relation to resurrection; called forth from the tomb,

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[59] The variety of pagan beliefs recorded in tombstone epitaphs is detailed in Keith Hopkins and Miranda Letts, 'Death in Rome', in *Death and Renewal: Sociological Studies in Roman History,* ed. Keith Hopkins, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) II, pp. 201-256. Cambridge Core ebook.

[60] A particularly fine example can be found in Paul, Herman, and Jean de Limbourg, The *Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry,* New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1954, 54.1.1a,b, Fol.171r. For a wider discussion on the depiction of nose holding at the resurrection of Lazarus by medieval and renaissance Italian artists and its epistemological importance in showing Lazarus as raised from death see Arthur C. Danto, *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays* (University of California Press: London, 1999).

Lazarus emerges when summoned, needing only to be unwrapped from the grave clothes that metaphorically bind and conceal him still in his old flesh. Sloughing off the wrappings, the new man in Christ is revealed. Though there is no written description of what this newly wakened corpse looks like, in the resurrection of Jesus, who himself spends three days in the grave before his return to life, there are hints as to Lazarus' appearance. In the garden tomb, Mary Magdalene does not recognise the risen body of her Lord and mistakes him for the gardener. The wakened corpse is therefore de-familiarised; only when he calls her by her own name can Mary identify the body before her. Like Lazarus, Jesus also unwraps his new self from the grave clothes which remain behind in the tomb, but the body revealed is one that is revitalised rather than renewed. Christ still maintains the marks of his crucifixion, as he bluntly points out to Thomas, the disbelieving disciple, as a form of identification: 'infer digitum tuum huc et vide manus meas et adfer manum tuam et mitte in latus meum' ('reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side', John 20.27). The wakened corpse is still vulnerable, penetrable, and marked by its previous encounters; in this way it can be inferred that Lazarus too may still be marked by the illness which caused his death, retaining the physical reminders of the past body within the present.

The state of the corpse was irrelevant to its ability to be resurrected; only the faith of the deceased in Christ mattered and determined who could and could not be resurrected. Jesus had reassured his followers: 'ego sum resurrectio et vita qui credit in me et si mortuus fuerit vivet' (I am the resurrection, and the life, he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, John 11.25). In addition to this promise, after his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, he gave his disciples gifts from the Holy Spirit that granted them miraculous powers of healing and resurrection akin to those of their master. Accordingly, after the ascension of Jesus, there are two final examples of resurrection by his disciples in Acts; the Apostle Peter raises a faithful disciple named Tabitha from the dead, and the

Apostle Paul resurrects a young disciple named Eutychus, who has fallen asleep listening to Paul preach, fallen whilst sleeping from a window, and now euphemistically fallen asleep on the street below. Both apostles follow the prescribed methods of resurrection by praying in combination with either speaking directly to the deceased in the case of Peter or making sustained physical contact with the corpse as Paul does. The faithful body then wakes up, proving that the physical presence of Christ is no longer necessary for resurrection. Instead, the power to wake the dead now resides in the bodies of those special followers of Christ deemed holy, or 'saints', and consequently can be accessed as long as there was a saint to be petitioned.

If the body of the person who was to be resurrected did not need to be recently deceased in order to be woken, similarly the saint doing the resurrecting did not have to be alive or even particularly fresh in the grave to be able to wake others. This too had a biblical precedent. A young man is raised from the dead when his body is hastily dumped into the open grave of the prophet Elisha: 'et tetigit ossa Helisei et revixit homo et stetit super pedes suos' ('and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet', 2 Kings 13.21). The power to wake the dead was contained within the very bones of the holy dead, and Christian theology therefore transformed the corpse from vile contaminant to source of new life. The corpse was still infectious but reinterpreted as infectiously holy: even the briefest touch could render the dead alive once more. Having intertwined the living with the dead, Christians now saw the holy corpse and the place that contained it as special. Unlike their pagan peers and predecessors, they wished to have the dead remain as close to the living as possible.

Innumerable hagiographies demonstrate the wish of early Christians to keep the remains of their sleeping holy martyrs in close proximity to the living. There are many different types of hagiography and, as Stephen Wilson notes, it is 'a complex genre that has

evolved over time. It includes both learned, sophisticated Lives akin to secular biography, and 'popular' Lives incorporating folk tales and fantasy'.[61] Most hagiographies, however, include at least an account of the saint's torture and death (*passio*) and of the miracles done by them, most notably the miracles occurring after their death (*miraculum*), particularly at their place of internment.[62]

The Sleeping Corpse in Popular Hagiography

One of the most famous hagiographies of the medieval era was Jacobus de Voragine's thirteenth-century compilation *The Golden Legend*.[63] Its popularity was such that not only are there a thousand extant manuscripts, but it is likely that 'in the late Middle Ages the only book more widely read was the Bible', despite not being written originally for a lay audience.[64]

In his conclusion to the life of Saint Anastasia, Jacobus records that Saint Apollonia 'made a chirche in her gardin and beried witheinne worshipfulli the bodi of Seint Anastace'.[65]

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[61] Stephen Wilson, 'Introduction', *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore, and History*, ed. Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 1-54, (p. 15). ACLS Humanities ebook. For a consideration of hagiography, its generic conventions and politics see James T. Palmer, *Early Medieval Hagiography* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), Catherine Sanok, 'Hagiography' in *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500-1500*, ed. Jennifer Jahner, Emily Steiner, and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 420-436, and *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. James Howard Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[62] Other kinds of hagiography include the life of the saint (*vita*), the discovery of a saint's relics (*inventio*), moving of relics, normally to a more appropriate shrine (*translatio*), and the saint appearing in visions to someone (*visio*). Most saints' lives include a combination of these types.

[63] Jacobus himself would go on to be 'venerated as a saint by the Dominican Order and the city and province of Genoa' where during his life he was archbishop. See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), I, p. xiii.

[64] Ryan, I, p. xiii. Jacobus uses a vast range of sources for his work including the Bible, writings of the early church fathers and the work of his contemporaries including Bartholomew of Trent. For more insight into who he was using and how see Steven A. Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine: A Genoese Mind in Medieval Europe* (London: Cornell University Press, 2016), pp. 66-115. De Gruyter ebook.

[65] *Gilte Legende*, ed. Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), I, p. 43. All subsequent references to this work will be given parenthetically by volume and page number. This Middle English translation (c.1438) of *The Golden Legend* uses Jean de Vignay's *Légende Dorée*, a fourteenth century French translation of the original Latin, as its base text. Hamer and Russell suggest Dame Eleanor Hull may have been the Middle English translator. See *Gilte Legende*, ed. Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), III, pp. 50-56. Eight proper copies of the *Gilte Legende* exist, as well as smaller scraps and *vitae* in other manuscripts. The main eight MSS are British Library, MS Egerton 876, BL Additional MS 11565, BL Additional MS 35298, BL MS Harley 630, BL MS Harley 4775, Gloucester

In imitation of the garden tomb of Jesus, Apollonia turns her own garden into a holy place of communion with the divine, a microcosm of Eden, where the earthly and earthed body provides access and connection to the celestially divine. On top of the holy body in the ground, Apollonia is able to build a church; a metaphorical body of Christian believers and acceptably sanitised outward symbol of the other body hidden from sight below ground. This church not only revolves around the central belief in the waking of the sleeping corpse, but physically exists on top of another.

The most well-known account of sleeping corpses in both *The Golden Legend* and more widely in the medieval West was the tale of *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*. Seven men, persecuted for their Christian faith, fall asleep in a cave, only to wake three hundred and seventy-seven years later to discover Christianity has spread and become the dominant religion.[66] Explicitly referencing the raising of Lazarus, the seven saints explain to the astonished townsfolk and the Emperor 'that for thi loue oure Lorde hathe arered vs before the day of the resureccion for thou shuldest stedfastly beleue the resureccion of the dede that be to come' (II, p. 508). Their sleep is explicitly categorised as a death, and yet it is simultaneously a re-birth, for in their suspended animation they have been 'as the childe is in the moderes wombe witheoute felynge or dysese' (II, p. 508). Reborn after centuries asleep in their sanctified womb cave, their faces are 'as fresshe as any floure of rose' (II, p. 508), a description overtly referencing the Edenic garden and garden tomb of Christ imagery that Apollonia had reflected in her own church building. Sweet smelling, of ruddy complexion,

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Cathedral MS 12, Lambeth Palace Library MS 72, and Oxford Bodleian Library MS Douce 372 (SC 21947). See *Gilte Legende*, III, pp. 3-20 for descriptions of the manuscripts, additional fragments, and smaller *vitae* manuscripts.

[66] Jacobus later contests this number at the end of the tale. 'It is done of that is sayde that they slepin .CCC.lxxvij. yere, for they arosen the yere of oure Lorde CCCC.xlviij., and Decyen regned but one yere only and .iiij. monthes, and that was in the yere of oure Lorde CC.lij., and so by this they shulde not slepe but an .C. .iiij.^{xx} . . xiij. yere'. See *Gilte Legende*, ed. Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), II, p. 509. All subsequent references to this work will be given parenthetically. The period of sleep enjoyed by the seven varies across accounts, though all are for a miraculous period of time. For a consideration of the variations in the tale and the calculations involved in generating a number for the years passed see Michael Huber, *Die Wanderlegende von den Siebenschläfern* (Leipzig, 1910).

and intertwined with the suffering Christ and his crown of thorns, these flowering saints, however, bloom only briefly. Having completed their purpose of confirming the veracity of resurrection, the saints once more fall into the catatonic stupor of death as soon as they finish speaking and are reinterred in the cave.

Their bodies, however, though asleep neither decay nor remain unmoving or insensate in the grave. Centuries later, Edward the Confessor would have a vision of the seven rolling over in their sleep onto their left sides, which was interpreted as signifying future doom for the nation.[67] The veracity of his vision is confirmed when legates enter the cave and verify that the saints have shifted from their usual positions on their right sides. They are not the only restless dead, however; saints often rolled over to make room for new sleeping companions who were being interred, as the bodies of two bishops do for Saint John Almsgiver at his entombment (I, p. 130). In addition, unlike the seven sleepers who felt 'nothing', many somnambulant saints were actively subject to the quirks and mundane trivialities that came with sleeping for centuries in the same confined quarters, communicating these with some force to the pilgrims who visited their tombs as part of popular medieval pilgrimage circuits. Ronald Finucane relates one such encounter between a pilgrim and the corpse of Godric of Finchale, who announced that 'he had a distinct aversion to the stench of public latrines situated near his church, where he lay buried'.[68] Saints were also directly affected by and often irked in their sleep by their own petitioners, with Saint John Almsgiver leaving his tomb to complain to a weeping pilgrim that her incessant crying had waterlogged his graveclothes (I, p. 131). The sleeping dead, therefore, were neither still nor silent in the grave. In fact, many of them were busier asleep than they had been awake. Considered as active members of their community, sleeping saints were important prophetic

[67] Frank Barlow, 'The Vita Ædwardi (Book II); The Seven Sleepers: Some Further Evidence and Reflections', *Speculum,* 40 (1965), 385-397 (p. 387) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2850916> [accessed 22 March 2021]
[68] Ronald C. Finucane*, Miracle and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: Aldine Press, 1977), p. 34.

symbols, objects of hope, and access points to the divine. Most importantly, they were succour for the sick.

The Bible treats the resurrection as part of a larger motif of healing, bringing life and action from death and stillness, particularly in relation to curing people stricken with paralysis, such as the man by the pool of Bethesda in the Gospel of John, or the paralytic let through the roof in the Gospel of Luke. All of these curative acts ultimately foreshadow the resurrection of Jesus and his role as a physical and spiritual physician, come to heal the world of sin and death during his mortal life and at his Second Coming: 'non necesse habent sani medicum sed qui male habent non enim veni vocare iustos sed peccatores' ('They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners', Mark 2.17). Whilst remarkable and certainly noteworthy, these healing miracles were part of everyday medieval life and to be expected of a medieval saint. As Simon Yarrow remarks 'there could be no Christian society without the miraculous'.[69] Curing death itself was the ultimate sign of the holiness of the saint and the glory of God, but healing of all kinds was within the purview of any saint and there were many ways in which saints, both living and deceased, could heal the sick, the dying, and the dead.[70] Many hagiographic examples offer deliberate echoes of biblical narratives of healing, often with biblical characters themselves featuring and drawing these parallels. In *The Golden Legend*, for example, Martha, the sister of Lazarus, specifically invokes the previous resurrection of her brother as a reason why Christ should give life to a drowned French youth. Prostrating herself in the form of a cross, she reminds her Lord that "thi frende my brother areredest from dethe to lyff, byholde the faith of hem that be here and arere this childe" (II, p. 515). Duly prompted, the

[69] Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 1. Oxford Scholarship Online.
[70] This special power did not, however, mean saints were meant to be worshipped in and of themselves. As Stephen Wilson points out though, 'in practice such distinctions were not always heeded or understood by the faithful or by the clergy'. Wilson, p. 4.

request is granted; the boy lives, is converted and baptised, his earlier watery death foreshadowing his spiritual death and resurrection in baptism (Romans 6.4).

The majority of healing narratives, however, take place at the tombs of saints. As they were places where the saint's body was kept, tombs, as Finucane memorably phrases it 'emitted a kind of holy radioactivity which bombarded everything in the area', including pilgrims, and even affected the saint's own body.[71] Indeed one of the signs of a saint, though this was not universal, was his or her own bodily incorruptibility in the tomb. This incorruptibility was doubly wondrous if the saint had suffered some unfortunate ailment in life or horrible tormenting wound that in death had been healed. In Book IV of *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* Bede describes the translation of St. Etheldreda's remains to a better position within the church after sixteen years have passed. Bede remarks not only that the corpse of Etheldreda is still as fresh as the day she died, but that the large and painful tumour under her neck, which eventually killed her, has gone: 'ita ut mirum in modum pro aperto et hiante uulnere, cum quo sepulta erat, tenuissima tunc / cicatrices uestigia parerent' (so that instead of the open gaping wound which she had when she was buried, there now appeared, marvellous to relate, only the slightest traces of a scar).[72] A more extreme version of this post-mortem healing occurs with St Edmund, who having been pierced through with javelins and beheaded, amazes all upon the opening of his tomb, when they find that 'his swura wæs gehalod, and þe ær wæs forslagen, and wæs swylce an seolcen þræd embe his swuran ræd, mannum to swutelunge hu he ofslagen wæs' ('his neck that was hewn off before was healed, except for a mark like a red silk thread around his neck, as if to show people how he had been killed').[73] Like Christ, the saints' bodies retain their

[71] Finucane, p. 26.
[72] Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 394-5.
[73] Ælfric, *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. G.I. Needham (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1976), p. 53, trans. M. A. Stouck in *Medieval Saints: A Reader*, ed. Mary-Ann Stouck (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1999), p. 271.

incorruptibility along with the markers of their martyrdom, highlighting the gruesome nature and reality of their deaths whilst concurrently signposting their move into a liminal state beyond such easily quantifiable markers as dead and living.

Tomb healing reflected medieval church theology which placed prayer as more efficacious than contemporary doctoring, which could often be painful, useless, expensive or bungled, as the widow with the issue of blood had demonstrated in her complaint to Jesus about her own experiences of physicians (Luke 8.43). Sometimes, as was the case with the widow, one was more in need of a saint after seeing a doctor than before, which was what happened as a child to the twelfth-century Mayor of Oxford, revived by St. Frideswide after 'a bungled operation to remove bladder stones […] left a "corpse" bound to the "operating table" in its parents' home'.[74] This is not to say that medieval medical practice and miraculous healing were diametrically opposed; though miracle stories frequently emphasise the inability of the physician to help the patient, medieval patients were likely to use both forms of treatment interchangeably. Recent scholarship suggests medieval medical practice informed descriptions of miracle healing and physicians were often called upon to certify the body as dead and subsequently verify proof of the miracle upon revivification of the corpse.[75] Christ himself was often depicted as *Christus Medicus*, taking on the mantle of doctor rather than shunning the role. With both saintly and secular medicine so closely intertwined, many medieval churches depicted scenes from the Bible, particularly of miracles and resurrections, both in stained glass windows and as decorative murals.[76] These images could also include regional saints as well as those formally recognised by the Church and had great influence on how saints were imagined and interacted with by the pilgrims who went to see them. People

[74] Finucane, p. 66.
[75] See Leigh Ann Craig, 'Describing Death and Resurrection: Medicine and the Humours in Two Late Medieval Miracles', *The Sacred and the Secular in Medieval Healing: Sites, Objects, and Texts* ed. Barbara S. Bowers and Linda Migl Keyser (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 103-115.
[76] See Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), p. 30.

often saw saints descending from stained glass windows as they slept or recognised the saints in their visions by their likeness to such depictions. The image of the saint producing miracles for the penitent pilgrim was often depicted on the windows as well, the tomb and its surroundings becoming a narrative echo chamber in which the miracles which happened were inscribed onto the environment around the tomb, and influencing how later pilgrims received their own miracles. Particularly good examples of these echo chamber narratives are found in the depiction of the miracles of Thomas Becket in the windows of Trinity Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral. Many of the pilgrim patients immortalised in these windows are sleeping, the saint pictured beside them as he heals their bodies.[77] More disquieting, however, is one pane where the saint is shown emerging from the tomb, the living corpse wedged half in and half out of the shrine, like a macabre cuckoo, to hover broodingly over the bed of a sleeping monk.

The Golden Legend includes many examples of saints healing, both in the dreams and visions of their supplicant and whilst the patient is awake, but as in the Trinity Chapel windows, the narratives and the methods employed by the saints in their treatments can be both benign and disconcerting. Some miracles, such as Saint Agnes healing the sores of the penitent pagan Constance, are gentle, painless, and simply involve the saint speaking kindly to the diseased and encouraging belief in Christ; awakening from her encounter with the saint Constance is 'perfitely heled' (I, p. 111). Other gentle cures include those effected through sweet healing smells, oils, or waters that flow from the tombs of many saints, providing healing to weary pilgrims. Jacobus records that from the bones of Saint Catherine 'plente of oyle welled oute largely, whiche oyle is of so gret vertu that it yeuithe hele to all manere of siknesse as it ys known to mani a deuout pilgryme which haue uisited that right holy and

[77] For further discussion on the connections between sleep, medicine, and health see Leitch, *Sleep and its Spaces*, pp. 48-56.

devout place' (II, p. 905). This remedy had biblical precedence: 'infirmatur quid in vobis inducat presbyteros ecclesiae et orent super eum unguents eum oleo in nomine Domini' ('Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord', James, 5.14). The flow of healing oil, common in so many hagiographic tales, eventually even becomes incorporated into the practical sacraments of the medieval Church in the act of Extreme Unction, which Philippe Ariès describes as 'reserved for the clergy in the Middle Ages [and] called the *dormientium exitium* (the sacrament of those who sleep)', whereby the sick and the dying are anointed with blessed oil in order to prepare the soul for death, or strengthen the body to live, according to the will of God.[78] What begins as a literary motif evolves into real world application. Thus, theological imagery is married to practical action and the body of the faithful are metaphorically transliterated into the corpus of the resurrection canon.

At the other end of the hagiographical medical spectrum, two deceased saints, Cosmas and Damian, have a far more practical, though macabre method of healing their pilgrims. Amputating the cancerous leg of one of their sleeping petitioners, they replace it, not with a miraculously celestial limb, but with that of the corpse of an Ethiopian man, freshly deceased that day. The dead body receives the amputated limb in exchange. In their visceral description of the amputation there is not so much a feeling of being in the soothing presence of the divine, but in the butcher's shop; of interrupting two of *Macbeth*'s witches discussing their dinner plans: 'Where shull we take nwe flesshe for to sette in the place where we take aweye the rotyn flesshe?' (II, p. 708).[79] The exchange is miraculous but unsettling, further emphasised by the unnamed petitioner, who upon waking 'toke a candell, and whan he sawe nothinge in hys thigh, he thought he was not hymself but that he was sum other' (II, p. 708),

[78] Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 23-24.
[79] Practicing witchcraft is one of the accusations levied against the two saints when they are put on trial and which the presiding judge asks the saints to teach him (II, p. 706).

experiencing a disconnect with his own body; a body that as seen in the resurrection of Jesus is de-familiarised. This time, however, the body is not only de-familiarised to others but to the self. The deceased are depicted as interchangeable with the living, and flesh that is dead can easily be made living once more. The text offers no explanation for why the anonymous petitioner receives the leg of a corpse instead of a divinely made limb, nor why the Ethiopian's relatively fresh leg is suitable, nor why the corpse receives the cancerous leg instead. Likewise, there is no discussion of the incongruity of a white man receiving the leg of a black man, though the implication is that not only is the healed leg miraculous, but the disparity in skin colour further visually confirms that this is a miracle rather than mortal medical intervention.[80]

This interchangeability between and familiarity with death and the dead amongst sleeping corpses is unsurprising. Acknowledging that death is just another form of existence, one which they themselves occupy, saints show no fear of corpses, regardless of whether they are the bodies of the pilgrim or the pagan. Saint Macarius was so comfortable with the dead that stopping for the night in a desert pagan tomb, he 'leyed his hede downe vpon the dede bodi in stede of a pilow' (I, p. 93), taunting his pagan corpse bed to 'Aryse vp yef thou maist' (I, p. 93) when it becomes reanimated by demons. Able only to ventriloquise the body instead of resurrecting it, the demons flee in the face of Macarius' stoic refusal to be afraid of their poor imitation of divine grace and power, as well as his physical assault of the corpse they inhabit.[81] The scene is also an extended pun. The possessed body cannot rise because

[80] The Wellcome Collection has a number of paintings of Cosmas and Damian in surgery replacing the leg of the petitioner with the dead Ethiopian's, including one attributed to the Master of Los Balbases, ca. 1495, which depicts the two saints in full academic dress, being helped by a trio of angels holding a candle and the unwanted limb.

[81] William Granger Ryan's translation of *The Golden Legend*, based on a 19th century Latin version of the legend, has Macarius simply reply to the demons before they flee. Hamer and Russell's *Gilte Legende* has Macarius 'bete the body' (I, p. 93). In a 1498 printed edition by William Caxton, Macarius beats 'the body wyth hys fyſt' as though beating out the dust and dirt from old bed linen. See Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1498), British Library, STC24876, fol.lxviiv. EEBO. The Caxton version, first printed in 1483, is based on a Latin, French, and earlier unknown English translation. The versions differ mostly in which saints are included and which are omitted or added, but whilst lives of individual saints vary little,

Macarius has it pinned beneath him, but the body cannot truly rise, i.e., be resurrected because it is both pagan and demon inhabited and therefore not a worthy Christian soul.

The mingling of the demonic and the divine, however, presented its own set of problems. Whilst saints could easily distinguish between what was sent by Heaven and what was sent by Hell, ordinary human beings struggled, particularly when the devil could appear in the guise of a saintly body. The risen Christ had been unknowable to one of his closest followers; how much more so then did the average pilgrim struggle to identify and differentiate between sleeping corpses and demonic visitations. One pilgrim, tricked by an impersonation of Saint James the Greater, is convinced to castrate himself with a knife before fatally stabbing himself (I, p. 492). Only the timely intervention of both the Virgin Mary and Saint James in an Edenic court where they sharply rebuke the demons restores the young man to life. Again, like many saintly sleeping corpse bodies before him, after three days, in an echo of the Messianic resurrection period, he is left with only the scars and an incredible story. In a period when even identifying when a body was truly dead was difficult, it is unsurprising that the fear of what and who the body encountered is underpins many hagiographic tales. Though, as D.M. Hadley describes, there were a variety of ways of 'identifying death, including the use of feathers and mirrors under the nostrils or mouth, the mixture of milk and urine or the placing of mugwort under the head', it was sometimes impossible to be sure if someone was still alive, particularly in cases of long-lasting unconsciousness.[82]

This confusion of the liminal space between living and dead, the inability to distinguish between saint and sinner, and the co-mingling and interchangeability of bodies is exemplified at the tomb of sleeping corpses. Often covered in human detritus such as

there are some discrepancies and here it is noteworthy that the nineteenth-century Latin edition omits any violence on the part of Macarius towards the possessed corpse and focuses solely on the power of his words.

[82] D.M. Hadley, *Death in Medieval England: An Archaeology* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), p. 71.

sloughed off skin, fingernails, and bits of bone given as offerings of thanks for successful healing, mortal bodily remains mingled with those of the saint.[83] Numerous heads, limbs, eyes, and other assorted body parts made of wax or silver were also left as votive offerings, so that even if the pilgrim's physical form could not be left behind, a symbolic representation of their healed body remained.[84] This belief in part of the body representing the whole was central to medieval Christian theology on the sanctity of saintly bodies. Binski writes that a 'fragment of a saintly body represented the saint in his or her entirety, and, as Prudentius, the great early fifth-century Christian author of the *Psychomachia* and the *Crowns of Martyrdom*, said, bodily division manifested triumph over death itself '.[85] This lack of wholeness, or the summation of parts being more important than the body as a whole could be taken to extremes in Church art, where Christ and his crucifixion could be dismembered into just the pertinent limbs and organs of the body: hands, feet, and heart.[86] Saints were often represented by the organ most mutilated at their martyrdoms, retaining the flaws of their persecutions, just as Christ maintains his stigmata. In their iconography, St Agatha, though healed, carries her dismembered breasts with her on a platter, whilst St Lucy carries her own eyes in a dish.[87] The most famous of all the mutilated saints, Saint James Intercisus, who was slowly cut into pieces, literally has the severance of his body included as part of his name (II, p. 908). Each lopped-off piece of flesh becomes a visual reminder of a Christian teaching that James ritually recites to his executioners and in his iconography he is always depicted mid-dismemberment, arms and feet scattered around the room, a living offering at his own tomb.[88]

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[83] Finucane, p. 96.
[84] For an insight into some of the offerings left at medieval tombs see Ben Nilson, 'The Medieval Experience at the Shrine', *Pilgrimage Explored*, ed. J.Stopford (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 1999), pp. 95-122.
[85] Binski, p. 14.
[86] For a good example of this kind of dismemberment art, see the outside wall of St Bartholomew's Parish Church in Rochdale, Lancashire, which shows a stone shield with the pierced hands and feet of Christ surrounding his heart as a type of heraldic imagery.
[87] The Wellcome Collection has two paintings by unknown artists from the sixteenth century of the two saints together holding their body parts on platters, a scene showing female solidarity as it was Lucy who prayed to Agatha for her miracle.
[88] Both *The Gilte Legend* and Caxton's version use 'bouchyers' (*G.L.* fol.CCCliiiir, EEBO) or 'bocher'

As Saint Paul writes ‘nam et corpus non est unum membrum sed multa’ (‘For the body is not one member but many’, 1 Corinthians 12.14) and in making up the body of Christ as Christian believers, the saints seemingly literally provide parts of their own flesh and blood to make an amalgamated body.

This great suffering did have some benefits. Jesus, as *Christus Medicus,* suffers an agonising death by crucifixion, and as in the case of their master, the more suffering saints endure before their death, the greater their ability to intervene and heal the penitent body, and thus all suffering is to be cheerfully endured. Saint Agatha, having had her breasts removed slowly and painfully, firmly refuses any medical treatment even when it is offered to her by the disguised Apostle Peter, explaining that she has ‘neuer [bode]ly medicyne to my flessh, and it were a foule þyng to lese þat y haue so long kepte’ (I, p. 177), Christ being her only medicine. Only once she has passed this test of abnegation does Peter reveal that he has he been sent by Jesus, and ‘sche fonde hirself helid and hir pappis restored to hir breste’ (I, p. 177). Agatha’s willingness to suffer echoes the Apostle Paul’s urging of the early Christian church followers to rejoice in suffering afflictions of the body, as he himself did: ‘qui nunc gaudeo in passionibus pro vobis et adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum Christi in carne mea pro corpore eius quod est ecclesia’ (‘I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church’, Colossians 1.24). Suffering, wounded flesh could therefore be sanctified when the body was saintly. Conversely, suppurating flesh could also be a sign of the sinner needing sanctification, and these wounded bodies mingled at the tombs and shrines of saints, touching and being touched, healing and being healed.

(II, p. 909) instead of executioners, which I believe to be more appropriate as the saint is sliced up as though he is meat, also echoing the common biblical metaphorical imagery of Christ as a lamb that will be slaughtered.

Many pilgrims wanted to do more than leave a part of themselves behind with the sleeping holy corpse. Previously, simply touching the tomb had been enough to cause a miraculous exchange from one body to another. Bede describes people 'qui cum suum caput eidem loculo adponentes orassent' (who prayed with their heads touching the coffin) of Saint Etheldreda were shortly cured of the pain or dimness in their eyes.[89] But for other pilgrims, there was an earnest desire for even closer contact, and for this purpose some tombs had niches carved into them so that 'they were rendered tangible and penetrable by means of niches and holes, "squeezing places", into which the sick and devout could (in theory) get'.[90] Touching the body of the saint without the barrier of stone, however, was the ultimate act of intimacy between the mortal and the divine. In 1198, on opening the tomb of Saint Edmund, the abbot of the monastery runs his hands all over the saint's corpse, touching

> oculos et nasum valde grossum, et valde eminentem, et postea tetigit pectus et brachia, et sublevans manum sinistram digitos tetigit et digitos suos posuit inter digitos sanctos. Et procedens invenit pedes rigide erectos tanquam hominis hodie mortui, et digitos pedum tetigit, et tangendo numeravit.

> (the eyes and large nose, and afterwards he touched the breast and arms and, raising the left hand, he touched the fingers and placed his fingers between the fingers of the saint. And going further, he discovered the feet were rigidly upright, like those of a dead man today, and touched the toes of the feet and counted them as he touched them).[91]

[89] Bede, p. 396.
[90] Binski, p. 79.
[91] I. G. Gage Rokewood, 'Cronica Jocelini de Brakelonda' in *Camden Old Series*, 13 (1840), 1-103 (p. 84).

This deeply personal accounting of the individual parts that make up the body of the saint is reverential but also implicitly eroticised; the abbot's clutching fingers moving to slide between the fingers of the saint physically, spiritually and emotionally interlock the sleeping corpse to the abbot's body. Many sleeping corpses have deeply intimate relationships with their worshippers and Church-appointed caretakers, which transcend the platonic bonds mandated by faith.[92] Before being touched by the abbot, in the immediate years after his interment, Saint Edmund was cared for by a widow named Oswyn, who took it upon herself not only to live at the saint's tomb, but also to see to the personal hygiene of the sleeping corpse: 'seo wolde efsian ælce geare þone sanct and his næglas ceorfan syferlice mid lufe and on scryne healdan to haligdome on weofode,' ('She would cut the saint's hair every year and trim his nails lovingly and chastely, and keep them at the shrine as relics on the altar').[93] The chaste relationship between the widow and the corpse is typical of saintly and sanctified female behaviour, though the use and stressing of the word chaste does imply that one could have other feelings for a corpse that were not sanctified by the church. The urge to kiss, lick, and press against tombs, shrines, and the bodies and bones of saints is a common motif in hagiography, and is not limited only to pilgrims. Saint Paula, for example, on her pilgrimage around the holy sites of Jerusalem, 'kessed the stone […] and beclipp[ed] the places wher the holi body hadde layn and drowe into her mouthe the desired waters of beleue that she coueited' (I, p. 136). That the tomb also functioned as the body of the saint transfigures acts of worship into erotic acts of devotion between sanctified bodies. The most infamous act of mouthing at the bodies of saints is the record of Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, gnawing at the arm bones of the sleeping corpse of Mary Magdalene, in order to break off a relic for himself.[94]

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[92] Some priests even went so far as to marry the holy corpses in their care using surrogate statues of the saint in place of the body. Jacobus records two priests who marry the statue of St Agnes with the agreement of the Pope (I, p. 104).

[93] Ælfric, p. 54, trans. Stouck, p. 271.

[94] Jacobus often records relic theft as consensual gift giving, with the saint voluntarily shedding body parts to give to the worthy. For an example of this see Saint Catherine snapping off one of her own fingers to give to a

Justifying this behaviour to horrified onlookers, he argues that he consumes the body of Christ every time he takes the Eucharist. If cannibalising the body of the Lord is therefore sanctified, it followed that the same theory applied also to the Magdalene's corpse.[95] Hugh himself would later become a saint, his oral devotion an extreme expression of religious desire.

Mouths are key loci for the interplay between sacred and secular. If tombs are where powerful, penetrable, and penitent bodies become mingled together in acts of religious devotion and healing, the mouth is the opening through which the sensual and the spiritual are expressed. Multitudes of pilgrims used their mouths to express their religious desires, whether through kissing prayer books and other devotional materials, or imbibing elixirs of saint dust, blood or other bodily residue in hope of a cure.[96] The True Cross in Jerusalem had to have a guard detail 'posted round the piece of wood because an enthusiastic pilgrim once took a bite out of it when bending to "kiss" it, and carried away the precious bit in his mouth'.[97]

In hagiography, mouths, lips, and tongues act as gateways between worlds; the power of life, death, and resurrection was contained in the oral power of the saint. This reflected the biblical emphasis on the power of words to create physical objects in reality. That was, after all, how creation had come into existence: 'in principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum' (In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God:

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devoted monk in William Granger Ryan's translation of *The Golden Legend*, II. p. 339. Sadly, this event is not recorded in *The Gilte Legende*.

[95]Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita S.Hugonis Episcopi Lincolniensis: From Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Imperial Library, Paris*, ed. James F. Dimock (London: Longman, 1864), pp. 317-318.

[96] Medieval prayer books often showed the side wound of Christ as a red vertical oval with a slit in the middle, a depiction with clear vaginal connotations, mingling the erotic with the sacred in ways that modern readers might find uncomfortable or even sacrilegious. For a typical example of this type of image see the fourteenth-century *Prayer Book of Bonne of Luxembourg*, *Duchess of Normandy*, attributed to Jean Le Noir, in The Met Museum, The Cloisters Collection, 1969, 69.86. Bonne's son Jean is the owner of the Book of Hours mentioned in footnote 6.

[97] Finucane, p. 44.

and the Word was God, John 1.1). Saints mediate this power, their mouths guarding the power of God behind their teeth until it is unleashed in a demonstration of righteousness.

The Sleeping Corpse in Later Hagiography

Hagiography remained popular in the fifteenth century, though the genre itself continued to develop, as did reader expectations. Writers such as the Augustinian Friar Osbern Bokenham compiled *vitae* which relied more on Latin passion sources than on the *Golden Legend* or Chaucer's works, though Bokenham knew the *Golden Legend* well having translated it into Middle English.[98] He restored much of what earlier compilers such as Jacobus had removed including, as Winstead identifies, 'the long passages of prayer and teaching', even as he avoided much of the complex theology.[99] Simon Horobin notes in particular that Bokenham deliberately leaves out Jacobus' notes on the problem of Gregory and Trajan's soul.[100] Bokenham was also interested in making saints more emotionally sympathetic to his audience and particularly his patrons, recreating holy women as figures who were more in line with traditional female heroines of romance, embodying what Horobin calls 'the fifteenth-century ideal of *courtesye'* as well as their virtuous qualities and manners.[101]

In Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (c. 1447), the mouths of female saints are repeatedly noted for the gracious words they express, their ability to ventriloquise the Holy Spirit, and their power to silence their enemies.[102] Saint Elizabeth, famous for her

[98] I have described Bokenham as compiling hagiography though this is subject to debate. Simon Horobin references and agrees with the work of A. S. G. Edwards who posits that the *Legends of Holy Women* as a 'collection was never envisaged by Bokenham to be a single whole but was instead a selection of individual lives assembled piecemeal over time'. See Simon Horobin, 'Politics, Patronage, and Piety in the Work of Osbern Bokenham', *Speculum*, 82.4 (October 2007), 932-949, (p. 941.) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/20466082> [accessed 06 April 2021].
[99] Winstead, p. 124.
[100] Horobin, p. 938.
[101] Horobin, p. 938.
[102] The complete text survives in only one manuscript from 1447, British Library, MS Arundel 327.

prayers ‘of swych feruoure’, has her maid shake her foot to wake her during the night in order to express her devotion to God in prayer. [103] An excellent healer, she builds a hospital to tend to the sick, but the power of her prayers is her most powerful weapon in her attempts to cleanse the world of the sick and the sinful. As a result of her ability to increase the body heat of others by her fervent praying, one young man has to beg her, ‘Sesyth of preying, I beseche yow’ (l. 10502) because he is in danger of spontaneous combustion, being so hot that he ‘swet and rekyd meruelously’ (l. 10506).

Saint Katherine’s words silence some, though not all, of her detractors. The philosophers who are brought to challenge her are ‘So astonynyd […] of hyr talking / That noon of hem coude wurd furth bring, / But stodyn as style as newe-shorn shepe’ (ll. 6797-6799). Instead, it is they who are converted by the power of her speech. Like Saint Elizabeth, she has the power to transform both body and soul with her words, shaping new lives from old with her oratory. Consequently, female saints are generally executed by beheading, or mutilation of the neck, their executors muting their power to speak, challenge, or change their persecutors with their divine words as was attempted with Saint Cecilia in Chaucer’s ‘The Second Nun’s Tale’. This balancing of powers appears as a motif throughout the *Legendys*. Saint Agnes revives her attempted rapist who had been by the ‘deuyl […] stranglyd’ (l. 4427), offering the ‘sacryfyse of preyere’ (l. 4497) from an open heart and mouth to revive the choked body.[104] It is not enough to save her from a charge of witchcraft, however, and

[103] Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ed. Mary S. Serjeantson (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), l. 9713. All subsequent references to this text will be referenced parenthetically.

[104] Some critics point out that the common execution of female martyrs by sword, and the piercing of their bodies with weaponry as part of their torture or death, can be read as a metaphor for rape. This argument, however, undercuts the idea that female saints are divinely protected from rape and privileges male lust over the power of God. It is also incorrect to argue that only female saints are tortured or killed in this ‘phallic’ way, as the examples of Saint John the Baptist, Saint James Intercisus, and Saint Paul, to name but a few, prove. Even Christ is pierced with a spear. Unless one argues that all acts of penetration recreate the penetrated body as female, an argument that seems homophobic, misogynistic, and transphobic at best, then it is far too simplistic to label death by sword as a gendered experience and metaphor for rape. There is, however, a difference in the way female martyr death is presented in hagiography and how it is presented in accompanying illustrations. For more on the difference between the textual and visual presentation of martyr death in hagiography and the complicated discourse around medieval gender see Martha Easton, ‘Pain, torture and death in the Huntingdon

though her ‘wurdys of hert’ (l. 4552) contrast with the baying of the furious crowd who ‘blaspheme & crye’ (l. 4549), she suffers ‘a swerd both bryht & clere / Into hyr throte depe for to be sent’ (ll. 4598-9), which mutes her power to resurrect through prayer, but also any spell-casting ability she might be thought to possess. Her words are so powerful that even Bokenham admits his struggle as a mortal man to document her divine sayings, acknowledging that his poetry is insufficient to record words more authoritative than ‘I kan now expressyn here’ (l. 4590). Ultimately, whilst female saints may be eventually killed by this permanent silencing of their oral powers, the records of their *vitae* mean that their words live on and triumph over both grave and pagan persecutor. Their seeming silence is only temporary, whilst the documentation of their lives, like the Bible, leaves a permanent record of their gracious deeds and words.

The death of the saint cannot stop the miraculous though. Upon Saint Katherine’s execution ‘in steed of blood, / Of mylk þer ran owt swych a flood/From hyr nekke whan it was smete’ (ll. 7341-7343). The body speaks when the saint cannot, and the whiteness of the milk instead of pure blood, like the water which emerges from Christ’s side wound, indicates holy innocence. Sometimes death could not even stop the saint from speaking. Bokenham tells us that Saint Lucy, despite the fact that ‘in hyr throte þei shouyn a swerd’ (l. 9406) ‘not-wythstondyng þat greuous wounde / She kept hyr speche’ (ll. 9408-09). Defying her persecutor Pascas who has told her that ‘wurdys shul fayle / When tormentys þe onys begynne assayle’ (ll. 9221-9222), Lucy retains her divine speech, speaking with the power of the Holy Spirit and confirming her earlier statement that ‘goddys wurdys shal neuere cees’ (l. 9224), even seemingly in the face of death. Instead, ironically, it is Pascas who dies first,

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Library *Legenda aurea’*, in *Gender and Holiness: Men, women and saints in late medieval Europe*, ed. Samantha J.E Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 49-64. For a useful and sensitive exploration of saints and gender see *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Alicia Spencer-Hall and Blake Gutt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

having his own powers and presence silenced by being beheaded in Rome by his masters and going to Hell.

Hell, of course, had its own mouth, and was often depicted in medieval art complete with teeth and tongue.[105] Occasionally, this mouth became physically embodied in the devils sent to torment saints; Saint Margaret, after praying to see her adversary whilst in prison is swallowed by a dragon devil:

> This horrible beste vp-on hyr heed
> Put his mouth, whil she thus seyde,
> And eek his tunge, wych was fer reed
> Vndyr hyr hele anoon he leyde,
> And swelwyrd hyr in euene at a breyde.
> And whan hyr cros in his mouth dede encrees,
> He brast on two, & she scapyd harmless.
>
> (ll. 708-714).

Margaret's words summon a dragon which devours her whole, yet her faith is more powerful than this mouth of hell, which though demonic proves soft and vulnerable, exploding upon impact with her cross. Her faith proven and resolve hardened, the next devil sent to torment Margaret is not only interrogated verbally by her, but swallowed up by the earth after she is finished. The bodies of the holy are frequently intertwined or even absorbed in the demonic. As Jane Gilbert points out, sleeping corpses are 'troubled and troublesome even where their intervention was appreciated, and much more so when not'.[106] Frequently depicted as

[105] For a good example of this see British Library, MS 18850 f.157r, also known as the Bedford Hours, c. 1410-1430, which depicts sinners being thrown into a literal hellmouth on Judgement Day.
[106] Jane Gilbert, *Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 2.

dangerous, sometimes even deadly, saints act with righteous impunity against their enemies. Geary uses the term 'negative miracles' to describe when the intercession of dead saints against individuals or groups of people deliberately causes grotesque visions, illness, deformity, and death, which are commonly reported in hagiographies in tandem with positive miraculous intervention as part of the saint's remit.[107] These adverse phenomena are normally reserved for those who commit acts of blasphemy, doubt the power of a particular saint, or are pagan persecutors of Christians, and the punishments are therefore justified as virtuous because they cause the sinner to repent, or to serve as an example to others. These negative interventions often subvert the saint's most famous miracle or signature style of healing, turning it into a punishment, and furthering an established trope whereby the intended method of persecution against a saint produces an equal and opposing reaction. Originating in the Old Testament and exemplified in the crucifixion of Christ, which makes him immortal rather than killing him permanently, the trope occurs in numerous accounts in *The Golden Legend* and *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*. Speaking to St Agatha about her Roman persecutor Quintianus, St Peter tells her that though 'Wyt torment hath þe doon greth dere, / Yet hast þou hym wyth þine answere / Tormentyd more þan he hath þe' (ll. 8649-8651).

The best example of saints producing negative miracles is Saint Christine, who walks on water when her persecutors attempt to drown her; when they try burning her on an iron wheel, her prayer to God that He 'Sheu on þis fere þi myth & þi special grace' (l. 2485) makes the fire explode, killing fifteen hundred idol worshippers instead. Using the power of her prayer, as her female peers also do, she asks that her father and tormentor will die: 'Lord, aftyr his meritys lat hym hens pace, / And frustrate hym of his wyl, I þhe beseche' (ll. 2625-

[107] A good example of this is the eleventh-century account in the *Liber miraculorum sancta Fidis* of the disruptive French child saint, Sainte Foy, who killed three generations of the same noble family for threatening the monastery in which her relics resided. See Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, 'An Unsentimental View of Ritual in the Middle Ages Or, Sainte Foy was no Snow White', *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 6.1. (Winter 1992), pp. 63-85.

2626). That same night, ‘wyth sweyeh tormentrye / Þe deuyl hym vexyd þat he loude gan crye, / For al his entraylys for uere peyn dyde swelle; / And in þe same oure he orrebylly dyde dye’ (ll. 2630-2633). It is the devil who torments him and provokes his entrails to expand, once again intertwining the demonic with the divine and underscoring the notion of the saint having power over all things, even evil spirits, in order to create righteous justice in the world.

Killing her father via exploding entrails is not Christine’s only negative miracle. She leaves a host of bodies in her wake everywhere she goes, whether it is the body of her latest tormentor or the torturer doing his bidding. Her final judge, Julian, has a snake charmer throw snakes at her. Instead, the snake charmer dies (a clear inversion of the death miracle), but Christine shows beneficence and raises him, knowing he and others witnessing this resurrection will now convert. Like Martha raising the drowned boy, Christine invokes the image of Lazarus when praying, asking God: ‘Qwky hym ageyne, lord, þrough þi mercy, / That al men seying wych resound ham / May thy name glorify now & endlessly’ (ll. 2976-2979). Julian, ‘angryd wyth þat Cristine seyde, / Commaundyd hir tong out kut to be’ (ll. 3051-3052) but cannot stop her praying to God before this happens, who blesses her. Despite the sounding of this heavenly voice Julian has her tongue ‘rent out cruelly’ (l.3069), whereas like Saint Lucy, not only does Saint Christine retain her speech, but also chews off a piece of her tongue which she ‘spyt in his face, & hys oon eye / So sore it smet þat þe sycht was blent’ (ll. 3072-3073).[108] This act is not the first time Christine has thrown bits of her body at her persecutor. In an inversion of the Eucharist, she throws a ‘gobet’ (l. 2469) of her own flesh at her father’s face, saying, ‘Syth þou desyryst flessh for to eet / Seke no forthere nere in noon oþer place. / Haue of þine own & faste gyne to frete’ (ll. 2472-2474). Through the

[108] Jacobus also notes this miracle in the *Golden Legend*, where he recounts that though Christine’s tongue is cut out, she retains her speech (I, p. 387).

cannibalisation of her own body to form a weapon to hurt her persecutor, Saint Christine's teeth, tongue and mouth not only contain divine oratory, but literally spit out divine judgement too. Blinded by her actions, deaf to divine intervention and dumb before Christine's oratory, Julian literally loses his sight and metaphorically loses his other senses in the face of the saint's superior ones. Hugh of Lincoln may chew on the corpse of Saint Mary Magdalene to access and keep her holy power, but through chewing on her own body, Saint Christine becomes a substitute saviour, a pseudo-Christ; yet not to save the world, but to damn it.[109] Thus, unlike some of the pagan persecutors of hagiography, Christine's three tormentors are unrepentant, unsaved, and dead by the end of the narrative.

Gail Ashton views the women of Bokenham's *Legendys* as having so 'little or no subjectivity of their own, they function as exemplar, highly praised for their ability to reflect patristic and patriarchal ideals of how this second, inferior sex ought to behave'.[110] I disagree with Ashton's assessment of Bokenham's female saints as 'ciphers, puppets, which his narrative discourse attempts to control', however. It's difficult to reconcile his depiction of saints as patriarchally perfect when Saint Elizabeth is depicted as almost accidentally internally combusting a man and Christine happily mutilates her mouth to blind her persecutor. Powerful icons of the power inherent in divine female speech, these female saints provide authorised, but also patriarchally subversive ideas of womanhood for Bokenham's female readers.

The Sleeping Corpse Outside of Hagiography: Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*

Hagiography was not the only place saints' tales appeared, nor was it the only place where the importance of speech and the liminal space of the mouth was exemplified in the saint's

[109] John 12.47.
[110] Gail Ashton, *The Generation of Identity in Late Medieval Hagiography: Speaking the Saint* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 35.

body. In Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century work, *The Canterbury Tales*, a poem which frames its narrative around travellers on a pilgrimage to the sleeping corpse of Saint Thomas Becket, two female members of the medieval religious community relate two tales of saints who linger between life and death in order to continue to speak to their communities.[111]

In 'The Second Nun's Tale', the life and death of Saint Cecilia are retold, with Chaucer largely following *The Golden Legend*, whilst also incorporating other versions, in order to highlight Cecilia's qualities as a preacher, teacher, and righteous speaker.[112] After an attempted execution with 'Thre strokes in the nekke', she lingers on for three days, having asked God to spare her for the allotted time in order to consolidate her preaching to her household.[113] Despite being 'half deed, with hir nekke ycorven there' (*SNT*, l. 533) she miraculously retains the power of speech and thus blessed, she 'nevere cessed hem the feith to teche / That she hadde fostred; hem she gan to preche' (*SNT*, ll. 538-539). Her words have meaning and power though they come from a corpse, in contrast to the power and the words which come forth from her persecutor Almachius, who is only capable of seeming 'a bladdre ful of wynd' (*SNT*, l. 439). He is a body full of nothing but hot air and empty of meaning.

Karen Winstead characterises Cecilia as a character who 'contrasts strikingly with the long-suffering, chaste "martyrs" celebrated by Chaucer's male pilgrims: the Man of Law's Constance, the Clerk's Griselda, and the Physician's Virginia'.[114] Though Cecilia is chaste

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[111] Karen Winstead notes that Chaucer is one of only two laymen who compose a *vita* of a saint. See Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 65. De Gruyter ebook. The framework of the *Canterbury Tales*, with its interlocking tale structure is, however, explicitly based on the secular *Decameron*. See Glending Olson, 'Geoffrey Chaucer' in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 566-588, (p. 586).

[112] Sherry L. Reames argues that Chaucer most likely worked from *The Golden Legend* and an anonymous Roman curia/Franciscan liturgical abridgement of the *Passio S. Caeciliae.* See Sherry L. Reames, 'The Second Nun's Prologue and Tales' in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales* I, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 491-528. Cambridge Core ebook.

[113] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Second Nun's Tale' in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) l. 526. This edition is based on the work of F.N. Robinson, with additional consultation of Pratt, J.M.Manly and E. Rickert, the latter of which use all known manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*. All subsequent references to this text will be referenced parenthetically.

[114] Winstead, p. 102.

she does not meekly and patiently suffer as these other three women do. Her responses to Almachius are 'rude' (*SNT*, l. 432) and increasingly insulting as she mocks him as **'**a lewed officer and a veyn justise' (SNT, l. 497), his 'nycetee' (*SNT*, l. 463) or foolishness provoking her to laughter (*SNT*, l. 462).[115] Cecilia is so fervent in her preaching and admonitions that Chaucer has to cut her castigations short; **'**Thise wordes and swiche othere seyde she' (l. 512); and, likewise, we never hear what Cecilia says over the three days that she lingers on in her death-state preaching. One of her most important points of rhetoric which Chaucer does retain, however, is her framing of Almachius as a flawed ruler because of the great lie that he believes:

> Thou seyst thy princes han thee yeven myght
> Bothe for to sleen and for to quyken a wight;
> Thou, that ne mayst but oonly lyf bireve,
> Thou hast noon oother power ne no leve.
>
> (*SNT*, ll. 480-483)

Almachius as a 'Ministre of deeth' (*SNT*, l. 485) cannot raise the dead - he can only kill the living. The power of resurrection, Cecilia implies, belongs only to the Christian God and to those chosen faithful also deemed worthy of this gift.

Chaucer's other hagiographic narrative, 'The Prioress's Tale', also centres on a body with its throat cut which lingers on in order to give praise to Heaven, but this time the body is that of a murdered seven-year-old child. An anti-Semitic miracle of the Virgin which explicitly references the blood libel of the thirteenth-century child saint Hugh of Lincoln,

[115] Jacobus' Cecilia never laughs at Almachius, exchanging only a quick paced back and forth with him before her attempted execution, an emphasis that demonstrates Jacobus' interest in the saints' lives as holy examples, rather than as individuals with personalities (II, p. 318).

'The Prioress's Tale' tells of an unnamed boy killed by Jews as he is singing the *Alma redemptoris* to the Virgin Mary.[116] His body is then thrown into a pit toilet and left for dead. Through the divine intervention of the mother of Christ, he is found in the pit by his own mother, because miraculously 'Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright, / He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge'.[117] After being brought into the nearest abbey, still singing, he explains the phenomenon to the mystified abbot: '"My thote is kut unto my nekke boon/ […] and, as by wey of kynde, / I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon"' (*TPT*, ll. 649-651), but a divine grain has been placed on his tongue, which allows him to remain in a liminal state between life and death, singing the praise of the Virgin. Andrew Albin views this miracle as a type of the immaculate conception, remarking that 'as Gabriel delivers the Word of God from his mouth into Mary's womb, so the Virgin delivers the mysterious *greyn* into the *clergeon's* mouth, both encounters enacting a miraculous transaction of salvific life and voice'.[118] Both 'transactional life' stories end with the premature and painful death of a beloved child however, as the grain is eventually removed from the child's tongue and his body is finally allowed to be still and quiet. Albin also notes that the child's 'slit throat, the sign of the clergeon's martyrdom, comes to substitute for his fleshy lips and meaty tongue, becoming the newly available organ through which Alma redemptoris mater can miraculously flow'.[119] This slit throat resembles the gaping slit wound in Christ's side. Unlike Christ, however, this child remains anonymous throughout the poem, unknown and without purpose except to sing a song he does not understand the words to as it is in Latin (*TPT*, l. 523).[120] Where Christ's

[116] The child saint Hugh of Lincoln is not to be confused with Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln who is mentioned earlier in this chapter.
[117] Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prioress's Tale' in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) ll.611-612. All subsequent references to this text will be referenced parenthetically.
[118] Andrew Albin, 'The Prioress's Tale, Sonorous and Silent', *The Chaucer Review*, 48.1 (2013) 91-112 (pp. 91-92) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/chaucerrev.48.1.0091> [accessed 26 March 2021].
[119] Albin, p. 104.
[120] It is important to note that the child's lack of knowledge is superfluous as the words are efficacious in themselves. Once again, the power of the Christian word is emphasised. Where God creates the world with the Word, here the child creates a world where words pause death, even if this is only for a short time.

side wound was proof of death to the Roman soldiers around him, the child's singing wound is proof of the child's liminal status as neither dead or alive, and its very existence poses a problem to those around him — what to do with a corpse that is not yet saintly but will also not be quiet.

Chaucer's narrative is different in several ways to many of the previous analogues.[121] As Albert Friedman notes, the most obvious difference is that 'in the oldest form of the story the murdered boy's singing leads to the discovery of his body, he is restored to life, and his resuscitation excites, in most cases, the conversion of the Jews'.[122] Instead, in Chaucer's retelling, the Jews who know of the murder are brutally executed by the local magistrate, whilst removal of the grain ends the miracle and the child is buried. The boy returns to his spiritual mother, rather than his mortal one. Other differences in the source materials have the boy's tongue being cut out instead of his throat being cut, as in the case of Christine and many other female martyrs who have their throats and mouths mutilated in order to silence them. In other versions where the tongue is missing, Friedman explains that writers 'felt constrained to supply its place by a gem, a white pebble, and in one case the pretty but gagging device of a lily'.[123] Symbolising his purity of mind and speech, the flower also strongly links the child to previous saintly bodies, such as the Seven Sleepers, and Saint Cecilia, named after the lily itself. Floral imagery, such as the roses and apples which appear in the life of Saint Dorothy, solidifies the sweetness and purity of the saint and provide echoes of the Edenic garden paradise. Additionally, flower imagery links the saints with the romance genre, where clandestine lovers meet in gardens, sleeping corpses rest in forests, and

[121] In her overview of the sources of the tale Laurel Broughton records that there are thirty-eight analogues to the story including thirty-two miracles of the Virgin. See Laurel Broughton, 'The Prioress's Prologue and Tale' in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales: Vol. II*, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 583-648. ProQuest Central Ebook.
[122] Albert B. Friedman, 'The Mysterious Greyn in the "Prioress's Tale", *The Chaucer Review*, 11.4 (Spring, 1977), 328-333, (p. 331) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25093399> [accessed 01 June 2018].
[123] Friedman, p. 331.

bodies are wakened by the power of flora, fauna, and occasionally a kiss. In choosing to have a grain on the boy's tongue and not a flower, and in ending the narrative with a death and not a resurrection, however, Chaucer neatly punctures a happy miracle and shapes it into something more like a tragic romance, intertwining the macabre more firmly with the miraculous, but also with the scatological. Frances McCormack, in her reading of the tale, emphasises the fact that the boy's corpse is thrown into a privy pit, but not given any ceremonial washing afterwards, thus 'the human defilement of his first burial is enshrined with him in his marble tomb'.[124] Andrew Albin disagrees and sees the body as 'a precious stone fastened in its setting; his body is purified beyond putrefaction and becomes jewel-like, "This gemme of chastite, this emeraude, / And eek of martirdom the ruby bright".[125] Whether the child is viewed as a martyr, saintly object, or point of scatological curiosity, his corpse is ultimately a site of anxiety, a body which Shannon Gayk categorises as 'semantically ambiguous […] the body is "thing" precisely insofar as it lingers in the liminal space between death and life, between animate and inanimate, between object and subject'.[126] In this narrative, the Virgin Mary cannot reverse the death of this child, just as she cannot prevent the death of her own son. As a healer, she can only delay the inevitable, making the corpse sing out to be recuperated from its inappropriate resting place to a more suitable one within the Christian community. Innocence is still lost in death, despite the soul's final destination being Heaven. The potential of the grain as a symbol of rebirth is therefore subverted; as the child Hugh never reaches his full adult potential, so Chaucer subverts his readers' expectations of a happy ending. Instead, the poem ends with the tomb of **'**marbul stones

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[124] Frances McCormack, ''By mouth of innocentz': rhetoric and relic in the Prioress's Tale', *Chaucer's Poetry: Words, authority and ethics*, ed. Clíodhna Carney and Frances McCormack (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 107-120 (p. 114).

[125] Albin, p. 103. I disagree with McCormack's assessment and see the moment that the child is sprinkled with holy water before his first attempted burial as a cleansing scene, which both metaphorically and physically would wash him of whatever excrement might cover his body.

[126] Shannon Gayk, '"To wondre upon this thyng": Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*', *Exemplaria*, 22.2 (2010), 138-156 (p. 142) < DOI: 10.1179/104125710X12670930868171>.

cleere' (*TPT*, 681) that the child is buried in. Niamh Patwell recognises that the 'monument should operate as a sign of the boy's translation to the heavenly realm, a reminder of his miraculous story. Instead, it becomes more about the site of his body on earth'.[127] The clear marble of the tomb implies that the body would be visible, accessible to worshippers who would be able to see the child and the murderous wound made miraculous. As clear marble does not exist, however, and Chaucer most likely means pure white stone, the tomb can be read as semi-translucent, revealing the body of the child as a shadow at its centre as if to emphasise the horror of the narrative.

This creeping sense of realism and anxiety, even in miracle stories, about what constitutes the ending of the living body is closely tied to the rise of the macabre from the twelfth century onwards. Just because medieval pilgrims wanted to get close to the saintly undead, does not mean that death and the dead were not frightening. Caroline Walker Bynum argues that whilst the dead were part of the everyday human experience, "nonetheless it would be both superficial and inaccurate to say that medieval people were "comfortable" with death'.[128] Instead, anxieties and scepticism about resurrection become more widely articulated.

Church art changes; the Danse Macabre and Transi tombs appear, and sometimes the returned body is a half-dead thing as seen in the tale of *The Three Living and the Three Dead*, in which three rotting corpses encounter three princes out hunting in a forest, warning them that they will soon become animated skeletal figures themselves.[129] This is not to say that conversations with the dead and the undead, as opposed to the holy sleeping dead, have not

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[127] Niamh Patwell, 'Patterns of Disruption in the *Prioress's Tale*', *Chaucer's Poetry: Words, Authority and Ethics*, ed. Clíodhna Carney and Frances McCormack (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 37-47 (p. 47).
[128] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages: Some Modern Implications', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 142.4 (December 1998), 589-596.
[129] For an insight into the relationship between the poetry and the artistic representations of *The Thee Living and the Three Dead* see Carleton Williams, 'Mural Painting of the Three Living and the Three Dead In England', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, Third Series 7 (1942), 31-40.

been related earlier. Echoing the anti-Semitism of 'The Prioress's Tale', in the *Golden Legend* Saint Macarius converses with a skull that he finds in order to confirm the horror of existence after death for those who do not make it to Heaven:

> whanne he hadde made his praiers he asked of the hede of whom he was, and he saide: 'Of a panyme.' Thanne saide Makarie: 'Wher is thi soule?' And he saide: 'In helle.' He asked hym yef he were depe, and he saide that he was as depe as the erthe is ferre fro heuene. Thanne Makarie saide: 'Is ther any mo depper thanne thou?' He saide: 'Ye, the Iues.' Thanne Makerie saide: 'Is ther any more depper thanne Iues?' Thanne saide the hede: 'The deppest of alle bene fals cristen men that were bought [of] the blode of Ihesu Crist and despisen the price therof.'
>
> (I, p. 94).

The saint's response to this conversation is not recorded, but given the nonchalant attitude of Macarius to his earlier encounter with the demon inhabited corpse, presumably he is equally unfazed by this conversation and its details, especially given that he initiated it. Unlike the abbot trying to work out why the dead child in his abbey is singing in 'The Prioress's Tale', Macarius is curious but calm and collected in his questioning. He knows the skull is conversant for a reason and that it will soon stop talking once he has the answers he seeks. Not every saint is quite so relaxed, however, when it comes to speaking with sleeping corpses.

Subversive Hagiography: The Problem of the Sleeping Corpse in *Saint Erkenwald*

In the anonymous alliterative fourteenth-century poem *Saint Erkenwald*, the perfectly preserved body of a just, pagan judge is uncovered during the seventh-century reconstruction

of St Paul's Cathedral.[130] The poem exists in only one medieval manuscript, British Library, MS Harley 2250, and there is no critical consensus on what genre the poem belongs to, with some critics, such as Jennifer Sisk, believing that '*St. Erkenwald*, although an unusual representative of the genre, is best approached as a hagiography'.[131] Others, such as Eric Weiskott, see it as 'more romance than hagiography. Its overall effect is to raise historical questions, not to settle theological ones'.[132] If it is read as a hagiography then it is an entirely fictitious type of hagiographical poem because, as Stefan Schustereder has pointed out, despite the fact that Saint Erkenwald was a real person, 'There is no historical source for the meeting of the bishop with the corpse of a righteous pagan judge buried underneath St Paul's Cathedral' and it is not mentioned in the hagiographies of the saint.[133] Lastly, Monika Otter argues that 'the poem is also about (if not primarily about) the hermeneutical questions of how we relate to our past and how we read the discoveries we make about our past'.[134] Compounding these problems of genre, the narrative of the poem raises several other important but difficult issues including how we encounter the dead and how death is quantified, what makes something holy, and whether a soul can be saved after death. The poem offers few answers, if any, in response.

At the start of the poem, as the masons are working on the building's foundations, they come across a 'ferly faire toumbe', gilded with unreadable gold lettering and holding

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[130] The authorship of the poem remains contentious, with earlier critical consensus being that the writer of *Saint Erkenwald* was also the Pearl Poet of British Library, MS Cotton Nero A. x. art.,3. Whilst this is an attractive argument because of the intriguing links between *Erkenwald* and Gawain's search for a chapel which also contains a liminal body caught between life and death, tenuous evidence means it remains unpersuasive. See Stefan Schustereder, 'Coming to Terms With A Pagan Past: The Story of St Erkenwald', *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 48.2-3 (2013), 71-92 (p. 74) <DOI: 10.2478/stap-2013-0008>.

[131] Jennifer L. Sisk, 'The Uneasy Orthodoxy of *St. Erkenwald*', *ELH*, 74.1 (Spring, 2007) 89-115 (p. 93) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30029547> [accessed 23 March 2021].

[132] Eric Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 132. Cambridge Core ebook.

[133] Schustereder, p. 78.

[134] Monika Otter, '"New Weke": *St. Erkenwald*, St. Albans, and the medieval sense of the past', *Journal of* Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 24 (1994), 387-414, (p. 405).

within it a corpse arrayed like a king.[135] Not only are his rich and beautiful 'wede vnwemmyd' (l. 96), but his features have been untouched by time or decay either. Instead, the corpse looks uncannily alive:

> And als freshe hym þe face and the fleshe nakyde
> Bi his eres and bi his hondes þat openly shewid
> Wyt ronke rode, as þe rose, and two rede lippes
> As he in sounde sodanly were slippide opon slepe
>
> (ll. 89-92).

The meruayle (l. 114) of the sleeping corpse is a problem miracle, however. It causes 'troubelle in þe pepul / And suche a cry aboute a cors' (ll. 109-110) that it forces Bishop Erkenwald to return from his visit to an abbey in Essex in order to resolve the 'mysterie of þis meruaile' (l. 125). It might be expected that the biggest concern about the perfectly preserved corpse is why it is so undecayed and what this miracle of conservation portends, but the real issue for the people is that they know nothing about him: 'one cronicle of þis kynge con we neuer fynde, / He has non layne here so longe, to loke hit by kynde, / To malte so out of memorie bot meruayle hit were' (ll. 156-158). The corpse presents an archival problem in that he cannot be labelled with a name or a position and there is no memory or record of him, nor can his tomb be read. Cynthia Turner Camp has pointed out that 'Over one-third of the poem (approximately 135 of 350 lines) is dedicated to the indecipherability of the tomb and the failure of established commemorative processes to identify the corpse', and in fact the judge remains anonymous throughout the text, much as the child in 'The Prioress's Tale'

[135] *Saint Erkenwald*, ed. Clifford Peterson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), l. 46. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.

does.[136] Thus the central question at the heart of the poem about identity after death seems to indicate that whilst one can be unknown to man one will always be known to God and His grace. The poem also seems to suggest that this grace needs an audience, however, or at least witnesses and / or living participants. The corpse has been preserved precisely for this moment of discovery and his anonymous status indicates that the miracle is less about the corpse as an individual and more about the power of God and Erkenwald's reaction to the situation. This is further supported by Emily Dalton's observation that 'Though the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries produced several narratives recounting the discovery of the tombs or bodies of virtuous pagans, St. Erkenwald is unique in introducing an inscription that is left untranslated at the end of the poem'.[137] Whilst the tomb is unreadable, hagiography teaches that the dead are not unreachable and so Erkenwald 'turnes to þhe toumbe and talkes to þe corce' (l. 177). His questions, like those asked by Macarius, are to the point and interrogative:

> Sithen we wot not qwo þou art witere vs þiselwen
> In worlde quat weghe þou was and quy þow þus ligges,
> How longe þou has layne here and quat laghe þou vyst
> Queþer art þou ioyned to ioy oþir iuggid to pyne.
>
> (ll. 185-188)

The corpse's response to this sustained questioning also proves troublesome though. Speaking through Grace 'þurghe sum Goste lant lyfe of him þat al redes' (l. 192), the dead

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[136] Cynthia Turner Camp, 'Spatial Memory, Historiographic Fantasy, and the Touch of the Past in *St. Erkenwald*', *New Literary History*, 44.3 (Summer 2013), 471-491 (p. 479) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542570> [accessed 23 March 2021].
[137] Emily Dalton, "Clansyd hom in Cristes nome": Translation of Spaces and Bodies in St. Erkenwald', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 117.1 (January 2018), 56-83 (p. 75) <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/issue/38030> [accessed 23 March 2021].

body explains that despite being a just and upright man, his soul is stuck in Limbo because he was born before the time of Christ and was therefore unable to be baptised. He is sad, cold, and hungry and his pitiful situation provokes deep compassion from his audience who 'alle weoyd for woo þe words þat herden' (l. 310). Shocked at both what they are hearing and who is telling them this, the people are metaphorically transformed themselves into frozen, sorrowing bodies trapped in the telling of the story: 'In al þis worlde no worde, ne wakenyd no noice / Bot al as stille as þe ston stoden and listonde / With meche wonder forwrast, and wepid ful mony' (ll. 218–20). Weiskott argues that this 'reaction of the onlookers expresses not so much pity on a heathen soul as the unspeakable horror of reanimation. For all that the resurrection of the judge recalls typologically the Resurrection of Jesus, in the world of the poem it embodies the unaccountable'.[138] However, whilst I agree that there is horror and anxiety expressed here, as there always is in resurrection narratives, I do not believe that it is directed at the animated body. After all, the Judge has merely been given the power of speech by Erkenwald, not full reanimation. The corpse has not been resurrected to tell its story, but like the skull talking to Macarius it is able to use its earthly remains to ventriloquise its own body from its soul's position in the spiritual realms. The corpse of the judge is therefore no different from that of any of the preserved saints that pilgrims would have come to see and to pray to, being souls separate from but still connected to their bodies. The horror that the onlookers feel in the Judge's case is that his soul is in Limbo through an accident of birth, rather than in Heaven.[139]

Deeply moved by the corpse's story, Erkenwald sheds 'lauande teres' (l. 314), simultaneously asking that God grant the body life long enough for him to be baptised, and

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[138] Weiskott, p. 135.

[139] Frank Grady also reads active anxiety later in the poem, this time expressed by Erkenwald, who worries that the corpse might die again without being baptised. Grady argues that the word 'daungerde' (l. 320) is more than just 'the bishop's sense of obligation to a newly discovered soul who falls under his pastoral jurisdiction' and that instead the situation is 'seriously and personally unsettling to the bishop'. See Frank Grady, 'Looking Awry at *St Erkenwald*', *Exemplaria*, 23:2 (2011) 105-125, (p. 107) <DOI: 10.1179/104125711X12946752336109>.

thus save his soul from limbo. This happens to be unnecessary, however, as Erkenwald's own body is holy, and like saints who emit healing oils, his tears are holy enough to baptise the corpse when one drop falls on his face. Erkenwald's words shape reality around him: his compassion and his unknowing deployment of the sacrament of baptism through his weeping saves the judge. This post-death conversion further compounds the problematic nature of the poem. As William Quinn points out, 'To baptize the living is, of course, effective; to baptize the dead is, with equal certainty, a pointless misapplication of the Sacrament'.[140] Recovery of a damned soul has happened before. In the *Golden Legend*, Jacobus records the well-known, if theologically controversial, story of Pope Gregory and the Roman emperor Trajan. The latter has been dead for a number of years, when Gregory weeps over the emperor's sins whilst recalling his many good attributes. Immediately, God interrupts the saint's crying with a stern warning: ''Lo, I haue saued Troyan fro euerlastinge payne, but kepe the dilygentely fro hennes forward that thou praie for none that is dampned'' (I, p. 205). Jacobus notes the problems with this story and the problems subsequent commentators have had, recording that 'some sayn that Troian was repeled ayein to lyff […] other sayen that the soule of Troian was not simply assoiled from euerlasting payne, but his payne was suspended vnto the day of dome' (I, p. 205), as well as other solutions to this theological upset. He also records that Gregory himself has to suffer ongoing illness as punishment during his life because he has rescued a person already damned by God, emphasising the forbidden aspect of what he has done (I, p. 206). Erkenwald's rescue of the corpse is slightly different from this incident as the corpse seems to have been deliberately preserved by God for Erkenwald to save, rather than Erkenwald accidentally saving a pagan who has no business being in Heaven. There is

[140] William A. Quinn, 'The Psychology of *St.* Erkenwald', *Medium Ævum*, 53.2 (1984), 180-193 (p. 182) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43628826> [accessed 23 March 2021].

still an undercurrent of tension in the poem though, which is expressed by the body's sudden failure after its seeming salvation:

> Bot sodenly his swete chere swyndid & faylide
> And alle the blee of his body wos blakke, as þe moldes,
> As rotene as þe rottok þat rises in powdere.
> For assone as þe soule was sesyd in blisse,
> Corrupt was þat oþer crafte þat couert þe bones,
> For þe ay-lastande life, þat lethe shalle neuer
> Deuoydes vche a vayne-glorie þat vayles so litelle.
>
> (ll. 342-348)

Unlike in 'The Prioress's Tale' where the body is given the last rites by the abbot but still will not go, here the body abruptly departs having received the sacrament it has been waiting for. There is no tidy resolution to the body, however. In a subversion of the incorruptible bodies of the holy, this sleeping corpse dissolves itself into a dusty, mouldy, black goop. No relics of the pagan judge are left to remain; instead the body becomes a repulsive, shadowy stain even as the judge's soul rests in paradise. The poet seems to recognise the incongruity of the dichotomy of this image, concluding that 'Meche mournynge and myrthe was mellyd to-geder' (l. 350) as the people process out of the Cathedral and the bells are rung. It is an abrupt and unexpected ending to the poem and one which concludes with silence from Erkenwald. After his unexpected baptising of the body, the reader might expect him to have some comforting final words to speak to the assembled crowd. Instead, he says nothing. Kenneth Rooney notes that 'all the corpse in *Erkenwald* is charged to be is simply a "tongue"; a

mouthpiece to yield testimony to the grace of God'.[141] But if this rotten body is a tongue, it is one that has only a limited worthiness. Silenced once more, the pagan body becomes indistinguishable from the rottenness of the ordinary corpse; silent, stinking, and dangerous in its corruptness. It seemingly also silences Erkenwald at the same time. Only the bells of the city are left to sound sonorously, but it is left to the reader to decide whether they ring in celebration, in mourning, or in warning.

Further complicating this uneasy meld of emotions is not only the effect of this dissolving corpse on the local people, but also on the poem's readers. Mary Boyle argues that 'this sudden decay emphasizes that these converts are not themselves to be considered holy. The miracle performed upon them was the work of a saint and it is saints, not converts, whose bodies are holy'.[142] This theology would not be initially clear to anyone reading the poem. The preservation of the corpse would suggest, as has been seen with earlier saintly bodies, that the judge's body is itself holy too and its incorruptibility would be in line with other hagiographical works and with reader's expectations. The sudden sludgy decay of the corpse is thus doubly shocking on both visual and religious levels. That the corpse in many ways mirrors Erkenwald himself adds a final layer of unease to the poem.

Several critics have outlined the uncomfortable parallels between the pagan judge and the poem's saint. William Quinn argues that 'the pagan judge is — if not biologically, then psychologically — born again in St Erkenwald', whilst Emily Dalton has noted that the situation of the tomb within St. Paul's mirrors the location of Erkenwald's own tomb, a space that would have been known to contemporary readers of the poem.[143] [144] These doublings remind the reader of Erkenwald's own eternal rest and the status of his body within his own

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[141] Kenneth Rooney*, Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), p. 133.
[142] Mary Boyle, 'Converting Corpses: The Religious Other in the Munich *Oswald* and *St. Erkenwald*', *Oxford German Studies*, 44.2 (2015), 113-135 (p. 131) <DOI: 10.1179/0078719115Z.00000000080>.
[143] Quinn, p. 188.
[144] Dalton, pp. 79-80.

tomb, but also of their own mortality and the question of what remains, physical or otherwise, when we die. More broadly, the fate of the unknown corpse mimics the fate of the writer of the poem, in that what has been left behind is a preserved body, this time of work, but also the incomprehension and unknowability of identification. As in 'The Second Nun's Tale' and 'The Prioress' Tale', the miracles presented in this text are only temporary and what is left when a corpse inevitably stops speaking is silence. Christine Chism notes that 'this eerie exchange shadows the recuperative congress between present and past, living and dead that a saint's shrine offers, where the living come to prove the miraculous power of the saint's fragmented body to heal the disruptions of death, illness, and sin.[145] Fundamentally, however, it is the reality in the poem that this exchange has temporal limits and that whilst conversing with the dead and with the sleeping dead is possible, it is both conditional and ultimately transient. Recuperation is possible, but it is limited.

The Romance Fairy Tale of Hagiography

The relationship between Christians, pagans, and the sleeping dead in both the Bible and some of the more famous hagiographical works of the medieval period is, as I have explored in this chapter, complex and often contradictory. At the heart of these narratives, however, are two concerns: first, how to quantify the nature of death; second, how a community copes with the death of an important figure and how it can rebuild itself around the loss so that it is still able to maintain a relationship with the deceased. Like the genre of hagiography itself, these relationships are not static. The connections between the sleeping corpse and the people around it are dynamic, reverent, hopeful, and active. Sleeping corpses are figures who help, who offer remedies to the sick and the dying, and who offer ordinary people a conduit to a

[145] Christine Chism, *Alliterative Revivals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 58. DeGruyter ebook.

higher power, whether through their divine oratory or through their divine presence. Having experienced great suffering, they are able to empathise with the suffering of others and act as a salve to physical hurts, both literally and metaphorically. The relationship between the sleeping corpse and the community can also, however, be painful and ultimately deadly if saints are not given the respect that they feel they deserve. Whether living or dead, they can punish their persecutors, chastise demons, inflict disease upon the unworthy, and even kill.

Monika Otter argues that hagiography 'remained popular throughout the Middle Ages. It was especially strong after the great monastic reforms, from about the tenth to the twelfth centuries, but it survived much longer; in fact, it has not really died out yet'.[146] Likewise, the sleeping corpse motif survives through the centuries. The motif changes and appears in genres other than hagiography, but it does not die out. Hagiography itself combines multiple aspects of other genres including romance and fairy tale and I would like to conclude this chapter by looking at two brief examples from hagiography to demonstrate how aspects of romance and fairy tale are intertwined within these religious narratives.

In 1173, William of Canterbury records the curious case of an eight-year-old boy named Philip who drowns in an ironstone quarry. When all mortal efforts to resuscitate him have failed, his mother has the Water of St Thomas the Martyr fetched from a nearby village. Pouring it down the mouth of the corpse is no easy task however, and Philip's mother experiences a nasty accident: as they resort to opening the 'closed mouth and the fast-clenched teeth with a spindle or some such thing, she happened to put in her finger; and, as the spindle slipped out, her finger was caught fast and almost pierced to the bone by the clenching teeth'.[147] Philip's father has to break his son's teeth with a knife to remove her finger and eventually, after much pleading with the saint, the water is swallowed and the

[146] Otter, pp. 391-392.
[147] *St Thomas of Canterbury, His Life and Miracles,* trans. Edwin A. Abbott (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1898), p. 165.

child wakes up. The mother's finger is not mentioned again, and one assumes that it is healed with human methods rather than divine, but this image of the child, the mother in pain, the pierced finger, the sleeping corpse, and the spindle has echoes of the crucifixion. The wounds caused by the nails piercing Christ's hands and feet and the spear thrust into his side are used as one of the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus, but they also reflect the metaphorical piercing that the Virgin Mary suffers when her son dies. Upon meeting the infant Jesus in the temple, Simeon prophesies that she will be in agony at his death, 'et tuam ipsius animam pertransiet gladius ut revelentur ex multis cordibus cogitationes' ('a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed', Luke 2.35). The images in this tale recall other moments in hagiography and medieval secular narratives when teeth bite down on the bones and flesh of bodies and intertwine the holy with the sinful. The use of the spindle, a seemingly throwaway detail, connects the story to larger ideas of women's power and behaviour. Winstead notes that medieval people associated spindles and needles with unruly women who 'flaunt their power over men', but they were often also associated with saints and with industrious women.[148] Virgin martyrs who defied the traditional, meek behaviours expected of ordinary women were often associated with spindles.[149] Coon gives the example of the spindles of Saint Radegund of Poitiers, which were 'so infused with the Holy Spirit that they could expel demons from the cloister'.[150] One of the most obvious metaphorical examples of saints and needlework is found in the Saint Cecilia narrative, where the saint points out that she is able to burst the windy speeches of Almachius 'with a nedles poynt' (*SNT*, l. 440), deflating his ego as well as his spirits. The word of God may be sharper than a two-edged sword, but in the hands of a saint a rhetorical needle will do just as well.[151] Spindles are also most obviously associated with the *Sleeping*

[148] Proverbs 31.
[149] Winstead, p. 96.
[150] Coon, p. 43.
[151] Hebrews 4.12

Beauty fairy tale, a story which largely revolves around women and how they resolve, through magic and kindness, a disastrous situation caused by a perceived slight. Though the spindle in the Canterbury narrative does not directly cause any hurt, its accidental removal and replacement with the mother's finger indicates the interchangeability of women and their tools and the close association between spindles and women's pain.

The second example draws on a different aspect of *Sleeping Beauty* lore: the enchanted sleep. In the *Golden Legend*, Saint Anastasia's sisters are brought before the local prefect who desires to see them naked. Miraculously, their clothing cannot be removed. Immediately, 'the prouost fell aslepe and slept so harde that he routed, that al his people wondered on hym, ne they might not awake hym for no stering' (I, p. 42). Whilst Jacobus does not tell us what happens to this prefect, the silence of the text leaves him forever asleep, either eternally enchanted or perhaps released once Anastasia's sisters are martyred. This deliberate ambiguity subtly highlights the difference between the sleep of the pagan prefect and the future sleep of the virgin martyrs. The three women know that their future sleep as faithful saints will have both power and purpose. The prefect, on the other hand, sleeps unknowingly and unproductively and his snoring emphasises his foolishness. He is an object of mockery, not miracle.

Ariès suggests that 'The medieval saint was borrowed by monastic scholars from a secular and chivalric tradition that was itself of folkloric origin' and many of these saints were already princesses and daughters of powerful rulers, secluded in towers and prisons and dungeons.[152] It is no wonder, therefore, that motifs such as enchanted sleepers appear in both genres, or that their reasons for being asleep are often so closely correlated.[153] Sheila Delany

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[152] Ariès, p. 5.

[153] This pattern is apparent, for example, in the anonymous hagiographical Middle English romance *Sir Gowther*, the tale of the son of a demon, who through humiliating acts of penance eventually becomes a saint, having repented of a life of appalling violence. He marries a sleeping corpse princess who God revives after she falls from her tower. After her resurrection, though previously mute, she becomes the mouthpiece of God and claims Sir Gowther for Heaven. See British Library, Royal MS 17.B.43.

has also noted the almost symbiotic relationship between the genres, remarking that the 'overlap of hagiography with romance and other genres has been affirmed by many scholars. One English collection, the *South English Legendary*, is explicitly meant as an alternative to romance'.[154] Medieval romance recuperates the medieval saint, in forms more familiar to later modern audiences. Whilst Gayk observes that 'the wondrous things of religious genres […] draw attention to the shifting relationships between animate and inanimate things, between living and dead matter, between objects and subjects', medieval romance also interrogates these ideas, mixing the sacred and the secular and creating a natural progression. Saintly sleeping corpses are pierced with the male bodies of secular romance, as well as with weapons of torture, and spindles with their domestic and religious connotations.[155] Where hagiography records pilgrims kissing the bones of sleeping saints in worship, romance literature transforms this motif so that suitors now amorously encounter the beautiful sleeping bodies of the royal undead.

[154] Sheila Delany, *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 86. See also Diana T. Childress, 'Between Romance and Legend: "Secular Hagiography" in Middle English Literature', *Philological Quarterly*, 57.3 (Summer 1978), 311-322. Another example of the merging of hagiography and romance would be the anonymous thirteenth-century Middle English romance *Amis and Amiloun,* where Amis is told by an angel to kill his two children in order to use their blood to cure his friend's leprosy. Amiloun is subsequently cured, and the children are miraculously restored alive and whole at the end of the poem.
[155] Gayk, p. 139.

Chapter Two

The Princess and the Prick: Sex and the Sleeping Beauty in Medieval Romance

When Disney's animation team began to sketch designs for the background ecology of *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) they took inspiration from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's extensive medieval collection, and made the deliberate decision, as Kathleen Coyne Kelly observes, to 'evoke the medieval spaces of fairy tale, illuminated manuscript, and tapestry' in their designs for the film.[156] Particular sources of inspiration were the Unicorn Tapestries (c. 1495-1505) and the Limbourg Brothers' *Très Riches Heures* (c. 1410) made for the Duc de Berry, whose *Belles Heures* (c. 1409) made by the same painters and featuring the resurrection of Lazarus was instanced in Chapter One.[157] From the film's opening scene the tale of *Sleeping Beauty* is established as medieval, the unseen narrator reading from a bejewelled manuscript that rests on an ornate wooden reading stand, itself positioned in front of a medieval tapestry adorned with a unicorn in one corner. The audience is taken inside the book as it is opened, the illuminated parchment becoming the elaborate background to the film and colour stylist Eyvind Earle's consciously stylised illustrations positioning the tale firmly in the fourteenth century.[158] Deliberately transplanting the story three hundred years earlier than the source material on which Disney based its own version, Charles Perrault's *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (1697), the film cements the idea of the medieval period as a time of chivalry, high romance, magic, and damsels in distress, and its literature as reflective of these themes. With its elaborate cover and place of honour recalling the position of a Bible in a

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[156] Kathleen Coyne Kelly, 'Disney's Medievalized Ecologies in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Sleeping Beauty*', *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past*, ed. Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 189-207 (p. 190).
[157] 'Picture Perfect: The Making of Sleeping Beauty,' *Sleeping Beauty Platinum Edition DVD*, dir. by Claude Gironimi (Disney, 2008 [1959]).
[158] Earle's dedication to a distinctive and consciously medieval style of illustration would cause a great deal of friction at the Disney Studios, as documented by Michael Berrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 556-559.

church, modern audiences could be forgiven for thinking of *Sleeping Beauty* as the crowning jewel of medieval romance texts, and women in it as emblematic of the period: helpless, trapped by forces greater than themselves, in need of rescuing by true love, or a knight, or both. Like these conceptions, however, the tale's tidy resolution where the good triumph, evil characters are defeated and killed and true love conquers, but restrains itself with a kiss, is neatly simplistic. Medieval romance literature offers a more complex depiction of women than Disney suggests, even when these women are depicted as being in a state of prolonged death-like sleep due to enchantment or excess of emotion.

Disney's recognition of the close relationship between fairy tales and medieval literature has not been matched by similar acknowledgement in academic scholarship. Derek Brewer notes that 'Romances have close affinities with fairy tales', but there has been very little close comparative analysis made between the two disciplines, a fact Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri attribute to the unfamiliarity for scholars of works outside of their own field.[159] This chapter attempts to correct this oversight by offering close readings of several medieval *Sleeping Beauty* narratives: *Eliduc* by Marie de France, *Apollonius of Tyre* from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, an episode from the sprawling narrative *Perceforest*, and an anonymous poem, *The Squire of Low Degree,* first printed in the sixteenth century. By examining how fairy tale intersects with medieval literature, this chapter refutes a number of key modern concepts regarding *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* narratives: that the sleeper is woken with a kiss of true love, that these narratives end happily when the sleeper awakes, and that *Sleeping Beauty* narratives are written by men and promote patriarchal ideals.

[159] Derek Brewer, 'The Interpretation of Fairy Tales', in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 15-37 (p. 31) and Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri, 'Introduction' in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 1-13 (p. 6). Works on the subject do exist, see for example D. Thomas Hanks Jr., 'The Rhetoric of the Folk Fairy Tale in Sir Thomas Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth"', *Arthuriana*, 13.3 (FALL 2003), 52-67, or *Telling Tales: Medieval Narratives and the Folk Tradition*, ed. Francesca Canadé Sautman, Diana Conchado, Giuseppe C. Di Scipio (New York: St Martins Press, 1998), but other than contributions by Ziolkowski or Leek, sustained close readings of medieval literature and fairy tales are limited.

Instead, as this chapter demonstrates, medieval romances transform pilgrimage and relic worship into chivalric quest and rape narratives, ultimately culminating in the parodic *The Squire of Low Degree*, and in the inclusion of cannibalism and necrophilia in French and Italian versions of the tale types.

This can, at times, make for uncomfortable reading. Like the sleeping saints before them, slumbering medieval women, whether they are sleeping corpses or not, are often objects of admiration and desire. In medieval romance, however, these desires are made explicitly sexual. More distressingly to the modern reader, in several of the examples of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale type that this chapter considers, these desires are unwanted and non-consensual. Some critics have argued that the 'celebrated twelfth-century invention of romantic love turns out to be nothing but a genre for the glamorisation of rape', as Henrietta Leyser acknowledges.[160] But, as she also later argues, this is a reductive claim. Whilst some of the *Sleeping Beauty* narratives of this period do contain episodes of rape, and these important narratives are acknowledged and discussed later in the chapter, to categorise every tale of this type as a rape narrative ignores many of the other functions of sleeping corpses in medieval romance literature. They can be the loci of romantic resolution; the ancestors of legendary knights; divine mouthpieces; parodic representations of the chivalric code; instructional examples for medieval women; revealers of truths; and the key through which approved family households are created and restored, whilst undesirable elements of the family unit are removed, such as monstrous wives and mothers.

[160] Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* (London: Orion Books, 1996), p. 249. For other key critics who have discussed the role of rape in medieval romance texts see Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Amy Vines, 'Invisible Woman: Rape as a Chivalric Necessity in Medieval Romance' in *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), pp. 161-180, and Caroline Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Labelling all sleeping corpse narratives as rape plots also necessarily reduces texts to the discourse of misogyny, where all romances are assumed to be written by men and read by women; the sleeping corpse becomes an object of lust for the male gaze of the writer, and one of horror for the female reader.[161] Not only does this dismiss current critical debates about medieval romance readership, but also it ignores the fact that women could write romance narratives that featured sleeping corpses, whether or not these plots contain attempted or completed sexual assault.[162] One of these female writers is the twelfth-century poet, Marie de France.[163] Emese Egedi-Kovács remarks that 'Marie de France a rassemblé (sans pouvoir se douter de sa postérité) tous les éléments fondamentaux du thème central du fameux conte de la « Belle au Bois dormant »' (Marie de France gathered (without knowing her legacy) all the fundamental elements central to the theme of the story of Sleeping Beauty), and she does so in the short Breton *lai*, *Eliduc,* a tale about a knight torn between his duty to his wife and his love for another woman.[164] It contains one of the most interesting and complex accounts of a sleeping corpse in medieval romance.

[161] Helen Cooper points out the problems of assumed romance readership, writing that 'Such evidence of book ownership as we have for the fifteenth century in England frequently associates devotional English works with women, but English romances, despite their piety, much more with men than women; on the other hand, women were more likely to own copies of French romances'. Helen Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 690-719 (p. 703). Cambridge Core ebook.

[162] For apt coverage of the debate over whether medieval romance readership is gendered and the difficulties of conclusively identifying audiences through historical records see Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 222-236.

[163] We know very little about who Marie de France was other than her name and the time she was writing. Even her gender has been disputed by critics. For an overview of what might be sketched out about her life, including her familiarity with the court of Henry II and the possibility that she may have been a nun, see Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, *Marie de France: A Critical Companion* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), pp. 1-9. Conversely, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne complicates the construction of Marie as a writer by arguing that she is not one female poet, but potentially multiple women writers. See Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'Recovery and Loss: Women's Writing Around Marie De France' in *Women Intellectuals and Leaders in the Middle Ages*, ed. Katherine Kerby-Fulton, Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, and John Van Engen (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), pp. 169-190.

[164] Emese Egedi-Kovács, 'Néronès la « vivante ensevelie », Zellandine la « belle endormie»', in *Perceforest: Un roman arthurien et sa réception*, ed. Christine Ferlampin-Acher (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Renne, 2012), pp. 101-133, (para.4 of 31). Open edition ebooks.

Female Solidarity and the Sleeping Corpse in Marie de France's *Eliduc*

Towards the end of the *lai*, Guildelüec, the wife of the eponymous knight, discovers the reason for her husband's overwhelming grief is the young woman apparently lying dead in the local hermitage. Positioned in saintly repose on a bed before the altar, the corpse of Guilliadun is blazoned as a 'rose nuvele' and a 'gemme', who with 'Les braz lungs, blanches les meins / E les deiz greilles, lungs e pleins' (the long arms, the white hands, and the long, slender, smooth fingers) is a figure of striking beauty.[165] Depicted in a manner analogous to the bodies of earlier Christian martyrs, the cadaver is beatifically uncorrupted; the red and white floral descriptors of the corpse deliberately invoke earlier representations of the perfection of the holy dead in hagiographies such as *The Seven Sleepers*.[166] The seeming corpse is additionally broken down into her separate parts; representation that recalls the iconography of the dismembered Christ and the itemising of St Edmund's body by the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds. Simultaneously, as Guildelüec peels back the bedclothes covering the body, Guilliadun's corpse becomes the locus of both the saintly and the sexual. Guildelüec is refashioned into a second Eliduc gazing at the body of the dead beloved, her contemplation paralleling her husband's own sorrowful examination of Guilliadun's corpse less than one hundred lines earlier. Guildelüec's acknowledgement of Guilliadun's remarkable beauty, her distress at the loss of such loveliness, and her declaration that 'Jamés n'averai joie nul jur' (I will never be happy again, l. 1028), echo her husband's lamentation and his solemn promise that 'Sur vostre tumbe chescun jur / Ferai refreindre ma dolur' (Every day, on your tomb, I will make my grief resound, ll. 949-950).

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[165] Marie de France, 'Eliduc', in *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Claire M. Waters (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2018), pp. 300-359 (p. 351), ll. 1011-1022. This edition, with the original text alongside a Modern English translation, uses British Library, MS Harley 978 as its sole source. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.

[166] The red and white colouring also recalls the traditional blazon of women's bodies in chivalric literature, such as in Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth century work *The Story of the Grail*, where the hero Perceval recalls the beauty of his love Blancheflor after seeing drops of blood on snow.

Guildelüec, however, is much more than just the extension and echo of her husband. When Marie de France retitles the *lai Guildelüec and Guilliadun* in her prologue, explaining 'Mes ore est li nuns remuez / Kar des dames est avenu' (but now the name is changed, because it happened to the ladies, ll. 24-25), the focus of the narrative is re-centred on the two women who are inextricably tied together at the heart of it, 'their equivalence captured in the partial homophony of their names', as Bloch observes.[167] Eliduc is revealed to be a conduit to unite the two women, a fact that is further compounded by it being Guildelüec who heals Guilliadun and wakes her from her sleeping death, rather than Eliduc. Despite being 'curteis e sage, / Beau chevalier, pruz e large' (courteous and wise, / a handsome knight, worthy and generous, ll. 271-272), he is a flawed hero, whose adulterous actions offend 'Cuntre Deu e encuntre la lei, / Cuntre dreiture e cuntre fei' (against God and against the law, / against righteousness and against faith, ll. 837-838). A less generous assessment of his character, by Constance Hieatt, dismisses Eliduc as one of the 'weaklings' of Marie's *lais*, who as a man and husband is 'clearly not worth keeping'.[168] Regardless of whether Eliduc is read as a sympathetic character, however, his contravention of chivalric, legal, and religious law means that his prayers at the tomb of Guilliadun can render no miracles, despite his heartfelt anguish. Instead, women rescue women, the healing at the tomb displaying the continuity of female solidarity and tenderness so frequently evidenced in *The Golden Legend* and *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, such as that recorded between Saint Agnes and Constance, or Saint Lucy praying for the recovery of her mother at the tomb of Saint Agatha.

The method by which Guilliadun is resurrected only serves further to underscore the importance of women to each other, extending so far as to incorporate elements of the natural world and the creatures in it into a female collective that resists masculine presences and

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[167] R. Howard Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 87.
[168] Constance Hieatt, 'Eliduc Revisited: John Fowles and Marie De France', *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, 3.3 (Fall 1977), 351-358 (pp. 356-357) <https://doi.org/10.1353/esc.1977.0032>.

overcomes the deleterious effects of male violence. When a female weasel is killed in the chapel by Guildelüec's male servant, her 'cumpaine' (female companion, l. 1051) revives her by placing a red flower in her mouth. Seeing this, Guildelüec takes the same red flower and replicates the actions of the weasel, placing the bloom 'Dedenz la bunche a la pucele' (In the maiden's mouth, ll. 1061-62) and achieving the same result: the resurrection of the dead female body.

Weasels were creatures closely connected with healing, and often appear in medieval manuscript marginalia curing other animals.[169] As Thomas Shearer Duncan observes, they were also always 'associated in some way with a woman or a maiden' and with new life, often in unusual settings.[170] Reginald of Durham recounts in his miracles of Saint Cuthbert that the deceased saint complains about a female weasel disturbing his tomb by giving birth to a litter between the feet of his corpse, in a more bestial retelling of life from the tomb.[171] In particular, weasels were linked with the Virgin Mary, the most powerful and important female figure in Christianity. It was believed that as she had conceived Christ through hearing the word of God through the Angel Gabriel, so weasels conceived in their ears and gave birth in their mouth, or vice versa.[172] This plurality of sexual orifices intensifies the fertile femininity of the weasel and female presences in the narrative, but also adds an undercurrent of sexual subversion. This is further emphasised by the fact that it is two female

[169] For an example of this type of imagery see a rather sweet illustration of a weasel curing a fox afflicted with dropsy in Ulrich von Pottenstein, *Spiegel der Weisheit*: Salzburg, *c.* 1430 (London, British Library, MS Egerton 1121, f. 109v).
[170] Thomas Shearer Duncan, 'The Weasel in Religion, Myth and Superstition', *Washington University Studies*, 12.1 (1924), 33-66, (p. 39). Weasels were not the only creatures to be associated with resurrection. In the anonymous and influential Greek bestiary *Physiologus*, written between the second and fourth centuries A.D, lions are recorded as giving birth to dead young. After three days the cubs' father breathes on them and brings them to life. There is no need for the reader to infer the Christian symbology as the text makes the biblical parallel explicit. See *Physiologus*, Morgan, MS M.459 f. 013r and *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore*, trans. Michael J. Curley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 3-4.
[171] Reginald of Durham, *Reginaldi monachi dunelmensis Libellus de admirandis beati Cuthberto virtutibus quae novellis patratae sunt temporibus*, ed. James Raine (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1835), XXVI.
[172] Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (London: Chicago University Press, 2017), pp. 79-81.

weasels who are depicted in the passage, rather than a male and female couple, creating, as Claire M. Waters points out in the notes of her translation, a 'density of feminine forms' (p. 351) that undercuts the expected heteronormative pairing.[173]

Similarly, the unidentified flower used by the weasel and Guildelüec entangles religious iconography with traditional romance images that disrupt heterosexual normativity. Exactly what flower the weasel uses that contains such magical rejuvenating properties is never identified within the poem, though critics have attempted to pinpoint it.[174] That the flower is likely to be a type of rose and therefore a symbol of Christ and the greatest example of Christian resurrection seems probable; placing the flower into the mouth of the corpse then becomes an act of communion or relic worship, a gesture which seems particularly appropriate in light of the chapel tomb setting. Beneath the Christian imagery, however, the flower retains its connotations with courtly love and the romancing of women, to which the *Roman de la Rose* and other seminal medieval romance texts attest. This excess of feminine forms and symbolism is at the very least, as Burgwinkle argues, 'a critique of heterosexuality as well as marriage'.[175] After all, Marie de France devotes only four lines of her poem to Eliduc's second marriage before returning the focus of the narrative to female spaces that celebrate the absence of men, reuniting Guilliadun and Guildelüec in the latter's abbey, housed on the same site as the chapel where they first met.

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[173] For two excellent articles which discuss the importance of and often rancorous discourse surrounding the symbolism of the female weasels in much greater detail then can be offered here, see Anna Klosowska, 'Queer/Posthuman in Marie de France's Eliduc: Sanctuaires à répit, Female Couples, and Human/Animal/Bare Life', *FKW // Zeitschrift Für Geschlechterforschung Und Visuelle Kultur*, NR. 54 (February 2013), 76-87 <https://www.fkw-journal.de/index.php/fkw/article/view/8> [accessed 16 March 2021] and Rick Chamberlain, 'Mes ores est li nuns remüez: Intratextual Misinterpretation and Shifting Symbols in Marie de France's 'Eliduc'', *Cincinnati Romance Review,* 27 (2008), 53–59.

[174] Carol Dover argues convincingly for Marie de France being inspired by the elusive 'herb of life' that Hildegard von Bingen records in her medicinal textbook *Physica,* under the entry for weasels. See Carol Dover, 'From Marie de France to J.K.Rowling: The Weasel'*, The Legacy of Courtly Literature: From Medieval to Contemporary Culture,* ed. Deborah Nelson-Campbell and Rouben Cholakian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 91-114 (p. 100).

[175] William E. Burgwinkle, *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature: France and England 1050-1230* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 150.

Usha Vishnuvajjala reads the relationship between the two women as emotionally complex but argues that ultimately 'Within the vocabulary of the courtly romance, we can say that she [Guildelüec] loves her [Guilliadun]'; I would agree with this assessment.[176] The precise nature of the relationship between Guilliadun and Guildelüec, however, is less important than the narrative emphasis on, and celebration of, female solidarity, empathy, and autonomy. Guildelüec's reaction to Guilliadun's death, her subsequent resurrection of her love rival, and ultimately her withdrawal to a convent in order to allow Eliduc and Guilliadun to marry can be seen as a romantic gesture, a selfless act, or one motivated by strong religious piety.[177] More importantly, her actions 'upset traditional power relationships', as Nora Cottille-Foley observes, destabilising patriarchal expectations of women as rivals.[178] Instead, *Eliduc* ends on the solidarity of women together and with their desires sublimated to each other, despite the thrust of the narrative, like so many medieval romances, being a man's desire for another woman. As Simon Gaunt notes, 'the women have achieved a unity separate from their husband, a unity which is altogether consonant with the idea that the *lai* "concerns the ladies"'.[179] Guildelüec's resurrection of Guilliadun by placing the red flower in her mouth may be seen therefore as an act of saintly compassion and an erotic sexual act, which reinforces the idea of the mouth as the gateway to life, death, and re-creation as discussed in Chapter One, but narratively it enables an act of storytelling more important than either of these purposes. Placing the flower in Guilliadun's mouth allows her to wake and tell Guildelüec her story, just as the Virgin Mary's holy grain on the tongue of a dead child

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[176] Usha Vishnuvajjala, 'Adventure, "Lealté", and Sympathy in Marie de France's "Eliduc"', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* 59.2 (Summer 2017) 162-181, (p. 171) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44866242> [accessed 17 March 2021].

[177] For an overview of some of these theories and the exploration of Guildelüec's actions as a type of Christ's selfless love see Deborah Nelson, 'Eliduc's Salvation', *The French Review*, 55.1 (October, 1981), 37-42 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/390982> [accessed 7 July 2018].

[178] Nora Cottille-Foley, 'The Structuring of Feminine Empowerment: Gender and Triangular Relationships in Marie de France', *Gender Transgressions: Crossing the Normative Barrier in Old French Literature*, ed. Karen J. Taylor (London: Garland Publishing, 1998), pp. 153-180 (p. 154).

[179] Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 155.

enables the should-be dead to narrate his life and the living to complete that narrative. Telling Guilliadun that 'Que viv estes, grant joie en ai; / Ensemble od mei vus enmerrai / E a vostre ami vus rendrai' (It is a great joy to me that you are alive; / I will take you along with me / and return you to your beloved, ll. 1098-1100), Guildelüec becomes medic and master storyteller, supplying a happy ending to all three through her actions. As the final *lai* in the collection, its decentralisation of courtly heterosexual love and promotion of female unity and independence becomes Marie de France's final commentary on the subject of romance, secular and religious desire, and the roles of men and women.

The use of the flower as a resurrection symbol occurs again in the fifteenth-century dream vision poem *The Isle of Ladies*. Known from two manuscripts (Longleat House MS 256 and British Library MS Additional 10303) by an unknown author, though once included as part of the apocryphal writings of Chaucer, the poem is, according to Ad Putter, 'an exuberantly emotive dream vision about the pains and joys of love' and features two moments of resurrection.[180] The first occurs relatively early in the poem where a queen is recalled from death by a lady with a magical apple. The second, and more significant, moment occurs towards the end of the poem and is worth recounting in full. The Queen and many of her ladies have died of grief at a perceived betrayal, her princely lover has killed himself, and the bodies are transported to an abbey of Benedictine nuns. At the abbey a bird hits a window 'richelye painte / With lyves of many a diverse saynte' and bleeds to death.[181] Other birds come, and at the bird's head lay a plant 'flowerless, all grene, / Full of smale leves and plaine, / Swerte, and longe' (ll. 1864-1866), which promptly bursts into flower. A

[180] Ad Putter, 'Fifteenth Century Chaucerian Visions', in *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), pp. 143-155 (p. 151). Cambridge Core ebook. The poem is also not particularly sophisticated, a quality that Markus Manfred has attempted to read as deliberate due to it being, in his opinion, a satire of courtly romance. He is the only critic who reads it in such a way. See Manfred Markus, '*The Isle of Ladies* (1475) as Satire', *Studies in Philology*, 95.3 (Summer, 1998), 221-236.

[181] 'The Isle of Ladies', in *The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies, The Isle of Ladies*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 68-129 (l. ll. 1849-50). All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.

seed is taken from the flower and put into the beak of the dead bird who revives. Seeing this, the abbess takes some of these seeds which are ‘no comone herbe’ (l. 1889), and they ‘con rehersse / Eche one to other that they had sene. / And talinge this, the seade wox grene’ (ll. 1896-1898). The flower grows, blooms, and produces seed which the abbess takes, putting three of these ‘greynes’ (l. 1922) in the mouth of the queen and reviving her. Everyone agrees that the seed and its healing properties are ‘some great miracle / Or medicine more fine than treacle’ (l. 1903-04), and after the queen in turn revives her companions, a marriage is arranged and the poem ends happily. The parallels with *Eliduc*, in the use of an unknown magical herb placed in the mouth to revivify and the animal resurrection prior to human resurrection, are clear. What *The Isle of Ladies* emphasises though is the role of the community of women who take on the mantle of healers and the importance of storytelling as an aspect of raising the dead. The seed is crucial to the physical healing of the queen, but it only grows as the Abbess and the nuns relate what has happened, reflecting the spiritual healing that comes with communication and mirroring Guilliadun’s recollection of her own story to Guildelüec. It also reflects the importance of the role of the female storyteller who creates new tales out of old and creates types of resurrection out of narrative retellings. The geographical location of the resurrection at the abbey replicates the setting of medieval practices of healing at the sites of churches and shrines, but the broken window of the saints also represents something more subversive: miracles come from the natural world and through the women who are able to interpret and apply these signs practically, rather than the saints who inhabit decorative and fragile spaces of worship.

In many ways, *Eliduc* is both subversive hagiography and rebellious romance. Though the poem alludes to biblical methods and metaphors of resurrection, it ultimately rejects them, relying solely on the love and pity of one woman for another alongside contemporary medical and folkloric beliefs to produce its miraculous happy ending, blurring

the line between fairy tale and religious text.[182] As J. Matzke discusses, the tale of the husband with two wives where endings permit bigamy, or one wife is replaced with another, is widespread.[183] Marie de France even provides one in her own collection with the inclusion of *Le Fresne*. As Deborah Nelson notes, however, Marie 'has consciously created a new version of an old story while adding an allegorical level'.[184] *Eliduc* presents and then discards the central heterosexual pairing that other romances champion and instead celebrates female power to create and recreate in its depiction of women resurrecting women, a topic that will not be treated in any great detail until Paulina's revealing of Hermione in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Most important, however, is the *lai*'s destabilisation of the saintly sleeping body as a figure which is useful to the community, particularly in its ability to raise the mortal dead, heal pilgrims, and produce miracles. Far from being an active member of society through acts of divine intervention and mediation, the sleeping corpse is now a problem to solve for the protagonist, a figure for external forces to work upon in order to shake it from the liminal space it inhabits into wakefulness and life once more, ideally so it can be romantically aligned with the hero of the romance. Instead of being a spiritual body with divine power, the sleeping corpse is ultimately transformed into and enclosed inside monuments to male passion, secular or religious, and in later romances becomes a passive receptacle for the male body, useful only in its capacity to bear children, regardless of its state of consciousness.

It is important to note that, unlike sleeping corpses in the Bible or hagiography, women in medieval romance who are presumed to be dead are often simply in a deep swoon

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[182] For an example of this type of allusion see Karen Casebier's essay in which she links the account of Guilliadun fainting in the boat with the biblical account of the prophet Jonah and the whale. Karen Casebier, 'Of Wind and Weasels: Resurrection Motifs in Marie de France's *Eliduc*', *Le Cygne: Journal of the International Marie de France Society*, 6 (2019), 7-33.

[183] John E. Matzke, 'The *Lai* of *Eliduc* and the Legend of the Husband with Two Wives', *Modern Philology,* 5.2 (October, 1907), 211-239 < https://www.jstor.org/stable/43249> [accessed 16 March 2021].

[184] Nelson, p. 41.

which only gives the appearance of death. Guilliadun, upon discovering Eliduc is already married, faints, 'Tute pale, deculuree / En la paumeisun demurra, / Que ele ne revient ne suspire' (all pale, colourless. She remained in her faint, she did not recover or sigh, ll. 854-856), and gives such a convincing appearance of death that everyone believes she has died. These medieval sleeping beauties, however, still meet the criteria for sleeping corpses as outlined in the introduction to this thesis; they straddle the thresholds of both life and death, their bodies remain unconscious for some time, and those around them think they are truly dead or at least incapable of waking. It is the sleeping corpses' lack of agency whilst in their liminal state which transforms the motif in the medieval romance, refashioning their powerful religious talismanic powers into beautiful but ultimately helpless bodies that need to be saved rather than sought out in supplication.

Finally, the resurrection of Guilliadun signals the movement away from saintly bodies as accessible to all in tombs carved with niches for pilgrim bodies to press against and holes through which the penitent could touch the saint. Instead, there is enclosure from the public, so that accessing the sleeping corpse becomes a test of the worthy, privileging the aristocratic knightly male body over the mass of the anonymous peasantry. This is not to say that the princess in the tower motif, which is so prevalent in romance, is not a feature in many saints' lives. Saint Christine, for example, is one of dozens of princess saints freed from towers, prisons, and even their own bodies, through the liberation of a martyr's death. Saint Barbara, whose father kept her locked away in a tower, even has the castle as her attribute. After their deaths, though, their bodies are accessible to all, exemplified by the fact that many of their tombs become popular stops along pilgrimage routes. The sleeping corpse of the princess in medieval romance on the other hand is not refashioned into a site for religious tourism. Instead, her body is locked away behind the closed doors of family homes, or impenetrable secret rooms, and bounded by gardens and forests. Guilliadun's body, lying 'Pres del chastel,

einz el boscage, / A la chapel e l'hermitage' (Near the castle, in the woods, / at the chapel by the hermitage, ll. 1135-1136), is guarded by the triumvirate of chivalric knighthood, the natural world, and religious seclusion. Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* takes this idea to its fullest extent, confining its princess to an isolated cottage in the woods, before moving her back under cover of darkness to a room in her father's castle. Hypnotized by Maleficent, she is then led through a secret passage in the fireplace and up a series of winding staircases, with the film spending nearly two minutes on the good fairies frantically looking for her in the maze of passageways. Hidden from them by the bewildering architecture of the castle, the fairies find Aurora too late, her comatose body eventually revealed dramatically beneath the sweep of Maleficent's cape in a spectacular inversion of *Eliduc*'s scene of revelation and womanly camaraderie. Finally, Maleficent surrounds the castle with thorns and transforms herself into a dragon. Sealing away the body of the sleeping princess with her own mutated form and seeking to swallow up intruders inside her own cavernous belly, she aims to neutralise the threat of good through ingestion, much like Saint Margaret's dragon devil, though she will be similarly unsuccessful.

Physically to seal off the sleeping corpse is perhaps the natural conclusion to the figurative fashioning of women's bodies through metaphors that rendered virtuous women as locked buildings, impenetrable towers, and walled gardens, enclosed domestic spaces that represented their place as bodies safely and chastely confined within the strict physical boundaries of the patriarchal household. As Ann Rosalind Jones notes in her essay on early modern conduct books, the 'good wife was constructed as the woman who stays indoors, guarding her chastity as she guards the other property of her husband'.[185] This imagery of the virtuous body as sound architectural construct follows a tradition that can be traced back to

[185] Ann Rosalind Jones, 'Nets and Bridles: early modern conduct books and sixteenth-century women's lyrics', *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality'*, ed. by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 39-72 (p. 52).

the Bible, where in the Song of Songs the body of the female Beloved is variously blazoned as a tower, a buttress, a sealed room. Similarly, the body of her pre-pubescent sister is declared a space prepared for construction, enclosure, and even siege warfare upon her eventual maturation: 'si murus est aedificemus super eum propugnacula argentea si ostium est conpingamus illud tabulis cedrinis' ('If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar', Song of Songs 8.9). Her body suitably barricaded, she will be defended, whether she wills it or not, from the masculine presence, which is armed, dangerous, and seductive.

A sleeping corpse, so the stories imply, will inevitably always be found, by a knight in shining armour, or, as *Eliduc* demonstrates, his bemused wife. That it is Guildelüec who finds Guilliadun and rescues, rehabilitates, and eventually lives with her, also implies that recovery is more important than discovery. Where narratives seem to end from the point of view of men, for women they can be seen as an opportunity to begin a new life, or to bring new life into the world.

From Miracle to Motherhood: The changing role of the sleeping corpse in *Apollonius of Tyre*

With the exception of hagiography, where divine intervention protects the female form, sealing women off from the danger of lustful men is often depicted as unsuccessful in medieval literature. Book Eight of John Gower's romance poem *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1386), is a prime example of this.[186] The poem is structured around the confession of the dream-narrator and lover Amans to Genius, the chaplain of Venus, and Book Eight revolves around

[186] Gower wrote for both Richard II and Henry IV and was a contemporary of Chaucer, to whom *Confessio* is partly dedicated. Other than the date of his marriage and his death in 1408, much of Gower's life is unknown to us, though historians and critics have attempted to flesh it out with a little guesswork and the evidence of his poetry to shape a biography for him. For a good example of this see *Historians on John Gower*, ed. Sian Echard and Stephen Rigby (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2019).

the sin of incest, focusing on retelling the tale of Apollonius of Tyre.[187] Antiochus perverts traditional patriarchal ideas of the father as gatekeeper to his daughter's body through his grief-fuelled lust, by denying potential suitors the possibility of obtaining her by means of both his riddle test and by keeping her physically within spaces that he can dominate. His authority is displayed both outwardly in the collection of heads 'stondende on the gate' of suitors who answer incorrectly, and inwardly through sequestering his daughter in rooms that remain private and removed.[188] Dwelling 'in hire fadres chambres' (8.291) she is secluded from all outside male presences, yet her father's protections only make her more vulnerable to his own twisted advances; his rape of her body renders her 'stille' (8.314), isolated, and immobilised in contrast to her father's decisive actions and deliberate movements in and 'out of the chambre' (8.313). Apollonius' daughter Thaise is similarly trapped, 'Clos in a chambre' (8.1425) in a brothel frequented by lustful male bodies. Through divine intervention, however, 'Was non of hem which pouer hade / To don hire eny vileinie' (8.1430-1). She is even able to swap her chambers in the brothels for a room 'Wher that honeste wommen duelle' (8.1457) and find purpose through her education of the local young women who come to her for tutoring. Eventually, Thaise is reunited with her father in a room that is practically identical to the one she was born in; not a 'chambre' but a 'caban' (8.1739) on board a ship, rooms which are 'ordeigned for the king' (8.1740) and thus controlled by

[187] The Apollonius story was extremely popular throughout the medieval and early modern period. Gower's retelling takes as its source a version from Godfrey of Viterbo's twelfth-century *Pantheon*. though it is likely Gower also used the version included in the fourteenth-century *Gesta Romanorum*. The Apollonius story itself is much older, however, as Elizabeth Archibald notes: 'the *Historia Apollonii*, which in its present form dates from the late fifth or early sixth century, is derived from a longer Greek original composed perhaps in the early third century AD'. See Elizabeth Archibald, '*Apollonius of Tyre* in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance' in *Latin Fiction: The Latin Novel in Context*, ed. Heinz Hofman (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 229-237 (p. 229) and Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1991).

[188] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, trans. Andrew Galloway, 2nd edn, Volume One (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), 8.369. All subsequent references will be given parenthetically. Fifty seven fourteenth-century manuscripts survive, containing all or part of the poem, and which also show Gower's later revisions to it. This edition uses Fairfax 3. Bodleian Library 3883, Bodley 902, Bodley 294, St. John's College, Cambridge, 34.B.12, Huntington El. 26 A.17, and Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 63.

Apollonius. Unlike the spaces made sexually dangerous by King Antiochus for his daughter, for Apollonius and Thaise the cabin acts as a sacred space of memorialisation and communion with the dead mother. For Apollonius, not only is it a reminder of the space where his wife died, but also a place where he himself becomes a sleeping corpse in imitation of her, swooning so deeply at the discovery of her death in childbirth 'That no man wiste in him no lif' (8.1061). The cabin, like the chapel for Eliduc, is a spatial reminder of his inability to rescue his wife from her seeming death, his kisses, like Eliduc's prayers, having no effect on the sleeping corpse of his wife. Instead, once again, medical intervention will be needed to reawaken the beloved corpse.

The medical procedure that wakes Apollonius' wife from her coma contrasts starkly with Guildelüec's intensely feminine folkloric flower and weasel cure, and with *Sleeping Beauty*'s true love's kiss. Master Cerymon is a 'worthi clerc, a surgien, / And ek a gret phisicien, / Of al that lond the wisest on,' (8.1063-5) and as such his medical advice is less magical and more practical. Using Galenic humoral theory, which posited that the body was made up of the four humors: blood, phlegm, bile, and black bile, and a balance of hot, wet, cold, and dry, Cerimon tries to 'restore nature's balance by prescribing medications in which the qualities were matched inversely to the patient's disordered complexion', as Nancy Siraisi explains.[189] Having been cold and dry in her sealed sea-going coffin, Apollonius' wife needs to have her blood heated; thus Cerimon focuses on warming the body up with a combination of warm sheets, anointing the joints 'With certein oile and balsme' (8.1198) and having her swallow a potion, heating her body from the inside as well as outside with warmth and moisture. Whilst the oils, balms, and liquors are not identified, it remains a highly realistic depiction of a medieval physician at work curing a sleeping corpse, with no hint of divine

[189] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Medicine and Practice* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 102.

intervention or folkloric happenstance to aid him in his treatment. Gower's account of Cerimon's work actually reduces the level of detail surrounding the medical treatment of the queen from earlier versions of the text. He also removes the precocious doctor's assistant, who in the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, an early Latin version of the text, is the person who actually revives the queen. This may have been changed to emphasise Cerimon's importance as the sole possessor of medical knowledge, with the simplification of the medical practices allowing the queen to be restored to the narrative as quickly and as efficiently as possible without detracting from Cerimon's evident skill.

Whilst Cerimon may be a respected physician, however, he can only ever be a deficient storyteller, able to impart what he knows of the queen from the letter accompanying her casket, but no more than that. Her immediate questions upon waking, "Ha, wher am I? / Where is my lord, what world is this?" (8.1206-7), can only be answered imperfectly; believing her husband and baby to have drowned she is left to conclude her narrative incorrectly, retreating to become the abbess of the goddess of chastity, Diana, where 'in som temple of the cite / To kepe and holde hir chasteté, / Sche mihte among the wommen duelle' (8.1243-5). It is left to Apollonius to retell the story correctly and reunite them once more. His 'tale [having] leid hire ere' (8.1850), she then re-enacts her seeming death at sea by falling

> aswoune upon the stones,
> Wherof the temple flor was paved.
> Sche was anon with water laved,
> Til sche cam to hirself agein,
>
> (8.1854-57)

Metaphorically washing up on the stone shore of the temple, husband and wife are once more reunited, the kisses which parted them repeated to seal this new reunion. Eventually the whole family is re-assembled. 'The king hath take his real place' (8.1902) and the 'queene is into chambre go' (1902-3), giving up her religious life in order to take up the mantle of rule once more, in stark contrast to the retreats to the religious life of Eliduc, Guilliadun, and Guildelüec. The resumption of the inhabitation of rightful spaces, however, leaves Apollonius' wife once more sequestered in inner rooms, isolated from the public, and resuming her role as wife and mother. Though these rooms are rightfully hers and her presence in them negates the incestuous undercurrent that runs through any of the king's private chambers, it does mean she is once more sealed away. Both Apollonius' wife and Guilliadun are heroines who, in Helen Cooper's words, are 'active and desiring'; both choose husbands they want, and yet both are rendered asleep, protected, and isolated.[190] Both women also reunite with their beloveds after this sleep, but whilst making very different choices in where and with whom they choose to spend the rest of their lives, both ultimately become removed from society, sequestered into domestic and religious life respectively.[191] The key difference between the two texts, however, is Apollonius' wife's role as a mother and the importance of childbirth to the accounts of sleeping corpses.

As Elizabeth Archibald notes, the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri,* 'may have also influenced the episode of the "false death" in childbirth in the popular legendary *Life of Mary Magdalene* which both Voragine and Bokenham recount in their respective collections of hagiography'.[192] In summary, after losing his wife in childbirth whilst crossing the sea in a

[190] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 222.
[191] There are many other similarities between *Eliduc* and *Apollonius of Tyre* which cannot be explored here, and it is possible that Marie de France may have known a version of the Apollonius tale, though no extant texts have yet been found to support this theory. For a detailed comparative discussion of the two texts see Mercedes Salvador-Bello, 'The Old English *Apollonius of Tyre* in the Light of Early Romance Tradition: An Assessment of its Plot and Characterization in Relation to Marie de France's *Eliduc'*, *English Studies*, 93.7 (2012), 749-774 <DOI:10.1080/0013838X.2012.700566> [accessed 28 February 2019].
[192] Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations,* p. 56.

storm, the prince of Marseilles leaves his dead wife and child ashore on a small island, where he commends them to the care of Saint Mary Magdalene. After visiting Rome and Jerusalem on pilgrimage, he returns to their resting place, only to find the child happily playing. After praying fervently to the saint, his wife is also restored to him. This restoration by the saint of the sleeping corpse and her family demonstrates the complex and shifting role of the sleeper in later narratives. Where once the sleeping corpse was saintly and worked to heal others and restore families, now the narrative prerogative is for the sleeping corpse itself to be restored to life, whether by secular medicine, as is seen in *Apollonius*, or through reproduction and birth overseen by a religious figure, as the *Life of Mary Magdalene* demonstrates. The importance of this narrative change in the motif of the sleeping corpse cannot be overstated as accounts focusing on rape, pregnancy, and childbirth as cure and consequence for sleeping corpses become more widespread. In addition to healing oils and milks, the bodies of sleepers are now producing children who are often magical, monstrous, or miraculous, and who are sustained by the secretion of liquids from the sleeping mothers as pilgrims once were from sleeping saints. At death, Binski notes that 'The soul was usually believed to leave the body via the mouth and to travel upwards (sins permitting) as a small childlike naked eidolon held in a cloth, typically to Abraham's Bosom'.[193] The sleeping corpse that gives birth to a child is therefore a subverted mirroring of this aspect of death; a child descending and leaving the body in the creation of new life, rather than ascending at the moment of expiration. Whilst saints in hagiography grant the blessing of children to other women, romance texts can seem to prize motherhood more than saintliness, and therefore bestow children on the sleeping women instead. As Valerie Garver has identified, 'Motherhood was a central and perhaps the most important role of laywomen in the ancient and medieval worlds'; in transposing the sleeping corpse from one genre to another the markers of the heroine have to be similarly

[193] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 110.

transformed.[194] Whilst pregnancy figures as a metaphor for sleeping saints in *The Seven Sleepers*, one of the key narratives of hagiography, romance texts take this metaphor and subtly change it. Those who are sleepers are no longer depicted as granting children to others or as the child in the womb, but as pregnant mothers instead. Monika Otter characterises relic discovery stories as 'largely symbolic stories. They show communities (usually monastic) relating to their past, discovering or retroactively inventing their origins, asserting their continuity in one location, and explaining or defending their rights and privileges; practical purposes, scholarly interest, and emotional desires merge inextricably'.[195] Romances are also invariably about the same sense of continuity and community, though this theme is established by connecting to a lost parent, or founding a noble hereditary lineage. By making sleeping corpses mothers, romances convert the motif whilst still maintaining the idea of sleeping corpses as offering 'second beginnings'.[196]

There is, however, an important caveat to the image of sleeping corpses transforming from sleeping saints into sleeping beauties and mothers, and it is, as Nancy Bradley Warren has highlighted, that maternal 'reproduction is […] foregrounded only to be subordinated' by men.[197] Motherhood is less important, narratively, than the preservation of male lineage and the completion and recreation of male identity. As the Mary Magdalene narrative demonstrates, the mother's body miraculously acts to sustain and nourish the male child for two years. The locus of food rather than love, her resurrection at the close of the episode is what Warren describes as 'finally a miracle for the father and son rather than for the mother' and provides the prince with the restoration of his identity as father and husband.[198] Carolyn

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[194] Valerie L. Garver, 'Childbearing and Infancy in the Carolingian World', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 21.2 (May 2012), 208-244, (p. 213) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/41475078> [accessed 24 June 2018]
[195] Otter, p. 394.
[196] Otter, p. 396. See also Frye, *The Secular Scripture*, p. 122.
[197] Nancy Bradley Warren, *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 152.
[198] Warren, p. 152.

Dinshaw argues that narratives which engage with altered time for their protagonists are often explicitly interested in problematising 'marriage, gestation, and procreation' by reorienting 'the protagonist from the realm of usual, expected, or acceptable social or sexual reproduction—temporal experience renders the protagonist queer'.[199] Though this is not always the case, Dinshaw maintains that 'queer potentials threaten to destroy ordinary reproduction or to transform our understanding of it utterly'.[200] Thus, where *Eliduc* offers a narrative with queer potential in its relationship between the sleeping corpse and the woman who wakes her, as well as a heterosexual relationship outside of prescribed social norms, other sleeping corpse narratives explore queer, taboo, or socially unacceptable relationships between sleeping corpses and their rescuers, in narratives which attempt to destabilise maternity, but ultimately conform to 'patriarchal reproduction [which] is revealed as resolutely linear', as Dinshaw argues.[201] In many medieval romances, reproduction actually rescues the sleeping corpse from their anomalous position outside of time and reinserts them back into patriarchal linearity.

Confronting chivalric rape narratives and the sleeping corpse in *Le Roman de Perceforest*

This new aspect of the motif of the sleeping corpse is epitomised in the anonymous fourteenth-century French episodic prose *Roman de Perceforest*, which contains, in Book Three, the first known written version of *Sleeping Beauty*. *Perceforest* presents an imagined pre-Arthurian Britain, whose sprawling cast of characters will become the ancestors of Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. The text was completed c. 1340 in the court of William I,

[199] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 43-44. De Gruyter ebook. Dinshaw also discusses two other medieval narratives concerned with characters who experience asynchronous time: 'The Monk and the Bird' from the fourteenth-century *Northern Homily Cycle* (Harley 4196), and the tale of King Herla from Walter Map's twelfth-century *De nugis curialium*. Though neither narrative is a sleeping corpse tale, as the characters remain awake whilst unknowingly experiencing the passing of vast swathes of time, the texts do demonstrate sustained medieval interest in divine or Otherworld anomalous temporalities.
[200] Dinshaw, p. 44.
[201] Dinshaw, p. 44.

Count of Hainaut and then underwent a considerable rewriting process in the fifteenth century, as Gilles Roussineau describes in his consideration of the only surviving manuscripts of *Perceforest*, which date from that period.[202] The text is influenced by numerous earlier works including, as Sylvia Huot notes, 'the prose *Tristan*, the prose *Lancelot-Grail*, and the Alexander romances – as well as medieval historiography as developed by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and others, and travel writing by such authors as Gerald of Wales and Marco Polo'.[203] Huot also remarks that the writer was familiar with the works of Marie de France, arguing that 'a reading of *Yonec* in tandem with *Milun*' as well as *Eliduc* contributes to the creation of the Sleeping Beauty story.[204] In chronicling the tale of Troylus and Zellandine, the latter of whom is the Sleeping Beauty of the text, the writer of *Perceforest* also incorporates many folkloric motifs including magical talking animals and forgotten gifts. SunHee Kim Gertz has written on Marie de France's incorporation and transformation of folkloric motifs into romantic courtly literature through the character of Guildelüec in *Eliduc* and I would argue that the anonymous writer of *Perceforest* crafts the text in a similar manner, creating a hybrid form that rewrites fairy tale into the conventions of literary romance. [205]

Book Three of *Perceforest* contains both the Sleeping Beauty tale type and a story of false death prior to this. In the account of false death, the heroine Nerones fakes her death to avoid having to marry the King of Norway, is tortured with pins and hot wax to ascertain whether she really is dead, is buried, breaks out of her grave, and then disguises herself as a

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[202] Gilles Roussineau, 'Réflexions sur lagenèse de Perceforest', in *Perceforest: Un roman arthurien et sa reception*, ed. Christine Ferlampin-Acher (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012), pp. 255-267. *Directory of Open Access Books ebook.*

[203] Sylvia Huot, *Postcolonial Fictions in the Roman de Perceforest* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), p. 1 Cambridge Core ebook.

[204] Sylvia Huot, 'The Afterlives of a Twelfth- Century Poet: Marie De France in the Later Middle Ages', in *"Li premerains vers": Essays in Honour of Keith Busby,* ed. Catherine M. Jones and Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 191-203 (p. 201-2).

[205] SunHee Kim Gertz, 'Transforming Genres in Marie de France's *Eliduc*' in *Semiotic Rotations: Modes of Meanings in Cultural Worlds,* ed. SunHee Kim Gertz, Jaan Valsiner and Jean-Paul Breaux (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), pp. 179-95.

boy. This episode, based in part on Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century romance, *Cligès*, shows an active heroine, one who is willing to perform death in order to avoid matrimony and is seemingly in stark contrast to Zellandine, the Sleeping Beauty, to whom events simply seem to happen. Brooke Heidenriech Findlay, however, reads the torture of Nerones as 'a particularly violent sort of scribing' in which the physical penetration by pins and burning 'shapes the heroine's identity in ways beyond the latter's control'.[206] Thus Nerones subtly prepares readers for Zellandine's more obvious passivity in the face of a higher authorial power, namely the goddess Venus, and demonstrates the way in which the complex manifestations of the sleeping corpse are often inseparably intertwined and in conversation with the larger motif of false death.

The comatose Princess Zellandine, cursed at birth by a goddess to prick her finger while spinning flax, is locked away by her father Zelland, under the instruction of his doctors, who believe that the gods, specifically Zelland's ancestor Mars, will cure her since mortal medicine is useless.[207] Lying on a bed, her unconscious form is suitably barricaded from mortal interference by a moat encircling the tower, the drawbridge being raised, 'et n'y avoit huis ne fenestre qui ne fut remasonnee de bonnes pierres, reserve seullement une fenestre qui estoit au sommet de la tour devers orient' (and there was no door or window that was not filled in with good stones, except for one window that was at the top of the tower to the

[206] Brooke Heidenreich Findley, *Poet Heroines in Medieval French Narrative: Gender and Fictions of Literary Creation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 50-58, (p. 51).

[207] This is a key example of a sleeping corpse romance relying on a noble lineage to fix a problem, but also of a sleeping corpse continuing and forming a new and important family tree, much as hagiographies established sleeping saints as community continuity points. Later medieval retellings of this story replace the Roman gods with fairies as the cause of the Sleeping Beauty's slumber. For another example from medieval romance where gods have been deliberately changed with nefarious fairies, see the anonymous late thirteenth-century poem *Sir Orfeo*.

east).[208] With her father's castle alone having direct access to her room via a tunnel, and with Zelland possessing the only key to the locked door at the base of the tower, her father becomes a literal gatekeeper to her form.

Divine intervention does eventually cure Zellandine, but not in the way that her father or his doctors believe. Troylus, her true love, is guided by the goddess Venus to her tower and with the aid of Zephir, a fallen angel, is flown through the window into her bed chamber.[209] There, at the urging of Venus, he rapes his unconscious beloved before beating a hasty retreat; nine months later she gives birth to a son. When the child sucks out the piece of flax embedded in his mother's little finger in his search for her nipple, Zellandine wakes and the curse is broken. At first reading the remedy seems worse than the disease; an unpalatable tripartite prescription of sexual assault, betrayed trust, and a dereliction of chivalric honour. Troylus himself wages war with his conscience about what he is about to do, arguing with the personifications of Reason, Discretion, and Desire. The dichotomy between his honour as a knight and his actions as a lover is shown in the juxtaposition between his polite request for permission to kiss Zellandine, 'Pucelle, plaise vous que je vous baise?' (Maiden, please may I kiss you?, p. 88), and his fear that she will wake, jumping away from her in alarm when she utters a 'grief souspir' (heavy sigh, p. 90). In a tale where morally dubious behaviour is sanitised with the veneer of chivalric and medical necessity, Troylus' question is the victim of lexical slippage. The Old French verb 'baiser' means kiss, but by the time Shakespeare wrote *Henry V* (c. 1599) it had acquired a crude secondary meaning for sex.[210] In Troylus'

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[208] *Perceforest: Troisième Partie*, ed. and trans. Gilles Roussineau (Geneva: Droz, 1993), p. 81. All subsequent references will be given parenthetically. Roussineau's modern French translated editions of each of the six books of *Perceforest*, first published in 1987 and only completed in 2015, are, to date, the only completed critical editions of the entire manuscript. Book Three uses Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 347 (MS A). The only comprehensive English edition is Nigel Bryant's abridged adaptation, *Perceforest: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011).

[209] Troylus' name references the son of Priam slain in the Trojan War. *Perceforest* opens with Trojan survivors of that war making Britain their new home and is concerned with the establishment of royal lineages in the face of successive invasion of the island by other forces including Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar.

[210] For insight into Shakespeare's deliberate play on the double meaning of *baiser* in *Henry V* see Marianne Montgomery, *Europe's Languages on England's Stages, 1590-1620* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 46.

courteous question hides an explicit desire, a statement of intent in a question that can only be purely performative as Zellandine cannot wake to respond to it.

Zellandine herself is very upset by Troylus' actions when the method of her cure is revealed to her: 'Adont elle commença a plourer comme celle quy ne sçavoit que homme eust eu afaire a son corps.' (Then she began to cry because she did not believe that any man could have done something with her body, p. 210). She continues to cry as her aunt explains what has happened, and she cries a third time when Troylus confirms his part in the tale, the loss of her virginity and the revelation of her sudden motherhood demonstrably distressing for her. Zellandine's emotional response to the ravishment of her body is, however, narratively sublimated to the importance of Troylus succeeding in raping her, saving her, and thus proving himself, somewhat ironically, to be a true knight. Troylus' struggle between his desire for Zellandine, his desire to save her, and his desire to maintain his honour is ultimately shown to result in the same action of rape. As Kathryn Gravdal points out, there is a slippery lexical line between knight and rapist and '*esforcer* in the sense of "admirable striving" coexists, in twelfth-century romances such as Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide, Le Chevalier au Lion*, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette,* and *Le Conte du Graal,* with *esforcer* in the sense of rape'.[211] Thus, in this moment what matters most is not what the cure is, but who is administering it and why. Troylus, after all, depicts himself as a doctor when conversing with a group of sailors who inform him of Zellandine's condition, telling them 'je me cognois aucunement en medecine a cause de mon pere qui fut l'un des meillieurs medecins du monde' (I know a good deal about medicine because of my father who was one of the best doctors in the world.' p. 59). His statement foreshadows his eventual role in healing Zellandine, but also legitimises his presence as doctor, lover, and cure. When he later wavers

[211] Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 3.

in his decision, Desire reassures him: ‘car baisier porte medecine en pluseurs manieres, et par especial il resuscite les personnes tressaillies et sy appaise les troublez’ (the kiss serves as medicine in many ways, and it especially revives those who have fainted and helps to cure the trouble, p. 88). As a lover, he therefore holds the cure and as a knight it is his chivalric duty to administer it. Having already personally experienced Venus’ restorative methods in an earlier episode of the epic, where his memories are returned to him in her temple through the application of her saliva to ‘les yeulx, les oreilles et la bouche du chevalier’ (the eyes, the ears and the lips of the knight, p. 67), Troylus has no reason to disbelieve the goddess or doubt that the application and exchange of bodily fluids with another will again provide a cure. [212]

Venus’ prescription encourages Troylus to fulfil his chivalric destiny, but implicitly questions his bravery if he should fail in his task:

> Hault chevalier, ne vous anoit.
> Se tel proesse en vous avoit
> Qu’entrissiez par dedens la tour
> Ou la belle de noble atour
> Se gist orendroit comme pierre,
> Puis qu’eslissiez par la raiere
> Le fruit ou gist la medicine
> Garye seroit la meschine
>
> (Noble knight, do not worry.

[212] Saliva as cure may have had some real-world medicinal relevance in that to remove evil from themselves a patient in the medieval period was often encouraged to spit. See Stanley Rubin, *Medieval English Medicine* (London: David and Charles, 1974), p. 63.

If you have the prowess

To enter the tower

Where that noble beauty

Lies like stone,

Then you pluck from the slit

The fruit that holds the medicine,

The girl will be healed)

(p. 80)

Rape is reframed as a medicinal quest and failure to administer a cure as cowardly. The language of rape is couched in the euphemistic language of plucking fruit from trees, whereby Zellandine simply needs to be harvested by her lover as an inevitable part of the cycle of the land. Returning to a metaphorical Garden of Eden, Troylus must pluck the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil from Zellandine, not to condemn the world, but to save his lover by literally being fruitful and multiplying.[213] When he later reunites with Zellandine, he reassures her that there is no dishonour in his rape of her, but rather 'ce a este pour vostre sante. Et aussi afin que nostre lignage soit maintenu de noble generacion' (that was for your health and also in order that our noble lineage be continued, p. 211). His actions therefore secure his identity as a great knight, but more importantly, make him father to a long and noble line of knights, which will eventually culminate in the birth of Sir Lancelot, thus elevating his rape of Zellandine to chivalric destiny.

In a narrative set before the arrival of Christianity to Britain, it is unsurprising that there is no saintly, Christian cure for Zellandine's permanent state of unconsciousness. Yet Troylus' actions are a type of secular subversion of holy conception miracles, where, as

[213] Genesis 1.28.

Katherine J. Lewis notes, celibate male saints as part of 'the logical extension of their status as spiritual father figures' helped childless couples conceive.[214] As Ryan Dennis Giles notes, to spin thread was 'a common euphemism for the sex act'.[215] Zellandine's pricking of her finger with flax from a spindle may be read as a symbol of her sexual maturity, but is also suggestive of stigmata, a secular and sexual mirror to the holy wounds of saintly sleeping corpses indicating their martyrdom to divine favour and love. Troylus' entry into the tower therefore becomes the ultimate pilgrimage in order to access the body of the sleeping corpse.

It also acts as a sexual violation of Zellandine, even before he touches her body. If bounded interior spaces are analogous to the body of the chaste woman, then the lady's private chamber or bedroom signals her most secret and intimate self. Secluded from the familial and domestic public areas of the house, the female bedroom provides private space for women to commune intimately with themselves, their chosen lovers, and God. Within this sequestered space women can and do appear naked, literally stripped of the need for outward adornment to mark their social status and character. The space around them is encoded instead; metaphorically reading the bedroom decorations, furniture, and most importantly the bed itself, the bedchamber corresponds to the nude female body within it, enabling the extrapolation of details about the aesthetics of the naked female form, her virtuous nature, and virginal status, even when the precise description of her nudity within the text is vague or limited. Coupled with the vulnerability of the nude female form, bedrooms are habitually the locus of danger for the women inside them; what should be safe and sacred is transformed into a place of ruination and breached boundaries. When the body in the bedroom is naked and asleep this danger is only exacerbated. Thus sleeping corpses, though seemingly safely

[214] Katherine Lewis, 'Male Saints and Devotional Masculinity in Late Medieval England', *Gender & History*, 24.1 (April, 2012), 112-133, (p. 122) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2011.01671.x>.
[215] Ryan Dennis Giles, *The Laughter of the Saints: Parodies of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 43.

cocooned at the heart of a series of concentric preventative barriers, are actually made more vulnerable to the invasive presence of others, in particular intrusive masculine bodies.

On entering the room Troylus is immediately arrested by 'un lit moult riche et noble, comme se ce fust pour une royne, car le ciel et les courdines estoient plus blanches que nege' (a bed rich and noble, fit for a queen, because the top and the curtains were whiter than snow, p. 86). The bed dominates the room in Troylus' vision because the bed figuratively is his beloved; pure, white and rich enough to signify her royal status. Thus his physical reaction on seeing the furniture is that of the chivalric lover seeing his beloved naked for the first time: 'lui commença le sang a monter au viaire et le corps a eschauffer pour ce qu'il pensa que c'estoit le lit ou la pecelle gisoit, qui dormoit continuellement' (his blood began to rise to his face and his body heated up because he thought that it was the bed where the maiden had been sleeping continuously, p. 86). Beneath the sheets, Zellandine is 'toute nue' (naked, p. 87), the only version of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale type where this is so. The bedsheets act as a metaphor for Zellandine. Their continuing virginal whiteness after Troylus' encounter with her body offers her symbolic protection from the gaze of her father, who fails to comprehend what has really happened and leaves believing that Mars has given his daughter medicine. It is her aunt who is able to read the rumpled bedding and deduce what has actually happened, that 'Mars, le dieu des batailles, n'eust trop acointié sa niepce' (Mars, the god of war, had been too well acquainted with her niece, p. 93). In this way, though she is unable to provide a cure for her niece she is still able to commune with her body and comprehend her narrative, in something of the way that Guilliadun is able to remove her husband's cloak from the body of Guildelüec and know the truth of her husband's love and sadness. Thus, whilst the creation and completion of male identity is ultimately foregrounded as more important than the sleeping corpse, there is still space within the narrative for the solidarity of women, particularly female understanding and compassion, in the face of male incomprehension.

European Reaction to *Perceforest*: conspicuous consumption in two subsequent versions of *Sleeping Beauty*

In Book Four of *Perceforest*, Zellandine comes across her grown son Benuic whom she fails to recognise. He has a piece of parchment on his chest, however, which tells, in picture form, the story of his conception. Zellandine therefore encounters and reads her own fairy tale within the story itself, a delightful metatextual moment which renders Zellandine as reader, co-author, and source material simultaneously. Zellandine may be the first reader of the *Sleeping Beauty* story, but she is not the last and there are numerous subsequent retellings.

Later versions of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale type build on images of conspicuous consumption, rape, and dubious morality, whilst simultaneously removing the comradery of women and replacing it with murderous rivalry. Giambattista Basile's 1634 Neapolitan version *Sole, Luna, e Talia,* published in his posthumous collection of forty-nine fairy tales *Il Pentamerone*, introduces a king who is already married when he rapes Talia, the Sleeping Beauty of this narrative.[216] It is likely that Basile was familiar with *Perceforest*, as an Italian translation of the text was printed in 1558, and his account of *Sleeping Beauty* certainly shares similarities with the earlier story, most notably that Talia, like Zellandine, gives birth, this time to twins, one of whom similarly sucks out the flax embedded in their mother's finger and wakes her. Basile's narrative, however, is clearly influenced by other popular European works which confront the gruesome, the grisly, and the fantastical, such as Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, written c. 1349 during an outbreak of plague.[217] In Tale 10.4 of the *Decameron*, Boccaccio includes the story of a married woman who dies during

[216] Basile (1575-1632) was a prolific and well known writer in his time. There is no manuscript of *Il Pentamerone*, but the first printed edition can be found in the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan.
[217] Boccaccio (1313-1375) was one of the most influential European writers of the medieval period, his work being translated into dozens of languages and providing important sources for writers such as Chaucer and Shakespeare. Twenty-two manuscripts written in Boccaccio's own hand still survive today. For a concise biography of Boccaccio and the context of his work see David J. Wallace, *Boccaccio: Decameron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

her pregnancy and is subsequently buried in a tomb. Her rejected suitor goes to spend a night with her, only to discover she is alive, whereupon he brings her body home where she revives, gives birth and is reunited with her husband at dinner by the rejected suitor. As Ryan Giles observes, the 'motif in each case follows the mythological precedent set by Proserpina, in which a woman is seized by death, sexually violated, and later brought back among the living'.[218] That she does so at a dinner party presents her as an extra course to consume with the added side dish of the son she bore whilst unconscious. Once again, this is a narrative which foregrounds male identity as more important than women and presents the rejected suitor's graciousness in restoring the dead woman to his friend as the pinnacle of selflessness. Another influential work is *Mandeville's Travels*, a fourteenth-century compendium of fantastical travellers' tales, originally written in French c. 1357 and then translated into numerous European languages.[219] *Mandeville's Travels* takes the attempted necrophilia further and relates the story of a young man who has sex with the corpse of his dead lover in her tomb. The corpse conceives and later gives birth to a monstrous gorgon head that prophesies the submergence of the city. Rooney comments that the 'shocking fruit of the tomb, and also of the womb and the dead woman, is a parasite of the grave writ large. Such a creature is the fabulous consequence of medieval anxieties concerning the hidden processes of decay'.[220] The narrative also confronts what bodies are and are not acceptable to encounter sexually and presents, in exaggerated type, the consequences of blurring what is sleeping and what is dead, what bodies are suitable as delectable consumables within a patriarchal society, and what bodies can produce only rot, even as they suggest fertility.

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[218] Giles, p. 46.

[219] Although purported to be written by Sir John Mandeville about his travelling experiences, it is likely that this is the pen name of a French writer who compiled a list of interesting stories. It was an extremely popular text, with around three hundred manuscripts surviving to this day. For further discussion of the extraordinary and long-lasting acclaim of *Mandeville's Travels* see C. W. R. D. Moseley, ''New Things to Speak of'': Money, Memory, and *Mandeville's Travels* in Early Modern England', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 41.1 (2011), 5-20.

[220] Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination,* p. 81.

In Basile's text, the king first encounters Talia's sleeping corpse by using 'na scala de vennegnatore' (a harvester's ladder) to climb through a window to 'couze li frutte d'ammore' (gather the fruits of love, p. 946).[221] When he subsequently discovers his actions have produced children, he talks about them so constantly at the palace that it is said 'tale che se manciava aveva Talia mocca e Sole e Luna' (that when he ate he had Talia in his mouth and also Sun and Moon, p. 948). The metaphor later becomes reality when the king's jealous wife attempts to have the twins made into pies and fed to the king, though the compassionate cook substitutes the 'dui belle pumme d'oro' (two lovely golden apples, p. 948) for 'dui crapette' (two kid goats, p. 948). When the plot is discovered and the queen burned to death in the pyre she has created for Talia, the king rewards his faithful cook by placing him in the 'cocina de sto pietto' (kitchen of this heart, p. 952) and promotes him to gentleman-in-waiting. The fairy tale's repeated focus on the human body as synonymous with food, and in particular, food that is to be consumed by the masculine presence, neatly intertwines the narrative with its romance and hagiographic predecessors. As Zellandine was, so too is Talia fruit to be plucked by a harvesting king, and her rape in turn produces more food for his table. Her children can be made into 'deverse menestrelle e saporielle' (various soups and sauces, p. 948). The king's unwitting consumption of what his wife believes are his own offspring returns us to the incestuous themes of *Apollonius of Tyre*, where the 'wylde fader thus devoureth / His oghne fleissh' (8.309-10). Finally, the queen's attempt to remove her rival through fire reminds us of the persecution of the saints. Basile's tale, however, plucks away the thin veneer of chivalry and divine ordination that sanctions the unsavoury aspects of the tale's previous iterations. Talia's cure is just a happy by-product of her rape and is administered by a king who happens upon her when searching for his hawk, rather than

[221] Giambattiste Basile, *Lo cunto de li cunti*, ed. Michele Rak (Milan: Garzanti, 1998), p. 946. All subsequent translations will be given parenthetically.

deliberately seeking out a damsel in need of medicinal assistance. His rape of Talia is an act of conquest rather than cure, a fact that Talia explains to his wife: 'lo marito aveva pigliato possessione de lo terretorio suio quanno essa era addobbiata' (her husband had taken possession of her territory while she was sleeping, p. 950). Gone, however, is the female solidarity between wife and mistress that Guildelüec and Guilliadun display. Instead, the king's wife desires only the death of her rival because Talia has given the king what she cannot: children. Unlike her saintly predecessors, Talia must rescue herself from the flames of her execution pyre, and the eloquent oratory of female saints is reduced to Talia screaming in order to alert the king to her imminent death. Basile's tale has no gods or heroes, only people who are vicariously clever and cruel, and is rooted in an earthy realism that takes the scenery and stock characters of romance and hagiography — kings, castles, heroines in need of rescue — but removes their high ideals and leaves them to solve their problems on their own without the aid of dashing knights and the intervention of the gods. Instead, the moral of the story is that: 'ventura tene *quanno dorme perzì chiove lo bene*' (for the lucky*, good rains down even when they are sleeping*, p. 952). In this way, as Nancy L. Canepa has identified, Basile uses 'references that crowd the *cunti* and disturb their illusory "happy-ever-after" linearity', reducing the divine protection of the Sleeping Beauty and her cure to chance.[222] The tale, though, does continue the central idea of the importance of the Sleeping Beauty as a fertile vessel and one whose fecundity secures the lineage of a king, and the removal of the current barren wife.

Charles Perrault's 1697 French version *La belle au Bois Dormant*, which uses *Perceforest*, *Sole, Luna, e Talia*, and an anonymous fourteenth-century Catalan text *Frère-de-Joie et Soeur-de-Plaisir* (Brother of Joy and Sister of Pleasure) as sources, also plays with the

[222] Nancy L. Canepa, '"Quanto 'nc'è da ccà a lo luoco dove aggio da ire?": Giambattista Basile's Quest for the Literary Fairy Tale', *Out of the Woods: The Origin of the Literary Fairy Tale in Italy and France*, ed. Nancy L. Canepa (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), pp. 37-80, (p. 40).

idea of cannibalising the sleeping corpse and her children.[223] Sanitising the narrative somewhat with the transformation of the jealous wife into the king's mother, the revelation that she is an ogress neatly removes her humanity to highlight her monstrous nature, now manifest as her physical form. Her desire to cook and eat her grandchildren and daughter-in-law in a *sauce Robert* is at once horrid and humorous, as the cook struggles to find a substitute animal that mimics the body of the Sleeping Beauty which is, after one hundred years of sleeping, 'un peu dure, quoique belle et blanche' (a little tough, although beautiful and white).[224] The king's mother eventually cannibalises herself upon discovery of her plan, jumping into the cauldron soup of creatures that she has prepared for Sleeping Beauty, her murderous hunger consuming her own flesh in the end. Perrault uses cannibalism as a device to reveal the inhumanity of the ogress mother and separate the King from his monstrous bloodline by reconfiguring him as father and husband with a legitimate lineage, rather than only the son of a monster.[225]

The ogre queen, however, is not the only hungry character. Perrault rewrites the narrative so that not only does the Princess sleep for one hundred years, but so too does everyone else present with her in the castle. When they wake, they wake starving, their physical hunger substituting, as Carolyn Fay has observed, 'for the romantic appetites of the royal couple: "comme ils n'étaient pas tous amoureux" ("as they were not all in love" [99]).

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[223] Perrault (1628-1703) was part of a salon of French writers interested in fairy tales, including Countess d'Aulnoy who coined the term 'fairy tale' (conte de fées), and his niece Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon, who would herself write her own subversive version of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1695 entitled *L'Adroite Princesse, ou, Les Aventures de Finette*. *La Belle au bois dormant* had already appeared in the 1695 manuscript *Contes de ma mère l'Oye*, now held in the Morgan Library and Museum, New York. The 1697 version of the story, contained in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, contains five stories from the *Contes* including *Sleeping Beauty*, as well as three new stories including *Cinderella*.

[224] Charles Perrault, 'La Belle au bois dormant', *Contes*, ed. Jean-Pierre Collinet (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp. 131-140 (p. 138). All subsequent references to this work will be given parenthetically.

[225] This idea of cannibalism linked with unnatural appetites and monstrosity is hinted at in the work of Marie de France's contemporary Chrétien de Troyes. In his Arthurian romance *Erec et Enide*, Erec's presumed dead body is displayed on the dining room table at Enide's forced wedding feast. Her new husband's violent demand that Enide eat in front of the corpse of her old husband is decried by onlookers, before Erec returns to life and kills his rival, slicing his head open so that the brains spill out, effectively serving him up as dinner instead.

The servants are figuratively starving to death — figuratively, of course — but the metaphor revives the idea of death'.[226] This hunger is not sanctioned by rape or pregnancy, however; there is no plucking of fruit from the sleeping corpse by the prince. Perrault has his princess wake at the end of the one-hundred-year curse just as the prince arrives, a matter of good timing, rather than medical practice. Roussineau suggests that Perrault changes the narrative from unconscious to conscious conception possibly for reasons of decorum, but also because: 'De manière délibérée ou insconsciente, elle élimine une ambigtïité qui, depuis l'époque de la Contre-Réforme, pouvait ètre ressentie comme sacrilège: celle d'une vierge qui, comme Marie, concevait sans plaisir et sans péché.' (Deliberately or unconsciously, it eliminates an ambiguity which, since the time of the Counter-Reformation, could be felt as sacrilege: that of a virgin who, like Mary, conceived without pleasure and without sin).[227]

Perrault seems firmly to separate the Sleeping Beauty from her saintly predecessors by stripping the narrative of any religious iconography and having her act as an active participant in her courtship and construction of her family. Perrault's decision to conclude his tale with the moral that women should reign in their own sexual appetites and wait for marriage before having sex also seems to suggest this. He laments that 'On ne trouve plus de femelle, / Qui dormît si tranquillement' (There are no more women, / Who sleep so peacefully, p. 140). As Lewis Seifert notes, if women were to do as Perrault suggests and patiently wait 'they would, presumably, find the sort of "rich, handsome, gallant, and gentle" spouse of their (or at least patriarchy's) dreams. But this is impossible, the *moralités* assure us, because women today are absolutely unlike Sleeping Beauty'.[228] Instead, they are active,

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[226] Carolyn Fay, 'Sleeping Beauty Must Die: The Plots of Perrault's "La belle au bois dormant"' *Marvels & Tales,* 22.2 (2008), 259-276, (p. 265).
[227] Gilles Roussineau, 'Tradition Littéraire et Culture Populaire dans L'Histoire de Troïlus et de Zellandine ("Perceforest", Troisième partie), Version Ancienne du Conte de la Belle au Bois Dormant', *Arthuriana*, 4.1 (SPRING 1994), 30-45 (p. 39) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27869044> [Accessed 3 February 2018].
[228] Lewis C. Seifert, 'Queer Time in Charles Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty"', *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies,* 29.1 (2015) 21–41, (p. 35) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13110/marvelstales.29.1.0021> [accessed 19 November 2018].

desiring, and often troublesome sleepers with hungers of their own, more akin to the ogre queen than the sleeping, nameless princess. Yet even the sleeping corpse has not been passively waiting for the curse to end. Sent good dreams by fairies she is consciously able to craft her response to the entrance of the Prince in the years that she sleeps, aware in her liminal state of events outside her body, like the sleeping corpses of the saints before her, and able to plan and respond to them in kind. Thus her greeting to the Prince when he appears in her bedchamber, '"vous vous êtes bien fait attendre"' ("What took you so long?", p. 136) is proof that the Sleeping Beauty plots carefully, rather than sleeps peacefully.

Troublesome Sleepers and Troubling the Dead

Whilst children facilitate the reconstitution of identity for men and provide the cure for the Sleeping Beauty, as the physical manifestation of sexual practice whether inside or outside of marriage they are proof that the maiden is no longer as white as the sheets that she sleeps on, or that she does not sleep alone, or that she may not even be sleeping. Children are proof to the wife that her husband is adulterous, to the ogress that her son has married, to the father that his daughter is no longer a virgin in a tower. They can therefore prove dangerous to the mother's life if discovered or even be killed themselves. Even in *Perceforest*, Zellandine's aunt takes care to conceal her niece's pregnancy and after his birth the child is soon taken away and hidden by the gods for his own protection. Other women and children, however, are often not so fortunate. In the late thirteenth-century Old French romance *Richars li Biaus*, written in the same region as *Perceforest* by a *mestre* Requis, Clarisse, who is raped whilst sleeping off a medicinal stupor, has her child, Richars, exposed by order of her father, though the child is rescued and survives. Others fare even worse. In *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, a French advice manual written by Geoffroy de la Tour-Landry for his daughters, and translated in 1484 by William Caxton, the Emperor of Constantinople has his pregnant

daughter drowned and her lover flayed when their relationship is revealed. His younger daughter, whose own potential lover is prevented from accessing her by the souls of the Christian dead for whom she has been devoutly praying appearing round her bed, is married off to the King of Greece. The young man tells her that 'As y wende to haue entered betwene the curteynes of youre bedde, y sawe so grete nombre of dede men that y was nigh wode for fere'.[229] As with Zellandine, the young woman's bed curtains represent her body, which the knight prepares to enter; unlike the Sleeping Beauty she does not sleep alone. The ghosts are a far more effective barrier than the parted curtains, their liminal bodies filling the breach that the knight makes as he parts the cloth. Thus, though the Emperor's daughter is not herself a sleeping corpse, she does sleep with the dead. Geoffroy's daughters are also to take the sleeping dead as their example, Winstead noting that he gives the example of a number of female saints, including Anastasia, Margaret, and Lucy, whom his daughters should imitate.[230] As Kenneth Rooney suggests, 'The Knight's didactic message therefore urges for his daughters what might be thought a desirable, moralized "necrophilia": they are to share their beds only with the Christian dead, a far more morally wholesome and beneficial coupling than any earthly lover' and whilst sharing that bed they are to try and be themselves types of sleeping dead.[231]

As previously discussed in Chapter One, there is a fine line between what is regarded as sleeping and what is dead. Romances blur these lines even further, and often the bodies of sleeping beauties are described as though they are dead. Clarisse, for example, sleeps in the middle of a garden ringed by high walls with a cloth protecting her face from the sun. This cloth, which Catherine M. Jones notes is a silk cloth, was 'most often used to shroud a corpse. In a number of texts, including Robert de Boron's *Estoire du Graal*, it refers to the

[229] Geoffroy de la Tour-Landry, *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Pub. for the Early English Text Society, by N. Trübner & Co, 1906), p. 6.
[230] Winstead, p. 117.
[231] Rooney, p. 109.

cloth used by Joseph of Arimathea to shroud the body of Christ'.[232] Jones goes on to compare the body of Clarisse with the grateful dead body of the knight who features later in the tale and is covered in a similar cloth: 'all appear poised between two states of being; draped in protective fabric, all three remain nonetheless vulnerable to outside aggression'.[233] These cloths function in the same way that Zellandine's bed curtains do; they are signifiers of privacy and protection to the body beneath or behind them, but in themselves offer no actual physical defence. Their presence in and of themselves should be enough to shelter those beneath the material, but often the presence of drapery invites discovery of the body, enticing trespassers further in, despite the fact that they are also often signifiers of corpses within. Both Guildelüec and Maleficent remove cloaks to uncover the sleeping beauties of their respective narratives and Basile's jealous wife makes Talia divest herself of her garments. Yet, removal of the cloth can, in certain cases, be part of the cure to wake the sleeping corpse: Apollonius' wife, 'A bodi ded, which was bewounde / In cloth of gold' (8.1178-9), must be cut free from her shroud as part of her resurrection cure; Zellandine must have the curtains round her bed parted for Troylus to access her body and pluck the fruit he has come for; and Clarisse, who sleeps in the garden because she is sick, must have the silk covering her face removed in order for her rapist to see her and conceive their son. Once this happens there is no more mention made of her illness: as Catherine E. Léglu notes, it seems 'as if her sickness contributed to the conception of her son, and was dispelled by it'.[234]

Though there can be confusion between sleeping corpses and the materials that cover them, the texts always make it clear to the reader that the women are still alive, though comatose through magical or medicinal reasons, and that those who come upon them are

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[232] Catherine M. Jones, 'Rape, Redemption, and the Grateful Dead: Richars li biaus' in *Gender Transgressions: Crossing the Normative Barrier in Old French Literature'* ed. Karen J. Taylor (London: Garland Publishing, 1998), pp. 3-20 (pp. 13-14).
[233] Jones, p. 14.
[234] Catherine E. Léglu, *Multilingualism and Mother Tongue in Medieval French, Occitan, and Catalan Narratives* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), p. 123.

treating with, and often having sex with, the bodies of living women. Sexual relations with actual corpses, as is the case in *Mandeville's Travels*, or attempted relations with them is always, by contrast, depicted as a moment of horror, or of having horrific outcomes. In Book Four of *Perceforest,* the demon Zephir entices Passelion into bed with a beautiful maiden who turns out to be a dead body. No necrophilia occurs as the trick is revealed before anything happens, but Passelion is disgusted at the potential sexual encounter. Women can actively desire the dead too. In *Richars li biaus*, necrophilia is narrowly averted by the intervention of Richart, who persuades a lady to have the knight who died rescuing her buried with the proper rituals, rather than having his body placed in her bed so that she can kiss him four times daily. Similarly, in Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century prose romance *Le Morte Darthur*, the sorceress Hallewes explains to Launcelot that she desires nothing more in this world 'but to have thy body dede. Than wolde I have bawmed hit and sered hit, and so to have kepte hit my lyve days; and dayly I sholde have clypped the and kissed the'.[235] In the Chapell Perelus, Hallewes conflates earnest passionate worship of saints' relics with secular and subversive erotic practices. Launcelot can only express horror at her yearning. He leaves, and instead it is Hallewes who dies, wasting away within a fortnight because of her unfulfilled desires. It is a brief encounter in a dense narrative, but it is powerful in its depiction of repulsive and repugnant affection and lingers with the reader long after Launcelot has continued on his journey.**[236]** It would not be until the anonymous fifteenth-

[235] Thomas Malory, 'Le Morte Darthur'*,* in *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, ed Eugène Vinaver, 2nd edn, vol.1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), Book VI, ll. 17-20. Based on Winchester MS., ff.96r-113r; Caxton, Book VI. I have chosen to preserve the original spelling of both characters' names in accordance with this edition.

[236] Launcelot's encounter with Hallewes and her desire to keep his insensate body close to her is indicative of his consistently vulnerable state whilst sleeping, illustrated, for example, in his kidnapping by the four Queens, and Sir Belleus' amorous, but mistaken assault on him, all of which occur in the same book. Malory uses the anonymous French *Perlesvaus* as his source for Launcelot's experience at the Chapel Perelus, but Hallewes' necrophilic desires for Launcelot are Malory's own invention. Adam Bryant Marshall assigns this necrophilic creation to Malory's interest in increasing the sense of danger facing Launcelot and heightening the knight's feelings of dread. See Adam Bryant Marshall, 'Sir Lancelot at the Chapel Perelus: Malory's Adaptation of the *Perlesvaus*', *Arthuriana*, 25.3 (Fall, 2015), 33-48 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24643528> [accessed 19 June 2021].

century metrical romance *The Squire of Low Degree* that female necrophilic desires in medieval romance would be dealt with in detail and at length.

Lich, Laugh, Love: Confronting a parody of romance and the sleeping corpse in *The Squire of Low Degree*

First printed in 1520 by Wynkyn de Worde and also known as *Undo Your Door*, the poem sees the princess of Hungary apparently discover that her lover, the Squire, has been murdered by her father's steward and his men.[237] Understandably distressed by the sight of him lying dead outside her room with his throat cut and his face horribly mutilated, she takes the corpse into her arms and drags his body back into her chamber. Overcome with grief, she then proceeds to disembowel her lover in order to preserve his body with aromatic spices and wax before enclosing his body in a maple coffin triple-locked inside a marble tomb at the head of her bed.

For the princess, her dead lover, though spiritually absent, is materially very present. Physically and constantly present in her most private space, the body of her lover not only takes up physical space in her bedroom by resting as close to her as possible, but even changes her everyday routine so that her life revolves around the honouring and worship of his death:

> And every day she kyst that dead.
> Soone at morne, whan she uprose,
> Unto that dead body she gose.

[237] This version survives only in fragments. A second text printed in 1560 by William Copland survives intact. No manuscript copies of the poem exist. The story was extremely popular and remained so into the sixteenth century. Lucy M. Allen-Goss records that the story is referenced in the works of other writers including Nashe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare, and Spenser. See Lucy M. Allen-Goss, *Female Desire in Chaucer's Legend of Good Women and Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), p. 165. Cambridge Core ebook.

Therfore wold she knele downe on her kne,
And make her prayer to the Trynité,
And kysse that body twyse or thryse,
And fall in a swowne or she myght ryse.
Whan she had so done,
To chyrche than wolde she gone.
Than would she here Masses fyve,
And offre to them whyle she myght lyve.

(ll. 694-704) [238]

This strict religious observance of the relic worship of her lover metaphorically transforms the princess into a nun; her swooning, so typical a behaviour of the romance heroine, becomes a religious re-enactment of a saintly death. Her action of mimicking the death of her lover is suggestive of the death of Christ, a spiritual husband to so many mystics, nuns, and religious women of the medieval period, while her lover's body recalls Christ's own beloved and wounded body.[239] Every action, whether rising, kneeling, or falling, becomes an act of love and worship, the bedroom reinterpreted as the private cell of a cloistered nun, her daily visits to the church to hear five masses the act of a penitent pilgrim. In her faithful, obsessive remembrance of the dead in her bedroom there are echoes of the Emperor's daughter praying at night for the dead who surround her bed to protect her from would-be lovers. But here, the princess' dead beloved is more than a ghost. He is a tactile memory, a physical manifestation of the memory of the beloved, who though handled reverently is also touched amorously. As

[238] 'The Squire of Low Degree' in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, ed. Erik Kooper (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), pp. 135-159.
[239] For more on how both women and men saw themselves as the bride of Christ see Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, P. A: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

Nicola McDonald notes, the princess embalms her love whilst naked and uses virgin wax to fill the corpse so that 'It is a consummation, but only of sorts'.[240] In death, the lovers become inseparable and it becomes difficult to work out where one body ends and the other begins, the princess exclaiming upon his eventual disintegration, "Alas that we should parte in two!" (l. 926). For seven years she has seen their bodies as one flesh co-mingled together. We are not told where she kisses the corpse thrice, only that she kisses the body, but the implication in all of the corpse falling to 'powder small' (l. 931) rather than just the skull or the hands is that the whole body is worshipped, not just the lips. But the body's failure to retain its structural integrity after so much handling and its return to a natural state of dust forces the princess to confront not just the fragmentation of the physical body but of her memory of her beloved, separating them into two parts. Thus the beloved dies a second time, but in leaving a more permanent absence compels the princess to plan her own retreat from the world, her lament to the dust echoing Eliduc's own vow to Guilliadun: 'Nowe wyll I take the mantell and the rynge, / And become an ancresse in my lyvynge. / And yet I am a mayden for thee' (ll. 955-957).

This plan of course is ultimately negated by the timely return of the Squire who has not actually been dead for seven years, but has been in fact proving himself as a knight across Europe. The body the princess has been so amorously worshipping is, in reality, that of her father's treacherous steward. To the princess' horror the whole episode has been a rather cruel and hideous case of mistaken identity, a matter made worse by her father's seeming knowledge of this error but failure to inform her, or to stop her necrophilic passions for the wrong man. After she has berated her father for his inaction, the king then reunites the lovers. In a reversal of the romancing of the cadaver by the princess it is now her turn to fall

[240] Nicola McDonald, 'Desire Out of Order and *Undo Your* Door', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 34 (2012), 247-275, (p. 263) < https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.2012.0003>.

'sownyng by and by', (l. 928) pliant and corpse like, into the arms of her beloved, who begins the task of reciprocating the seven years' worth of affection she has given to his substitute body by kissing her 'an hundreth tymes and mo' (l. 1068).

A.C. Spearing notes that the poem and Shakespeare's late romances have much in common, as well as observing the more specific parallels between the *Squire of Low Degree*, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline,* and Tale 4.5 of the *Decameron*, which concerns the heroine Lisabetta, who buries the head of her murdered lover in a pot of basil that she waters daily with her tears.[241] A derivative version of this latter story, known as *Guystarde and Sygysmonde*, was known separately in England and was very popular, probably influencing the writer of *The Squire of Low Degree.*[242] Spearing also comments on the necrophilia between the princess and her lover, remarking that it

> appears to be carefully calculated to convey a horrifyingly extreme test of devotion — so extreme that it does not pretend to be anything but a fiction, horrifying nevertheless in its intense single-mindedness, yet not unbearably horrifying both because we know that, even within the fiction, the corpse is not really the Squire's and because we must believe by now that the King's narrative coincides with the poet's own and will have a happy ending. We are thus able to savour the Princess's devotion at a certain aesthetic distance.[243]

[241] Shakespeare clearly knew this text, referring to it by name in *Henry V,* Act V Scene I and using this moment as source material for the encounter between Innogen and the headless body of Cloten in *Cymbeline*.
[242] For further discussion on the popularity of the text and its relationship to other romances and later writers of the period see Julia Boffey and A.S.G Edwards, 'The Squire of Low Degree and the Penumbra of Romance Narrative in the Early Sixteenth Century', in *Romance Rewritten: The Evolution of Middle English Romance: A Tribute to Helen Cooper* ed. Elizabeth Archibald, Megan G. Leitch and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), pp. 229-240. Cambridge Core ebook.
[243] A.C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 187 Cambridge Core ebook.

Yet I do not believe we are able to 'savour' this devotion at a distance. The corpse may not be the Squire's, but it is undeniably still a corpse. Spearing dismisses the horror of the moment as nothing worse than that which appears in *Cymbeline* or the *Decameron*, but it is more macabre and horrifying than either of these examples because Innogen does not embalm Cloten's body and worship it for seven years, nor does Lisabetta dig her lover's head out of its basil pot daily to kiss it. Aesthetically we only see the basil, not the rotting head that is hidden in the earth as in a little grave. Neither Innogen nor Lisabetta sexualise the corpses they encounter as the Hungarian princess does, a fact Spearing seems to gloss over. This is the true horror of the text and why the living Squire must reappear at the end of the poem. Unlike Lisabetta who withers away and dies, it is the corpse which the princess holds that erodes away. Her sexual energies must be redirected towards a body that will not disappear under their weight and will be able to channel them into a new royal lineage, so that the poem ends with the potential for creation rather than absence.

This is an uncomfortable, jarring ending to the romance. Some critics such as K. S. Kiernan have argued that the 'embalming scene is an example of black humor in the Middle Ages at its most outrageous' and that the ending similarly is bleakly comic because the narrative is meant to be a humorous satire, poking fun at the tropes of romance and chivalric literature; the princess and the squire are more in love with love itself and its performative value than each other.[244] This response remains unsatisfactory, however, and ignores the fact that this is not a happy ending, with the return of the squire an opportunity for everyone to forget the previous seven years of grotesquery. Instead, the reader is left with unanswered questions as to why the dead steward is dressed as the squire by the king's men and why the king fails to tell his daughter of the deception practised upon her. Additionally, after her

[244] K. S. Kiernan, '*Undo Your Door* and the Order of Chivalry', *Studies in Philology*, 70.4 (Oct 1973), 345-366, (p. 363) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4173816> [accessed 01/05/2018].

reunion with the squire where she falls swooning into his arms, the princess remains silent for the remainder of the text. She is almost totally excluded, while it is instead the king and the squire who close the text together, their homosocial desire subsuming the princess' hagiographic and romance driven narrative and voice.

The Squire of Low Degree is therefore not really about the princess and her love for the corpse in her bedroom, but about the squire's journey from potential lover, to relic, to knight and appropriate spouse for the princess. The tale revolves around his ever-changing role and identity, mistaken or otherwise, with those around him, and his ascendance to greatness. As Joan M. Ferrante writes, 'his final union with her (if he can achieve it) represents the completion of himself.'[245] As the sleeping corpses of saints were valued for their use to the community and the supplicants who came to see them, so the Sleeping Beauty restores male homosocial bonds, elevates men to new chivalric heights, is the conduit through which important lineages are continued, and the tool used to root out those who transgress social taboos, such as cannibalism. Thus, in *Perceforest*, when Troylus debates whether he should rape Zellandine, the narrative is not really about curing her at all, but saving himself. Zellandine holds a mirror up to his own self-worth and completes it because 'de lui mesmes il estoit de nulle valeur, ne fussent les vertus d'elle' (he was of no value whatsoever without her virtues, p. 83). Sleeping Beauty cannot remain asleep forever, because the one who rescues her is, in turn, in need of rescue and redemption.

Perceforest continued to be popular with readers throughout the sixteenth century. It was even reimagined for the stage, being the source for the Elizabethan play *Clyomon and Clamydes* (printed in 1599 though probably composed two decades earlier), which takes much of its story from the tale of Nerones in Book Three, though it removes the false death

[245] Joan M. Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature from the Twelfth Century to Dante* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 74.

motif entirely. Not everyone was as enamoured with these kinds of narratives, however. As Jane Taylor notes wryly in her consideration of the play, this type of folkloric 'historical' romance text was what 'Philip Sidney […] calls, disdainfully, "mongrel tragic-comedy," "neither right tragedies, nor right comedies"'.[246] Seemingly uninspired and scornful of these narratives, Sidney would instead attempt his own version of *Sleeping Beauty*, but strip the text of its magical, fairy tale qualities to produce a meditation on the merits of rulership. More importantly, he would also make Sleeping Beauty a man.

[246] Jane H. M. Taylor, '"Mongrel Tragi-Comedy": *Perceforest* on the Elizabethan Stage', in *"Li premerains vers": Essays in Honour of Keith Busby,* ed. Catherine M. Jones and Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 479-493, (p. 485).

Chapter Three

‘betwixt a prince dead and a princess alive’

Elizabethan Romance and the Male Sleeping Beauty

Numerous texts in the Elizabethan period warn of the dangers for women and young people of reading books perceived to be detrimental to their physical and spiritual wellbeing. Juan Luis Vives’ sixteenth-century conduct books and their English translations are frequently cited by early modern readership critics as prime examples of the way reading, particularly women’s reading, was meant to be circumscribed. Helen Smith records that Thomas Paynell, the translator of Vives’ *The Office and Duetie of a Husband* (trans. 1555), interprets ‘Vives's advice on the best way to manage a wife’ as recommending that ‘Yf she can reade, lette her haue no bookes of Poetrye, nor suche tryfelynge bookes as we haue spoken of before, […] delyuer her no vayne, no chyldyshe, no barbarous, nor no superstitious bookes’.[247] Vives was certainly not alone in railing against the idea that women should read anything which might draw their hearts and minds away from familial duties and religious contemplation. Lori Humphrey Newcomb notes that ‘William Tyndale, as early as 1528, warned against ‘hystoryes & fables of love and wantones, and of rybaudrye, as filthy as harte can thynke: to corrupte the myndes of youth’.[248] Edith Snook, meanwhile, observes that Roger Ascham, author of *Toxophilu*s (1545) and *Schoolmaster* (1570), warns against reading romances because of their illicit content and the location of their creation ‘in abbeys and monasteries — a ‘very lickely and fit fruite of such an ydle and blynde kinde of lyvynge’— and lead ‘onely

[247] Juan Luis Vives, *The Office and Duetie of a Husband*, trans. Thomas Paynell (London: John Cawood, 1555?), P8v–Q1r, quoted in Helen Smith, *‘Grossly Material Things': Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 174. Oxford Scholarship Online.
[248] Lori Humphrey Newcomb, ‘Romance’, in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 363-377 (p. 369). Oxford Scholarship Online.

to manslaughter and baudrye''.[249] Jacqueline Pearson notes that 'Thomas Salter's *The Mirrhor of Modestie* (1574) makes similar points: Romance fiction and "lascivious" poetry are a "pestilent infection" and must be avoided, while "the lives of godly and virtuous ladies" from the Bible and history are recommended'.[250] Whilst the genre of romance is broadly dismissed as not only wanting, but actively detrimental to its readers, specific authors and their texts are picked out for special warning.[251] These include European writers such as Ariosto and Boccaccio, whom Richard Mulcaster views as 'over heavie to wymen', recommending, as Snook notes, that they 'should be avoided like other Italian works'.[252] English romances fare no better than their continental cousins. Helen Hackett records that fifty years after Mulcaster offered his suggestions, Thomas Powell, in his 1631 book *Tom of all trades, or the plaine path-way to preferment* writes 'In stead of Song and Musicke, let them learne Cookery and Laundrie. And in stead of reading *Sir Philip Sidneys Arcadia*, let them read the grounds of good huswifery'.[253]

The texts under consideration in this chapter, Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (c. 1580), John Lyly's *Endymion* (1588), and Michael Drayton's *Endimion* (1599), would not have been recognised by their authors as romances, and I use the term in its current meaning of encompassing a broad swathe of secular fiction from the renaissance. As Christine S. Lee argues, at the time, 'Sixteenth century romances were understood as books of arms and

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[249] Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus in English Works*, ed. William Aldis Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904; 1970), xiv-xv, quoted in Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 14. Routledge ebook.
[250] Jacqueline Pearson, 'Women Reading, Reading Women', in *Women and Literature in Britain 1500–1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 80 – 99 (p. 81). Cambridge Core ebook.
[251] It should be noted that whilst there are numerous examples of women being characterised as readers of romance, there is not actually a great deal of evidence to prove that the vast majority of romance readers were women, outside of these warnings. Though romances themselves often addressed an imaginary female audience, this was based on habits inherited from Italian writers whose 'feigned address to ladies excuses male readers' interest in themes of love. Such asides to women readers were carried into English romance by the translators of these novelle, as in William Painter's *Palace of pleasure* (1566, 1567)', Newcomb, p. 371.
[252] Richard Mulcaster, *Positions: Wherein Those Primitive Circumstances be Examined, which are Necessarie forthe Training Up of Children* (1581, reprinted in London: Longmans, 1888), p. 172, quoted in Snook, p. 13.
[253] Thomas Powell, *Tom of All Trades. Or the Plaine Path-Way to Preferment* (1631), p. 47, quoted in Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5. Cambridge Core ebook.

chivalry […] A ‘‘romance’’ was a heroic poem: a story of great men and, indeed, written chiefly by men’.[254] Whilst the texts in this chapter are stories of men written by men, at the heart of these narratives are men who embody characteristics in direct opposition to what sixteenth-century readers would have understood made a hero of romance. Sidney’s Basilius and the eponymous figures of Lyly and Drayton’s works are not heroic, and indeed cannot even attempt to be heroic, as they spend much of their time in their respective narratives asleep or perceived as dead, states which in and of themselves are inherently anti-romantic and anti-heroic. Helen Cooper notes that ‘Sleeplessness is a recurrent state of male lovers in the Petrarchan tradition, and before that in medieval French romance’.[255] Against this textual convention and social condemnation from moralists, the male sleeping corpses of Basilius and the Endymions offer their assumed women readers new ways of configuring and understanding liminal bodies that earlier medieval romances had traditionally conceptualised as female. Challenging conventional gender roles, these texts subvert the established principles of the sleeping corpse motif in new and provocative ways, and warp the relationship of the sleeping corpse with the divine and with the community.

The Problem of the Corpse in Paradise: Death and Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*

Arcadia as a place is not the invention of Sidney, but a locus shared with other renaissance writers and artists and based on classical writings, a landscape which melds together a real Greek province with an imagined space of bucolic bliss.[256] Among many depictions, one of

[254] Christine S. Lee, ‘The Meanings of Romance: Rethinking Early Modern Fiction’, *Modern Philology*, 112.2 (November 2014), 287-311 (p. 293 and p. 299) <https://doi.org/10.1086/678255>.
[255] Helen Cooper, ‘*Sir Thopas*’s mourning maidens’ in *Contemporary Chaucer across the centuries*, ed. Helen M. Hickey, Anne McKendry and Melissa Raine (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 42-55 (p. 43).
[256] For an in-depth exploration of the various sources which form the landscape known as Arcadia, including Theocritus and Virgil, and why Arcadia comes to represent a shared pastoral idyll for writers, see Nandini Das, ‘Placing Arcadia’, in *Medieval into Renaissance: Essays for Helen Cooper*, ed. Andrew King and Matthew Woodcock (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), pp. 143-162. Cambridge Core ebook. Though Arcadia functions as a country bordered largely by the imagination, it is likely that Sidney did use real geographical spaces and maps to base his work on. For more on how Sidney used maps in his revised *Arcadia* see Peter

the most famous occurs in *The Arcadian Shepherds*, a painting finished c. 1638 by the French artist Nicholas Poussin. In the painting three young shepherds and a shepherdess stumble across a large stone tomb incongruously positioned in the idyllic pastoral landscape. Along its side, the Latin inscription 'Et in Arcadia Ego' is engraved, which can be translated as 'I am also in Arcadia', a message which functions as both epitaph to the deceased and warning to the living shepherds of their own mortality: Death, too, is in Arcadia. Bending to read the writing, the words of which also happen to be the alternative title of the painting, the shepherds are abruptly forced to contemplate the ephemerality of life, and as viewers, we are left to meditate on the tension and disquiet of the co-existence of death in the midst of paradise. Poussin's painting, his second attempt at depicting a utopia punctured by reality, is a subtler, more restrained rendering of a version painted twenty years earlier by the Italian artist Guercino, also entitled 'Et in Arcadia Ego', which depicts two shepherds staring bleakly at a human skull positioned prominently in the foreground of the painting.[257] The phrase was probably coined by Gulio Rospigliosi, later Pope Clement IX, who commissioned both paintings by the artists, and who was apparently inspired by Virgil's *Eclogues*, a series of ten poems set in the pastoral idyll of Arcadia. Though the words 'et in Arcadia ego' are not specifically found in the poet's writings, as M. Owen Lee remarks, they 'have caught and conveyed something of the melancholy sense of mortality peculiar to Virgil'.[258] In the Fifth Eclogue, two shepherds sing a song of mourning that commemorates the death of Daphnis, a handsome youth who has suffered an untimely demise, and speak of his many outstanding

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Lindenbaum, 'The Geography of Sidney's *Arcadia*', *Philological Quarterly,* 63.4 (Fall 1984), 524-531 <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/geography-sidneys-arcadia/docview/1290772719/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 13 March 2021].

[257] Poussin's first version of 'Et in Arcadia Ego', painted around 1627, is a much darker interpretation of the topic, featuring a skull resting on a tomb which disappears into the shadows of the background and out of the picture altogether. It currently hangs in Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. In contrast, the 1638 version removes the skull and recentres its figures and the tomb, creating an 'elegiac meditation as opposed to shocked encounter with mortality', according to Lawrence D. Steefel Jr, 'A Neglected Shadow in Poussin's Et in Arcadia Ego', *The Art Bulletin*, 57.1 (March, 1975), 99-101, (p. 99) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.2307/3049341>.

[258] M. Owen Lee, *Death and Rebirth in Virgil's Arcadia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 90.

attributes. One of the shepherds calls for a tomb to be built and the following verse inscribed upon it: '"Daphnis ego in siluis, hinc usque ad sidera notus, formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse"' (I'm woodland Daphnis, known from here to heaven's sill. Guardian of the finest flock, I'm finer still).[259] As a caretaker of the pastoral landscape, in death he is thus returned to it, but even as the shepherds ask Daphnis to watch over and bless the landscape of which he is inextricably a part, the unnatural death of one so tightly intertwined with nature abruptly ends the Arcadian dream of peace and safety.

Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romance *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, first printed in 1590, grapples with the same issue. The work circulated only in manuscript form in the 1580's, and Sidney died before he completed his revision of the manuscript. His incomplete text, which ends mid-sentence and mid-scene, was published by his friend Fulke Greville in 1590 and is known as the *New Arcadia*. In 1593, a major revision was published which combined the manuscript ending of the *Old Arcadia* with the *New Arcadia* with a note bridging the two texts, as well as the removal of an attempted rape scene and revision of a consensual sexual encounter between two characters into a scene of innocence.[260] Finally, in 1621, Sir William Alexander published an edition including his own lengthy bridging piece between the Old and the New. This is the version known as *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and to which I will be referring hereafter as *Arcadia*.

Arcadia tells the story of the king of Arcadia, Basilius, and his family, as Basilius rejects rulership and retreats to the woods in order to escape an oracle's prophecy that the

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[259] *Virgil's Eclogues*, trans. Len Krisak (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5.43-44.
[260] This major revision was thought to be the work of Sidney's sister Mary but is now generally attributed to Sidney himself. It is very difficult to create noble, sympathetic characters if they also engage in illicit sexual practices and so the removal of Musidorus' attempted rape of Pamela and Pyrocles' sexual encounter with Philoclea is thought to be intended, as Peter Lindenbaum surmises, 'to ensure our sympathy for them [the princes] and to enable them to look more respectable and worthy when confronted with Euarchus and his ideal of justice in the trial scene that probably would have ended the *New Arcadia*.' See Peter Lindenbaum, 'Sidney's *Arcadia*: The Endings of the Three Versions', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 34.3 (May, 1971), 205-218 (p. 211) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3816699>.

marriages of his daughters, Pamela and Philoclea, will cause his own death.[261] Sequestering his daughters in two separate lodges, Basilius eagerly takes on the role of an old, fretful fairy tale king, suspicious and possessive of his daughters' virginities and romantic entanglements, whilst hypocritically seeking to begin an affair of his own with the Amazon Zelmane, who is really a prince in disguise and object of love for both his wife and youngest daughter, Philoclea. In retreating to the woods, Basilius fractures his family and his rulership, prematurely ending the line of inheritance by nullifying his daughters' romantic aspirations and thus any potential progeny they might have. The landscape reshapes itself accordingly.[262] The seas are populated by pirates; wild, ravenous beasts and murderous locals roam the woods of Arcadia; and a prolonged episode of siege warfare later in the text results in the graphic slaughter of dozens of knights in bloody battle as Basilius struggles to free his daughters from imprisonment by his own sister-in-law Cecropia and her son Amphialus. Unable to rule his people, his family, or his own passions, Basilius inhabits a topography that mirrors his own anxious and distrustful nature; a pockmarked paradise where death is not only stumbled upon in tombs amongst the greenery, but actively stalks the landscape.[263]

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[261] Because of its focus on kingship, critics have often read *Arcadia* politically. Whilst the interplay between the presentation of court in *Arcadia* and Sidney's own life at the court of Elizabeth I is interesting and important, it is not the focus of this chapter. For more on *Arcadia* as political allegory see James Biester,'"A Pleasant and Terrible Reverence": Maintenance of Majesty in Sidney's *New Arcadia*', *Philological Quarterly*, 72.4 (Fall 1993), 419-442, David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance: Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney's "Arcadia" and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[262] This reshaping reflects older ideas originating in Virgil's *Eclogues* of the Arcadian landscape's close relationship with man, in which, as Zoja Pavlovskis remarks, 'nature does not merely provide sustenance - she is a friend […] Natural objects rejoice with man; they are sad when he leaves them and joyful at his return.' See Zoja Pavlovskis, 'Man in a Poetic Landscape: Humanization of Nature in Virgil's *Eclogues*', *Classical Philology*, 66.3 (1971), 151-168 (p. 159) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/268132> [accessed 07 June 2021].

[263] The disordered Arcadia is not quite the wasteland depicted in Old French Romances, which is marked by 'nature's sterility' as Howard Bloch describes it. By contrast, Arcadia is fecund with wrong and unnatural progeny in the wild beasts and vengeful relatives which roam its landscapes. It does, however, reflect ideas of the wasteland as the product of 'a crisis of kingship and general social order'. See R. Howard Bloch, 'Wasteland and Round Table: The Historical Significance of Myths of Dearth and Plenty in Old French Romance', *New Literary History*, 11.2 (1980) 255-76 (p. 258, p. 260) <https://doi.org/10.2307/469011>.

This is also a landscape empty of magic. Though Sidney actively engages with many of the tropes of romance, his deliberate revisions of the genre kill off all of the fantastical elements natural to it. There are 'no zodiacal monsters, magic swords, shields, magicians, or enchantress', as Tiffany Werth points out, none of the elements that imbue romance with a sense of the marvellous.[264] There are no gods to curse young maidens into falling asleep, cannibal ogress mothers, or miracle cures from the graves of the sainted dead. The one fairy tale that the text does offer, Mopsa's story in Book II of a princess who must quest to recover her lost knightly lover, is deliberately cut off midway through its telling.[265] Sidney's editing out of the 'lying wonders', which Werth explains as 'a phrase often read as shorthand for Catholic practices', from his main sources of romance and hagiography in order to make it more palatable for a Protestant audience, leaves the reader with an absence.[266] The bleakness of human fallibility and the evils of the material world are no longer cushioned by magic and miracle.[267]

Sidney's misanthropic revisions extend not only to the genre of romance, but also to the revision of his first manuscript. As Joachim Frenk notes in his comparison between the *Old Arcadia* and its revised text, 'the *New Arcadia* strikes a markedly different tone

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[264] Tiffany Werth, 'The Reformation of Romance in Sir Philip Sidney's "The New Arcadia"', *English Literary Renaissance,* 40.1 (Winter 2010), 33-55 (p. 34) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43447680 > [accessed 23 June 2018].

[265] For further examination of this tale see Clare Kinney, 'On the Margins of Romance, at the Heart of the Matter: Revisionary Fabulation in Sidney's *New Arcadia*', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 21.2 (Spring, 1991), pp. 143-152. Alex Davies sees Mopsa's unfinished story as having 'a disquieting similarity to Sidney's narrative as a whole' because 'it too descends to us from antiquity via a chain of intermediate steps: from the Latin novel to the medieval romance, and from the medieval romance to the earlier Tudor, down to the time of the *Arcadia*'s composition.' See Alex Davis, *Renaissance Historical Fiction: Sidney, Deloney, Nashe* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), p. 119. Cambridge Core ebook.

[266] Werth, pp. 34-35.

[267] This is not to say that Protestant writers like Sidney did not believe in the intervention of the divine in the world. What they disagreed with was, as Alexandra Walsham notes, 'that miracles could occur at the behest of human beings, whether clergy or laity.' Thus, whilst 'Protestants shared the same cosmology as medieval and contemporary Catholics' they 'collapse[d] the miraculous into the natural'. See Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed', *The Historical Journal*, 51.2 (2008), 497-528, (p. 509) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20175171> [accessed 1 June 2021].

throughout […] a decidedly unhappy tone'.[268] Absence now opens the text of *Arcadia*, as in Virgil's eclogues, with two shepherds mourning the loss of their beloved. Though Urania, the object of the shepherds' affections, has simply physically left Arcadia rather than died, their lamentations at her departure are as effusive as if she had, the shepherd Strephon having 'his voice brake so with sobbing that he could say no further'.[269] Yet their reminiscences and praise are almost immediately interrupted by the corpse of Musidorus, a young and handsome prince, washing ashore nearby. Not only does death walk amongst Arcadia and the lands surrounding it, but Arcadia also draws in the dead to its shores, creating penetrable, liminal boundaries where life ebbs out and death flows in. The text takes care to emphasise the beauty of the dead body, noting that he is of 'so goodly shape and well-pleasing favour that one would think death had in him a lovely countenance' (p. 64). The young man is handsome, and death has seemingly enhanced this quality, as with an uncorrupted saintly corpse newly washed. Yet, despite the introduction of death at the beginning of the narrative, this is almost immediately followed by a re-birth as the shepherds resolve to revive him. As Sallie Anglin remarks, the 'relationship between Strephon and Claius is a generative one. It may not produce children in the heteroreproductive sense but, physically and metaphorically, they deliver Musidorus from the sea and into Arcadia'.[270] Despite the echoes of *Apollonius of Tyre* here, the Arcadian shepherds have no need of a doctor to resuscitate the princely corpse, but are seemingly well versed in techniques for returning the dead to life:

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[268] Joachim Frenk, 'Happiness in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*', *Critical Survey*, 32.3 (Autumn 2020), 59–69 (p. 61) <doi:10.3167/cs.2020.320306>.
[269] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1987), p. 62. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.
[270] Sallie Anglin, 'Material Romance: Embodiment, Environment and Ecology in Sidney's New Arcadia', *Sidney Journal*, 30.2 (2012), 87-107 (p. 99) <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/material-romance-embodiment-environment-ecology/docview/1447204951/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 23 August 2019].

> lifting his feet above his head, making a great deal of salt water come out of his mouth, they laid him upon some of their garments and fell to rub and chafe him till they brought him to recover both breath, the servant, and warmth, the companion, of living.
>
> (p. 64)

In rubbing the body in order to generate heat and stimulate breathing, covering him with their clothes, and removing troublesome fluids, the shepherds use the same practical and mundane methods as they would for looking after a sickly new-born lamb.[271] Thus, through their role as midwives Musidorus, as a sleeping corpse, becomes part of the fauna of the pastoral landscape, only to later follow the profession of his pseudo-fathers by disguising himself as a shepherd named Dorus in order to become close to his beloved Pamela. Unfortunately, in remaking himself as both sheep and shepherd, Musidorus becomes a second Daphnis; caretaker of the landscape, but also vulnerable to the possibility of being buried beneath it.

This resurrection is the first, but certainly not the last to occur in *Arcadia*. In Book Three, Cecropia captures Pamela and Philoclea and locks them up in her castle in an attempt to persuade the latter to marry her love-sick son, Amphialus. Luring her nieces into a trap with servants dressed as shepherdesses, Cecropia subverts the traditions of the pastoral, which, as Clare Kinney argues, 'transforms recreative pastoral into a masque/mask concealing a darker plot. Her abduction and adulteration of pastoral anticipate her son's own abduction and deployment of the beguiling ceremonies of knightly romance within his theater

[271] Jean de Brie, a fourteenth-century French shepherd, recommends a shepherd wear a surcoat, which can be used to wrap up new-born lambs, and that when a lamb is born it should be given to its mother to be cleaned and stimulated. For more information on the practical aspects of life as a medieval shepherd see: *The Medieval Shepherd: Jean de Brie's Le Bon Berger (1379)*, ed. and trans. Carleton W. Carroll and Lois Hawley Wilson (Tempe, Arizona: ACMRS, 2012).

of chivalry'.[272] Barbara Brumbaugh has written extensively on how 'Cecropia could without contradiction be associated with the Church of Rome, the Mass, *and* the Whore of Babylon', but she also has close parallels to tyrants in medieval hagiographies who try to persuade Christian martyrs to marry pagan suitors and repent of their religious vows. [273] Cecropia first tries to reason with her nieces, only for Philoclea to inform her of her resolution to 'lead a virgin's life to my death, for such a vow I have in myself devoutly made' (p. 460). When her bribes, threats, and inducements fail she then encourages her son to rape Philoclea, arguing that '''No'' is no negative in a woman's mouth' (p. 533). Suffering as sweetly as a saint, however, Philoclea threatens suicide should this violation ever be attempted, arguing that 'the house of death had so many doors as she would easily fly into it if ever she found her honour endangered' (p. 451). Amphialus does treat Philoclea as though she were holy, carrying her knives with him 'next his heart as the only relic he had of his saint' (p. 574), but the choice of weapon as relic indicates Philoclea's fierce refusal to consent to Amphialus touching or obtaining any part of her person. Unlike a lock of hair or other bodily relic, the knives are sharp and deadly and act as physical representations of her desire to defend herself from the unworthy, whether they claim to be worshippers or not. As Helen Moore remarks, 'love is figured not as a pilgrimage but as the precursor to endless wandering, kidnap, imprisonment, loss and absence' and Amphialus cannot play at being a pilgrim when he is also Philoclea's jailor.[274] Philoclea's pointed truths, that Amphialus calls for 'pity and use cruelty; you say you love me, and yet do the effects of enmity" (p. 449), cut through his revisioning of her imprisonment as romantic and him as her princely rescuer. Though he claims that 'it is your

[272] Clare R. Kinney, 'Chivalry Unmasked: Courtly Spectacle and the Abuses of Romance in Sidney's *New Arcadia*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 35.1 (Winter, 1995), 35-52 (p. 38) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/450988> [accessed 23 August 2019].
[273] Barbara Brumbaugh, 'Cecropia and the Church of Antichrist in Sir Philip Sidney's *New Arcadia*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 38.1 (Winter, 1998), 19-43 (p. 32) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/451079> [Accessed 17 November 2019].
[274] Helen Moore, 'The Pilgrimage of Passion in Sidney's *Arcadia*', *Pilgrim Voices: Narrative and Authorship in Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. Simon Coleman and John Elsner (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp. 61-83 (p. 80).

beauty which makes these castle-walls embrace you' (p. 451), Philoclea makes it clear that the embrace by either the architecture or Amphialus is wholly unwanted.

Ultimately, having failed to convince her nieces to give in to her demands, Cecropia seemingly executes them both, beheading first Pamela, then Philoclea in front of a horrified Zelmane. Though Philoclea later reveals the ruse as Cecropia's final attempt to get them to recant their positions, these staged executions are horrifyingly realistic, mostly because in revealing that both Pamela and Philoclea are alive, Philoclea discloses that a real execution did take place: that of the maiden Artesia who has attempted to betray Cecropia. Though Philoclea is forced to place her head in a dish of gold, so that through means of clever trickery she appears as though decapitated, it is Artesia's blood which spatters the bowl. This deception leads to a disquieting moment where it seems as though Philoclea's decapitated head on the platter 'still appeared to be alive' (p. 563), with her eyes sometimes moving. After Philoclea reveals the trick, we can see how what may once have been an allusion to the miracles common in hagiography is simply an indication that the execution, for Philoclea at least, was a trick all along. Tiffany Werth argues that 'Romance, like the legends of saints, "bewytched" readers by asking them to believe in a porous border between the material and supernatural worlds', but *Arcadia* firmly closes that boundary, dismissing all ideas of miracles, resurrections, or divine intervention.[275] Bi-Qi Beatrice Lei comments in her consideration of misogyny in *Arcadia* that 'To read the work as a straightforward legend of good women is undoubtedly reductive, if not incorrect', nominally because the women in the text are very rarely wholly good. I would also argue, however, that *Arcadia* cannot be read as a legend in the same way as Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* or Voragine's *Golden Legend* because it is concerned less with religious miracle and more with 'deceit' (p. 569) and 'sleights' (p. 568), words that Philoclea uses when she reveals the truth of her apparent death

[275] Werth, p. 44.

to Zelmane, who initially believes her to be an angel.[276] There is no princess to be awakened, or saint to ask a boon of, or miracle to be prayed for. Instead, there are simply lies, a dish full of blood, and the corpse of Artesia, who is quickly dismissed by Philoclea as being justly 'punished for her double false-hood' (p. 569). This performance of death as the production of artifice is deeply theatrical, so theatrical that Cecropia, as Christopher Martin notes, 'looks forward to the villains who would, in the decade following Sidney's death, come to dominate the Elizabethan stage.'[277] Cecropia transforms death and resurrection from serious supernatural events to ones that could conceivably be reproduced on stage by a clever director.

This performative aspect of death is most fully embodied by Parthenia, the wife of the noble knight Argalus. The pair are depicted as idealised lovers and the most virtuous pairing in the text. Parthenia's grief at her husband's death in single combat against Amphialus becomes physically manifest in her role as the Knight of the Tomb.[278] Taking on the chivalric masculine role as her husband's avenger, she clads herself in armour 'all painted over with such a cunning of shadow that it represented a gaping sepulchre' (p. 526).[279] The *Song of Songs* metaphorically renders women's bodies as battlements and doors, and medieval literature such as *Eliduc*, *Perceforest*, and *The Squire of Low Degree* locates women within protective enclosed environments, but the Knight of the Tomb is literally painted as a monument to her matrimonial devotion to her deceased husband. Stephanie Chamberlain

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[276] Bi-Qi Beatrice Lei, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 41.1 (Winter, 2001) 25-48 (p. 26) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1556227> [accessed 12 March 2021].
[277] Christopher Martin, 'Misdoubting His Estate: Dynastic Anxiety in Sidney's "Acadia"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 18.3 (Autumn 1988) 369-388 (p. 386) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43447255> [accessed 12 March 2021].
[278] The tragic love story of Parthenia and Argalus proved so popular that it would survive as a separate text outside of the *Arcadia*. Francis Quarles' 1629 verse version of the lovers' meeting and their various trials and tribulations would, as Lori Humphrey Newcomb notes, be 'a perennial best-seller, with some thirty reprintings through the century, and [it] then entered chapbook form to survive another century.' Newcomb, p. 375.
[279] Parthenia would provide the inspiration for the character of Aspatia in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy,* first published in 1619. Aspatia, dressed as a soldier, fights a duel with her former lover for deserting her and is fatally wounded and dies. For further discussion of the role of women and their bodies in Jacobean revenge tragedy see Chapter Five.

notes that the name Parthenia is derived 'from the Greek, Parthenos, the virgin goddess' and that 'during the Middle Ages, the Parthenon was converted to a church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary.'[280] Parthenia is reconfigured as a space dedicated to the holy dead, a living corpse entombed within her own armour. She is thus transformed into a walking memento mori. The liminal space she inhabits as both dead and alive is further complicated by the impresa on her shield which is of a 'beautiful child, but having two heads, whereof the one showed it was already dead; the other alive, but in that case, necessarily looking for death. The word was: 'No way to be rid from death, but by death' (p. 526). Recalling the Virgin Mary, Parthenia mothers a child with one foot already in the grave and who looks prophetically to death as its future. Like the monstrous head born from the tomb of the dead woman in *Mandeville's Travels* that foretells the doom of the city of Adalia, this double-headed creature prophesies doom, but of a personal rather than political nature. The prophecy proves self-fulfilling, however. Parthenia believes herself trapped in life as a living corpse since her husband's death. Proclaiming her desire to 'go live with him since whose death I have done nothing but die' (p. 529), she finds that the only way to free herself from her self-imposed role as walking dead is to die. To this end she arrives to fight Amphialus with four maidens dressed in mourning and with the bases of her amour 'embroidered only with black worms, which seemed to crawl up and down, as ready already to devour him' (p. 526). Staging not only her own funeral, but also her death and its corruptive workings on her body in the grave, Parthenia similarly transforms Amphialus from knightly opponent to grief-stricken mourner, one who breaks his sword in 'testifying his sorrow' (p. 528) when the truth of her identity is revealed as she dies. The spectacle of her death is described in terms more commonly used by a Petrarchan lover:

[280] Stephanie Chamberlain, 'Wife and Widow in Arcadia: Re-envisioning the ideal', *College Literature*, 29.2 (Spring 2002), 80-98 (p. 95) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25112638 > [accessed 23 August 2019].

> her beauty then, even in the despite of the passed sorrow or coming death, assuring all beholders that it was nothing short of perfection. For her exceeding fair eyes having with continual weeping gotten a little redness about them; her roundy sweetly swelling lips a little trembling, as though they kissed their neighbour death; in her cheeks the whiteness striving by little and little to get upon the rosiness of them; her neck, a neck indeed of alabaster, displaying the wound, which with most dainty blood laboured to drown his own beauties, so as here was a river of purest red, there an island of perfectest white
>
> (p. 528)

This disturbing eulogising makes the reader one of the 'beholders', part of an audience unable to look away from the theatre of Parthenia's death, which is both a tragic ending and a joyful reunion for Parthenia and Argalus: her soul, we are assured, goes to heaven to join her beloved husband's. Parthenia's wounded body, partly revealed beneath the tomb-like armour, figuratively becomes part of the Arcadian landscape of rivers and islands, a beautiful deathscape, a function that is later literalised when Basilius orders a tomb for the two lovers to be constructed. Their crypt is engraved with an epitaph extoling their unity in life and death; thus Parthenia and Argalus become 'Et in Arcadia Ego' together.

Their deaths are ultimately the consequence of Basilius' failure to rule, which is itself exemplified in his transformation into a sleeping corpse.[281] Drinking a love potion intended for Zelmane, Basilius is immediately gripped by its terrible alterative properties:

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[281] Abdicating responsibility for his people and retreating to the woods is metaphorically seen as a death for Basilius, a metaphor James Shirley picks up in his subsequent production of *Arcadia*, where Basilius' friends argue 'tis unnaturall/ To bury your selfe alive'. See James Shirley, *A Pastorall Called the Arcadia* (London: J[ohn] D[awson] for John Williams, 1640; STC 22453), sig. B1r, quoted in Rachel Ellen Clark, 'Rebellion in Arcadia: Caroline anti-militarism in dramatic adaptations of Sidney', in *James Shirley and Early Modern*

> first with a painful stretching and forced yawning, then with a dark yellowness dying his skin and a cold deadly sweat principally about his temples, [he falls] with pang-like groans and ghastly turning of his eyes, immediately all his limbs stiffened and his eyes fixed, he having had time to declare his case only in these words: 'O Gynecia, I die. Have care-' Of what, or how much further he would have spoken, no man can tell.
>
> (pp. 728-9)

In actively refusing to heed the words of the Oracle and deliberately choosing to subvert and obstruct the natural processes of life, marriage, procreation, and death, Basilius is, ironically, consumed by inertia.[282] In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare conjures a queen from a statue, but here Sidney transforms a king into one, stiffening his limbs and fixing him in place, literally trapping him in his desired stasis. Cutting him off halfway through his warning to his wife, the potion stops his mouth, much as Basilius himself has effectively muted the Oracle's prophetic words. The potion also stains Basilius' skin yellow, a colour which as Helen Hickey has noted is inescapably linked with illnesses such as jaundice and leprosy, but also with moral diseases such as duplicity, jealousy, and corruption.[283] It is unclear whether the potion, if consumed by another, would produce the same effects, or whether the colour Basilius turns is particular to his own shortcomings, but regardless, the potion physically

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Theatre: New Critical Perspectives, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer, 1st edn. (London: Routledge, (2016), pp. 59-71 (p. 65). Routledge ebook.

[282] This inertia is symptomatic of the strange flow of time offered in *Arcadia*. Alex Davies argues that Sidney is deliberately anachronistic in his use of historical details, which combine Greek landscapes with medieval peoples and props such as four-poster beds. The corpse of Basilius is also a prop of the past which impinges on the present. Davies posits that 'what is coming back to life is not so much the past as multiple pasts' (Davis, p. 108). Basilius' eventual return resets the present back to a time before he made his disastrous decision to move to the forest, though it does not undo the lessons learned from this mistake. On a meta-narrative level, Basilius' return does bring back multiple pasts as it echoes the return of so many sleeping corpses before him.

[283] Helen Hickey, 'Medical Diagnosis and the Colour Yellow in Early Modern England', *E-REA*, 12 (June 2015) < DOI**:** 10.4000/erea.4413>.

manifests his incompetent rulership as a visible identifier upon his body. Basilius, falling upon the land which has mimicked his fractured psychological state, now falls to the lowest turn on Fortune's wheel, 'I have reigned', a rotation Sidney explicitly links to his 'hard hap' (p. 728) or evil fortune. Despite living in a world of oracles and foretelling however, Basilius' misinterpretation of the prophecy allows him his own agency even as he unknowingly fulfils it. Thus, as Julianne Werlin notes, 'far from bringing his characters entirely under the aegis of necessity, Sidney allows them a preserve of possibility, which in turn proves instrumental to the fulfilment of the plot'.[284] Whilst, as Werlin argues, the 'prophecy creates a network of necessary events' under the auspices of divine providence, Basilius and the other characters who populate Arcadia are still responsible for their own actions, essentially becoming the authors of their own hard haps through deliberate denial of the prophetic words of others.[285] Shakespeare explores this paradox in more detail in *The Winter's Tale*, where the deliberate denial of an Oracle's judgement also results in the death of a monarch and the guilt of the remaining spouse.[286]

If Basilius' transformation into a sleeping corpse is inevitable, it is also agonising. Previous texts involving sleeping corpses have dwelt little upon the actual moment of transformation itself, or if they have, have glossed over how the transformation from one state to another feels for the subject in deference to its impact upon the onlookers. Sidney, conversely, emphasises the horror of the change experienced by subject as being 'ghastly' and 'painful', with Basilius giving 'pang-like groans' and moaning. Throughout *Arcadia*, Sidney has been at pains to link the experience of falling in love with the act of drinking poison: Pyrocles uses the metaphor upon seeing Philoclea's picture (p. 140), Gynecia despairs of it in conversation with her unrequited love Zelmane (p. 216), and Zelmane uses it

[284] Julianne Werlin, 'Providence and Perspective in Philip Sidney's Old Arcadia', *SEL*, 54.1 (Winter 2014), 25–40 (p. 33) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24511149> [accessed 23 August 2018].
[285] Werlin, p. 33.
[286] See Chapter Four for further discussion of this topic.

to describe Basilius' unwanted wooing of her (p. 630). Gynecia's mother, in giving the potion to her daughter upon her marriage, promises that it will 'force love with love effects' (p. 676) in the imbiber, so we, as readers, should therefore not be surprised that Basilius seems to be under the effect of poison.[287] Rendering a common trope of romance literature literal and physical, rather than metaphorical, so as to subvert it, in effect, by realising it, Sidney ensures that we are just as surprised and disturbed as Gynecia at what is happening to Basilius' body, despite Sidney's frequent warnings earlier in the text. That Basilius then seemingly dies as a consequence of drinking the love poison completes the distressing spectacle, one that is in complete contrast with the depiction of Parthenia's body, who also dies from the effects of love.

As well as being a reflection of his moral decay and a subversion of romance tropes, the negative effects of the love potion upon Basilius' body reflect contemporary beliefs about love draughts. In Baldassare Castiglione's 1528 text *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by Sir Thomas Hoby into English in 1561, he argues that the use of trickery in order to obtain love makes the deceiver merely 'maister of a deade carkase', whether he or she uses deceit or resorts to 'enchantments, sorceries, and otherwhile plaine force, sometimes meanes [sleeping potions] to cast them in sleepe and such like matters.'[288] Castiglione argues, in other words, that lack of consent renders the trickster only capable of possessing the lover's body and not

[287] One of the most famous examples of love potions in medieval literature is found in the romance of Tristan and Isolde. It appears in all versions of the story and is, as Alan Fedrick notes, 'a dominating theme in the 12th-century poems of Béroul, Thomas d'Angleterre, and Eilhart von Oberge'. See Alan Fedrick, 'The Love Potion in the French Prose "Tristan"', *Romance Philology*, 21.1 (August 1967), 23-34 (p. 23) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44940306> [accessed 24 August 2021]. Whilst the importance of the potion is reduced in the thirteenth-century *Prose Tristan* and Malory's *Morte Darthur*, the magical brew and its love effects are always depicted negatively, and imbibing it ultimately culminates in the lovers' deaths. See Maureen Fries, 'The Impotent Potion: On the Minimization of the Love Theme in the "Tristan En Prose" and Malory's "Morte Darthur"', *Quondam et Futurus*, 1.3 (Fall 1991), 75-81 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27870141> [accessed 24 August 2021] or for a good overview of the different ways the potion is used in the various *Tristan* versions, see Sidney M. Johnson, 'This Drink Will Be the Death of You: Interpreting the Love Potion in Gottfried's *Tristan*', in *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan*, ed. Will Hasty (Suffolk: Camden House, 2003), pp. 87-112. Cambridge Core ebook.

[288] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1928), p. 180.

his or her mind. In keeping with this warning, in *Arcadia*, Gynecia becomes the literal mistress of a seemingly lifeless body through the misapplication of the love potion.[289]

As we discover, Basilius is not actually dead, though this knowledge is only revealed to both the other characters and the reader as we draw to the close of the text, with Basilius waking up in court after Gynecia has been sentenced to death for his murder. Sidney emphasises the sublime theatricality of the scene with Basilius' body first emitting loud groans before the velvet cover draping him is removed to reveal, as a magician might, his revived corpse.[290] Unlike in the medieval romances discussed in Chapter Two, here the drawing back of drapery reveals the living body rather than the slumbering corpse. The reaction of the onlookers, however, is a similar mix of awe and distress, with some beginning to 'fear spirits, some to look for a miracle, most to imagine they knew not what' (p. 845). Dismissing wild speculation as to the interference of ghosts or the workings of divine intervention, Sidney takes a sly jab at Catholic miracle stories.[291] Basilius' seeming resurrection is not the result of something we cannot understand, be it holy or infernal, but instead the product of an entirely human invention, 'a drink made by notable art and, as it was thought, not without natural magic, to procure for thirty hours such a deadly sleep as should press all show of life' (p. 845). Neither love potion nor poison, the liquid is in fact the 'early modern version of a knockout, or date-rape, drug' as David Houston Wood dryly notes.[292] It was created by Gynecia's grandmother, a Cyprian princess, in order to drug a

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[289] For more on *Arcadia* as a response to Castiglione's work see Nona Fienberg, *Elizabeth, Her Poets, and the Creation of the Courtly Manner: A Study of Sir John Harington, Sir Philip Sidney, and John Lyly* (New York and London: Garland, 1988).

[290] The use of sleeping potions on the Renaissance stage to mimic death, particularly in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cymbeline*, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

[291] Robert Stillman views this moment of resurrection, which he calls a 'heavy-handed piece of romance gimmickry' as one which 'Sidney openly requires his readers to perceive as the deliberate manipulations of the poet what is simultaneously treated as the operation of providence […] That Basilius's awakening should suggest Christ's—even for a moment—is a typical piece of Sidneian audacity'. See Robert E. Stillman, 'Philip Sidney and the Catholics', *Modern Philology*, 112 (2014), 97-129 (p. 128) <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/676134>.

[292] David Houston Wood, '[A] Deathful Suck: Passions, Potions, and Poisons in Sidney's *Old Arcadia*', *Prose Studies*, 28.2 (2006), 150-167 (p. 158) <DOI: 10.1080/01440350600784636>.

young nobleman she loved and have him quickly and easily conveyed 'into a pleasant chamber in the midst of a garden she had of purpose provided for this enterprise' (p. 846), in order that when he woke up he would have the choice of either marrying her or being accused of raping her. That it lasts for longer than thirty hours when Basilius drinks it is a consequence of its being consumed by a body far more advanced in age than the original youthful recipient. The sleeping draught is therefore only a love potion of the same kind Castiglione warned his readers about; it gives the person who offers the liquid power over the imbiber, a power that is explicitly described as part of the bottle's inscription: 'Let him drink this, whom long in arms to fold / Thou dost desire, and with free power to hold' (p. 676). That Gynecia's grandmother is able to secrete her potential lover away in a room in her own private garden of bliss is a powerful subversion of the medieval trope of women being locked away in towers and hidden in forests, encircled by architecture and greenery by powerful patriarchal forces. Instead, Gynecia's grandmother echoes Malory's Morgan le Fay and the queens who successfully abduct the sleeping Lancelot, as well as being a more effective echo of Hellawes; in possession of a certain type of witchcraft and offering the man she desires straitened choices. As David Houston Wood argues, the 'potion in this work thus embodies a fantasy of female sexual autonomy and power that Sidney's Renaissance England had largely proscribed'.[293] Though the potion seems to offer sexual autonomy, when it is offered as a gift to Gynecia, she can only experience a twisted version of her grandmother's dubious courting practices. In a vision that takes place prior to Basilius' drinking of the potion Gynecia finds herself not in a garden but a 'place full of thorns' (p. 376) which she struggles to navigate. In wild and desolate surroundings which embody man's Edenic punishment for sin she finds not a lover, but the living corpse of her husband who embraces her, infecting her with 'a strange smell' (p. 376). Love has been described as a disease earlier in *Arcadia*, with Musidorus

[293] Houston Wood, p. 159.

urging Pyrocles to abandon his love for Philoclea and ‘purge yourself of this vile infection’ (p. 138). Gynecia, however, is not in love with her husband, and the smell that the dead Basilius infects her with is not love either, but the remembrance of duty, wifely fidelity, and ultimately represents condemnation; Gynecia’s recollection of this dream after Basilius’ death creates an overwhelming sense of self-loathing within her. Like her husband she has become diseased by her own increasingly corrupt morals, infected like him with the same all-consuming want for Zelmane regardless of her marital status, position as queen, or even her own daughter’s feelings.

Though Gynecia sees herself as responsible for her husband’s seeming demise and happily brands herself with the titles of monster and murderess in atonement, she is also responsible for the cure of his mind and body and his eventual re-awakening to both his status as king and his own shortcomings. Gynecia is a healer; we have already been told that she has ‘skill in surgery’ (p. 178) and an impressive array of healing ointments and lotions, including ‘a precious balm’ (p. 178) which she applies to Zelmane when she attains an injury. She is also ‘a woman of great wit, and in truth of more princely virtues than her husband’ (p. 76) and it is implied that Gynecia has inherited her grandmother’s own small skill in natural magic, which we may expect her to use to wake Basilius when she kisses his corpse in contrition. As *Arcadia* is not a fairy tale, however, Gynecia’s medical ministrations are rather more accidental than romantic or even deliberate. Before he drinks the potion Gynecia warns Basilius of the potion’s properties, mentioning only that ‘she meant to minister it to another patient’ (p. 728). Too thirsty to pay attention to his wife, Basilius drinks it anyway and unwittingly becomes the right patient after all, inadvertently being induced into a coma for his own good. Though what Basilius experiences in his coma is unrecorded, his enforced sleep imbues in him a change of heart, and he wakes up a better man. He saves his kingdom, the lives of his wife and future sons-in-law, and himself, recognising that ‘his own fault had

been the greatest' (p. 846). Literally and metaphorically waking up to his actions, Basilius can resume his rightful role of king, father, husband, and faithful subject of the gods with the knowledge that his mistakes can and should be immediately rectified, chiefly by taking up his proper place as leader of Arcadia by leaving the woods and returning to the city. In quitting the courtroom for the court, as Garrett A. Sullivan Jr. notes, 'Basilius is understood as not only finally shaking off the potion's soporific effects, but also rousing himself from the passionate sleep that began with the removal of his family to the Arcadian forest'.[294] Basilius' return from the dead also means the dismissing of the charges against Musidorus and Pyrocles, leaving them free to marry Basilius' daughters and re-establish a kingly line of inheritance once more. *Arcadia* therefore ends with the marriages of Pamela and Philoclea to their respective suitors and the subsequent birth of their own offspring and future monarchs. As Maurice Evans notes, however, 'by the end, when order has been re-established and the transgressors have either repented of their sins or been eliminated because of them, even then the Golden Age is not reborn' (p. 38). Instead, the landscape and its inhabitants are scarred. In place of one metaphorical tomb to symbolise 'et in Arcadia ego' there are countless tombs and graveyards, now existing to hold the bodies of those caught up as casualties in Basilius' battle with Amphialus, Cecropia, and fate itself.

Though Gynecia is publicly pardoned by Basilius, the full truth of the matter is concealed in order to save the honour of all involved. Sidney tells us that Pyrocles and Philoclea 'never bewrayed her' (p. 847), but as Helen Cooper argues, 'too many of the dangers and disruptions along the way have had their origins within themselves for the happy ending of the plot to convey a secure sense of assured order.'[295] This unease at the restoration of the family unit without any interrogation of the internal motivations of the family members

[294] Garrett A. Sullivan Jr., *Romance and Human Embodiment: Vitality from Spenser to Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 62.
[295] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time,* p. 260.

themselves, or punishment of them for their flaws, is embodied in Gynecia's concluding moments in *Arcadia*. Hailed by all men as 'the perfect mirror of all wifely love' (p. 847) which Sidney notes dryly was 'undeserved' (p. 847), she does eventually obtain this title by 'observing all duty and faith' (p. 847) throughout the rest of her life, though there is pointedly no mention of love. Duty and faith are the core tenets which make Gynecia determined to die for what she believes to be the murder of her husband, by being entombed with him in a 'living burial' (p. 847). Though Basilius wakes before this ritual can take place, Gynecia spends the rest of her marriage effectively trapped with her husband and his aging body, enacting her living burial with him in their loveless marriage, and with no potion left to rectify the matter. The happy ending of the plot that Helen Cooper discusses is therefore only happy on a purely superficial level, and an ending only in that it is the conclusion of Sidney's own exhausted artistic talents. Despite concluding *Arcadia* with the birth of the next generation of heirs to the throne, Sidney writes that their tales need to 'awake some other spirit to exercise his pen in that wherewith mine is already dulled' (p. 848). Unlike in *Perceforest*, where the birth of a child leads to a noble line of knights culminating in Lancelot, in *Arcadia* the adventures of the children of our heroes and heroines are prematurely ended with the author's desire to rest and sleep. As Frenk remarks, instead of 'freezing Arcadia in a happy ever after, the only ending of any *Arcadia* Sidney ever wrote stresses the need to continue the writing process.'[296] Sidney's text did 'awake' other writers in their attempts to revise, repackage, and in some cases completely rewrite *Arcadia*: these new Arcadias include Gervase Markham's *The English Arcadia* (1607), Richard Bellings' *A Sixth Booke to the Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (1624), James Shirley's stage adaption *The Arcadia, a Pastoral* (published 1640), and Anna Weamys' *A Continuation of Sir Philip*

[296] Frenk, p. 65.

Sydney's Arcadia (1651).[297] Even Sidney's niece, Lady Mary Wroth, would write a romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621) in response to her uncle's work. Though, as Aurélie Griffin notes, it 'is not a continuation of *Arcadia* in the proper sense, in so far as it only features one Sidneian character', it does imitate Sidney's style in ending 'mid-sentence as did the *New Arcadia'*.[298] Elizabeth A. Spiller argues that through Sidney's revision and the revisions of later authors 'narration itself becomes a form of resurrection' for both the characters of the text and even Sidney himself.[299] It is an inescapable fact, however, that Sidney's revised text, no matter what additions or changes are made by others, is left perpetually imperfect and incomplete by its creator, and Spiller's optimistic reading of Sidney's textual resurrection falls apart by the beginning of the eighteenth century as the text falls out of fashion. As Natasha Simonova remarks, 'eventually interest waned: the last direct continuation [of *Arcadia*] was published in 1651; the last three folio editions in 1655, 1662, and 1674'.[300] Readers and writers were only prepared to revive Sidney and his *Arcadia* a certain number of times before they grew bored.

Parodying Paradise: The Sleeping Corpse as Rip Van Winkle in John Lyly's *Endymion*

Two years after Sidney's death, his contemporary John Lyly would use the theatricality inherent in *Arcadia* as a springboard for his own tale of a man who loves inappropriately and is consequently cast into an enchanted sleep, in his 1588 stage adaptation of the myth of *Endymion*.

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[297] For more on this, particularly in relation to Anna Weamys and her version of *Arcadia* see Chapter Six of Kathryn DeZur, *Gender, Interpretation, and Political Rule in Sidney's Arcadia* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2013).
[298] Aurélie Griffin, 'Mary Wroth's *Urania* and the Editorial Debate over Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*', *Études Épistémè*, 22 (2012), para. 15 and 19 <https://doi.org/10.4000/episteme.388>.
[299] Elizabeth A. Spiller, 'Speaking for the Dead: King Charles, Anna Weamys, and the Commemorations of Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia"', *Criticism*, 42.2 (Spring 2000), 229-251 (p. 232) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23124305> [accessed 12 March 2021].
[300] Natasha Simonova, '"A book that all have heard of . . . but that nobody reads": Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 50.1 (January 2020), 139-159 (p. 139) <DOI 10.1215/10829636-7986637>.

Andy Kesson notes that 'When Lyly came to write for the theater in 1583, he was already the era's best-selling and most visible writer'.[301] His plays often borrowed heavily from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work which, as Lindsay Ann Reid remarks, 'proved endlessly fascinating not only to Lyly but to early modern English authors and audiences more generally'.[302] Kent Cartwright comments that in

> Elizabeth's court two types of drama came to prevail by the 1580s: humanist classical stories, often enacted by school-boy companies, emphasizing courtly themes of love, chastity, friendship, valor, and magnanimity; and chivalric romances, typically performed by professionalmen's companies, showcasing adventure, love, enchantment, intrigue, exotic characters, and spectacle. [303]

Lyly's plays generally fit into these broad categorisations. It is also important to note, however, as Kesson does, that 'Lyly's plays are unusual in early modern drama for the predominance and preeminence of their female characters' and that his 'work encourages dissident and disruptive readings, which may explain why it seems to have prompted the liquidation of his theater companies on two separate occasions'.[304] In his treatment of the myth of Endymion, Lyly offers a radical reimagining of the classical figure at the same time

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[301] Andy Kesson, "It is a pity you are not a woman", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33.1 (Spring 2015), 33-47 (p. 34) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26355087> [accessed 13 September 2021].
[302] Lindsay Ann Reid, 'Ovidian Retro-Metamorphosis on the Elizabethan Stage', *Early Theatre*, 21.2 (2018), 71-90 (p. 72) <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.21.2.3559>.
[303] Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 168. Cambridge Core ebook
[304] Kesson, p. 35, p. 43. Kesson argues that Lyly's association with women, his work as a courtier playwright for Elizabeth I, and the perception of his euphuistic style as 'effeminate' has led to his dismissal by many modern critics. For a different overview of Lyly's style as a playwright and his use of boy companies see Leah Scragg, 'John Lyly, Endymion', in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp. 323- 337.

as he disrupts the motif of the sleeping corpse with a disturbing portrayal of love and the ravaging effects of time.

Among Greek myths, *Endymion* is unusual in that it is both a romantic story with no stinging consequences at its conclusion and relatively simple in its telling: the lovestruck moon goddess enchants a shepherd boy into an eternal and un-ageing sleep so that she may be with him every night. In the hands of Lyly, however, this romance becomes a grotesque dark comedy, where the main motif of the myth, that of the sleep of eternal youth, is subverted so that Endymion sleeps for forty years, all the while aging into an old man. Departing almost entirely from the original myth, as well as the traditional iconography of the sleeping corpse as a static beauty, the main plot focuses on attempting to wake Endymion and then on the horrifying effects of his slumber upon his body. Lyly argues in the prologue to the play that he presents 'neither comedy, nor tragedy, nor story, nor anything, but that whosoever heareth may say this: "Why, here is a tale of the Man in the Moon"' and insistently uses the phrase four times in just twelve lines.[305] The emphasis here on the play as mere fancy simultaneously asks us to dismiss it as make-believe whilst encouraging us more closely to examine those fantastical elements that are contained within it, particularly because whereas Sidney strips his tale of the supernatural, Lyly fills his production with witches, spells, and fairies, which become, as Bevington points out, 'essential to the story, and make

[305] John Lyly, *Endymion*, ed. David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), Prologue, ll. 10-12. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically. This is not the first time Lyly dismisses his work as a trifle. In his introductory letter for *Euphues and his England* (1580), Mary Ellen Lamb points out that 'Lyly denigrates his book as a ''toy,'' even as ''trash'' fit only for readers who value pleasure over profit'. See Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Inventing the Early Modern Woman Reader through the World of Goods:: Lyly's Gentlewoman Reader and Katherine Stubbes' in *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800,* ed. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), pp. 15-35 (p. 22). DeGruyter ebook. However, he also offers and encourages women to read it as part of their everyday activities and/or in place of them. Encouraging woman 'to read instead of sew so that she will not prick her finger if she becomes sleepy […] with his possible double entendre that she will then ''prick'' her finger, shows her distance from a cultural model of virtuous industry' (Lamb, p. 20). Offering women the chance to read about other women 'pricking' their fingers rather than their own, Lyly sardonically constructs reading as euphemism. Newcomb's suggestion that Lyly's own euphuistic style is a type of 'distinctive rhetorical embroidery' (Newcomb, p. 372) adds a further layer to this image whereby writing becomes a type of sewing and Lyly is in danger of pricking his own fingers on his own wit.

use of improbability in a way that the more severely neoclassical critics like Sir Philip Sidney deplored' (p. 13). The 'lying wonders' that Sidney so scrupulously excises from *Arcadia* are overwhelmingly present in Lyly's text in a fashion that feels deliberate and not a little malicious, much like the function of the supernatural in the text. The use of fancy in *Endymion* is not simply to provoke wonder; magic and the supernatural are almost always used to afflict human flesh, resulting in multiple moments of body horror onstage. Lyly's fairies have 'Sharp nails to pinch' (4.3.40); his witches change women into trees and trap young men in comas; his goddess-queens threaten mortals with mutilation unless they marry. It therefore becomes difficult to dismiss what Lyly would like us to characterise as harmless fun, when fancies in the hands of those who possess magic are used to display the monstrous, the grotesque, and the unnatural in the practices, affections, desires, or unstable bodily forms of magic users and their victims. Lyly becomes almost Puck-like in his writing, with an edge of cruelty in his humour that is perhaps unsurprising for 'a writer fascinated by monsters, necromancy and transgression', as Kesson acknowledges.[306] The legend becomes, in Lyly's hands, a dark comedy with a revenge plot at its centre, and the hybridity of the narrative, woven together from various sources and genres, mimics the monstrous fluidity of the characters.[307]

Despite being the title character, Endymion is not the hero of the play. Instead, he is a presented as a liar, fantasist, and one whose love is purely performative. The very first words spoken by his abandoned lover, Tellus, name Endymion as 'Treacherous and most perjured' (1.2.1), and his love for the moon is characterised in quick succession as mad, foolish, a fancy, and finally an infatuation 'no less miserable than monstrous' (1.1.30) by his friend

[306] Andy Kesson, *John Lyly and early modern authorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 12.
[307] See Chapter Five for a more in-depth analysis of how the motif of the sleeping corpse eventually becomes intertwined with the revenge plot in Jacobean drama, with the effect of transforming the corpse from victim to accessory to murder, often literally.

Eumenides. Just as love is depicted as a disease in *Arcadia*, so here Eumenides believes his friend to suffer from an affliction of the mind or an enchantment for 'otherwise in a man of such rare virtues there could not harbour a mind of such extreme madness' (1.1.88-90). Eumenides, who is the real hero of the tale, is sadly blind to his friend's flaws, chiefly that he is double in both speech and actions. Endymion talks of metaphorically donning the clothes of a knight drawn from medieval romance, prepared to prove himself with mighty deeds to his beloved moon, claiming 'There is no mountain so steep that I will not climb, no monster so cruel that I will not tame, no action so desperate that I will not attempt' (2.1.7-9). Yet he attempts none of these things and instead chooses to live 'in a solitary cell' (2.1.46) for seven years, becoming hermit-like in his devotions to the moon and its physical embodiment in Queen Cynthia. The mighty deeds that he might have undertaken for the sake of love are transferred to the planes of his face, so that his quest on behalf of his beloved may instead be read in his countenance. His body becomes a map of his suffering as a lover, pointedly drawing attention to each mark of anguish: 'Behold my sad tears, my deep sighs, my hollow eyes, my broken sleeps, my heavy countenance' (2.1.12-13). These physical indications of his love, however, do not truly reveal Endymion's nature, but instead become a theatrical mask for him to don when he wishes, so that he creates for himself a double visage 'like Janus' (2.1.52) in his desire to dissemble and perform the double role of dutiful courtly lover to a moon that cannot desire him, and of faithful lover to a woman he no longer wants. It is his fixation on his countenance as a performative aspect of his lovemaking to Cynthia that becomes the key to his downfall when Tellus comes to 'espy Endymion' (2.1.53). Realising he no longer loves her and has merely been using her as a cloak for his inappropriate and unrequited affections for Cynthia, she devises a revenge that reveals his duplicity to everyone and manifests his doubleness by stripping away the one thing Endymion truly loves: his looks. As Endymion has been caught between two women, between his actions and his

words, his desire to be both knight errant and weeping maiden, Tellus traps him in a liminal space where 'he shall neither live nor die' (1.2.42). Endymion's real punishment is that he is forced to grow old in his sleep, mimicking the changes of the moon over time in its waxing and waning; coupled with his human mortality, the corruption of his beauty rids him of the marks of his courtly and knightly suffering that are apparent in his 'fair face' (2.3.55). His lover's visage is transformed into 'withered skin' (2.3.55-56); Endymion loses his heroic status and is reduced to an old man sleeping without 'the reward of love' (2.3.57), effectively transforming over time into a Basilius figure and sharing his 'hard […] fortune' (4.1.81-82). Like that of the slumbering king in *Arcadia,* Endymion's sleep allows for the corruption of his values and ideals, a corruption manifest in his flesh. No longer able to play at being the melancholic lover with weeping, sighing, or fitful rest, his lover's visage is replaced with the flawed and wintry landscape of the duplicitous and soundly sleeping old fool:

> Thou that layest down with golden locks shalt not awake until they be turned to silver hairs; and that chin, on which scarcely appeareth soft down, shall be filled with bristles as hard as broom. Thou shalt sleep out thy youth and flowering time and become dry hay before thou knewest thyself green grass, and ready by age to step into the grave when thou wakest, that was youthful in the court when thou laidst thee down to sleep.
>
> (2.3.34-41.)

Endymion spends forty years in a 'dead sleep' (3.1.2). When a cure for his slumber is found and he is woken, however, his youth is not restored to him. Dipsas' words 'when thou wakest' imply foreknowledge that her spell is finite, either because of the limits of her own magic or that Endymion's friends will break the curse, but his awakening is not actually the

undoing of his punishment, but rather the fulfilment of it. Endymion does not suffer by growing old and dying in his sleep; he must be woken to be abruptly forced to confront his mortality and the jarring dislocation of his elderly, ugly body from his internalised identity as a beauteous, poetic, and courtly lover. Compelled to rid himself of his previous Janus faces, Endymion now contre-blasons his own body, the lover disassembling and rejecting his own form: 'What, a grey beard? Hollow eyes? Withered body? Decayed limbs?' (5.1.53-55) Only the 'hollow eyes' of the lover remain, but in the body of his elderly self they take on a new resonance as the sunken eyes of a skull, foreshadowing his own death rather than any loving consummation. The woman he desires makes a similar list of his individual parts: 'Behold Endymion […] Hollow eyes? Gray hairs? Wrinkled cheeks? And decayed limbs?' (4.3.77-80), but his list of withered bodily particulars reads almost as a list of unimpressive saint's relics, even as they are attached to the living saint. As his friends look on in horror, there is an echo of the onlookers at Lazarus' resurrection, holding their noses at the stench of the woken body that returns still bearing its grave corruption. As Endymion picks apart his appearance, he finds he is a stranger to himself: 'But that this should be my body I doubt; for how could my curled locks be turned to grey hairs and my strong body to a dying weakness, having waxed old and not knowing it?' (5.1.73-76). The master of dissembling is unable to recognise the truth in the revealing of the trick. Endymion's body, caught halfway between life and death, is now unbelievably monstrous to him; his horror is not simply at the fear of aging now manifested in his form, but at the loss of his ability to use his body to deceive and the negation of his role as potential paramour of the moon. Everything Endymion represents has been eroded by the passage of 'Injurious time' (1.1.36-37); even his ability to make the choice 'either to die or possess the moon herself' (1.1.18-19) has been taken away from him, so that he now has no other option but to wait for a swiftly encroaching death.

Endymion's monstrosity is further emphasised as Lyly subverts how time functions within the theatre. Though it is common practice for playwrights to compress the passage of time in their plays for the sake of practicality and the comfort of both their actors and audience, Lyly condenses the movement of years in his work solely into the body of Endymion and the immediate landscape around him, dislocating the other characters from the flow of time so that, as Hamlet says, 'time is out of joint'.[308] Though decades have passed by the conclusion of the play, none of the other characters make mention of their own bodies growing older or uglier and when Endymion finally has his youth restored to him through Cynthia's words, which make his 'joints strong, and these mouldy hairs to moult' (5.4.189-190), he is not noticeably younger than anyone else.[309] In the play, characters are only able to tell time by looking at Endymion's body and the vegetation that has surrounded his sleeping form; what was a twig at his head when he was first cursed in Act Two, by Act Five is now a tree. This time disorientation is also true for the audience, who have watched Endymion asleep on stage for three acts of the play. Though he is secluded at the side of the stage on a bank of lunary, the audience have watched over his body and seen the physical manifestation of the passage of the years in him, years which to both the audience and Endymion have passed in 'one night' (5.1.55). Endymion's inability to fathom the passage of so many years on his body in what feels like such a compacted period of time, serves to remove him from the play and make him part of the audience, adding an additional layer of spectacle to his voyeurism of his own self.

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[308] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 1.5.189.

[309] The number of exact decades that have passed is uncertain. At 5.1.56 it is forty. At 3.4.19 only twenty years are mentioned, an internal discrepancy which Bevington attributes to Lyly's use of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a source, where in reference to the witch Medea healing Jason's father forty years are mentioned. However, the uncertainty adds to the temporal subversion located within Endymion's body and suggests that not only are the effects of time passingly solely located within Endymion's body, but that time itself is speeding up within his sleeping corpse, so that it is true to say both twenty and forty years have passed by the time Endymion wakes.

Cynthia's fairies are also tasked with watching Endymion's body in order to protect it from 'trespass' (4.3.42). They are double-natured like Endymion, variously described as 'fair fiends' (4.3.30), 'Hags' (4.3.31), 'Nymphs' (4.3.32), 'pretty ladies' (4.3.141), and 'fair babies' (4.3.176), all titles fearfully, and the latter euphemistically, bestowed upon them by Corsites, who has been set the impossible task of removing Endymion's sleeping body from its lunary bank. Pinched into sleep for crossing into the forbidden territory, the fairies cover Corsites with spots until he is 'more like a leopard than a man' (4.3.89). This unlovely transformation in many ways mirrors Endymion's: both men fall foul of Tellus' machinations, both are enchanted into a sleep on the same bank, both are transformed whilst sleeping to reveal a baser, more bestial nature, and both are viewed afterwards as being so 'deformed' (4.3.92) that his 'face is now too foul for a lover' (4.3.123-124). Corsites is fortunate, however, in receiving an almost immediate cure that enables him to remove his spots by rubbing himself with the lunary on which he has been sleeping. As Shannon Kelley notes, with 'its reputed use in alchemy and witchcraft, lunary was a dangerous herb'.[310] In conjunction with the belief that 'in the place where you received this maim you shall find medicine' (4.3.138-139) lunary becomes both signifier of malevolent forces at work in the landscape and on the human form, and cure of the evil effected by those very same forces. Just as the witch-brewed potion puts Basilius to sleep and cures him of his hypocritical morals, so too does Corsites' encounter with the witch's herb allow him to wake knowing truth, even if that truth is ugly and won through painful experience.

Endymion's truest mirror is Sir Tophas, a character who, whilst not transformed himself, is closely associated with monstrous bodies, being in love with Dipsas, the ugliest character in the play. The star of the comedic subplot, Sir Tophas, like Endymion, sleeps for

[310] Shannon Kelley, 'Desire, a Crooked Yearning, and the Plants of Endymion', *Renaissance Drama*, 44.1 (Spring 2016), 1-23 (p. 13) < https://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/english-facultypubs/83> [accessed 30 April 2019].

long periods of time on stage and longs for a woman he cannot have. His desires are 'monstrous', too; not because he loves what is unobtainable, but because he wants what society deems detestable:

> I desire old matrons. What a sight would it be to embrace one whose hair were as orient as the pearl, whose teeth shall be so pure a watchet that they shall stain the truest turquoise, whose nose shall throw more beams from it than the fiery carbuncle, whose eyes shall be environed about with redness exceeding the deepest coral, and whose lips might compare with silver for the paleness!
>
> (5.2.100-107)

Where Endymion contre-blasons his own form in horror, Sir Tophas revels in an ugly truth, and one suspects that if Endymion's transformation had also changed his gender, Sir Tophas would have found a new figure to desire. His love of the monstrous form becomes a catalyst for his own desire to change his body to suit what he is told are his beloved's desires; in his pursuit of Dipsas, Sir Tophas is prepared to forsake all of his teeth, his fingernails, and even his own human shape, welcoming the thought of being turned into 'some goodly ass' (5.2.89) by Dipsas when he is tired of walking on two legs. Endymion may point to his sad countenance as a mark of his devotion as a paramour, but Sir Tophas' willingness to mutilate his own flesh and shed his humanity defines him as the more passionate, more authentic lover, despite him being a parody of Endymion himself, and an echo of the eponymous hero of Chaucer's parodic take on a medieval romance in 'The Tale of Sir Thopas' in *The Canterbury Tales*.[311] There is no need to enchant Sir Tophas into a sleep to make his form

[311] 'The Tale of Sir Thopas' is a narrative ended prematurely by the exasperated interruption of the Host who despairs at the content of the story. Immediately following 'The Prioress's Tale', *The Tale of Sir Thopas*, Mary Hamel suggests, 'is related to the preceding tale as more than relief: it is a kind of parody. Along with Chaucer's burlesque of the popular romance, along with his satire of bourgeois knighthood, in a less obvious way he sends

monstrous when he will willingly effect this himself whilst he is awake. Only the revelation that Dipsas is already married puts a stop to his imaginings of bodily unravelling.

At the end of the play, after the other characters have paired off, Sir Tophas asks Cynthia for the witch Bagoa, who has been transformed by Dipsas into an aspen tree as a punishment for revealing her part in Endymion's enchantment. Having desired a 'wife that looks like an old pippin' (5.2.38-39) it is perhaps natural that he should request the one woman who has spent time as vegetation, and assume that like Endymion she will return in an altered and altogether more ugly state. Though we have no stage directions, Thopas' curse upon seeing her, 'A bots upon thee!' (5.4.298), suggests that Bagoa reappears as a beautiful young woman, much to his disgust. The curse is therefore both an exclamation of deep frustration and a wish for Bagoa to be afflicted; she would be more lovely if she were more loathsome.[312]

The darkest comment on Sir Tophas' monstrous desires, however, does not come from any of the main characters, but from Dares, Endymion's page. Seeing Sir Tophas' despair at being unable to have Dipsas as wife, he tells Epiton, Sir Tophas' page, that they will 'dig an old wife out of the grave that shall be answerable to his gravity' (5.2.114-115). Although this is written as a comedic line that underscores Sir Tophas' tastes as disgusting, Lyly was well read enough to know that Sir Tophas would not be the first man in literature to obtain a wife in this way. Lyly would have been familiar with, for example, Tale 10.4 of

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up the tale of the little clergeoun.' For further comparison see Mary Hamel, 'And Now for Something Completely Different: The Relationship between the "Prioress's Tale" and the "Rime of Sir Thopas"', *The Chaucer Review*, 14.3 (Winter, 1980), 251-259 (p. 253) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/25093506> [accessed 31 May 2021].

[312] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania's reaction to truly seeing Bottom for the first time without the effects of the love potion evoke a similar reaction of disgust. What was once considered lovely is rendered rank: 'O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!'. See William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 4.1.76. As well as *Endymion*, several of Lyly's other works including *Midas* (where Apollo changes the king's ears to those of an ass) and *The Woman in the Moon* would also influence *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Leah Scragg argues for the influence of *Gallathea* in particular. See Leah Scragg, 'Shakespeare, Lyly and Ovid: The Influence of 'Gallathea' on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'', in *Shakespeare Survey 30: Henry IV to Hamlet*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 125-134.

Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as discussed in Chapter Two.[313] The pointed necrophilia adds an uncomfortable edge to Lyly's humour; if Sir Tophas likes a woman with one foot in the grave, then perhaps he will like one even more who has been freshly dug up. That it is only the witty aside of a servant would make the comment easy to dismiss if we had not already seen in earlier chapters characters interacting with both corpses and sleeping corpses as if they were living. The confusion over Endymion's own status as a sleeping corpse, in that he is 'dead with life, and living […] altogether dead' (4.3.159-160), blurs the line between what type of body is considered acceptable for a lover and what is not, particularly when both Endymion and Sir Tophas are already considered monstrous for rejecting normalised bodies in order to love the forbidden.

This sly but deliberate provocation of the audience to feel revulsion is most pronounced in the method by which Endymion is cured of his sleeping enchantment. In order to undo Dipsas' witchcraft, Cynthia, Endymion's beautiful and beloved moon, must press her virgin lips against his and kiss the withered old man he has become, making *Endymion* the first written version of *Sleeping Beauty* to wake the sleeper with a kiss, though not yet a kiss of true love. Lyly could have chosen a myriad other methods to wake his sleeper and critics generally fall into two distinct camps as to why he chose a kiss.[314] The first group of critics argues that the kiss functions as an erotic outlet for the audience. As Shannon Kelley argues, the 'kiss is essential for us to see, for it generates erotic frisson'.[315] The second group sees it as an expression of Neoplatonism, where the kiss is the culmination of the 'ecstatic striving

[313] Although the *Decameron* did not appear in a complete English translation until 1620, Renaissance writers had access to translations of individual stories and the original text in Italian. Samuel Wolff argues convincingly that Lyly uses the original Italian text of Tale 10.8 of Boccaccio's *Decameron* as a source for *Euphues*. See Samuel Lee Wolff, 'A Source of 'Euphues. The Anatomy of Wyt', *Modern Philology*, 7.4 (1910), 577–585.
[314] Endymion is enchanted to sleep partly through song and Lyly could have chosen to wake him with music as Shakespeare later does with Thaisa in *Pericles* (c. 1608). For more on the association between magic, music and sleep see Sarah F. Williams, '"Singe the Enchantment for Sleepe": Music and Bewitched Sleep in Early Modern English Drama', in *Spirits Unseen: The Representation of Subtle Bodies in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. Christine Göttler and Wolfgang Neuber (Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 179-196.
[315] Kelley, p. 14.

of the soul to seek union with God through contemplation' (p. 12), as Bevington argues in his introduction to *Endymion*, with reference to its portrayal in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. Within these groups there is some occasional crossover in the discussion of the kiss as converting the potential for romance into a moment of grace and salvation, but I suspect that the kiss is simply another of Lyly's subversive jokes. For a writer who enjoys body horror and presenting spectacle from which the audience is unable to look away, it seems logical that the reason there is a kiss is that we must watch Endymion's elderly face besides Cynthia's young and lovely one without the catharsis of seeing Endymion immediately become young again. Instead, we are left with the disgust of what we have just witnessed, compounded by Endymion's pointed references to his aged and ugly features as he takes stock of his body, which stretch out the moment of revulsion to occupy the entire scene.

Revulsion at a kiss between an old man and a young woman is later echoed in Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*, where Maleficent taunts the chained Prince Philip that she will release him from her dungeon, but only after one hundred years have passed, when as an old man he will be sent to wake Sleeping Beauty with true love's kiss. Her words are mocking: 'And now the gates of the dungeon part and our Prince is free to go his way. Off he rides on his noble steed, a valiant figure, straight and tall, to wake his love with love's first kiss', but they are also uncomfortably contrasted with the animation of a slumped and defeated skeletal figure, grey bearded and head bowed, slowly plodding out of Maleficent's castle on a tired and skinny horse.[316] It is left to the audience's imagination as to how the kiss between a cadaverous Prince Philip and a Sleeping Beauty who is unchanged by the passing of a century might look, but in the meeting of Cynthia's lips with Endymion's we have some idea.

Cynthia's kiss is subversive in other ways, in particular as an inversion of the motif of the stolen kiss, which has been depicted innumerable times throughout literature, including

[316] *Sleeping Beauty*, dir. Clyde Geronimi (Buena Vista Film Distribution, 1959).

between men and sleeping women, and men and sleeping corpses. Philip Sidney's own *Astrophil and Stella*, published in 1591 but circulated earlier in manuscript form, treads well-worn ground when in the second song Astrophil takes a kiss from the lips of the sleeping Stella, though he is well aware that she has previously refused permission for such an action when she was awake:

> Her tongue waking still refuseth,
> Giving frankly niggard 'no';
> Now will I attempt to know
> What 'no' her tongue sleeping useth.
>
> (Second Song, ll. 9-12) [317]

Using the traditional imagery of women as architecture discussed in Chapter Two, Astrophil compares assault upon a woman's body to the storming of a castle, remarking that 'Now I will invade the fort'. In his desire to take what he wants from Stella, he chooses to 'forget the difference between a stolen kiss and one freely offered' as James Finn Cotter remarks.[318] Astrophil positions himself as a knight who has been successful on the field of battle and Stella is both the castle which he has breached and the fair maiden inside it. Cynthia's kiss, in contrast, is explicitly written as neither romantic nor sexual and is a kiss that rescues the sleeper and does him 'good' (5.1.23) rather than rewards the one actively kissing him. There is no threat of sexual violence towards Endymion's body, just as no would-be lovers are enflamed by Basilius' body. Women in these texts are powerful and important, but, with the exception of Gynecia's grandmother, they do not take advantage of vulnerable male bodies.

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[317] Sir Philip Sidney, 'Astrophil and Stella' in *Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 153-211 (p. 183).
[318] James Finn Cotter, 'The Songs in 'Astrophil and Stella'', *Studies in Philology*, 67.2 (1970), 178–200 (p. 182) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4173672> [accessed 12 March 2021].

This sexual inaction may be because these bodies are not desirable and have no qualities with which to tempt viewers of their sleeping forms, or because as Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) notes: 'a sleeping man is only half a man'.[319] Seen as less viable sexual options for women within the heteronormativity of the text, sleeping men are recast as effeminate and women-like. More importantly, though, men may be left unmolested because the texts are not as interested in the men as potential lovers as they are in showing them being punished by women. Cynthia is aware that her kiss, whilst a moment of salvation for Endymion, is also one of reckoning; she can wake him, but to make him young once more 'it be impossible' (5.1.26-27). Her kiss is therefore a continuation of his punishment.

Lyly's portrayal of the three women at the heart of the play embodies the stereotypes of women as authoritative, intelligent, crafty, dangerous, and intimately connected with magic: Tellus as representative of the earth, Dipsas the witch, and Cynthia as the moon's embodiment. As Christine Neufeld argues, despite the women being physically very different from each other, all three act as aspects of each other in that they are intimately connected with Diana, the tripartite goddess of the moon, virginity, and witches.[320] We have encountered Diana before in the temple where Apollonius' wife becomes priestess, but here she exists not as a symbol of the resurrected woman, but as a symbol of woman's ability both to take and give life. Endymion's sleep is explicitly caused by witchcraft: he is put to sleep with the use of singing, medicinal herbs, and the wafting of a poisoned fan before his face by Dipsas on Tellus' orders. The same witchcraft that enchants him, however, is also the cause of his release. Cynthia first frees him from his sleep with her kiss, then with her words dissolves the effects of age on his body, so that he is restored to his youth. As Neufeld argues, because of 'the triune nature of Diana that constructs Cynthia and Dipsas as aspects of the

[319] Thomas de Vio, *Commentarii in quinque Mosaicos libros* (Paris, 1539), p. 25, quoted in Lei, p. 33.
[320] Christine M. Neufeld, 'Lyly's Chimerical Vision: Witchcraft in Endymion', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43.4 (2007), 351-369 <doi:10.1093/fmls/cqm060>.

same power, Cynthia's actions appear to work on the folkloric principle, confirmed by modern immunology, that a poison can contain its own antidote'.[321] Cynthia's magic heals Endymion in much the same way that the bed of lunary does Corsites' plague spots.

Whilst Endymion sleeps, he encounters one final powerful and dangerous woman in a dream: a woman carrying 'a knife with which she offered to cut my throat, and in the other a looking glass' (5.1.89-90). Endymion's dream is specific, horrifying, and clearly recollected, but also marks a shift in how the sleeping corpse is portrayed. Previously, we have rarely been privy to the interior life of the sleeping corpse. We know that Perrault's *La Belle au Bois Dormant* was sent good dreams and had time to perfect her opening line to the Prince whilst she slept, and that the sleeping corpses of medieval saints were unafraid of visiting the dreams of pilgrims in order to complain of neck ache or of being placed too close to the latrines. Gynecia also experiences a frightening vision of holding the living corpse of her husband. All these dreams and visions are very different, however, from the clearly remembered, highly symbolic, yet uninterpreted scene that Endymion witnesses whilst in his corpse-like state. The dream is also different because the audience witnesses it in the form of a dumb show in Act Two Scene Three. As Bevington notes, sleeping figures on stage often have their dreams visualised for the spectator, particularly when these characters are part of religious theatrical retellings, but these meetings between the mortal and the divine are 'more apt to be suggestive of ideas about the magic of theater than about providential concern with human destiny'.[322] Endymion's dream, though referred to as 'strange' (5.1.103) by both Endymion and Cynthia, is left uninterpreted and offers no enlightenment or solution to Endymion. Instead, the audience is left to provide its own meaning to what they have witnessed. The play has often been read as a political allegory: the vast majority of research

[321] Neufeld, p. 363.
[322] David Bevington, 'Asleep Onstage', *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, ed. John A. Alford (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1995), pp. 51-85, (pp. 60-61).

on *Endymion* attempts to tie various historical figures to the main characters of the play, with varying levels of success.[323] Similarly, critics have also attempted to explain Endymion's dream allegorically. Although this type of allegorical interpretation can at times be 'deeply unhelpful', as Andy Kesson argues, and is ultimately less relevant to my own reading of *Endymion*, Gillian Knoll has plausibly proposed that the woman in Endymion's dream 'evokes Anatomia, "the reductive deity of division" who presided over the dissecting room'.[324] [325] As a representation of the surgeon peeling back layers of the human body in order to reveal its secret, intricate workings, Anatomia directly correlates to the women of *Endymion* who use their knowledge of magic, medicine, and the body both to bind it and free it, as well as reveal painful truths in the process. As Knoll points out, Endymion pleads with Cynthia to look at his body as an expression of his love, a request that becomes more extreme when he asks her to 'see every vein, sinew, muscle, and artery of my love, in which there is no flattery nor deceit, error nor art' (2.49-51).[326] Only beneath his skin is Endymion not duplicitous. In making his request, Endymion transforms Cynthia into Anatomia and himself into a corpse ready for dissection, and as audience members we are invited to watch the autopsy, the ultimate act of voyeurism. This post-mortem never actually takes place, however. Tellus' disruption of this potential autopsy instead closes Endymion's body up tight. His slowly corrupting body can only be viewed externally whilst he ages in his sleep and when he wakes there is no desire to inspect the interior of the old man; his exterior is horrifying enough.

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[323] Some of these readings include Josephine Waters Bennett, 'Oxford and *Endimion*', *PMLA*, 57.2 (1942), 354-69, and Jacqueline Vanhoutte, 'Age in Lust: Lyly's *Endymion* and the Court of Elizabeth I', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 37.1 (2011), 51-70 <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1163/23526963-90000401>.
[324] Kesson, p. 132.
[325] Gillian Knoll, 'How To Make Love to the Moon: Intimacy and Erotic Distance in John Lyly's *Endymion*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 65.2 (Summer 2014), 164–179 (p. 174) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24778554> [accessed 8 May 2019].
[326] Knoll, p. 174.

Though Endymion is restored to his original self once more by the end of the play and all of the characters, with the exception of Cynthia and Endymion, are neatly paired off, any sense of a happy ending with the re-establishment of the natural order is contrived and, like Endymion's beauty, superficial. As Sara Deats points out, although 'all metamorphoses are annulled and all protean figures restored to their natural forms through the beneficial power of the *deus ex machina* Cynthia, the linking of passion with disfigurement remains'.[327] Like that of *Arcadia*, the ending of the play only offers a sense of unease. The characters follow Cynthia off stage, but her own unstable nature as a waxing and waning moon is symbolic of the fragility of the bodily form and a sign that change is inevitable. Endymion will, one day, still have to confront his aging body and this time there will be no turning back of the clock.

Trapped in Paradise: Michael Drayton's *Endimion* and the irreversible Sleeping Beauty

The myth of Endymion would not only inspire Lyly. Nearly a decade later, Michael Drayton would also write about the famous sleeper and his love of the moon in his epyllion *Endimion and Phoebe* (1595). Unlike Lyly's revision of the myth, it is a far more straightforward treatment. In Drayton's poem, Endimion is a handsome shepherd living on an island paradise and wholly dedicated to the moon goddess Phoebe. Disguising herself as a nymph, Phoebe woos Endimion, and after a series of romantic misunderstandings and revelations, she honours Endimion by enchanting him into an un-aging sleep for thirty years so that he may experience heavenly visions.

Like Lyly, Drayton is intensely interested in bodies and their presentation. Whereas Lyly, however, is fixated on how the alteration of the human form can manifest the obscene and the grotesque, Drayton focuses instead on the nature of beauty and desire as sensual,

[327] Sara Deats, 'The Disarming of the Knight: Comic Parody in Lyly's "Endymion"', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 40.4 (November, 1975) 67-75 (p. 73) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3199121> [accessed 8 May 2019].

transformative, but also deadly and irrevocable. Like other popular epyllions of the period including Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1598), both of which he used as a model, Drayton gives the mythological narrative an erotic treatment, with Endimion's beauty blazoned in typical poetic fashion. A proto-Snow White, his skin 'the snow it selfe dyd stayne', his hair is 'of the Ravens shyning black', and his eyes are like 'Diamonds inclosing Globes of Jet'.[328] Endimion is so beautiful that even Jove, believing him to be a nymph in boy's clothing, is 'inflamed with desire' (l. 95): an uncomfortable parallel with Basilius' own pursuit of Pyrocles when the latter is disguised as Zelmane. More disturbing than the continued presence of lustful monarchs chasing after potential lovers who are uninterested in them, however, are the actions of the water nymphs who also inhabit the isle. Endimion's beauty is so overwhelming that they 'Stealing oft times to kisse him whilst he slept: / And tasting once the Nectar of his breath, / Surfet with sweet, and languish unto death' (ll. 90-92). Endimion possesses too much beauty for them to survive 'tasting' him whilst he sleeps; his kiss instead turns nectar, the food of the gods, into a poison.

Endimion's kiss of death does not, however, affect the goddess Phoebe, who similarly takes advantage of the sleeping Endimion: 'Kneeling her downe, him in her armes she clips, / And with sweet kisses sealeth up his lips' (ll. 471-472). Phoebe's embrace of the sleeping shepherd deliberately evokes the language of hagiography. She cries tears 'like pure drops of Milk' (l. 475) upon his cheeks, and her nymphs lay flowers at their feet and around the surrounding area whilst invoking 'Musicks sacred sound' (l. 489) before bathing his body with 'sweet Balme' (l. 494), anointing his temples with nectar, and finally kneeling to kiss him, though seemingly avoiding his deadly lips. This reverential behaviour around Endimion

[328] Michael Drayton, 'Endimion and Phoebe: Ideas Latmus', *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Limited, 1963), pp. 180-206, l. 139, l. 146, 1.150. All subsequent line references will be given parenthetically.

echoes the treatment and preparation of saints' sleeping corpses as they are groomed to become true intermediaries of God. Phoebe, likewise, makes Endimion divine in nature, infusing his soul with the 'fiery nature of a Heavenly Muse' (l. 508) before taking his hand and waking him into a trance-like state. Phoebe, in turn, becomes a sexualised quasi-Christ figure, who tells Endimion that in the well in which she first bathed 'Who drinks thereof, shall never after thirst; / The water hath the Lunacie appeased, / And by the vertue, cureth all diseased' (ll. 196-199). In a secular parallel to Christ who bestows the holy spirit on his followers, Phoebe makes Endimion more than human, but like the saints who must be sleeping corpses in order fully to bridge the divide between the mortal and the divine, Endimion must also experience stasis. Laying his head in her lap and wrapping him in her mantle, Phoebe models a pagan Pieta before carrying Endimion to heaven to view the zodiac and the movement of the planets, which Drayton describes as having direct influence on both the constitution of man and his 'lives effects and fortunes' (l. 713). The astronomical body which has most influence over Endimion's own though is Phoebe, who, taking control of his fortune, eventually decides to keep Endimion asleep for thirty years under a laurel tree, 'Remayning ever beautifull and yong' (l. 990), so that she 'might descend and sport with her love' (l. 986) at her leisure.

The ending to the legend Drayton offers here is more than slightly disturbing. Endimion is aware of the problems of a mortal loving the divine and the high chances of transformative side-effects; he does, after all, tell Phoebe the tale of a youth in love with a nymph who lies down to sleep and is turned by the gods into a stream (ll. 587-600). Endimion's metamorphosis, whilst not dissolving his body, does fundamentally change it, and, like the youth, he has no chance to consent to, or refuse, the change he undergoes. Phoebe's choice to 'honor her Endimion, / And glorifie him' (ll. 754-755) only offers Endimion passivity and compliance in a sleep that proffers him celestial visions in exchange

for inertia. Phoebe is Gynecia's grandmother in goddess form: a less malevolent Tellus. Endimion's sleep is not like the punishing sleep of *Arcadia*'s Endymion, nor is it medicinal in the way of Basilius' sleep. Instead, it is the fulfilment of his fortune, stripping him of his humanity in order for him to become the paramour of a goddess, as well as allowing him to see the truth of the universe and its divine workings upon mankind.

Much as critics have seen the kiss between Lyly's Cynthia and Endymion as a Neoplatonic allegory, so too some see Neoplatonism at work again in Drayton's version of the story. Vincent Petronella argues that Drayton makes use of Neoplatonic imagery and theory in order to show 'a young shepherd whose spiritual journey is a model for all those who desire, while alive, to reach the highest levels of being'.[329] Phoebe's kiss does literally and figuratively transport Endimion to the highest spheres of Heaven. To read the poem as only a Neoplatonic allegory is to gloss over the jarring finality of the ending, which reveals nothing of the visions that Endimion actually sees and instead, as Barbara Ewell bluntly remarks, gives his fate 'short shrift'.[330]

The most famous aspect of the Endimion myth is the fact that the shepherd exists in a permanent dreamlike state. Yet in Drayton's adaption of the legend he concludes the poem with Endimion being laid down to sleep under laurel trees, and then cuts away with an apologetic, but ultimately disinterested, shrug: 'And what in vision there to him be fell, / My weary Muse some other time shall tell' (ll. 991-992). The exhausted pen of Sidney might just as well be resting between Drayton's fingers, but the frustration of the ending for the reader is sharper. Drayton proves throughout the poem that he is quite capable of constructing

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[329] Vincent F. Petronella, 'Double Ecstasy in Drayton's Endimion and Phoebe', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24.1, The English Renaissance (Winter, 1984), 87-104 (p. 88) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/450351> [accessed 18 June 2019].

[330] Barbara C. Ewell, 'Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe*: An Allegory of Aesthetics', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture, 7*.1 (1981), 15-26 (p. 24) <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/draytons-endimion-phoebe-allegory-aesthetics/docview/1311898784/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 18 June 2019].

elaborate descriptions, often tangential to the narrative, in order to create vivid and beautiful scenes. Endimion's final meeting with Phoebe, for example, where he arrives lying on a chariot drawn by 'foure stately Unicornes' (l. 806) and shaded from the sun by a 'bevy of fayre Swans' (l. 817) flying over his head is ridiculously effervescent in its medieval decadence. Drayton does not spare a single line, however, to reveal what heavenly visions Endimion might have seen, nor what happens to Endimion once he wakes from his three-decade long slumber. Drayton could easily have omitted the final couplet, moreover, and concluded the poem on an admittedly still abrupt, but nonetheless happier note. In deliberately rounding it off with two lines that stress the poet's own desire to sleep, Drayton finishes the poem with an interruption rather than a conclusion as well as a reminder that the whole experience is a constructed work of fiction, one in which the telling has impinged upon the writer's need to rest. As Edward Lecomte complains 'So Endymion slept thirty years, and *desunt nonnulla*' (some things are lacking), a reference to the addition made by publisher Edward Blount to the end of Marlowe's own epyllion *Hero and Leander*.[331] There is some critical debate as to whether Marlowe's epyllion is unfinished or whether it is intentionally concluded at an earlier point than its original source: Marlowe ends with the lovers together in the morning after spending the night together, rather than ending with Leander's drowning and Hero's suicide.[332] As in the case of Sidney's *Arcadia*, other writers attempted to finish what they perceived as incomplete, including George Chapman, who added extensively to Marlowe's epyllion before republishing the poem in the same year. When Lecomte takes Blount's publishing note and appends it to Drayton's work, there is a similar sense of the reader making a judgement about whether a text is finished. Marlowe left no indication that the poem was anything other than complete, but his readers infer there should be more

[331] Edward S. Lecomte, *Endymion in England: The Literary History of a Greek Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 99.
[332] For an excellent discussion on whether Marlowe's poem is finished see Gordon Braden, 'Hero and Leander in Bed (and the Morning After),' *English Literary Renaissance*, 45.2 (Spring 2015), 205-230.

because they know the original myth and its conclusion. With Drayton, we are left frustrated because he tells us there is more to say, then deliberately refrains from saying it, much like Sidney. Drayton would later extensively revise and rework much of his poem for his satire *The Man in the Moon,* published in 1606, but this later work so radically changes and removes so much of the epyllion as to be unhelpful to any attempt to discover what he did not write regarding Endimion's visions. Thus, at the end of the poem, in place of a happy ending we are left with loss and incompletion.

Arcadia, *Endymion*, and *Endimion and Phoebe* all play with the hope of a golden age or perfect love. Yet all three conclude with a sense of loss and disquiet. *Arcadia* and *Endimion and Phoebe* are unsettling because they are interrupted texts; the authors' own self-proclaimed exhaustion overwhelms the story, so that even as the narrative attempts to bring about a happy ending, it stutters to a premature halt. Basilius awakes, Endimion does not, but ultimately, it is the writers who are cast into the role of sleeper. *Endymion*, on the other hand, is disquieting because it takes a familiar myth of the eternal sleeper and subverts all the established identification markers of the sleeping corpse: beauty, agelessness, and a function within the community or a masculine chivalric identity. Instead, in the texts considered in this chapter, sleeping corpses are destabilising male figures. In *Arcadia* and *Endymion* they are intertwined with the failure of governance of the self and individual passions, political and otherwise, or associated with subversive ideas of gender, witchcraft, and power. All three men are figures who interrupt and puncture the natural order of the world, and in the case of *Arcadia* and *Endimion* have their authors forcefully interrupt for them. By the end, Basilius, Endymion, and Endimion all know higher truths about both themselves and their worlds, but the realisations come at a steep cost to themselves. All three texts end with the characters pairing off, whether through choice, entreaty, threat, or narrative convenience. Whilst the awakening of Basilius and Endymion may to some extent right their respective worlds, the

conclusions offer uncomfortable uncertainties as to the harmony of the couples at the close of their respective tales and the prosperity of the lands they inhabit. For Endimion, who is the only sleeping corpse to remain asleep at the close of his narrative, there is a sour note of warning that his time spent asleep is a fleeting moment of bliss: 'Yet as a dreame he thought the tyme not long'. To wake, in these texts, is to realise that *desunt nonnulla* and that it will always be so.

Ultimately, Sidney, Lyly, and Drayton's experiments with male sleeping corpses would be short lived and eventually overshadowed by the use of the motif in the work of their contemporary, William Shakespeare. Whilst retaining the same landscapes of Mediterranean paradises and ancient vistas that Sidney, Lyly, and Drayton use, as well as their sense of disquiet, Shakespeare turns the gender of the sleeping corpse back once more to female, creating some of his most interesting and memorable heroines in the figures of Thaisa, Innogen, and Hermione. Unlike his contemporaries, however, Shakespeare returns to old stories and to the past, not to provide interrupted narratives, but to offer definitive, though not unproblematic, conclusions to questions of loss and family. By exploring what is 'lacking' or incomplete in the narratives of his contemporaries, Shakespeare examines how one can continue to believe in miracles in an increasingly cynical age.

Chapter Four

‘a thing like death’: Mouldy Tales and Fair Corpses in Shakespeare’s Romances

The motif of false death is a staple of early modern drama, regardless of genre of play. George Chapman’s 1605 comedy *The Widow’s Tears*, for example, features a man who tricks his wife into believing he is dead in order to test her vow that she will not remarry, and in Francis Beaumont’s 1607 parodic play *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Jasper Merrythought pretends to be his own ghost in order to marry his true love, Luce. Meanwhile, in John Webster’s 1612 tragedy *The White Devil*, the scheming murderer Flamineo is shot dead by his sister and her maid, only for him to rise from the dead and reveal that the pistols are unloaded, a moment which Stephen Marche characterises as ‘both terrifying and comic: it is the resurrection and judgement played out by a devil as a cruel joke’.[333]

In contrast, Shakespeare’s frequent use of false death and sleeping corpses is not primarily a tool through which characters misogynistically test the fidelity of women or escape justice. Nor is it principally used as a staged piece of trickery for either comic or vengeful purposes. Shakespeare lacks the cynicism of his fellow playwrights; a cynicism I will be exploring in further detail alongside Jacobean revenge tragedy in Chapter Five. Instead, Shakespeare earnestly explores what it means to be dead and the blurred boundaries between bodies that are asleep, dead, or caught somewhere in between: the ghost of Hamlet’s father stalks the battlements in mocking contradiction of his son’s simplistic distinction between life and death as being and not being; Juliet lies sleeping in a crypt; Hermione returns sixteen years after her death to the astonishment of her husband; with his magic Prospero threatens to wake the dead and bring them onstage. Within this broad depiction of

[333] Stephen Marche, ‘John Webster and the Dead: Reading the *Duchess of Malfi*'s Eschatology’, *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 28.2 (Spring, 2004), 79-95, (p. 81) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43445754> [accessed 5 November 2020].

mistaken death Shakespeare uses the sleeping corpse motif on stage to concentrate on loss and recovery, and the varying degrees of success with which characters are able to recoup the absent beloved. In his work, those who are fortunate enough to return from beyond the grave may be resurrected but are never entirely restored to what they once were.

Shakespeare's fascination with attempting to identify and quantify existence coalesces in the on-stage appearance of sleeping corpses in a number of his plays, including *Romeo and Juliet* (1595/96), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605), *Pericles* (1608), *Cymbeline* (1610), and *The Winter's Tale* (1611). Though, as David Roberts comments, 'there is no evidence that Shakespeare was familiar with any version of the Sleeping Beauty story,' it was a typical motif in both the texts of his Italian sources and the work of his peers.[334] It would therefore be very unlikely that Shakespeare was not acquainted with the fairy tale or its various incarnations; his frequent usage of it over the years suggests, as Martin Mueller argues, that 'Sleeping Beauties triggered Shakespeare's most wilful exercise of the playwright's power of life and death'.[335] Shakespeare was also clearly familiar with other folktales about beautiful sleeping maidens, including an oral version of *Snow White*.[336] It is quite likely, as Charlotte Artese remarks, that '*Cymbeline* may in fact be the earliest literary version' of the fairy tale.[337] Shakespeare's repeated return to and reworking of the sleeping corpse motif over the

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[334] David Roberts, 'Sleeping Beauties: Shakespeare, Sleep and the Stage', *Cambridge Quarterly,* 35.3 (2006), 231-254 (p. 235) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42967249> [accessed 12 December 2016].

[335] Martin Mueller, 'Shakespeare's Sleeping Beauties: The Sources of "Much Ado About Nothing" and the Play of Their Repetitions', *Modern Philology*, 91.3 (1994), 288-311 (p. 288) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/438435> [accessed 14 April 2021].

[336] Shakespeare's use of folk and fairy tale is not limited to only these two fairy tales. See, for example, Ciara Rawnsley, 'Behind the Happily-Ever-After: Shakespeare's Use of Fairy Tales and *All's Well That Ends Well*', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2 (2013) 141-158 [https://doi.org/10.13128/JEMS-2279-7149-12632] and Duke Pesta, '"This Rough Magic I Here Abjure": Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the Fairy-Tale Body', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 15.1 (2004) 49-60. Derek Brewer goes so far as to argue that 'The habits of mind developed in reading fairy tales and folktales are a far better preparation for reading Shakespeare than any amount of historical and social background'. See Derek Brewer, 'The Interpretation of Fairy Tales', in *A Companion to the Fairy Tale*, ed. Hilda Ellis Davidson and Anna Chaudhri (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 15-37 (p. 31).

[337] *Shakespeare and the Folktale: An Anthology of Stories*, ed. Charlotte Artese (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 248. De Gruyter ebook. Critical consensus on this issue has not always been harmonious as Catherine Belsey acknowledges: 'Half a century ago, the editor of Arden 2 commented scathingly that Snow

course of his career also demonstrates an evolving response to the motif in direct opposition to its use by his contemporaries. Where other playwrights of the period use sleeping corpses on stage for comedic or cynical purposes, Shakespeare gradually retreats from grim, realist depictions to position the sleeping corpse further and further within the realm of the religious, the mystical, and the magical. In shifting from a neo-classical model to a medieval one, Shakespeare is able to incorporate folklore tradition and many of the tropes of the mystery plays that he probably watched as a child before they were suppressed in the late sixteenth century.[338] In her survey of some of the more recent scholarship on Shakespeare, Lucy Munro writes that Shakespeare's use of the past

> can be historical, mythical or fictional; it may be a site of memory, subjectivity or nostalgia; it can be dynastic or popular in its concerns; the past may even turn out to be simultaneously the present, or even the future […] Furthermore, although Shakespeare often foregrounds the alterity of the past, his works also insist on correspondences between past and present, and on occasion collapse the distinctions between them altogether, introducing strikingly anachronistic details or cultural assumptions.[339]

White had been 'unconvincingly' cited as a source of *Cymbeline*'. See Catherine Belsey, *Why Shakespeare?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), ix.

[338] Though there is no evidence Shakespeare watched any of the Cycle plays, most scholars agree he is likely to have seen the Coventry Mystery Plays which were only seventeen miles from his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon and performed up until 1579. For further consideration of the way that the mystery cycles and the memory of them influenced Shakespeare's plays see Beatrice Grove, *Texts and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare, 1592-1604* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), or for the way specific material objects from mystery plays were reformed and reincorporated in Shakespeare's plays see Kurt A. Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft: Remnants of the Mysteries on the London Stage* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2014). For a more generalised but extensive exploration of biblical culture in Shakespeare's England and its varied and prolific appearance outside of church spaces, including in his plays, and in domestic settings, see Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[339] Lucy Munro, 'Shakespeare and the uses of the past: Critical approaches and current debates', *Shakespeare*, 7.1 (2011), 102-125, (p. 105) <DOI: 10.1080/17450918.2011.557503>.

Further to this, in Shakespeare's later plays, the past is actively desired, lovingly recuperated, and usually sited within the bodies of women long thought gone. In Shakespeare's final romances, the past haunts the present until it is resurrected and joyfully reintegrated into the present with the waking and return of the sleeping corpse, though in these reunions there always remains an echo of loss. This loss may be intangible, (the passage of time) or tangible (not all who are dead return) but it always exists as an undercurrent, despite the happy endings to these plays. Notwithstanding the puncturing of what are seemingly blissful conclusions, Shakespeare's return to the medieval reinserts the wonder into his works that Sidney removes, grounding his worlds in magic and folktale. In his plays divine and human intervention work in tandem to achieve the miraculous. The sleeping corpse may return due largely to the actions of ordinary people, but this return is still characterised as wondrous and sanctioned by higher powers.

Confronting the Tragedy of a Realistic Sleeping Corpse in *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595)

Whilst Sidney, Lyly, and Drayton set their sleeping corpses within a tarnished but still golden pastoral age, Shakespeare's first sustained use of the motif in *Romeo and Juliet* situates it firmly within an urban Italian landscape ravaged with plague. Few plays of the period actively engage with the disease, though other types of diseased bodies make frequent enough appearances in early modern theatre; even Shakespeare avoids showing plague victims on stage.[340] Despite this lack of material embodiment, for his contemporary audience, the setting would have been undoubtedly disquieting. Since 1348, England had suffered repeated outbreaks of plague; in 1593, only two years prior to *Romeo and Juliet* being staged, London

[340] For a discussion of how plague was used on the stage see Barbara H. Traister, '"A Plague on both Your Houses": Sites of Comfort and Terror in Early Modern Drama,' in *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, eds. Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman (New York; London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 169-182.

lost around 12% of its population to the disease.[341] Even more unsettlingly, theatres were seen as places that increased the spread of plague through the close proximity of their audience members, and even as the root cause of the disease by their moralistic detractors. As Michael Neill notes, theatres were 'imagined as a source of miasmic infection' both literal and metaphorical, a conceit that transformed the theatrical space into an extension of the plague infested Italian cityscape and the audience into potential victims.[342]

Plague, however, functions as much more than uncomfortable contextual scenery. It is the crux upon which the miscommunication of Juliet's apparent death turns: before Friar John can get to Mantua, he is quarantined by city health officials on suspicion of having been where 'the infectious pestilence did reign'.[343] The letter he carries with him, penned by Friar Laurence explaining to Romeo the truth, is never sent. Consequently, Juliet's potential rescuer is unaware of her situation and Friar Laurence must hurriedly call for a crowbar to free the 'Poor living corpse, closed in a dead man's tomb' (5.2.29). Plague traps both Friar John and Juliet amongst the dying and the dead. Theologically, it also places those inhabiting the world of *Romeo and Juliet* within a landscape of divine wrath, where the boundaries between the living and the dead blur. As Mary Floyd-Wilson notes, 'God may work through a variety of forces, including the influence of the stars, or the environmental effects of bad air, but no one disagrees [in the early modern period] that a supernatural sanction is the primary trigger of an epidemic'.[344] Unlike Sidney, Lyly, and Drayton, who populate their texts with active and interfering gods and oracles, Shakespeare suffuses his play with the

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[341] J. Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 74.
[342] Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 26.
[343] William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 5.2.10. All subsequent references will be given parenthetically.
[344] Mary Floyd Wilson, ''Angry Mab with Blisters Plague': The Pre-Modern Science of Contagion in *Romeo and Juliet*', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science,* ed. Howard Marchitello and Evelyn Tribble (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2017), pp. 401-422 (p. 402).

ominous passive presence of the divine throughout. From the beginning of the play the lovers are condemned as both 'star-crossed' (Prologue, line 6), and 'death marked' (Prologue, line 9). In previous chapters I have discussed the traditional treatment of love as disease: in *Romeo and Juliet* it erupts as divinely ordained plague. Plague thwarting the lovers' plans is not a motif of Shakespeare's own invention, being present in several of the sources that he may have used including Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Iuliet* (1562) and Matteo Bandello's *Giuletta e Romeo* in his *Novelle* (1554).[345] However, Shakespeare deliberately amplifies its presence throughout the play with the language of pestilence, culminating in Mercutio's emphatic dying curse: 'A plague o' both your houses' (3.1.86). Though meant metaphorically rather than literally, Mercutio's curse serves to emphasise what Romeo and Juliet already sense themselves: incurably infected with love, they are walking corpses.

Unsurprisingly in a time of epidemic, both Romeo and Juliet frequently imagine each other as deceased. Newly banished, Romeo imagines Juliet as a rotting corpse, adorned with 'carrion flies' (3.3.35), whilst she pictures him as 'one dead in the bottom of a tomb' (3.5.56). Within the text, plague blurs boundaries between what is dead and what is living, an effect reflecting contemporary fears of being unable correctly to identify what might be a corpse and what might be an unconscious but still living body. These fears are as old as plague literature. Boccaccio's *Decameron,* also written at a time of plague, features two stories (Tales 3.8 and 10.4) where bodies are mistakenly buried alive. Thomas Dekker's blackly comic plague pamphlet *The Wonderfull Yeare* (1603)*,* includes a story of a drunken man who falls into an open grave and frightens the local sexton the next morning by causing him to

[345] The insertion of the plague plot seems to be Bandello's invention. The earliest known version of the tale, Masuccio Salernitano's 1476 story of Mariotto and Gianozza of Siena in *Il Novellino* (Novella XXXIII), has the messenger killed by pirates. For more information about types of Romeo and Juliet already in circulation before the eponymous play, see Jill L. Levenson, 'Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare', *Studies in Philology*, 81.3 (Summer, 1984), 325-347.

believe the dead are speaking to him.[346] Juliet, meanwhile, is deliberately entombed alive. As a sleeping corpse Juliet differs from her literary predecessors in that she is fully aware of what is about to happen to her: it is not a miraculous sign in response to fervent martyrdom, nor is she tricked or punished into falling into a death-like coma. Instead, she is an active participant in becoming a sleeping corpse. She bravely offers to be hid 'nightly in a charnel house, / O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones, / With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls' (4.1.81-83), despite her concerns about being near the dead with their unpleasant smells and their unnerving sounds and movements. Stating that she would enter 'a new-made grave / And hide me with a dead man in his tomb' (4.1.84-85), rather than simply lying with ancient bones, Juliet remarks that these are 'Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble' (4.1.86), metaphorically, as well as physically, inserting herself into narratives of living burial. Her assertion that she will do whatever is necessary to be with Romeo, however, does not dismiss her central concern that she will die before she is able to be reunited with him, either because she will 'be stifled in the vault, / To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in, / And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?' (4.3.32-34), or because on waking, the horror of her location will make her 'run mad' (4.3.47) and therefore use the corpse of her cousin to fatally injure herself. Despite her fears, Juliet's actual reaction on waking up is a calm and measured recollection of both plan and personhood, 'I do remember well where I should be, / And there I am' (5.3.149-150), but her earlier suggestion that she might kill herself in the tomb does foreshadow her death, though not with a kinsman's bone but with her husband's dagger.

Juliet is not particularly convincing as a corpse and the audience might reasonably expect Romeo to identify her as still living when he closely inspects her body. He sees that

[346] Rick Bowers, 'Antidote to the plague: Thomas Dekker's storytelling in *The Wonderful Yeare* (1603)', *English Studies*, 73.3 (1992), 229-239, (p. 236) <DOI: 10.1080/00138389208598808>.

'Beauty's ensign yet / Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks / And death's pale flag is not advancèd there' (5.3.94-96), but her flushed skin, red lips, and unchanged beauty are to Romeo not signs of life, but further confirmation that he was right to worship Juliet as an object of divine beauty. Her perfection outlasts life itself.

Romeo can be forgiven for not realising Juliet is still alive and moments from waking up. After all, as we have seen, he is not alone in struggling to identify whether the body he surveys is living or dead. On stage death is complicated by its necessary illusory quality. As Maggie Vinter argues, 'In the theater, death is not something you suffer but something you do'.[347] Performative by nature, the death of a character on stage involves the suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience in much the same way as any other kind of stage-acting; we know we are not actually watching kings, witches, and fairies perform for us, for example. Dying and remaining dead on stage, often for a significant period of time, however, requires a greater degree of skill from the actor. Done badly, a stage death is not just unbelievable, it is funny. The unfortunate comic potential of an onstage death can be further compounded by the ego of the actor. In 1664, Richard Fowler became so terrifyingly immersed in his part that

> at the end of the Fourth Act he laid so heavily about him, that some Mutes who stood for Souldiers, fell down as they were dead e're he had toucht their trembling Targets; so he brandisht his Sword & made his *Exit*; ne're minding to bring off his dead men; which they perceiving, crauled into the Tyreing house, at which, *Fowler* grew angry, and told 'em, Dogs you should have laine there till you had been fetcht off; and so

[347] Maggie Vinter, *Last Acts: The Art of Dying on the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), p. 1. De Gruyter ebook.

> they crauled out again, which gave the People such an occasion of Laughter, they cry'd that again, that again, that again.[348]

Shakespeare's own acknowledgement of the problems of staging a realistic death is embodied in the character of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: playing the lover Pyramus in a play within the play, he stabs himself to death in as overblown a manner as possible, exclaiming 'Now die, die, die, die, die'.[349] Theseus, watching in bemusement, wryly comments: 'With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and prove an ass'.[350] This kind of comedy is already present with Juliet's first 'death' and her nurse's hysterics:

> O woe! O woeful, woeful, woeful day!
> Most lamentable day! Most woeful day
> That ever, ever, I did yet behold!
> O day, O day, O day, O hateful day,
> Never was seen so black a day as this!
> O woeful day, O woeful day!
>
> (4.4.80-85)

Many critics have noted the parallels between the play within a play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. As Kiki Lindell argues, it is also precisely the comic echoes of the former contained in the effusiveness of lamentation in the latter that heighten the tragedy

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[348] From John Tatham, *Knavery in All Trades, or, The Coffee-House* (London, 1664), D4v–E1r, quoted in Musa Gurnis, *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling: Theater in Post Reformation London* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), p. 58. De Gruyter ebook.
[349] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 5.1.295.
[350] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.298-9.

of Juliet's second 'real' death, because as an audience we are 'lulled and lured by all this into believing, or almost believing, that all will be well'.[351]

Believing that all will be well despite all evidence to the contrary is most strongly invoked in the ending of *King Lear* (1605), where Lear agonisingly vacillates between believing Cordelia is dead and unrevivable and the hope that she might still live, despite her hanging.[352] As Mueller notes, 'Cordelia is a Sleeping Beauty who is indeed dead, but the thought that she might not be refuses to go away.[353] Lear's desperate, demanding plea for his courtiers and for the audience to 'Look on her, look, her lips, / Look there, look there!' raises the expectation that as Lear himself dies, Cordelia might awaken, much like Juliet in the tomb.[354] That the play ends with no such revival violates the idea of justice, as well as the expectations of any audience member who knew the original ending of Shakespeare's source materials. In *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (c. 1590s) and Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth century *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Lear is reinstated as King and eventually succeeded by Cordelia.[355] That Nahum Tate's 1681 reworking of the text, *The History of King Lear*, in which Cordelia lives and marries Edgar became the dominant version of the play for over two centuries attests to the strength of feeling of audiences concerning such a bleak and brutal ending.[356]

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[351] Kiki Lindell, 'Putting the Fun Back into Funerals: Dealing/Dallying With Death in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Comparative Drama*, 50. 2/3 (Summer & Fall 2016), 165-181, (p. 170) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26312021> [accessed 28 April 2021].

[352] The story of Lear and his daughters is found in *Perceforest*, though it is unlikely that Shakespeare took this as his direct source material. Gloucester's tale is taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, a text Shakespeare would also use for the false death of Claudio and the substitution of the severed heads in *Measure for Measure* (1604) as it is very reminiscent of the beheading trick with Philoclea. See William A. Oram, 'What Shakespeare Made of Sidney's Arcadia', *Sidney Journal*, 36.1 (2018), 1-17.

[353] Mueller, p. 288.

[354] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear: A Conflated Text*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 5.3.308-309.

[355] See Alan R. Young, 'The Written and Oral Sources of King Lear and the Problem of Justice in the Play', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 15.2 (1975), 309–319 <www.jstor.org/stable/449674> [accessed 28 April 2021] and Meredith Skura, 'Dragon Fathers and Unnatural Children: Warring Generations in *King Lear* and It's Sources', *Comparative Drama*, 42.2 (July, 2008), 121-148 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23038017> [accessed 28 April 2021].

[356] For more on the differences between Shakespeare and Tate's versions and critical reception to both works see Katherine Romack, 'The romance of Nahum Tate's *King Lear*', *Sederi*, 30 (2020), 91-115 <https://doi.org/10.34136/sederi.2020.5>.

At the other end of this spectrum is *Othello* (1604) with the murder of Desdemona, where both the audience and Othello believe he has successfully suffocated his wife. Yet despite his assertion that his wife is dead and the audience's belief this is true, she revives long enough to clear him of her murder and then actually die over thirty lines later, much to the horrified surprise of everyone watching.[357]

While John Kleiner asserts that Romeo 'must convince himself of her death against the evidence of his senses', given the uncertainties that Shakespeare consistently plays with as to whether the characters he presents on stage are living, dead, or somewhere in between, Romeo's failure to recognise that Juliet is alive is understandable.[358] To Romeo, it makes perfect sense that the woman he has variously described as a 'dear saint' (1.5.100), a 'holy shrine' (1.5.91) and a 'bright angel' (2.1.68) would remain, like those holy bodies, fresh and uncorrupted as a corpse. He has even dreamt of Juliet's saint-like powers of revivification, remarking that

> I dreamt my lady came and found me dead-
> Strange dream, that gives a dead man leave to think!-
> And breathed such life with kisses in my lips
> That I revived and was an emperor.
>
> (5.1.6-9)

If this play were a hagiography no doubt the kiss of a saint would have the restorative properties that Romeo dreams of. Yet Shakespeare actively resists this kind of happy ending

[357] Whilst not historically accurate, the 2004 film *Stage Beauty* offers an intense portrayal of this moment which effectively conveys the shock and horror of the audience at Desdemona's unexpected semi-revival.
[358] John Kleiner, 'Live Boys-Dead Girls: Death and False Death in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Literary Imagination*, 17.1 (2014), 18-34 (p. 21) <doi:10.1093/litimag/imu032>.

and Romeo's imaginings are immediately followed by news of Juliet's death.[359] Though he has dreamt that she can revive him, he is unable to save her, and his dream is a happier version of the play's ending where Juliet kisses Romeo and he remains dead. Marjorie Garber argues that Romeo's dream 'ceases to be literal and becomes metaphorical. Indeed, this is the only way we can satisfactorily account for the supernatural note, the revival or resurrection. Because of Juliet's love for him, Romeo will be ironically revived and enshrined by the Capulets, as she by the Montagues'.[360] However, I disagree with Garber that the statue in any way functions as a resurrection image. If this statement were true, then Hermione's statue in *A Winter's Tale* is a resurrection rather than a memorial. Yet in that play Hermione's resurrection is only legitimised when she comes to life, the statue not being enough by itself. Romeo's reference in his dream to him being an emperor acknowledges the absurdity of the dream and its nature as a comparison point of failure rather than prophecy. Unlike *Endymion*, the kisses that the lovers exchange have no regenerative properties and in the final moments of their relationship their respective mouths become the loci of rupture and death, with both Romeo and Juliet hoping to die with a kiss. Juliet in particular hopes that 'Happly some poison yet doth hang on' Romeo's lips and thus she will 'die with a restorative' (5.3.164-166).[361] For Juliet, the kiss is a restorative in that it will cure her of her separation from her husband and is thus a medicine at the same time as she acknowledges its poisonous truth.

The intertwined nature of medicine and poison has occurred earlier in the play with Romeo's labelling of the drug he buys from the apothecary a 'cordial and not poison' (5.1.85), and in Juliet's irrational fear that the sleeping potion she will take is instead 'a

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[359] Balthasar tells Romeo that Juliet's 'body sleeps in Capel's monument' (5.1.18) which is, ironically, the truth.
[360] Marjorie Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 45.
[361] In an echo of this moment, Othello will also 'die upon a kiss'. See William Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 5.2.369.

poison which the friar / Subtly hath ministered to have me dead' (4.3.23-24). The Friar himself acknowledges that plants have potency for both, remarking that 'Within the infant rind of this weak flower / Poison hath residence, and medicine power' (2.2.23-24). Tanya Pollard identifies a number of plays of the period which use a similar sleeping potion / poison device, including Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1592), Edward Sharpham's *The Fleire* (c. 1607), and John Day's *Law Tricks* (printed 1608). Pollard regards this feature as a reaction to changing pharmaceutical practices and the use of strong narcotics to combat devastating diseases such as plague, often with fatal side effects.[362] Thus when the Friar describes the sleeping potion as a liquid which will rob Juliet of pulse, warmth, breath, colour, and instead make her 'stiff and stark and cold, appear like death' (4.1.103), there is the possibility that Juliet really will become a corpse.[363] As a clergyman, the Friar melds the world of miracle and legend where Catholic priests would know about saints' lives and miracles involving resurrected bodies, and the world of medical curatives, being an educated follower of Galenic medicine.[364] We are not told what potion it is that he gives Juliet, only that it is a sleeping potion that can create 'The form of death' (5.3.245). Problematic as Friar Laurence's solution is, he is the only one to come up with a plan to rescue Juliet from her impending marriage to Paris. Three years later, Shakespeare would again use a priest to rescue another of his heroines from a difficult situation, when Friar Francis in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) suggests Hero fake her death and then resurrect herself when her

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[362] Tanya Pollard, '"A Thing Like Death": Sleeping Potions and Poisons in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*', *Renaissance Drama*, 32 (2003), 95-121 (p. 104-5) < http://www.jstor.org/stable/41917377> [accessed 9 January 2017].

[363] Dominick Grace has extensively explored whether the actor playing Friar Lawrence could double for the Apothecary, complicating the idea that the Friar could ever save Juliet. See Dominick Grace, 'Romeo and the Apothecary', *Early Theatre*, 1 (1998), pp. 27-38.

[364] For an in-depth discussion of the complex meeting of Galenic and Paracelsan medicine and Neoplatonic thought within the play, see Lynette Hunter, 'Cankers in *Romeo and Juliet*: Sixteenth Century Medicine at a Figural/Literal Cusp', in *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*', ed. Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 171-185.

wounded honour is restored. Hero's false death involves no mysticism, magic, or medicine, only the power of storytelling and the Friar's quick thinking.

In comparison to Friar Francis, however, Friar Laurence is a poor rescuer. He is too slow to stop Romeo from killing Paris and then committing suicide, but too hasty in leaving the tomb to prevent Juliet from killing herself. As a priest he lacks the necessary chivalric qualities of those who attempt to wake the sleeping corpse in medieval romances; he is not a lover able to wake the sleeping beloved with a kiss and lacks the bold courage necessary of a knight, acknowledging that he ran away because 'a noise did scare me from the tomb' (5.3.261). Likewise, though we have seen in Chapter One that divine intervention can act to resurrect or wake the sleeper, Friar Laurence offers no prayers, seemingly content to acknowledge that 'A greater power than we can contradict / Hath thwarted our intents' (5.3.153-155), a statement that contradicts Susan Snyder's assertion that 'There is no villain, only chance and bad timing' by suggesting that the villain is fate and the 'work of Heaven' (5.3.260).[365] The Friar's one constructive act in the tomb is his decision to send Juliet to a nunnery (5.3.156-57), though this thought is less about protecting Juliet than removing her from the situation and thus covering up his own involvement in the affair. Friar Laurence may be a holy man, but all he can do is retell the story (5.3.228-268) rather than try to rewrite its unhappy ending through any kind of religious intercession.

As Ramie Targoff has extensively explored, in contrast to all of Shakespeare's sources, he offers no mention of a heavenly reunion for Romeo and Juliet in the afterlife. Instead, the play contains their love to the material world and their relationship strictly to the confines of the Capulet tomb. As Targoff notes, '*Romeo and Juliet* becomes, in the end, Shakespeare's greatest expression of carpe diem'.[366] In the refusal to acknowledge any post-

[365] Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1979), p. 66.
[366] Ramie Targoff, *Posthumous Love: Eros and the Afterlife in Renaissance England* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 128.

death reunion for the two lovers, both the tragic nature of the play and the frenetic pace of the relationship at its heart are underscored. In removing any religious aspect from the play Shakespeare, in the words of William C. Carroll, 'emphasize[s] loss rather than redemption', an effect underscored by the play's final actions taking place in the tomb itself and by the multiple bodies present on the stage.[367] Additionally, the unsettling, macabre aspects of the play are emphasised, with the Friar describing the tomb as a 'nest / Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep' (5.3.151-152) and the watchmen noting the discrepancy between what has been buried and what is now 'bleeding, warm, and newly dead / Who here hath lain this two days buried' (5.3.174-175). Michael Boyd's RSC production of *Romeo and Juliet* (2000), which populated the stage with the ghosts of the dead, including a spectral Mercutio involved in giving the poison to Romeo, and Romeo and Juliet reappearing as ghosts to walk off together through the audience, seems therefore somewhat to miss the point. In his review of the production Alan Desson comments that the appearance of the ghosts throughout gives 'The suggestion […] of a union in afterlife if not on earth watched over by a Mercutio and Tybalt who were no longer enemies', softening the ending by creating a happy post-script antithetical to the play's actual presentation of life and death.[368] Hugh Grady argues that 'death in Shakespeare's plays is primarily secular. It is in fact transformed by the artwork in which it was represented into an aesthetic rather than a religious experience' and whilst I would disagree with this statement in respect to Shakespeare's later works, in regard to *Romeo and Juliet* the absence of any kind of religious comfort, and its replacement with 'the sight of death' (5.3.205) without its resurrective aspects for both Montagues, Capulets, and the audience certainly seems to ring true.[369]

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[367] William C. Carroll, ''We Were Born to Die': *Romeo and Juliet*', *Comparative Drama*, 15.1 (1981), 54-71, (p. 65) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41152929> [accessed 20 April 2021].
[368] Alan Dessen, *Rescripting Shakespeare: The Text, the Director, and Modern Productions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 118. Cambridge Core ebook.
[369] Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 195.

A decade later in his final plays Shakespeare offers a very different vision of the power and potential of the sleeping corpse. Whilst still being liminal sites of uncertainty in terms of their living or dead status, the sleeping corpses that appear in *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale* are dynamic, regenerative figures in lush, pastoral landscapes, who return to continue and legitimise legacies, heal fractured families, and signify a past which has been partially recuperated and a future which, whilst unknown, suggests the potential for a happy ending. The women who revive and return to their families are, however, not completely restored to their former selves, being permanently marked by both their experiences with death and the passage of time. They are women who sustain echoes of the losses they have suffered even as they rejoice in their revivification and reunion with their loved ones. In this way, the women signify their own selves, but also have what Sophie Duncan terms 'archival resonance' in that they gesture towards the past in a number of ways 'beyond the obvious function of the stage corpse as a memento mori'.[370] Shakespeare's final plays deliberately invoke that past, refashioning, retelling, and reuniting an old, familiar story with his audience. The reimagined medieval past that Shakespeare presents on stage is as much an absent presence as the dead who return in his plays, whether conjured spirit-like like Gower, or made of more solid flesh like Hermione, Innogen, and Thaisa. At the same time though, there is an undercurrent of anxiety about what may, or may not be, salvaged from the past and beneath the joyous endings, a troubled presence, which, as Gordon McMullan and David Matthews note, makes 'gestures towards the sense of rupture'.[371] In these final plays, sleeping corpses may reclaim place, position, and family, but they do not return unchanged.

Critics have ascribed this shift in attitude to a variety of causes. Ian McAdam sees the later plays as a reaction to Shakespeare's own changing family circumstances and thus

[370] Sophie Duncan, *Shakespeare's Props: Memory and Cognition* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 160.
[371] *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, ed. Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 2.

'Shakespeare's replacement of an orthodox theological vision with a philosophical viewpoint that elevates the artistic imagination – and its acceptance of natural processes – to a socially and psychologically redemptive role'.[372] Helen Cooper views Shakespeare's return to the medieval as a movement 'away from the humanist, with all its rules and restrictions, and towards the greater freedoms offered by the medieval: towards making the theatre a world in miniature', whilst Bart Van Es identifies this moment as Shakespeare's response to the publication of *Don Quixote* (1605) and audience appetite for the past, so that 'Shakespeare's late plays (which are often characterized as removed, dreamy and symbolically religious) become extremely modish'. [373] Why Shakespeare returns to the medieval past is, however, less important than how this return functions or fails within the world of the plays, and how this use influences the sleeping corpse motif.

Resurrecting Narratives and Narrators in *Pericles* (1608)

Pericles is a narrative that was both extremely familiar to its early modern audience and very popular. Based on Laurence Twine's *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* (1576), Book Eight of Gower's *Confessio Amantis,* and written in collaboration with George Wilkins, who would later publish a prose version of the play in the same year, the play was reprinted six times between 1609-1635, and was the first of Shakespeare's plays to be staged after the Restoration.[374] It was so familiar that Ben Jonson would famously call it a 'mouldy tale', and

[372] Ian McAdam, 'Magic and Gender in Late Shakespeare', *Late Shakespeare:1608-1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 243-261, (p. 244). Cambridge Core ebook.
[373] Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, p. 3. Bart Van Es, 'Late Shakespeare and the Middle Ages', in *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents*, ed. Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 37-52, (p. 48). Cambridge Core ebook.
[374] Whilst there has been much debate over the authorship of the play and its relative merits, most critics now agree that Wilkins was co-author of the play. For a comprehensive study of the evidence see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Sarah Beckwith notes that Shakespeare had used Gower's Apollonius of Tyre story before as a source for *The Comedy of Errors* so he would have been very familiar with the text. See Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and The Grammar of Forgiveness* (London: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 94. De Gruyter ebook. For more on the reception of *Pericles* at the time and subsequent later productions see Eugene Giddons, '*Pericles*: the afterlife', in *The Cambridge Companion to*

with its recycled narrative, and multiple resurrections and returns within the play, it is mouldy in more ways than one.[375] Indeed. as T.G. Bishop remarks, 'In *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre,* Shakespeare deliberately set out to resuscitate a dramatic style some twenty years out of date, and thereby made transmission and revival the central concerns of the play'.[376] Within so much recycling there is, however, one obvious change — the renaming of the eponymous hero from Apollonius to Pericles, which Walter Cohen suggests is a nod to Sidney's Arcadian Pyrocles, though there is no real evidence to support any theory as to why the change was made.[377]

Pericles is not only a play where the narrative is revived. Shakespeare goes one step further and has the poet Gower appear on stage in a narratorial function.[378] Gower offers no threat; he is a spectre conjured to act as Chorus rather than critic and his eight moralising monologues are often accompanied by dumb show to explicate the tale. [379] In explicitly acknowledging the medieval heritage of his work and ventriloquising one of the most important writers of the fourteenth century in order to do so, Shakespeare emphasises the blurring between medieval and early modern literature and culture, whilst also deploying one of his favourite conventions: depicting liminal bodies on stage. Told by a ghost with a reconstituted body called up from the 'ashes', and opening with a line of decapitated princely

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Shakespeare's Last Plays', ed. Catherine M.S Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 173-184. Cambridge Core ebook.

[375] Ben Jonson, 'Ode To Himself', in *The Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Verse*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson and J. Bullough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934) pp. 179-180.

[376] T. G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 93. Cambridge Core ebook.

[377] Walter Cohen, p. 2724.

[378] Jenny Sager notes that the resurrection of storytellers also occurs in Robert Greene's *James IV* (c.1590) and Robert Armin's *The Valiant Welshman* (c. 1615), though these revivifications are far more theatrical, accompanied by music and dancing. See Jenny Sager, 'When dead ones are revived': The Aesthetics of Spectacle in Robert Greene's *James IV* (c. 1590)', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 16.2 (2012), para. 18 <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/when-dead-ones-are-revived-aesthetics-spectacle/docview/1418415627/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 10 June 2021].

[379] Shakespeare would later invoke the spirit of Gower's contemporary, Chaucer, in the prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), imagining the poet waking in his grave to complain about the abuse to his artistic legacy should the play be only a poor reworking of its more impressive literary predecessor, *The Knight's Tale.* Chaucer never actually materialises to make an onstage appearance.

heads bearing gruesome witness and warning should Pericles fail the riddle set him, the play seems macabre.[380] Yet Gower soothes away this disquiet with his prescription that the story itself acts as a kind of medicine, 'And lords and ladies in their lives / Have read it for restoratives' (Prologue, l. 7-8). Critics have read this emphasis on restoration in a variety of ways. Romack views *Pericles* as being a specific 'romantic restorative to Lear', whilst Jonathon Baldo regards the play as speaking to much larger ideas of 'a restoration of England to its medieval self'.[381] Reacting both to Shakespeare's own work and more broadly to medieval textual continuities and communities, the play may remind the audience through the use of the word 'restorative' of the restorative kiss Juliet seeks from her dead husband, and the dual aspect of restoring something or someone to life, whilst simultaneously being reunited with the dead, the lost, and the past. As a restorative *Pericles* is old, reliable folk medicine, mould remade into a powerful drug. As Kurt Schreyer argues, 'To be moldy, however, is not simply to be "stale"; it carries the possibility of being both old-fashioned and innovative […] a locus of death and birth, mold leavens the authority of the past with the promise of the future'.[382]

At the heart of the play are the presentation of death and a consideration of the way resurrected bodies might return. Death in the play may be presented as false like Marina's, or metaphorical like Pericles', and bodies may return as spirits as Gower does, or as true resurrections of the sleeping corpse like Thaisa. Each death in the play, regardless of type, contains echoes of the other deaths presented. This is most obvious in the way curtains are used to reveal and frame Thaisa's seemingly dead body (Scene 11), Marina's memorial

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[380] William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), Prologue, l. 2 All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.
[381] Romack, p. 94. Beckwith also agrees that '*Pericles* is a rewriting of *King Lear*', p. 88. Jonathon Baldo, 'Recovering Medieval Memory in Shakespeare's *Pericles', South Atlantic Review,* 79.3-4 (2014), 171-189 (p. 171) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/soutatlarevi.79.3-4.171> [accessed 30 April 2021].
[382] Kurt A. Schreyer, 'Moldy Pericles', *Exemplaria*, 29.3 (2017) 210-233 (p. 214) <DOI: 10.1080/10412573.2017.1346394>.

monument (Scene 18), and the semi-comatose Pericles, who is sunk in the depths of despair (Scene 21). In each 'discovery' of a body or where one should lie, the play also reveals an overarching journey that processes from life, through death and memorialisation, to an almost inevitable return of the dead to the living.

Pericles experiences the play's first type of resurrection when in Scene Five he staggers to shore after suffering a shipwreck, leaving the 'wat'ry grave' (5.50) of the sea. Pericles is helped by fishermen in a moment reminiscent of the shepherds helping Musidorus out of the sea from *Arcadia*. The next instance of resurrection in the text is also associated with pulling bodies from the water.[383] Thaisa, now the name of Pericles' wife and not his daughter, is presumed to have died in childbirth and 'must overboard' (11.47) at the request of the sailors in order to stop the storm currently raging around them, a scene that elicits parallels with the sailor's confrontation with Eliduc. Pericles is left with 'this piece / Of your dead queen' (11.17-18) in the form of his new-born daughter Marina, who as Duncan remarks 'offers an archive and memorialisation of her mother'.[384] Baldo sees Thaisa being thrown 'scarcely coffined, in the ooze' (11.59) 'without monument, inscription, or consecrated space, [as] represent[ing] an extreme form of the threat of oblivion that hovered over all the dead in post-Reformation England', yet Thaisa carries her own 'passport' (11.64): her coffin is effectively labelled with her position, lineage, and worth, indicating that where spoken language may fail, written memorialisation will always be able to breach the gap between the living and the dead. The problems explored in *St. Erkenwald* are thus avoided.[385] Even should this narrative fail, Marina, as a 'piece' of her mother, acts as a living

[383] This moment also resonates with the opening shipwreck of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601) that causes Viola and Sebastian to believe each other dead, and in *The Tempest* (1610) when the early shipwreck in that play leads Alonso to believe his son is dead and vice versa.
[384] Duncan, p. 161.
[385] Baldo, p. 175.

memorial to her, and in being able to tell her own story and that of her parents effects first a dialogue and then later a reunion between the living and the dead.

Thaisa's resurrection is couched in the language of sainthood and miracle, with Pericles explicitly naming it as such when they are reunited (22.81); her coffin smells 'Most sweetly' (12.59) like that of a saint. Her seemingly miraculous revival from a sleeping corpse is, however, contrasted with and due to the entirely practical application of medicinal heat, stimulation, and music by Cerimon as in the earlier sources.[386] Though things are repeatedly framed as 'strange' (12.62 and 12.104), and as a 'wonder' (12.94), Cerimon himself interrupts all speculation concerning the miraculous nature of what has occurred by pointing out the practicalities of his art — he has a delicate patient to look after, who is in danger of a fatal relapse. Cerimon succeeds where Romeo fails in correctly identifying signs of life in what at first glance appears to be a corpse, pointing out 'how fresh she looks. They were too rash / That threw her in the sea' (12.77). Thaisa's coffin, which is remarked upon as being tightly 'caulked and bitumed' (12.58), therefore acts as a kind of stasis chamber. Kaara Peterson in her discussion of the medical context of the plays labels the late romances as being about 'displaced wombs and refrigerated hysterics', and the construct of a refrigerator is apt here as Thaisa must be warmed up from being a 'block' (12.88).[387] It is a more appropriate description than Bishop's metaphor of a 'rich and strange chrysalis', with its implications of change and transformation, when the coffin does not change Thaisa, but preserves her as a remnant and relic of the past.[388]

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[386] This music which wakes Thaisa is placed in Scene 21 by the heavenly music which sends Pericles into a divinely arranged slumber, suggesting that the waking of sleeping corpses is up to the intervention of man, but that the play still functions within the overall jurisdiction of divine providence. Reuniting with those thought dead is entirely reliant on the grace of the gods.

[387] Kaara L. Peterson, 'Shakespearean revivifications: Early modern undead', *Shakespeare Studies,* 32 (2004), 240-266 (p. 263) <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/shakespearean-revivifications-early-modern-undead/docview/222333822/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 27 June 2020].

[388] Bishop, p. 106.

Thaisa seemingly experiences a second death in the final reunion of the play. On hearing Pericles recount his story at the Ephesian temple, Thaisa falls down in shock, an action her husband interprets as her death (22.35). In Cerimon's retelling of the tale to Pericles she is once more revived and recovered narratively by the doctor as well as physically when she wakes, with Pericles further complicating the language of death and resurrection by asking his wife to 'come, be buried / A second time within these arms' (22.65-66). In Pericles' heartfelt request, he evokes the language and lifecycle of their marriage: the sexual euphemism of death in bed, a union in death that evokes the effigies of couples on transi tombs, and an eternal union in the afterlife. Pericles' subsequent appeal to Cerimon to 'deliver / How this dead queen re-lives?' (22.86-87) allows for a symbolic rewriting of Thaisa's earlier disastrous birthing scene, one which ends in new life rather than death and which echoes earlier *Sleeping Beauty* narratives where birth rescues the sleeping corpse, rather than condemns them.

The child of this first death, Marina, who 'wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus, / And found at sea again!' (21.183-184) has her own resurrective and corrective powers of storytelling. A second Saint Agnes, she preaches 'divinity' (19.4) in the brothel to safeguard her virginity, but her oratorical skills are at their height in her ability to recover her father from his depression and give him his own second kind of resurrection. When he is revealed in Scene 21, Pericles is a replica of Endymion, the stage directions indicating that he is 'lying upon a couch with a long overgrown beard, diffused hair, undecent nails on his fingers, and attired in sack-cloth'. Lysimachus asks Marina to use 'sacred physic' on Pericles (21.63), and in retelling her origins she gives 'another life / To Pericles' (21.194-195) through the power of her narrative and his recognition of her as his daughter. Marina is a figurative Cerimon, and though there is no suggestion that she has either magical or medical abilities, save in her ability to speak truth, the wonder of the moment leads Pericles to ask whether he has slipped

into a fairy tale: ‘But are you flesh and blood? / Have you a working pulse and are no fairy?’ (21.140-141). Certainly, it is difficult for him to tell the difference between dream and reality. His remark that ‘This is the rarest dream / That e’er dulled sleep did mock sad fools withal / This cannot be my daughter, buried’ (21.148-150) emphasises the slippage between the states of living, sleeping, and dying. Pericles’ uncertainty as to whether he still sleeps precedes a further moment of enchanted sleep. In order to receive divine visitation from Diana, heavenly music only he can hear sends him to sleep (21.209-220). This supernatural intervention to enable the final reunion between sleeping corpse and family serves to underscore that the events of the play have been divinely orchestrated, but also that in this world, divine design and human intervention are inextricably intertwined. Cerimon’s medical gifts are not overshadowed by Diana’s appearance or stage managing.[389] Instead, Cerimon is seen as ‘the man / Through whom the gods have shown their pow’r’ (22.82-3), as near a god, in being an excellent medic, as a man can be. Gower may have come to ‘sing a song that old was sung’ (1.1), but *Pericles* suggests that this song contains both the notes of ‘heav’nly music’ (21.18) and a physician’s ‘still and woeful music’ (13.86) in order to reach a happy ending and hear the voices of the supposed dead (22.55).

Within this happy ending, however, there is an undercurrent of loss, firstly in the fourteen years of Marina’s childhood that Thaisa has unwittingly missed, and then in the anticipated loss of her daughter a second time through her marriage and reign in Tyrus, whilst Pericles and Thaisa rule in Pentapolis. As R.S.White argues, despite the reunions, ‘each individual has been brought into living relationship again with his or her own past, and that in a strangely haunting way this leaves each still in some sense alone, and separate […] A space

[389] It is likely that it is Diana who, unseen, urges Marina to not give up on Pericles and ‘Stay till he speak’ (21.84). This intervention by the goddess was made explicit in the Folger Theatre production of *Pericles* (2015), where Diana appeared on stage and spoke the line with her hand outstretched to prevent Marina leaving.

for solitude still surrounds each character, even in community'.[390] Thaisa's final lines, which inform her husband of her father's death, suggest that even as parts of the past are recovered, other things are lost, and that in meetings there are partings, a theme which is embodied in the final reappearance of the ghostly Gower to conclude the play.[391] The play does not dwell on these absences and separations and moves even more briskly over the six lines which recount the murder of Cleon and his wife by their enraged citizens for their attempted murder of Marina. Such brevity only highlights the slightly mixed note that the play ends on rather than disguising it and whilst it can be argued that Cleon and Dionyza's grisly demise is justified by the wickedness of their actions, it is difficult to deny that the play concludes with an awkward shift from the narrative spectacle of their death to Gower wishing the audience 'joy' (22.125).

Staging a Bloody Fairy Tale: A Multiplicity of (Sleeping) Corpses in *Cymbeline* (c. 1610)

If *Pericles* is a restorative to *King Lear*, *Cymbeline* rewrites *Othello*. Both plays consider the consequences of a woman who marries a man her father disapproves of, a man who then orchestrates her murder as retribution for her perceived infidelity. Unlike *Othello*, Posthumous will regret the death of his wife before he discovers she is innocent, and Innogen is able to wake from her seeming death to absolve all wrongdoing and be reunited with both husband and father by the play's end. *Cymbeline's* presentation of such a determinedly happy ending, however, glosses over the lack of restorative justice that Innogen experiences and her own transformation from forthright heir apparent to obedient wife and daughter.[392]

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[390] R.S.White, *Let Wonder Seem Familiar: Endings in Shakespeare's Romance Vision* (London: Athlone Press, 1985), p. 126.

[391] The strongest evocation of this idea occurs in the conversation between the Old Shepherd and the Clown in *The Winter's Tale:* 'Thou metst with things dying, I with things new-born'. See William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale, The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 3.3.104-05. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.

[392] This ending would later annoy George Bernard Shaw so much that he would rewrite it in order for Innogen more forcefully to voice her displeasure at the attempted mariticide. See J.K.Barrett, 'The Crowd in Imogen's

Primarily constructed from an episode in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587) and Tale 2.9 of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, *Cymbeline* is Shakespeare's most obvious experiment with folkloric motifs and with the *Sleeping Beauty* / *Snow White* story. The play contains an evil queen, missing princes, a princess in disguise, an enchanted sleep, and a chastity wager, though many of these themes are playfully interrogated or subverted through the course of the production. Innogen's stepmother strongly protests that 'you shall not find me, daughter, / After the slander of most step-mothers, / Evil-eyed into you', acknowledging and rejecting her characterisation as a stereotype within a fairy tale narrative even as she actively works to play the part.[393] Innogen, the Sleeping Beauty of the play, falls into an enchanted sleep, though the needle which should prick her is reworked metaphorically, imagined as an instrument that she can use to measure the distance between her and her beloved Posthumous (1.3.19) and as a weapon to punish her wicked and cowardly step-brother Cloten if he were to fight her husband: 'I would they were in Afric both together, / Myself by with a needle, that I might prick / The goer-back' (1.1.167-9). The image is a reminder of the association of spindles and needles with women's domesticity, but also their potential for unruly and violent behaviour.

The play's most obvious parallels with *Sleeping Beauty* and more directly with *Perceforest* are found in Act Two, where the voyeurism of the villain Giacomo in the chamber of the sleeping Innogen parallels the voyeurism of Troylus in Zellandine's room and that of the other male figures watching sleeping women examined in Chapter Two. Giacomo's method of entry into the bedroom is immediately a violation of both the sacred female space and the King's explicit command for his daughter to be safeguarded alone

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Bedroom: Allusion and Ethics in *Cymbeline*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 66.4 (Winter 2015), 440-462 (p. 440, p. 460) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24778639> [accessed 08 May 2021].

[393] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 1.1.71-73. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.

within her room for her refusal to stay away from her husband (1.1.53-54), much as Zelland locks up his child to keep her away from unworthy men. Consequently, the prescribed social rules regulating Innogen's prized chastity are doubly negated in Giacomo's secret penetration of her private chamber without permission via the trunk — a hiding space within an already closeted area and a subversive echo of the body in the chest in the Hungarian Princess' bedroom in *The Squire of Lowe Degree*. Innogen's reading has, however, already foreshadowed this moment; before retiring to sleep she has spent three hours reading Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and stopped at the rape of Philomel, turning the leaf down 'Where Philomel gave up' (2.2.46). In turn, Giacomo also spends three hours, from midnight until three o'clock in the morning, taking notes on his surroundings; as audience members and readers we share uncomfortably in his prolonged act of voyeurism, a mimicry of Innogen's own voyeurism of Philomel as reader of her story.[394] Giacomo leaves Innogen's sleeping body physically alone, but his unwelcome insertion into her private space acts as a metaphoric rape, or at the very least an uncomfortably sexualised experience, one which Evelyn Gajowski argues 'points the way to the sexualized theatrical spectacles that are contemporaneous with it and which follow it — *The White Devil*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Broken Heart*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*'.[395] Simultaneously, it also gestures back to earlier *Sleeping Beauty* tales where rape is constructed as a narrative necessity. In fashioning his story of sexual conquest over Innogen to Posthumous, Giacomo becomes a teller of tales like Boccaccio or Basile, where the conquest of a beautiful sleeping woman is told to a titillated audience. Thus, within the fairy tale structure of the play are the seeds of another fairy tale,

[394] Many critics have written extensive analyses of the description of the Innogen's room and the classical allusions at play, as well as the close relationship between Innogen and the textiles that deck her bedroom. In particular, see Rebecca Olson, 'Before the Arras: Textile Description and Innogen's Translation in *Cymbeline*', *Modern Philology*, 108.1 (August 2010), pp. 45-64 and Georgianna Ziegler, 'My lady's chamber: Female space, female chastity in Shakespeare', *Textual Practice*, 4.1 (1990), pp. 73-90.

[395] Evelyn Gajowski, ''Sleeping Beauty, or 'What's the matter?': Female Sexual Autonomy, Voyeurism, and Misogyny in *Cymbeline*,' in *Revisions of Shakespeare: Essays in Honor of Robert Ornstein*, ed. Evelyn Gajowski (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 89-107, (p. 104).

rather as *Hamlet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contain plays-within-plays. Further parallels between this moment in *Cymbeline* and *Perceforest* first include the reading of bodies as beds as Zellandine's aunt identifies the rumpled bedding as an indicator that her niece is no longer a virgin, whilst Giacomo notes that Innogen is a 'Fresh lily, / And whiter than the sheets!' (2.2.15-16), her chaste behaviour transforming her into part of the bedding. A second parallel is found in the metaphorical consumption of the sleeping female form though sex: Zellandine is rendered as fruit to be plucked, whilst Posthumus demands that Giacomo 'make't apparent / That you have tasted her in bed' (2.4.56-57). A final parallel is the exchange in recognition of a consummated act of rings which later reveal the truth and restore the lovers to each other, though in *Cymbeline* it is the seducer rather than the sleeping corpse who gains the ring.

Lawrence Green argues that 'Bedchambers in Shakespeare—particularly ladies' chambers— almost always operate as proxy grave chambers and their occupants as emblematic monumental effigies'.[396] It is unsurprising then that Giacomo imagines Innogen as a corpse, wishing that 'sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her, / And be her sense but as a monument / Thus in a chapel lying' (2.2.31-33). The words anticipate her later sleeping corpse state and render her in hagiographical terms: 'Tis her breathing that / Perfumes the chamber thus' (2.2.18-19). In transforming Innogen into a saint, Giacomo sanctifies the space he is defiling, transfiguring himself into the 'Italian fiend' (5.6.210) and 'sacrilegious thief' (5.6.220) that Posthumous later names him as.

Innogen's beatific state as a 'blessèd thing' (4.2.207) is one of the first things noted about her when she is subsequently taken for dead in Act Four by Guiderius and her brothers. Having taken what she thinks is a drug that will soothe her melancholic spirits, Innogen

[396] Lawrence Green, '"And do not say 'tis superstition": Shakespeare, Memory, and the Iconography of Death', *Comparative Drama*, 50.2/3 (Summer & Fall 2016), 249-270 (p. 258) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26312026> [accessed 12 May 2021].

instead falls into an enchanted sleep, one that makes 'a show of death' (1.5.40), much like Juliet's. Created by the court doctor, Cornelius, and secretly substituted for the 'Strange lingering poisons' (1.5.34) that the Queen had wished for, the potion acts to 'stupefy and dull the sense awhile' (1.5.37), turning Innogen stiff as though rigor mortis had already set in.[397] The audience sees Innogen's sleeping corpse and knows that she is really alive, though there is a short moment within the scene where her death, unseen, is narrated to Guiderius and consequently to the audience by Arviragus, who describes her sleeping with her 'right cheek / Reposing on a cushion' (4.2.212-213). Unlike in *Pericles*, where the apparent deaths of Thaisa, Pericles, and Marina are staged to mirror each other, here Innogen's death is constantly being discovered, described, or replayed by the characters throughout the play and even within the same scene, as if she is a matryoshka doll of death. Even the language repeats, so that no sooner has Arviragus relayed the fact he thought Innogen was sleeping, but Guiderius concurs, remarking 'Why, he but sleeps. / If he be gone he'll make his grave a bed. / With female fairies will his tomb be haunted' (4.2.216-218), lines that echo the images of the fairies who guard the sleeping Endymion and the nymphs who bedeck the catatonic Endimion. When the Roman Lucius discovers Innogen later in the same scene, he will also question whether she is 'dead or sleeping' (4.2.358) and Cloten's body as a 'bloody pillow' (4.2.365) will replace the one upon which she was earlier found reposing. Innogen's unconscious rest on the body of the headless Cloten, whom she believes to be Posthumous, fits neatly into hagiographic tropes and echoes the rest of Saint Macarius. As a pagan Roman, however, Lucius rejects this tableau, arguing that 'nature doth abhor to make his bed / With the defunct, or sleep upon the dead' (4.2.359-360). The scene is undeniably macabre. Her face smeared in Cloten's blood, his bleeding, decapitated corpse beside her, Innogen

[397] Again, the potion is unidentified, and the audience is left to imaginatively substitute whatever they think most likely as to its contents. Innogen makes no comment on its taste, smell, or appearance, though it acts slowly enough that after taking it she is able to have a conversation with her companions before exiting the scene.

deliberately undoes her beauty with her choice of ghoulish cosmetics. Replacing the flowers which her brothers had strewn over her with more bloody matter, Innogen's decision to 'Give colour to my pale cheek with thy blood, / That we the horrider may seem to those / Which chance to find us!' (4.2.332-334) invokes 'Et in Arcadia ego, with a vengeance!' as Michael Taylor remarks.[398] It also neatly emphasises the odd, uncomfortable moments sprinkled through the final reunion scene, where Guiderius recognises Innogen as that 'same dead thing alive' (5.6.123). He later repeats that 'we see him dead' (5.6.126) which the editors gloss as 'saw', though the present tense unwittingly works to present Innogen as a proto-zombie, something returned from the grave though, horrifically, still dead. This rendering of Innogen as simultaneously dead and yet present with the living and able to interact with them does not stray too far out of the realms of the play's theology, which also sees Posthumous' family return from the grave as ghosts to visit him in Act Five, with his brothers still bearing the bloody injuries they acquired as soldiers.

Innogen enacts one final death in this concluding scene. When she is violently assaulted by her husband who still remains ignorant as to her identity, the stage directions indicate that she is shoved away and falls down. Pisanio's fretful command for her to 'Wake' (5.6.233) however, suggests that Posthumous actually knocks her unconscious and that it takes a little time for her to rouse once again, a reading supported by Pisanio's rebuke that Posthumous 'ne'er killed Innogen till now' (5.6.231). The assault also more violently mimics a similar moment between Pericles and Marina where he pushes her away from him before she also reveals her identity (*Pericles*, 21) and recalls Paulina's warning to Leontes not to refuse the newly awakened Hermione because 'then / You kill her double' (5.3.106-107).

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[398] Michael Taylor, 'The Pastoral Reckoning in *Cymbeline*' in *Shakespeare Survey Volume 36: Shakespeare in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 97-106 (p. 97). Cambridge Core ebook.

Innogen's revelation of her own identity precedes the return of her brothers from their own exile and seeming deaths. Reunited with Cymbeline, the king ruefully acknowledges that Innogen 'hast lost by this a kingdom' (5.6.174). Innogen's easy acceptance of her royal demotion in the face of her elder siblings' return is magnanimous and implies the unimportance of the crown by contrast to the value of her regained family. Her decision also seemingly works against the established motif in medieval romance, whereby the sleeping corpse functions as a figure who continues chivalric lineages and gives birth to new heirs to the throne. Instead, even as Innogen returns, she is displaced from her original world and role as future queen and mother. This dislocation seems to be the only logical choice in a play which kills off all of its maternal figures, including the two wives of Cymbeline, the wife of Guiderius, and Posthumous' mother, whose first words as a ghost are a description of her death in childbirth. Even the evil Queen, who claims as a pupil of Cornelius that she can 'distil, preserve' (1.5.13) and make a cordial which 'hath the king / Five times redeem'd from death' (1.5.62-63), is unable to save herself from the narrative machinations of a fairy tale plot which requires her death. There is no evidence other than her self-professed claim that she is really able to do this and given her interest in poisons this seems unlikely. Her implausible off-stage demise and confession, however, seem more like convenience than rational outcome. R.S. White views the Queen as 'virtually a straight lift from the character of Cecropia'.[399] Like her forebear, she must die to clear the way for a happy ending to remove her bloodline from its close and threatening proximity to the heroine.

Innogen does, however, symbolically fulfil her role as a maternal sleeping corpse. In returning her brothers, the heirs of the kingdom, to the throne she re-establishes and restores Cymbeline's broken family line, just as Marina 'begets' her father and restores her own lineage (*Pericles,* 21.182) Although Posthumous is not of noble blood, the play circumvents

[399] White, p. 139.

any question about the suitability of Innogen's own offspring for the crown by making her a proxy-maternal figure for her brothers, even as she erases her own place in line for the throne. Once more the sleeping corpse motif inextricably intertwines loss with regeneration.

Exit, Pursued by a Sleeping Corpse: The Problem of Hermione's Return in *The Winter's Tale* (1609-11)

The final moment of resurrection considered in this chapter is Hermione's return in *The Winter's Tale.* In rewriting Robert Greene's popular prose romance *Pandosto* (1588), Shakespeare deliberately subverts the ending of his source material to redeem his characters from death, and in the process writing an end so baffling that it has provoked endless critical debate about his religious beliefs, the role of the theatre, and the return of the dead on the early modern stage.[400] It is a play which presents the appearance of a happy ending in the resurrection of Hermione, but which only partially masks the absence of those who do not return, depicting a queen who is reunited with her family, but not fully restored to her former state.

In the final scene of Act Five, Leontes, his daughter Perdita, and the members of his court come to the home of Paulina to inspect the newly completed statue of Leontes' late wife. The sculpture is a truly amazing piece of artistry, capturing Hermione's 'dead likeness' (5.3.15) to such a degree that Paulina warns them they should 'Prepare / To see the life as lively mocked as ever / Still sleep mocked death' (5.4.18-20). Here then finally is the statue of Juliet that as an audience we never see, and in the pulling aside of the curtain to reveal a still female figure are echoes of Innogen, Marina, Thaisa, and centuries of past sleeping beauties. Unlike these other static beauties, however, Hermione is noticeably flawed. Leontes

[400] Lori Humphrey Newcomb has discovered *Pandosto* went through twenty-one editions during the seventeenth century, a good indicator of its enduring popularity. See Lori Humphrey Newcomb, ''Social things': the production of popular culture in the reception of Robert Greene's *Pandosto*', *ELH*, 61.4 (December 1994), 753-781, (p. 756) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2873357> [accessed 15 May 2021].

points out that the statue shows an older, more time-worn woman, complaining that 'Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems' (5.3.28-29). Paulina's rebuke that the statue marks the passing of sixteen years which Hermione saw is 'piercing' (5.3.34) to the soul of Leontes, her words (and now the image of his dead wife) pricking his conscience as they have done continually for over a decade in order to create within him a suitable level of contrition. Paulina could be compared to Marina, preaching divinity to wayward men in order to remind them of their moral obligations and ethical principles. Yet, Paulina casts herself less as Saint Agnes and more a vengeful spirit, specifically the ghost of Hermione, remarking to Leontes that 'Were I the ghost that walked / […] I'd shriek that even your ears / Should rift to hear me' (5.1.63-66). Leontes acknowledges that should he marry again, the new bride would cause the spirit of his past wife to 'Again possess her corpse, and on this stage, / Where we offenders mourn, appear soul-vexed' (5.1.58-59). The potential for Hermione to return simmers below the surface of these later scenes, the threat of the dead returning to haunt the living ever present, just as the characters are haunted by the consequences of their past actions. It is not just a haunting that is invoked though, but a possession — either of Paulina's body or of the rotting corpse of Hermione herself — which threatens to reappear before both Leontes and the audience on the 'stage' and even more significantly, not to speak, but to scream at her husband. The idea of this shrieking zombie Hermione is terrifying enough that Leontes admits he would murder his new wife (5.1.62) to rid himself of this vengeful corpse. The danger of the dead physically returning is again invoked when Paulina points out that the return of Leontes' lost child is 'all as monstrous to our human reason / As my Antigonus to break his grave / And come again to me' (5.1.41-43). The Oxford edition glosses monstrous as incredible, but this reading loses some of the horror of the line, which conjures the unnaturalness of the living dead with their grave stink and their potentially violent return in the image of Antigonus waking, not from a quiet sleep, but

from a grave which fails to contain him. In comparison to these noisy, rotting, restless dead, Hermione's slightly wrinkled statue is not the worst version of Leontes' wife that Paulina could have conjured on stage. Leontes' desire to kiss the statue certainly indicates that a few lines from age are not enough to cool his amorous response to seeing his wife again, though Paulina's warning that 'The ruddiness upon her lip is wet. You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own / With oily painting' (5.3.81-83) hints at Leontes' corrupting touch. The statue Hermione may look beautiful, but it is a fragile beauty that is easily damaged, and which threatens to damage in return by 'staining' Leontes with a kiss, a threat which is more explicitly realised by Jacobean dramatists and explored more fully in Chapter Five. Paulina's refusal to let Leontes' kiss, or Perdita touch, the statue returns our attention to her careful stage management of the scene.[401] Unlike in the other plays considered so far, the audience of *The Winter's Tale* have no prior knowledge that Hermione can be recovered from the dead and so are as surprised as Leontes when Paulina claims, 'If you can behold it, / I'll make the statue move indeed, descend, / And take you by the hand' (5.3. 87-89), and Hermione loses her stiff, statue form and descends to be reintegrated into her reformed family. At the heart of this transformative moment is the knotty problem of who or what returns, how this resurrection is achieved, and what we as an audience are supposed to believe about what we have just witnessed.

Paulina dismisses any idea that her transformation of Hermione from statue to living creature is witchcraft. She protests that she is not 'assisted by / Wicked powers' (5.3.90-91) and that her 'spell is lawful' (5.3.105). Her invocation for 'Music; awake her; strike!' (5.3.98)

[401] Andrea Stevens draws parallels between the dialogue in the York Cycle between the newly resurrected Christ and Mary Magdalene in the garden, and Paulina's command that Leontes and Perdita should not touch the drying paint of the Hermione statue. Stevens notes that 'Mary repeatedly commented on the wetness of Christ's wounds: 'Mi Lorde Jesu, I knowe nowe thee; / Thi woundes thai are nowe wette'; 'Thy woundes hath made thi body wete / With bloode that was thee withinne' (81, 112–13). By emphasising the 'liveness' of Christ's scars, Mary reinforces the teaching that Christ's sacrifice is ongoing. Here, the statue's wetness emphasises the urgent immediacy of the encounter – something is happening, and it is happening now'. See Andrea Ria Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 142. Cambridge Core ebook.

to stir Hermione recalls Cerimon's resurrection of Thaisa. Paulina has been characterised as a healer earlier in the play. When Leontes' irrational jealousy leaves him with a 'diseased opinion' (1.2.299) Paulina offers to 'come to bring him sleep…/ I do come with words as medicinal as true' (2.3.33-37), qualifying her help as coming from one who is Leontes' 'loyal servant, your physician' (2.3.54). Paulina is not Helena in that she has no actual medical skills to help the king, and Leontes dismissively calls her 'a mankind witch' (2.3.68), but in her ability to offer Leontes sleep and to awake Hermione she recalls not Dipsas but Cynthia.[402]

Paulina's instruction to Hermione that she should 'Be stone no more' (5.3.99) is accompanied by other imperatives to the resurrected Queen that direct her transformation, but her command to Leontes, the assembled courtiers, and the audience itself that 'It is required / You do awake your faith' (5.3.94-95) is the most important in the play, one which encapsulates the narrative crux which sharply divides critical responses. Critics such as Ruth Vanita, Darryll Grantley, Phebe Jensen, Karen Marsalek, and Sean Benson, to a greater or lesser extent, view Shakespeare as drawing on Christian iconography, with Vanita, Grantly, and Jensen categorising the play as specifically Catholic in nature.[403] Conversely, critics such as Julia Reinhard Lupton argue that *The Winter's Tale*, whilst containing fragments of pagan, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant imagery, is secular in nature and that 'The play performs, that is, an *iconography of idolatry*, a visual and critical analysis of the religious image in the

[402] Helena from *All's Well That Ends Well* (c. 1603-6) is not considered further in this chapter, because although she fakes her own death she is not a true sleeping corpse: her death is only reported and not seen on stage.
[403] Ruth Vanita,'Mariological Memory in *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry VIII*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 40.2 (Spring, 2000), pp. 311-337 <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1556131> [accessed 12/05/2021], Darryll Grantley, '*The Winter's Tale* and Early Religious Drama', *Comparative Drama*, 20.1 (Spring 1986), pp. 17-37 <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41153211> [1 August 2020], Phebe Jensen, *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Karen Sawyer Marsalek 'Awake your faith': English Resurrection Drama and *The Winter's Tale* in *'Bring Furth the Pagants'*, ed. David Klausner and Karen S. Marsalek (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), pp. 271-291. De Gruyter ebook, and Sean Benson, 'The Resurrection of the Dead in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest'*, *Renascence*, 61.1 (Fall 2008), pp. 3-24 <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rlh&AN=36412362&site=ehost-live> [accessed 22 April 2021].

secular world'.[404] Finally, there are those critics such as Grace Tiffany, William E. Engel, and Richard McCoy, who see the play as more concerned with theatrical spectacle and the wonder it can provoke, rather than religious marvel.[405] Engel sees Hermione's transformative moment from statue to living woman as 'not an expression of religious belief or a display of esoteric erudition, but rather a performance-oriented expedient that Shakespeare could count on to evoke a sense of awe'.[406] McCoy meanwhile views Paulina's demand to awaken faith as being about 'poetic faith, or the willing suspension of disbelief, rather than a religious belief in a divine power or sacred purpose'.[407] It is important to note, as Alison Shell does, that 'Shakespeare's dense religious allusiveness tells us less about his own convictions than about the culture he grew up in, and the references he expected his audience to notice'.[408] Likewise, David Bevington posits that Shakespeare avoids expressing any personal opinions on anything, least of all religion, and allows his characters to hold and express a variety of viewpoints on often controversial topics, none of which we should mistake for his own.[409] Similarly, rather than arguing that *The Winter's Tale* tells us anything about Shakespeare's own religious leanings, I would suggest that the play reads most effectively as one which traffics in the frightening and unnerving realities of death and resurrection and participates in centuries of resurrection narratives. To see Hermione's return as only what McCoy calls 'a psychological rather than divine miracle' is to ignore the wonder of the moment, but also

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[404] Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 177.
[405] Grace Tiffany, 'Shakespeare's Miracle Plays', *English Studies*, 93:1 (2012), pp. 1-13, <DOI: 10.1080/0013838X.2011.638455>, William E. Engel, '*The Winter's Tale*: Kinetic emblems and memory images in *The Winter's Tale*', in *Late Shakespeare:1608-1613*, ed. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 71-87. Cambridge Core ebook, and Richard McCoy, 'Awakening faith in *The Winter's Tale*', in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*, ed. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 214-230, Cambridge Core ebook.
[406] Engel, p. 72.
[407] McCoy, p. 227.
[408] Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 9.
[409] See David Bevington, 'The debate about Shakespeare and Religion', in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*, ed. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 23-39.

much of the horror that accompanies earlier references to the dead returning, whether as ghosts, living corpses, or resurrected people. To reduce this scene to the wonder of theatre concludes the play too neatly, simplifying the episode as a clever trick without any of the theological implications.

Such a reading also offers no explanation for one of the most alarming, but also most religious moments in the play, which the audiences only experience second-hand through Antigonus' explanation. Arriving on the shores of Bohemia, Antigonus describes to the baby Perdita his visitation the night before by Hermione's ghost:

> I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o'th'dead
> May walk again. If such thing be, thy mother
> Appeared to me last night, for ne'er was dream
> So like a waking. To me comes a creature,
> Sometimes her head on one side, some another.
> I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
> So filled and so becoming. In pure white robes
> Like very sanctity she did approach
> My cabin where I lay, thrice bowed before me,
> And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
> Became two spouts. The fury spent, anon
> Did this break from her
>
> (3.3.15-26)

As the audience never sees this ghostly Hermione, it could be argued that this vision is the result of Antigonus' fears playing on his mind, though the naming of the baby as Perdita

(3.3.32), and Hermione's prophesy that he will not see Paulina again (3.3.35), are harder to reconcile as purely the product of a guilty conscience or fearful mind.[410] Antigonus himself admits to being one of these sceptics, and his relation of the vision blurs the boundaries of what is real and what is only dreamt. The audience are equally uncertain as to what he has seen, a point Walter Lim makes when he asks 'Is Hermione a body or a dream, and therefore insubstantial? Is this the spirit of the dead queen or a "goblin damn'd"? From which doctrinal perspective is the audience meant to respond to the precise character and nature of this apparition — Catholic or Protestant?'[411] Antigonus' own description of the ghostly Hermione posits her as beautiful and saintly at the same time as being unsettling. She is presented as a creature, as Innogen is a thing, and her movements appear unnatural, with her vacillating head and her bowing motions. She is a waterlogged creature, a 'vessel of […] sorrow' (3.3.20), her eyes 'two spouts' (3.3.25) that produce a veritable fountain of tears. Even the noises she makes are unnatural. She struggles to speak, 'gasping' as she does so, the sounds perhaps imitating a death rattle, and she disappears 'with shrieks' (3.3.35). That shortly after relating this vision of the ghostly Hermione, Antigonus is chased off stage by a bear and killed, ties the haunting to Patrick Geary's theory of negative miracles.[412]

Antigonus' death also underscores the idea that no land is a paradise, not even Bohemia, which is largely characterised by pastoral idyll. The land may have fairies who tell the shepherds their fortunes (3.3.106-7), but it also contains monstrous beasts (3.3.11-12). Sidney's influence is felt most strongly in the pastoral scenes in Bohemia and in the other imagined

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[410] Some productions do make the ghost of Hermione visible. Examples include the BBC's 1992-1994 series *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales* and a 2018 version staged by The New Swan Shakespeare Festival, California, where the ghost of Hermione appeared on a balcony above the stage to relate her words to Antigonus, then stayed to watch until 4.1 where she took on the choric function of Time. In the final scene the production removed Paulina's potential remarriage and concluded with the ghost of Antigonus taking Hermione's place on the balcony and repeating the words she had spoken as Time.

[411] Walter S. H. Lim, 'Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 41.2 (Spring, 2001), 317-334, (p. 322) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.2307/1556191>.

[412] Jonathon Bate sees the bear not as sent by Hermione but as representative of Hermione herself, arguing that Shakespeare references the myth of Calliope from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* here. See Jonathon Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 223-227. Oxford Scholarship Online.

landscapes of the late romances. Like Arcadia, however, they are imperfect places, with the islands of *Pericles* populated by pirates, whilst Roman forces threaten British lands in *Cymbeline*. In *The Winter's Tale*, as Andrea Stevens bluntly remarks, **'**Sicilia remains a landscape haunted by stories of empty graves, walking spirits, and wife- killers'.[413] Sidney's influence is also felt in the characterisation of the women of the play, with Joan Rees positing that 'Hermione with her dignity and self-respect would recognize first cousins in *New Arcadia*'; Perdita might find much in common with Pamela and Philoclea too.[414] Raised in an idyllic context, Perdita attempts to keep all talk of death at bay, refusing Florizel's imaginings of him being strewn with flowers 'like a corpse' (4.4.129). The landscape is reconfigured around her, so that 'a bank, for love to lie and play on' (4.4.130) becomes a bed, and the dead that threaten to populate the landscape are rewritten as finding life and love once more in Perdita's arms (4.4.131-2). Polixenes calls her a 'fresh piece / Of excellent witchcraft' (4.4.410-411) for ensnaring Florizel, and if this were tonally a different, darker play this accusation might hint at unnatural desires on Perdita's part that would tie her with her coven of forebears: Hallewes, Gynecia's grandmother, and Dipsas. Perdita's powers to save the dead, however, are far more innocent, and rooted in the familial rather than the sexual. Perdita finds her parallel in the other falsely accused witch of the play, Paulina, the two women having unwittingly worked together to preserve Hermione from death.

Hermione's dialogue with her daughter at the end of the play twice mentions the act of preservation, first when she asks where Perdita has been 'preserved' (5.3.125), and then again when she reveals that she has 'preserved' (5.3.128) herself alive after hearing from the Oracle through Paulina that Perdita lives. The exact method of this preservation is never revealed to the audience, but as Beckwith points out, 'It is not how Hermione has survived

[413] Stevens, p. 138.
[414] Joan Rees, *Sir Philip Sidney and Arcadia* (London: Associated University Presses, 1991), p. 69.

that is important but that she has'.[415] The telling of Hermione's tale is left to be revealed offstage, just as Leontes' recognition of his daughter is. In much the same way as the audience skips over Perdita's sixteen years in Bohemia, the audience skips over the intervening years for Hermione, as though we are the ones who have been caught sleeping and have only now woken up.[416] That Hermione has spent nearly two decades living secretly with Paulina goes unremarked. Ruth Vanita considers Paulina's seclusion to be reminiscent of enclosure in a convent, with Paulina a saint-like abbess figure who recalls the important female figures in the family of Christ.[417] The relationship also echoes the female camaraderie between Guilliadun and Guildelüec and their sharing of a religious communal space at the end of *Eliduc*, whilst Hermione's intercession to the gods to ask a blessing for her daughter mirrors Agatha's saintly invocations on behalf of Lucy, and recalls Thaisa's role as priestess of Diana. Florizel's comparison of Perdita to Flora, goddess of flowers (4.4.2), also has echoes of the flower exchange in *Eliduc.* Where Guildelüec uses the flower to wake Guilliadun, Perdita/Flora's existence is enough for Hermione to preserve herself to see her daughter. In the presence of her daughter, a metaphorical flower, she is able to wake herself.[418]

The women speak to each other, or on behalf of each other if they are silenced, as Abbe Blum has noted: for Blum the examples of Lucrece's maid, Emilia, Paulina, and Beatrice amongst others suggest 'resistance to the effacement of the heroine' through the

[415] Beckwith, p. 130.
[416] This strange aspect of time as both preservative and something that should be skipped over is best expressed by the Old Shepherd who wishes that 'there were no age between ten and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in the between but getting wenches with child' **(**3.3.58-60). Clearly the Old Shepherd does not know his sleeping beauty narratives, however, if he thinks sleep prevents pregnancy.
[417] Vanita, p. 314.
[418] Katherine Myers discusses Perdita as Flora but does not make the connection back to *Eliduc*. See Katherine Myers, 'Men as plants increase': botanical meaning in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 40.2 (2020), 171 - 190.

solidarity of women and their ability to speak for their silenced sisters.[419] Hermione's speech is the last thing to return in her transformative moments, but her dialogue with her daughter stands in stark contrast with her silence towards Leontes, in what is often read as a final disconcerting moment of the play. Though she 'embraces him' (5.3.112) and 'hangs about his neck' (5.3.113) her silence seems to be at odds with her actions. Thomas E. Mussio, however, argues that the moment recalls the parable of the Prodigal Son and that 'although it seems that she is passive and restored to Leontes, it is really she who actively embraces him and returns them to their proper relation'.[420] The embrace also acts as a final corrective moment for Leontes. He has jealously imagined Hermione as a 'medal, hanging / About [Polixenes'] neck (1.2.309-310). Now he wears her around his own neck, not as a medal, but as a pilgrim's badge, having visited her tomb and experienced a miracle. Sam Thompson, in his discussion of early modern drama, explores the idea of the living body embracing the corpse, where 'it is associated with slander, jealousy, adultery, and sexual violence'.[421] In the embrace between Hermione and Leontes, however, Thompson argues that Shakespeare 'redeems the horror of the hinted emblem by substituting for it the staged image of an embracing couple charged with awareness that both are alive'.[422] Shakespeare takes what could be a horrific moment and makes it into an affirmation of miracle, even as Polixenes and Camillo wonder whether Hermione is alive, or a ghost, or 'stol'n from the dead' (5.3.114).[423]

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[419] Abbe Blum, '"Strike all that look upon with mar[b]le": Monumentalising Women in Shakespeare's Plays', in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), p. 101.
[420] Thomas E. Mussio, 'Bandello's "Timbreo and Fenicia" and "The Winter's Tale"', *Comparative Drama*, 34.2 (Summer 2000), 211-244, (p. 229) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/41154019> [accessed 10 April 2021].
[421] Sam Thompson, 'Bound to a Corpse: A Macabre Emblem in Early Modern Drama', *Notes and Queries*, 59.1 (March 2012), 82–86, (p. 83) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1093/notesj/gjr279>.
[422] Thompson, p. 86.
[423] This confusion is inherent to Shakespeare's mix of genre and material, creating a play which, as Catherine Belsey points out, 'opens with something like realism, and abruptly turns into fairy tale in Act 4. But which logic prevails in Act 5, when Hermione returns from the dead?' Shakespeare neatly sidesteps having to answer this question by leaving discussion of the mechanics of the queen's resurrection offstage. See Catherine Belsey, *Why Shakespeare?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), xi.

Richard McCoy calls this 'a truly astonishing happy ending'.[424] Despite Hermione's return from the dead and the reunion of Perdita with her parents, however, this is a play which recognises that not everything is recoverable. Unlike Innogen's, Perdita's return does not recover her own lost brother and Mamillius remains lost to the living. Like his graveyard tale 'Of sprites and goblins' (2.1.28) he is a story cut off prematurely.[425] Though not mentioned by name, he is evoked in Leontes' recollection that he has said 'many / A prayer upon [Hermione's] grave' (5.3.142), a grave that she shares with her son, Leontes' having commanded that 'One grave shall be for both' (3.2.234). Christopher Wheeldon's 2014 adaptation of *The Winter's Tale* for The Royal Ballet evoked this loss poignantly, with a stage which had statues of both Hermione and Mamillius, though only Hermione came down from her pedestal. Though Leontes turns to Paulina in enquiry, a shake of her head negates the possibility that she can produce a second miracle, and the ballet ends, not with Paulina's potential remarriage, but with her performance of mourning duties before the lone statue. Unlike the ending of *Pericles* which sees a full family reunion, or *Cymbeline* which reconstructs four fifths of Innogen's family, *The Winter's Tale* can recover only one family member. As an audience we are warned that a 'sad tale's best for winter' (2.1.27) and if the play is sad, it is not because it sneers at resurrection stories, but because resurrections are not a universal experience. Paulina reminds Leontes' assembled court and the audience that Hermione's resurrection, 'Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale. But it appears she lives' (5.3.116-118). *The Winter's Tale*, with its bittersweet conclusion, leaves no room for derisive joking. Instead, both the characters and the audience are forced to consider how they might live with the past, rather than being haunted by it.

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[424] McCoy, p. 228.

[425] Leontes' characterises the reunion of his family as fixing what was once 'dissevered' (5.3.156). Like the dismembered parts of saints, what was separated can be re-joined in death, but a thin line of scarring will remain to mark what was made absent. In this way, the absence of Mamillius marks the family just as much as the passage of time.

Jeremy Lopez argues that the reason Renaissance theatre works is because it embraces 'the potential for failure: the potential for conventions not to work efficiently, for dramaturgy not to be plausible, for theatrical information not to be conveyed clearly or coherently'.[426] This rationale, in part, explains why Shakespeare's late romances are so successful. An element of the tragic lingers on in the less than perfectly happy endings of these plays. Lopez suggests that when an audience watches a tragedy, after

> the laughter dies [it] is replaced by an empty and breathless wonder, a kind of shock at the number of bodies or limbs, the amount of blood on the stage. Renaissance tragedy asks audiences to bask in their own inability to rise to the demands it makes.
>
> (Lopez, p.135)

Shakespeare's romances can be read in much the same way. Once the remaining family members are reunited and the laughter dies, what is left is wonder and shock at the returned bodies, the number of blood relatives on the stage. This is not the same kind of wonder as the lying wonders removed from Sidney's work. Shakespeare is always careful to have a medical reason for a return, or in the case of *The Winter's Tale* no explanation except the one the audience constructs for themselves. Instead, this is wonder at the apparent failure of natural laws. In a period where the possibility of miracles is fervently disputed, the late romances leave belief up to the audience and conclude before a happy ending is truly required, or further questions can be asked. In a similar fashion to *The Squire of Low Degree*, joy occurs at the return of the beloved body, but uncomfortable conversations remain to be had in a once

[426] Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 134. Cambridge Core ebook.

fractured family about how the losses occurred in the first place. *Romeo and Juliet* can be read as having a hopeful ending, because in death the protagonists heal the wounds of their family feud. The dead leave space for the living to forgive. The returned body, however, fills that space and forces the living to confront their own relationships with an often unpleasant past.

On a narrative level, these sad stories of loss and partial recuperation foreshadow the genre where the sleeping corpse motif will next appear. As Andrea Stevens argues, *The Winter's Tale*, with its jealous king, wronged wife, lost daughter, and dead son, contains many of the components for 'the revenge tragedy, the proper generic home of ghosts who returns to exhort the living to avenge the injuries done to them – as well as the home of corpses whose uncannily reanimated bodies become instruments of revenge'.[427] Where Shakespeare's late romances joy in resurrection reunions and only dare to hint at the return of the restless dead, revenge tragedies revel in staging the macabre return of the corpse who seeks not reintegration, but recompense.

[427] Stevens, p. 136.

Chapter Five

'and kiss his lips to death': Jacobean Cynicism and the Sleeping Beauty

In his work *The Hour of Our Death*, Philippe Ariès confidently asserts that there is no necrophilia in seventeenth-century theatre. Though objects of affection may rest

> in the bottoms of graves, in cemeteries, which from now on are places conducive to desire […] they still do not go so far as making love to a corpse. Not that they would be loath to do so themselves, but just when things threaten to get out of hand, the corpse wakes up. It is a false corpse, a living corpse, or as Georges de Scudéry puts it, "a corpse that moves". [428]

This assertion that all acts of necrophilia on the seventeenth-century stage are negated because of the false death motif is only true of comedies, however, such as Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1606), where 'moving corpses' appear frequently. In John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* (1611), and Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), characters fake their deaths, only to sit up in their coffins at their onstage funerals.

Numerous Jacobean tragedies, by contrast, especially revenge tragedies, feature both attempted and actual necrophilia. In these tragedies the corpse may very well move, but only because it is being forcefully manhandled out of a grave and into the bed of the perpetrator. Richard W. Grinnell argues that the proliferation of necrophilia on stage at this time reflects 'cultural anxiety about gender roles and power that attends James I's coming to the throne', but this interpretation simplifies the use and abuse of the sleeping corpse as exclusively the

[428] Ariès, p. 376.

result of contemporary attitudes to gender and politics.[429] Though these plays are clearly interested in powerful men and their sometimes unnatural desires, necrophilia on the Jacobean stage also engages with literary history, cynically subverting the established trope of the sleeping corpse. As we have seen, the sleeping corpse has been a positive model for divine intervention and communication between God and the community; a receptacle ensuring the continuation of the chivalric line; a warning to men of the consequences of failed self and political governance in loving inappropriately or unnaturally; and a familial figure who is lost and then returned, though this restoration is only partial and always melancholic. Jacobean sleeping corpses are treated as saintly, by contrast, only in so far as they are idolised and sexualised figures who exist in worlds where God is absent or impotent; secular saints who invoke negative miracles ultimately to kill those who move or misuse their remains. Though reinserted into the roles of wife or lover, they are incapable of producing children and as a result end lines rather than continuing them. Whilst still serving as symbols of the failure of men to govern their people or their feelings, they now represent fatal judgements on rulers who have no time for repentance or remorse. Finally, though they remain figures of loved ones lost and then returned, these returns are forced and unnatural. The sleeping corpse may be restored to seeming life through the application of cosmetics and puppetry, for example, but this restoration can only ever be less than partial, given that all that exists under the makeup is a skull. Unlike Shakespeare, Jacobean tragedians firmly reject magical or miraculous attempts to recuperate the missing and the seemingly dead.

In contrast to earlier iterations of the motif in the genres explored in previous chapters, Jacobean tragedy is singularly uninterested in waking the sleeping corpse. Instead, the necrophiliac mistakenly or irrationally views the body as alive. There is no reason,

[429] Richard W. Grinnell, '"And love thee after" Necrophilia on the Jacobean stage' in *Between Anthropology and Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse*, ed. Rose De Angelis (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 84.

therefore, to wake what is already perceived to be conscious. Those who are aware that the body is a corpse have less interest, moreover, in waking the dead than using them as instruments of revenge: the body of the fair maiden becomes the means by which justice is served. The sleeping corpse, in short, is now a corpse that kills. In an additional inversion of the motif, the method of murder is often a poisoned kiss from the skull of the dead beloved. Kenneth Rooney has categorised skulls used in theatre as items 'free of active corruption', often used as 'moralising props'.[430] Yet for the Jacobean revenger, however, whilst the skull might be the ultimate arbiter of morality, it is a corrupting object that seeks to remove corruption. It cannot, however, act alone, needing a living accomplice to actuate the murder. Thus, both revenger and necrophiliac use the dead for their own individual needs and, in many ways, mirror each other. Ultimately, waking the sleeping corpse, serving the wishes of the dead, or even following basic social morals is less important than the ego of the revenger and / or the necrophiliac. For the necrophiliac, fulfilling his ego above all else manifests as obtaining the body — living or dead — of the woman he desires, no matter what legal or physical barriers he must overcome. For the revenger, the satisfaction of his ego is met in revealing he is the architect of the necrophiliac's downfall; his revenge is incomplete without acknowledgement, which ironically often leads to his own demise.

Revenge was prohibited by both the Bible and in secular law, though as Fredson Bowers notes, it was socially permissible to avenge personal injury, or to avenge others if they were unable to avenge themselves, or when recourse to justice was unavailable.[431] Consequently, theatrical revengers often begin as noble, sinned against figures who have the sympathy of the audience, which understands their impulse to privately right a perceived

[430] Rooney, p. 47.
[431] Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 36-39. De Gryuter ebook.

wrong.[432] That these figures change, as Bowers argues, 'from sympathetic, wronged heroes to bloody maniacs whose revenge might better have been left to God' is emblematic of the role as satisfying the primal urge to inflict injury when one has been injured and exemplifies how this act then serves to corrupt.[433] In general, revengers must themselves die in order to end the cycle of vengeance and to restore the order and authority of God and government, though there are occasional exceptions to this, such as Govianus in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*. Though revenge tragedies lessen the active presence of the divine on stage, this does not indicate that revenge tragedy is a secular genre. As Timothy Rosendale remarks, many critics have debated whether Jacobean revenge tragedy is secular or religious, but he posits that this argument is less important than revenge tragedy's capacity to 'articulate complex dynamics of agency that negotiate between oppositional, cooperative, and independent accounts of human and divine action in ways that are deeply (if not always explicitly) theological'.[434] Sleeping corpses in revenge tragedy echo their earlier role as religious icons, whilst simultaneously having this religious iconography undercut through their manipulation by revenger and necrophiliac. This exploitation reflects the uncomfortable position of the sleeping corpse within Protestant theology, which 'allowed for a whole range of supernatural beings to be active in the world, especially angels, demons, and various kinds of spirits, such as those of the revenant dead', but 'was never quite sure what to make of ghosts, poltergeists, visions, prophecies, miracles' as Robert Scribner suggests.[435] Just as medieval worship of saints focused on the intact remains or separated parts of the holy dead, so too, as John

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[432] Revenge in real life was often far less noble. Philip Sidney's friend and publisher of the *New Arcadia*, 'Fulke Greville was stabbed in the back by his servant in 1628 for not sufficiently rewarding him'. Bowers, p. 24. Unfortunately, his doctors stuffed his wounds with pig fat, and he eventually died of gangrene.
[433] Bowers, p. 40.
[434] Timothy Rosendale, *Theology and Agency in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 108. Cambridge Core ebook. Alison Shell, for example, sees *The Revenger's Tragedy* as an anti-Catholic play. See Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[435] Robert Scribner, 'The Reformation, popular magic and the "disenchantment of the world" ', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23.3 (1993), 475-494 (pp. 486-487) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.2307/206099>.

Kerrigan remarks, 'Revenge tragedy […] is about the body because, often enough, it is about the body in parts, or skeletons (in Chettle's *Hoffman*, Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*) or (as in Goffe's *Orestes*) a handful of a father's bones'.[436] Consequently, whilst critics such as Linda Woodbridge see the proliferation of revenge tragedies during this period as reacting against economic, political, and social inequities, or take the view, as Robert Watson does, that Renaissance writers are expressing religious anxieties concerning death and the afterlife, I would argue that revenge tragedy is largely concerned with the past and that past as a physical presence on stage.[437] As Sarah Lewis argues, revengers are themselves caught in a 'temporal discord' whereby they are 'torn between action and inaction, waiting and not waiting […] tied to stagnating memories of past injuries, whilst at the same time […] focused on the attainment of revenge in the future'.[438] Though revenge tragedy initially appears completely at odds with the iconography and theology of the sleeping corpse, the incorporation and appearance on stage of the body creates a complicated relationship with the uses of the corpse in the past and with the past itself.

This chapter considers a number of Jacobean plays which revolve around the necrophiliac and the sleeping corpse, primarily Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) and *Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), as well as Philip Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* (1621).[439] These plays all feature the sleeping corpse that kills by kissing, an act which

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[436] John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.131. Oxford Scholarship Online.
[437] See Linda Woodbridge, *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and Robert Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (London: University of California Press, 1995).
[438] Sarah Lewis, *Time and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 3. Cambridge Core ebook.
[439] The ascription to Middleton of both plays is a debate largely settled amongst critics, and I accept the current consensus on the authorship of either play, particularly as it has no impingement on the argument presented in this chapter. For a compelling argument as to Middleton's authorship of *The Revenger's Tragedy* see Brian Jay Corrigan in 'Middleton, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and Crisis Literature', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 38.2 (1998), 281-89 and in regards to *Second Maiden's Tragedy* see James Purkiss commenting on 'the widespread recognition of Thomas Middleton as the play's author' in *Shakespeare and Manuscript Drama: Canon, Collaboration and Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 118.

could be easily dismissed as deliberately provocative, and critically useful only in demonstrating the willingness of Jacobean playwrights to engage in lurid and sensationalist writing in order to shock their audiences. Likewise, it would seem logical to categorise these plays which sexually exploit female corpses for masculine pleasure and revenge 'as the epitome of early modern misogyny' as Aimee Ross-Kilroy notes.[440] Whilst these works can be read in this way, however, it does not account for all that these plays are, as Ross-Kilroy herself argues. Such readings ignore the complex ways that they engage, interrogate, and subvert the motif and its cultural, political, and religious baggage. Critics have variously placed these plays as deconstructing the role of women, as reactions to the Gunpowder plot and other political upheavals, and as responses to scientific advances in understanding the inner workings of the body.[441] They also, however, as Scott Dudley suggests, explore how bodies hold cultural echoes of 'a past that can only be experienced as rupture'.[442] When the sleeping corpse appears on stage, it calls to mind previous iterations of itself in literary and religious history, invoking a religious faith and metaphysical optimism that Jacobean cynicism acknowledges, desires, but ultimately rejects.

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[440] Aimee Ross-Kilroy, '"The Very Ragged Bone": Dismantling Masculinity in Thomas Middleton's "The Revenger's Tragedy"', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, 33.4 (2010), 51-71, (p. 62) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43446682> [accessed 9 November 2020].

[441] See for example, Christine M. Gottlieb, 'Middleton's Traffic in Dead Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in The Revenger's Tragedy and The Lady's Tragedy', *English Literary Renaissance*, 45.2 (Spring, 2015), pp. 255-274, Heather Hirschfeld 'Wildfire at Midnight': *The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Gunpowder Plot', *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 68. 283 (2016), pp. 60-78, Adrian Streete, *Apocalypse and Anti-Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 94-121, Swapan Chakravorty, *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 66-86, and Karin Coddon, '"For Show or Useless Property": Necrophilia and *The Revenger's Tragedy*', *ELH*, 61.1 (Spring, 1994), pp. 71-88.

[442] Scott Dudley, 'Conferring with the Dead: Necrophilia and Nostalgia in the Seventeenth Century', *ELH*, 66.2 (Summer, 1999), 277-294, (p. 291) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30032074> [accessed 09 November 2018]. Though Dudley's argument centres mainly on John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), it is equally applicable to the plays under consideration in this chapter.

Recreating the Sleeping Corpse: Ventriloquism, Misogyny, and *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606)

In Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the skull of Gloriana, a woman who has been fatally poisoned nine years prior to the opening of the play, is in turn used to poison her murderer and avenge her death. Appearing from the very opening of the play in the hands of her beloved and the play's principal revenger, Vindice, Gloriana is immediately reduced to a poor echo of what she once was. No longer glorious as her name suggests, she is instead the 'sallow picture' of Vindice's 'poisoned love': half fiancée, half murder victim.[443] Carried around by Vindice and later puppeteered by him, Gloriana can easily be read as having no body, no life, and therefore no agency in the play. As Tanya Pollard argues, she 'reminds the audience that she is not a woman but the decayed remains of one: a stage prop, not a player'.[444] Critical evaluation of Gloriana is largely in agreement with Pollard's assessment. Ross-Kilroy sees her as 'an androgynous skull, held like a puppet by a man, wearing a female costume to revenge its own death — speechless, mute, and indifferent to its fate'.[445] Likewise, Christine Gottlieb argues that any 'discussion of Gloriana is problematized by the fact of her absence from the play; "she" appears onstage only as a skull. While the skull is sexual, its sexuality is emphatically not a continuation of Gloriana's sexuality'.[446]

Whilst Gloriana is undeniably used as both prop and puppet, she is not absent from the stage and the skull, far from being an empty symbol, is her. Scott McMillin claims that 'The skull is an actor […] Through costuming and illusion it gains its double identity', but

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[443] Thomas Middleton, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington and others (London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 1.14. All subsequent references to this play will be given parenthetically. For an overview of some of Middleton's other plays which demonstrate his versatility as a writer see Michelle O'Callaghan, 'Thomas Middleton and the early modern theatre' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 165-180.
[444] Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 116.
[445] Ross-Kilroy, p. 62.
[446] Gottlieb, p. 266.

arguably the identity that the skull obtains is one it has always had.[447] In an echo of the sleeping corpses of medieval saints, Gloriana's bones represent her subjective being whilst simultaneously being her objective body; her dismembered and isolated body part is a synecdoche, functioning in a similar way to Saint Lucy's eyes and Saint Agatha's breasts in their iconography. We are never told how Vindice comes to have Gloriana's skull, or where the rest of her may lie; having managed to obtain her skull, however, he carries it around with him obsessively for nine years, making this relic of her person a talisman of his revenge. As a relic, Gloriana's intangible presence is inextricably bound to her physical remains; in this sense, her skull is not a sexless, glorified prop, but Gloriana herself. As Paul Binski notes when talking about the practice of robbing shrines for the relics of saints, to 'possess a relic was to possess a person and, literally, a body of evidence which substantiated a privilege, and in this sense *furta sacra* were not so much thefts as kidnapping'.[448] Thus when Vindice later jokes, 'Brother, fall you back / A little with the bony lady' (3.5.119-120), he is unknowingly, yet literally, correct in identifying Gloriana as both skeleton and woman: a cynical type of Our Lady, becoming Our Lady of Bones.

As the play progresses, Gloriana becomes more than just her skull, obtaining a body and the appearance of life through a process of physical reconstruction that both invokes and subverts Christian faith in the bodily resurrection of the dead. She is 'dressed up in tires' according to the stage directions in Act Three Scene Five, and then has her skull painted with cosmetics so that she looks like a living woman, in order that Vindice can fulfil the corrupt Duke's request for a woman on whom to spend his lust.[449] That anyone could transform a

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[447] Scott McMillin, 'Acting and Violence: *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Its Departures from *Hamlet*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24.2 (Spring, 1984), 275-291 (p. 284) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.2307/450528>.

[448] Binski, p. 16.

[449] This practice seems to have been based on historical reality. For a fascinating, illustrated look at how skulls and skeletons were elaborately decorated, dressed, and often given wax faces before public presentation as holy relics in churches in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe see Paul Koudounaris, *Heavenly Bodies: Cult Treasures & Spectacular Saints from the Catacombs* (London: Thams & Hudson, 2013).

skull into the semblance of a living face through cosmetics seems farfetched, and that that face should be desirable seems incredible, but that is precisely the point. The Duke's lust is such that he does not really mind what the body looks like, so long as he has one. His poor rulership of his state, his family, and his own sexual longings blind him to the reality of his necrophilic desires, which Middleton repeatedly underscores with a series of terrible puns in the ensuing dialogue between the Duke and Vindice. The latter warns him that his reconstituted and disguised Gloriana 'has somewhat a grave look with her' (3.5.135), but the Duke responds, 'I love that best' (3.5.136), explaining that 'In gravest looks the greatest faults seem less / Give me that sin that's robed in holiness' (3.5.137-138). Gloriana's seemingly reticent 'behaviour' and forbidding appearance, as mediated by Vindice, which should encourage the Duke to reconsider his actions, only spur him on. The illicit provokes him into actions the audience find both repulsive and transfixing, making the spectators complicit participants in this necrophilic act.

The Duke is wrong, however, to claim Gloriana equates to 'sin robed in holiness' when in fact the inverse is true: as a relic she is a holy object, attired and made up to look like a sinner. In pulling aside her wrappings and pressing his mouth to the bone in a kiss, the Duke parodically re-enacts a meeting between devoted pilgrim worshipper and relic, echoing hagiographic accounts of numerous believers with sleeping corpses, as exemplified by the account of Saint Paula in the *Golden Legend*. As the Duke goes to embrace Gloriana, Vindice, in an aside to his brother, tells him to 'raise the perfumes' (3.5.139), ostensibly to disguise the smell of decay and to overwhelm the Duke's senses. But holy bodies also emit pungent healing oils and scents as explored in Chapter One. The Duke once more reconfigures what should be a warning to him into an anticipatory encounter, arguing that 'Pleasure should meet in a perfumèd mist' (3.5.141), and sexualising a religious experience.

The Duke is no Bishop of Lincoln, however, and is unable to justify his oral encounter with sacred female bones. His blasphemous and immoral kiss is immediately punished as the skull's poisoned lips eat away at the flesh of his own in a negative miracle, to borrow Geary's phrase again. The kiss that we saw bring life in *Endymion*, here only brings death. Vindice explicitly describes the exquisite symmetry of the vengeance plot and the role that the skull has in its own retribution, remarking

> no, it shall bear a part
> E'en in it own revenge. This very skull,
> Whose mistress the Duke poisoned, with this drug,
> [*He shows a vial of poison*.]
> The mortal curse of the earth, shall be revenged
> In the like strain, and kiss his lips to death.
>
> (3.5.100-104)

Though we are not told what kind of poison Vindice uses, the toxin immediately eats away the outer parts of the Duke's mouth, then attacks the fleshy insides of his jaw, teeth and tongue. Vindice's prophetic remark that Gloriana has 'A pretty hanging lip, that has forgot now to dissemble / Methinks this mouth should make a swearer tremble' (3.5.56-57) literally comes true as the Duke writhes in agony from his fateful kiss. Recognising that he has been poisoned, the Duke can only cry out in an excruciating series of O's as the poison consumes him, repeating the exclamative 'O!' nine times in this scene up until the moment of his death, the O here representing a literal cry of despair, but also suggesting the moment of orgasm, the orifices of the body, the corrupt shape of the kiss itself, and the ravaging effects of the acidic

poison which leave a ragged, bleeding, fleshy mess where his mouth, the symbol and seat of his power should be. The kiss also, as Pollard notes, 'offers a grotesquely material version of the Neoplatonic exchange of souls: rather than consuming his spirit, Gloriana's skull consumes the Duke's lips, teeth, and tongue, gradually dissolving him out of existence'.[450] The Duke's kiss with Gloriana is indeed transformative and transportive, but unlike Endymion's kiss with his celestial beloved, this transformation can only be a negative one, without possibly recuperation, leading to the grave. The Duke is irredeemable, admitting that 'Many a beauty have I turned to poison / In the denial, covetous of all' (2.3.130-1). With so many victims of his insatiable lust and desire for control, the Duke has effectively poisoned himself. Much as in *Arcadia* Basilius drinks the sleeping draught and is the author of his own misfortune through the misgovernance of his affections, so the Duke too must drink the poison he has created for himself.

It is no mistake that the Duke's insatiable appetites turn on him and that his mouth is attacked. The *Revenger's Tragedy* repeatedly couches the numerous problems that plague the Duke's family and court, such as bastardy and incest, in terms of food and consumption. Spurio, the Duke's illegitimate son, speaks of himself as being born of food and lust, and Vindice frames incest in the same terms: 'Any kin now, next to the rim o'the'sister, / Is man's meat in these days'(1.3.62-3). As seen in 'The Second Nun's Tale', 'The Prioress' Tale' and *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, saints' mouths, particularly the mouths of female saints, are often places of power, being the loci through which they transmit the word and power of God; their enemies repeatedly attempt to silence them through violent penetration by swords and other weapons to silence them. It is fitting then that it should be Gloriana's mouth that destroys the Duke's own mouth, or centre of power, in turn, and that it is his tongue, or the remains of it, which is nailed down with a knife by Vindice and his brother in

[450] Pollard, p. 118.

order to force him to witness the incestuous embraces of his son and his son's stepmother. Threatening to slice his eyelids off if he blinks and to 'make his eyes, like comets, shine through blood' (3.5.205), in witnessing his son and wife have sex the Duke experiences a perverted type of holy vision, a subversion of those experienced by pilgrims at shrines. Vindice's threat to transform the Duke's eyes into comets, astronomical events associated with misfortune, further serves to emphasize the Duke as victim of supernatural displeasure and Vindice as a type of secular god, mediating his revenge through parodic divine intervention.[451]

Though vengeance is meant to be left to the Lord, Vindice takes the place of a God who is largely absent throughout the play, heard only in the occasional rumble of thunder.[452] Even this response is mockingly prompted by Vindice who exclaims 'Is there no thunder left, or is't kept up / In stock for heavier vengeance? [*Thunder is heard*.] There it goes!' (4.2.203-4). This provocation and meteorological reply is translated by Vindice not only as tacit approval for his actions, 'When thunder claps, heaven likes the tragedy' (5.3.50), but also as assurance that in the absence of any direct divine intervention, his presence as a substitute for God and his practical negative miracles are right and righteous: 'When the bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good' (3.5.206). Vengeance is the direct translation of Vindice's name, a nod to his origin in medieval morality plays and neat summation of his role, but the character both embodies this singular characteristic and becomes more than a theatrical echo. He takes Jaques' assertion that 'one man in his time plays many parts' to extremes, being a procrastinating Hamlet waiting nine years for revenge, then disguising himself to play the part of the bawd Piato, before becoming revenger, master puppeteer, and a type of Romeo,

[451] For a good overview of some of the numerous examples of comets being associated with death and misfortune through time, see Duane Koenig, 'Comets, Superstitions, and History', *Quarterly Journal of the Florida Academy of Sciences*, 31. 2 (June, 1968), 81-92.
[452] Romans 12.19.

seeking (another's) death in a kiss.[453] Intensely self-aware of his role as a player, Vindice becomes, according to Lars Engle, 'a kind of playwright within the play'.[454] His awareness of his own performativity is not enough, however, to prevent his self-scripted downfall. Gleefully admitting what he has done to Antonio, the new Duke, the latter has him promptly arrested for 'speedy execution' (5.3.122) in an act that is one of self-preservation as much as it is one of justice. Vindice recognises that 'This murder might have slept in tongueless brass / But for ourselves, and the world died an ass' (5.3.131-2), but his desire to be acknowledged as the avenging righteous spirit — ''twas Vindice murdered thee' (5.3.93) — is more important than the secret satisfaction of revenge using the sleeping corpse. The only thing Vindice will 'wake' is the sleeping murder. Unlike in *Arcadia*, there is no need to bring the case to trial to prove innocence or guilt when the revenger draws attention to his own revenge, unable to silence his own ego. Vindice will not have his thunder, the thunder he has continually provoked through the play, stolen by anonymity. Instead, he will commit one final murder and write himself out of the production he has choreographed, acknowledging that ''Tis time to die when we are ourselves our foes' (5.3.130).

This climactic moment is not the first time that Vindice has effectively murdered himself, however. Earlier in the play, Lussurioso employs Vindice to kill Piato, a character he has disguised himself as in order to facilitate his revenge. Revealing that 'I'm hired to kill myself' (4.2.209) Vindice does as he is bidden and 'kills' his second self, reminiscing in his final lines on stage that ''Tis well [Piato] died; he was a witch' (5.3.139) Vindice's characterisation of Piato as a witch for his prophetic knowledge in predicting that murderers always reveal themselves neglects to acknowledge that Piato / Vindice is also a witch according to the law. As Keith Thomas comments, the 1604 witchcraft statute 'made it a

[453] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 2.7.145.
[454] Lars Engle, 'The Revenger's Tragedy: Introduction' in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington and others (London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), p. 1299.

felony to take up a dead body in whole or part for magical purposes' and Vindice has spent large parts of the play carrying the skull of his lover around with him.[455] Whilst we never see Vindice digging his love up, he must, at some point, have acquired her skull from her burial site, and though he is not using her body for magical purposes, his secular 'resurrection' of her body in the pursuit of revenge blurs the lines between a type of sanctified raising of the dead and the diabolical raising of spirits for nefarious purposes.[456] Renaissance conceptions of the witch were inextricably intertwined with the idea that they collected corpses or parts of them, and that witchcraft enabled them to have power over the dead, in part explaining, as I explored in *The Winter's Tale*, why Paulina is so adamant that her facilitation of Hermione's return is unmagical in nature.

One of the most infamous witches to grace the Jacobean stage is Erichtho in John Marston's *The Tragedy of Sophonisba / The Wonder of Women* (1606). Living amongst tombs, she uses corpses in a variety of cannibalistic and necrophilic ways:

> but when she finds a corpse
> New-graved, whose entrails yet not turn
> To slimy filth, with greedy havoc then
> She makes fierce spoil, and swells with wicked triumph
> To bury her lean knuckles in his eyes;
> Then doth she gnaw the pale and o'ergrown nails
> From his dry hand; but if she find some life
> Yet lurking close, she bites his gelid lips,
> And sticking her black tongue in his dry throat,

[455] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 526.
[456] See Samuel 1.28 for a biblical example of a witch summoning the spirit of the dead in order to communicate with them.

She breathes dire murmurs. [457]

Erichtho's unnatural desire physically to enter the corpses she finds and mingle her body with theirs is both disturbing and disgusting.[458] Yet her moral compass is shown to be more righteous than that of the play's villain, Syphax, who desires the play's heroine Sophonisba willing or not, alive or dead, taunting her that if she does 'strike thy breast; know, being dead, I'll use / With highest lust of sense thy senseless flesh' (4.1.57–8). Deciding to use a love potion to obtain her for himself, he is instead tricked into sleeping with Erichtho, who rebukes him for attempting to obtain what he wants without consent: 'Know he that would force love, thus seeks his hell' (5.1.21). Providing that hell for him, Erichtho fulfils Syphax's desire to sleep with the dead by causing him to sleep with her, the closest thing the play has to a living corpse. Perverting Syphax's own perverted desires through her bed trick, Erichtho acts, ironically, as the play's skewed moral sexual compass, much as Vindice does in his disguise as Piato by testing his sister's chasteness and punishing the Duke for lusting after those who do not desire him. Yet neither Erichtho nor Vindice / Piato see their actions as hypocritical or question their use of the dead to achieve their own ends, nor does Vindice seem to mind mingling Gloriana's body with the Duke's and thus, as Stephen Mulaney argues, 'subjecting her to the fate she died to avoid: she is the painted lady, the courtesan, the

[457] John Marston, *Sophonisba or The Wonder of Women*, in *The Malcontent and Other Plays*, ed. Keith Sturgess (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.1.112-121. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically. Marston took Erichtho from *Pharsalia*, a poem by the Roman Lucan. In *Pharsalia* she is described in equally graphic and disturbing terms. For more on Erichtho and her depiction as a witch see Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 28-29.

[458] Marston was no stranger to writing strange and disturbing graveyard scenes. In his earlier tragedy *Antonio's Revenge* (c. 1601), the eponymous revenger stabs a child and then, as John Kerrigan notes, 'sprinkles gore on his father's tomb, in a parody of Mosaic rites, and 'From under the stage a groan' is heard (43–50)'. For further exploration of this play and its bloody links to the gothic, particularly Dracula, see John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 39. Oxford Scholarship Online.

whore'.[459] In many ways the sexual relations between Erichtho in the guise of Sophonisba and Syphax mirror the coupling between Vindice / Gloriana in the guise of a living woman and the Duke, where the present absence of the beloved facilitates and presents 'spectacularly the coupling of the quick and the dead' as Karin Coddon terms it.[460] This spectacle of the merging of the living and the dead is made more tangible in The National Theatre's 2008 production of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, where Vindice not only puppeteers the skull, but merges with the Gloriana puppet itself. As Alan Dessen comments in his review of the play, the actor playing Vindice

> used a dummy, again with the golden mask, with him standing in the darkness behind it, his shoes supplying the feet, and he also provided some adroit interweaving of the Duke's hands with "hers" (the left was from the dummy, the right from Vindice). [461]

Critics have seen Vindice's manipulation of the Gloriana corpse puppet as the ultimate act of misogyny, but this production underscores the argument that if Gloriana's tangible presence is located in her skull, then this moment is not puppetry but Vindice's appropriation of Gloriana's spirit, an appropriation so thorough-going that it is difficult to see where Gloriana begins and Vindice ends. In her review of the same production, Laura Grace Godwin notes the Gloriana / Vindice puppet creature becomes 'a disturbingly androgynous image'.[462] This particular production takes the materialisation of Gloriana one step further, reinserting her

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[459] Stephen Mullaney, 'Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45.2 (Summer, 1994), 139-162 (p. 160) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2871215> [accessed 09 November 2020].
[460] Coddon, p. 82.
[461] Alan C. Dessen, 'Eyeballs and Icicles, a Swimming Pool and a Dummy: Shakespeare and "The Revenger's Tragedy" on Stage in 2008', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 26.4 (Winter 2008), 53-64 (p. 63) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26347823> [accessed 09 November 2020].
[462] Laura Grace Godwin, 'Revenge Backwards, and in Heels: *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*, England, Summer 2008', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 26.4 (Winter 2008), 115-131 (p. 130) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26347831> [accessed 25 March 2021].

ghost onto the stage and manifesting her visually for the audience, and as such more vividly mingling the living and the dead. With revenge complete and Duke dead, Dessen comments, 'what had been the dummy became an actress dressed in white who stood up, looked at Vindice, and moved away'.[463] Dessen interprets Gloriana's retreat from Vindice as 'disapproval or disgust at the use of Gloriana's skull not just for revenge-justice but for this vicious, out-of-control murder', but the action can also be interpreted as a fulfilment of Vindice's comment that 'The very ragged bone / Has been sufficiently revenged' (3.5.153-4) and Gloriana's movement away from her skull and from Vindice is an exorcism of a relic that has fulfilled its purpose.[464] Now that the negative miracle has been manifested Gloriana's skull no longer appears in the play. Though we are not told what Vindice does with what remains, we assume that the skull is returned and re-interred with the rest of her corpse and can finally rest quietly.

This moment of completion is therefore also one of division and separation. Gloriana's 'revival' is temporary and her union with Vindice fleeting. Her return to a quiet grave suggests the inability of Jacobean tragedians to recuperate the past, and their lack of desire to do so. Vindice never wishes or prays that Gloriana is alive, and his conjuration of her as a living woman is only in the service of revenge not resurrection. He never views Gloriana's skull as possessing or being connected to the spirit of Gloriana; though he begins the play by speaking to her skull, and Hippolito remarks that he is still 'sighing o'er death's vizard' (1.1.50), there is no indication that Vindice ever expects a response from his dead love, nor that he is waiting for a sign from her. In *The Revenger's Tragedy* the living and the dead might physically and horribly mingle, but there is no suggestion that the dead might cross the divide to communicate with the living or that the living would want them to.

[463] Dessen, p. 63.
[464] Dessen, p. 63.

Instead, the divide between the living and the dead becomes more firmly entrenched, as does the divide between present and past. Gloriana's status as a sleeping corpse is entirely eroded through the course of the play, as are the blurry boundaries that have so far categorised the motif. By the end, Gloriana is just a corpse, unseen, unheard, and firmly positioned off stage.

Crowning the Sleeping Corpse: The living dead and self-vengeance in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611)

In the same year that Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* was performed, another play also took as its subject the return of the female sleeping corpse, Thomas Middleton's *The Second Maiden's Tragedy.* The eponymous maiden is, as Sarah Beckwith notes, a 'conscious reprise and reversal of Hermione. In the one play a living woman poses as a statue, in the other a dead woman is treated as if she were living'.[465] In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Middleton responds to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; now he turns to *The Winter's Tale*, to hagiographies, and to the figure of King Herod from the medieval mystery cycles to re-examine the attempted recuperation of the female corpse by men in positions of power.[466] Where *The Revenger's Tragedy* uses and subverts some of the concepts of medieval morality plays, this subversion is now taken to its parodic extreme in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*.

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[465] Sarah Beckwith, 'Shakespeare's Resurrections' in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Curtis Perry and John Watkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 45-67 (p. 59). It is not possible to definitively say which play was performed first, though current critical consensus suggests that Middleton was inspired by Shakespeare and not vice versa. The c. 1611 production of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* likely shared actors as well as themes with *The Winter's Tale*. Bailey Sincox summarises current critical thought on the historical staging of both plays, noting that the 'Lady and Hermione may have been played by the same actor, Richard Robinson (as Eric Rasmussen, Andrea Stevens, and Julia Briggs have argued); Briggs furthermore suggests that Richard Burbage played both Leontes and the Tyrant'. Bailey Sincox, '*The Winter's Tale* and Revenge Tragedy', *Shakespeare Studies,* 47 (2019), 233-260 (p. 253) <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/scholarly-journals/winters-tale-revenge-tragedy/docview/2303660934/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 10 April 2021].

[466] Many scholars have commented on the links between Hamlet and Vindice, but for a good overview of how the latter as a revenger is influenced by Hamlet, see Chapter Five in Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation: Mimesis and Modernity in Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1515/9781400868292>.

The Second Maiden's Tragedy sees the Lady, a strong, capable and decisive female character, kill herself to protect her body from the unwanted advances of the Tyrant. Undeterred by her death, the Tyrant removes her body from her tomb and installs her as his queen, much to the horror of everyone around him, including the Lady herself, who reappears as a ghost in order to inspire her lover to avenge her and return her body to its rightful location. Unlike Gloriana, who we only get to know as a character second-hand through Vindice and his descriptions of what she was like when she was alive, the Lady is depicted on stage firstly as a living person, then as a corpse, and finally as a ghost. Despite being a stock character in that she is nameless, the Lady is more than a simple representative figure of all womankind. Although she resembles earlier women prepared to die in the name of love such as Juliet, like persecuted female saints such as Saint Christine the Lady is bold, decisive, and unafraid to speak her mind. As in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, God is largely absent; his messages amount to no more than to two rumblings of thunder, passing away and leaving only 'silence'. Instead, the Lady takes up the saint's role and represents the divine to mankind, silenced neither in life nor death.[467] The Lady's righteous suicide, her virtuous fury at the desecration at her tomb, and her pleasure at the deadly judgement inflicted upon the Tyrant by the end of the play all point towards *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* as a staged, subversive recollection of Catholic hagiography.

Hagiographies of virgin female saints typically depict lustful local rulers and in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, The Tyrant, as his name suggests, aptly fills that role. He has usurped the rightful king, Govianus, and embodies unbridled and unnatural passion, both at a state level in his seizure of the throne, and at a personal level in his seizure of the Lady from her final resting place. The Tyrant's indifference as to whether the body he wants is living or

[467] *The Second Maiden's Tragedy,* ed. Anne Lancashire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 5.2.205. All subsequent references to this play will be given parenthetically.

not is hinted at when Govinaus confronts the Lady's father, Helvetius: Govianus threatens to 'have sent thy soul to a darker prison / Than any made of clay, and thy dead body / As a token to the lustful king thy master' (2.1.117-20). Govianus' description of the Tyrant as lustful clearly refers to his lust for the Lady, but the lack of specificity suggests that the Tyrant would be content with any body, even Helvetius' dead one.

Certainly, the Tyrant does not view death as a barrier to physical love. Death, in the view of the Tyrant, is simply something else to usurp.[468] He constructs death as an amorous masculine rival by whom he refuses to be cuckolded and the tomb which holds the Lady's body as a tower or prison in which his jealous rival has placed her. Neither the Lady's own wishes nor 'Death nor the marble prison my love sleeps in / Shall keep her body locked up from mine arms; / I must not be so cozened' (4.2 48-50). The Tyrant's jealousy rewrites his part in the play so that he is no longer the villain but the hero, a dark echo of a noble medieval knight come to slay a monster and rescue his fair love. At the Lady's tomb, the Tyrant urges the soldiers he has brought to 'Pierce the jaws / Of this cold, ponderous creature' (4.3.25-6), reconfiguring the grave as a foul beast in need of killing. The Tyrant partially echoes *Arcadia*'s Amphialus, a man also rebuffed by the one he loves and desperately rewriting himself into the role of knightly protector, rather than persecutor.

The tomb the Tyrant is attempting to break into would most likely have been displayed on the stage with an effigy of the Lady as part of the tomb lid, both because this type of funerary arrangement was 'fashionable at this time', according to Lancashire, and because it would serve as an anticipatory projection of the corpse of the Lady herself lying

[468] One of the greatest examples of a leader who refuses to let death get in the way of his plans is the eponymous protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (c. 1587). After the death of his wife Zenocrate in Part Two, Tamburlaine embalms her, but refuses to have her interred, ordering that her body be kept until he himself dies. Loretta Anna Jungbauer comments with regard to his own death: 'Tamburlaine does not regard death as an end but rather as a threshold leading to a new domain where, due to its vagueness, he might grow into the superhuman entity he aims to become'. See Loretta Anna Jungbauer,'Representation of Death in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great, Parts One and Two*', *Eger Journal of English Studies*, XIX (2019), 5–23 (p. 19) <DOI: 10.33035/EgerJES.2019.19.5>.

beneath the stone.[469] The Tyrant's statement that 'The monument woos me; I must run and kiss it' (4.3.9), supports the idea that the prop tomb was fashioned as part lady, an image which would emphasise the disturbing nature of the Tyrant's affections and increase the morbidity of the moment more than if he simply kissed a stone box. This moment also neatly foreshadows the end of the play and the Tyrant's unstoppable movement towards his own death through kissing the dead. The Tyrant also mistakes the moisture on the tomb for tears, remarking, 'Now trust me if the tears do not e'en stand / Upon the marble. What slow springs have I! / 'Twas weeping to itself before I came' (4.3.10-12). If the moisture on the tomb was to come from a weeping effigy, then this liquid would also serve to underscore the saintly nature of the Lady, recalling the weeping statues and icons which were common medieval signs of the miraculous and the presence of the saint, or the Virgin Mary.[470]

The Lady's reconfiguration as a stone effigy atop of her own tomb also reiterates the configuration of women and their chastity as buildings and monuments. In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the body of Lord Antonio's wife is described as 'a fair comely building newly fall'n / Being falsely undermined' (1.4.2-3), and the decision to avenge her death is justified in similar terms: 'Twere pity / The ruins of so fair a monument / Should not be dipped in the defacer's blood' (1.4.66-8). Here the tomb is not awash in blood, but wet with tears, though the monument of the Lady's body will eventually be dipped in poison to cut off the defacer's life blood. The Tyrant also describes the Lady's body in terms of masonry, calling her a 'sanctified building' (4.3.81), her pale corpse pallor transfigured into 'the monuments glister' (4.3.82) and her body one of 'death's palaces' (4.3.83). The Tyrant's true, repulsive desires are once more revealed, however, in the metaphor. If the Lady's body is a holy sepulchre, the

[469] Lancashire, p. 208.
[470] For some examples of weeping, bleeding icons of the medieval period see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011). Statues and images of saints that weep blood, oil, or tears still occur, though the Catholic Church takes a very sceptical approach to the phenomena.

Tyrant is not a noble knight tasked with guarding the place, but a thief and a squatter. Taking the Lady's body in his arms, the Tyrant remarks that 'Since thy life has left me, / I'll clasp the body for the spirit that dwelt in't, / And love the house still for the mistress' sake' (4.3.110-112); 'Thou art mine now, spite of destruction / And Govianus, and I will possess thee' (4.3.113-4). It is his need to own the Lady's body, to be her body's unwilling landlord and thus to spite both her own will and his rivals — Death and Govianus — that drive his actions rather than any compelling emotional or noble attachment. The Tyrant even goes so far as to make explicit comparison between his own selfish actions and those of King Herod with the corpse of his wife Mariam, referencing a story that was very popular during the Renaissance; of its retellings Elizabeth Cary's closet drama, *The Tragedy of Mariam* was probably the most-well known.[471] The Tyrant recollects that

> I once read of a Herod, whose affection
> Pursued a virgin's love, as I did thine,
> Who for the hate she owed him killed herself
> (As thou too rashly didst), without all pity.
> Yet he preserved her body dead in honey,
> And kept her long after her funeral.
>
> (4.3.115-120)

This Talmudic reference to Herod's preservation of the body of Mariam in honey embodies the inextricable intertwining of sweet and rotting, and recalls Samson's removal of honey from the carcass of a lion in the Book of Judges.[472] The Tyrant tries to justify his removal of

[471] For insight into Cary's play and the close relationship both her and her play had with contemporary writers of the period see Ramona Wray, 'Performing "The Tragedy of Mariam" and Constructing Stage History', *Early Theatre*, 18.2 (2015), 149-66.
[472] Judges 14.

the Lady and his own desires to preserve her as more noble than those of Herod in that he will have the Lady as a type of beautiful ornament in his court, rather than as a sticky, sacrilegious sex object. The soldiers he has brought with him to help penetrate the tomb and who function to puncture the high drama with irreverent humour sustain this correlation of the corpse and food, however, remarking as the Lady's body is pulled from her tomb that this is, to them, much 'Like a great city-pie brought to a table / Where there be many hands that lay about; / The lid's shut close when all the meat's picked out' (4.3.131-33). Christ in the tomb was the bread of life; the Lady, in a far less reverent metaphor, is a meat pie filling, yet this idea of a pie as a tomb was a common one of the time. Pies with lids were known as coffins, and the words are used interchangeably to mean the box or basket of the pie itself, as in the sixteenth-century cookbook *Epulario or The Italian Banquet* by Giovanni de Roselli, which was translated into English in 1598. One particular recipe for making a pie, which when cut open allows birds to fly out of it, as immortalised in the children's rhyme *Sing a Song of Sixpence*, instructs the cook to 'Make the coffin of a great Pie or pasty'.[473] There are similarities here to the corpse pies of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1590-3) and to Hamlet's description of his mother's bereavement and indecently rapid remarriage, where the 'funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables', both of which connect feasting and / on the dead with sexual immorality. There are also resonances with the motif of tasting holy places and people, discussed in Chapter One, and with the attempted cannibalisation of Sleeping Beauty by her mother-in-law in Chapter Two.[474] The Tyrant

[473] Giovanne de Rosselli, *Epulario or The Italian Banquet*, 2nd edn (London: Adam Islip, 1598), Image Five unnumbered page <http://ezphost.dur.ac.uk/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/books/epulario-italian-banquet-wherein-is-shewed-maner/docview/2248568347/se-2?accountid=14533> [accessed 1/03/2021]. In reference, perhaps, to its connections with corpses and coffins, in the first recorded written version of *Sing a Song of Sixpence* in 1744 it is four and twenty naughty boys, not blackbirds, that are baked in the pie.

[474] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and others, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2008), 1.2.179-80.

'cannot keep from sight of her so long. / I starve mine eye too much' (5.2.6-7), co-opting the language of hunger to legitimise his lust.

Whilst the Lady is visually compared to various foodstuffs, her actual appearance on stage and the management of this has provoked some debate amongst critics. The Tyrant admiringly calls her corpse 'one of the most beauteous sleepers / That ever lay so cold' (4.3.17-18), yet the practicalities of the situation call for a living boy to be dressed and to act as a dead woman, or for a prop dummy to be used instead. David M. Bergeron argues that 'obviously in staging this some sort of life-like effigy would be used, for at one point (V.ii) both the corpse and the ghost of the Lady are on the stage at the same time', going on to argue that *The Second Maiden's Tragedy,* in combination with *The Winter's Tale*, and the mock execution of Pamela and Philomela in Sidney's *Arcadia* , discussed in Chapter Three, would later influence the scene in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614) of the Duchess and the wax corpses of her children and Antonio.[475] Susan Zimmerman, on the other hand, disagrees. Referring to the production by the King's Men (c. 1611) when boy actor Richard Robinson played both the Lady and the Lady's ghost, she argues that it is 'possible, even likely, that in 5.2 Robinson appeared as corpse rather than ghost […] presumably he also represented the corpse in 4.3, the tomb scene with the Tyrant'.[476] I am inclined to agree with Zimmerman that the Lady's body in the tomb was played by a real actor rather than a prop, both because this choice would make it a more effectively horrifying moment on stage, and because there is enough time for the actor playing the Lady to play her corpse before reappearing as her ghost in the middle of the tomb. There is a pleasing continuity, but also significance, in the same actor playing 'dead' before the Tyrant, and only coming to 'life' or a semblance of it before her avenger, Govianus.

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[475] David M. Bergeron, 'The Wax Figures in The Duchess of Malfi', *Studies in English Literature*, *1500-1900*, 18.2 (Spring 1978), 331-339 (p. 332) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/450365> [accessed 09 February 2021].
[476] Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 122-123.

The Lady's appearance on stage as a ghost by her tomb has led to discussion of the religious implications of the act. Peter Marshall argues that Protestant theologists struggled to interpret reports of sightings of ghosts, variously categorising these events as catholic scams, the work of the devil, trick of the minds, or an imbalance of humours.[477] At the same time, early modern writers were more concerned with using ghosts as dramatic literary devices than with contributing to the discourse of the supernatural and its reinterpretation following the Reformation; Marshall notes that 'in the period 1560–1610, fifty-one ghosts were featured in twenty-six plays'.[478] Therefore, whilst the appearance of the Lady as a ghost is difficult to explain theologically, like his contemporaries, Middleton, as Andrea Stevens argues, 'appears less interested in explicitly advocating a coherent theology of death and resurrection than he is in exploiting the dramatic and theatrical possibilities of staging the soul's ongoing relationship to the body'.[479]

This relationship between soul and body has been forcefully disrupted by the Tyrant's immoral actions in removing the Lady from her place of rest. Her post-tomb life is entirely stage-managed by the Tyrant who now treats her as a living woman, clothing her to his tastes and engaging her in one-sided conversations. The Lady was '*all in white, stuck with jewels, and a great crucifix on her breast'* in the stage directions at the tomb in Act Four, but these have now been replaced with the Tyrant's irreligious treasures; he 'cause[s] her body to be decked / In all the glorious riches of our palace' (5.2.8-9). The Tyrant calls the Lady's corpse a 'blessed object' (4.3.59), treating her body as a holy relic which he 'could eternally stand thus and see' (4.3.61). His idolatry of the Lady and consideration of her as a saint, however, ignores many hagiographic and religious writings prohibiting the movement of saintly relics

[477] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 249-250. Oxford Scholarship Online.
[478] Marshall, p. 257.
[479] Andrea Ria Stevens, *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 133. Cambridge Core ebook.

without the permission of the saint and the consequences of doing so. Geary notes that 'In the most extreme of these accounts, the transfer was often presented as a theft, or more aptly as a kidnapping, which, like the contemporary practice of bride stealing, was carried out with the active assistance of the "victim"'.[480] The Tyrant views his retrieval of the Lady as the recouperation of his 'sweet lady' (4.3.86) by the one who loves her, and the Lady also acknowledges that she has been stolen away: 'The monument is robbed. Behold, I'm gone; / My body taken up' (4.4.61). Yet the Lady's later appearance to Govianus in order to recruit him into avenging the removal of her body from her tomb indicates that whilst the Tyrant may be stealing a bride, the Lady in question is not a willing participant. What the Tyrant views as a *translatio* is, in fact, the prelude to a negative miracle.

Interrupting Govianus' meditation on her tomb as a 'Chamber of peace / Where wounded virtue sleeps locked from the world' (4.4.5-6) the Lady informs him of her present absence — 'I am not here' (4.4.40) — in words that rework those of the angel at the tomb of Christ informing Mary that the body she seeks is not there.[481] Unlike Christ, the Lady has not risen of her own accord. Informing the astonished Govianus of her true location, she describes her body as being with the Tyrant

> at court
> In his own private chamber. There he woos me
> And plies his suit to me with as serious pains
> As if the short flame of mortality
> Were lighted up again in my cold breast;
> Folds me within his arms and often sets

[480] Geary, p. 173.
[481] Luke 24.6.

> A sinful kiss upon my senseless lip;
> Weeps when he sees the paleness of my cheek,
> And will send privately for a hand of art
> That may dissemble life upon my face
> To please his lustful eye.
>
> (4.4.66-76)

Making explicit the earlier implications of Gloriana's skull being connected to her spirit in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the Lady complains that her body is unwillingly courted by the Tyrant within his chambers, her description recalling the sexually immoral behaviour of Antiochus and his daughter in his chambers. The audience is not told whether the Lady senses that this is what is happening to her body, or whether she has seen it for herself, but it would make theological sense if the Lady could sense what was happening to her earthly remains, as well as increasing the horror of the moment. Her spirit may be separated from her body, but not from experiencing the sensations of the Tyrant touching her corpse, even as her body is incapable of reacting.

It is Govianus who must intervene for her. Unlike in other revenge tragedies, the Lady personally recruits Govianus from beyond the grave to seek retribution on her behalf, rather than the revenger acting out of a sense of his own wounded ego. In death, the Lady has lost none of her decisiveness and it seems likely that if she could rescue herself, she would. Her command to Govianus, however, that her 'rest is lost; thou must restore't again' (4.6.79), gives the possibility of redemption from his earlier failure to follow her wishes. The Tyrant's hiring of an artist to paint the Lady's corpse and 'hide death upon her face' (5.2.81) is ironically fulfilled by a disguised Govianus, though the Tyrant needs little help to 'run thus violently / Into the arms of death, and kiss destruction' (1.2.247-8).

In her discussion of cosmetics on the early modern stage Tanya Pollard argues that 'Kisses, like cosmetics, were a source of both fascination and anxiety in the Renaissance, in response to concerns about their corrosive effects on physiological, erotic, and spiritual boundaries'.[482] Govianus' painting of a corpse bluntly conveys the twofold problem of cosmetics: the horrors of what they can conceal and their inherently dangerous composition. Farah Karim-Cooper, however, disagrees with Pollard; she argues that Pollard's 'analysis of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* does not take into account the fact that the use of cosmetics as political medicine expunges its associations with moral impurity', contending that *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* engage with cosmetic moral discourse at the same time as both plays subvert it by using cosmetics to act 'as a political and spiritual restorative'.[483] The Tyrant, playing at being a doctor, who with his 'arms and lips / Shall labour life into her' (5.2.118-119), can only recognise his own sickness after he kisses the Lady's poisoned corpse, as though the poison restores some awareness that he is morally and physically corrupt: 'I talk so long to death, I'm sick myself' (5.2.121). The Tyrant's other recognition, that it is communication with the dead that is making him ill, though incorrect, reflects the changed theological stance on communicating with and on behalf of the dead. Despite speaking to the Lady's corpse throughout the play, he has never received a response, taking her silence as an invitation to kiss her instead:

> Madam! 'Tis I, sweet lady. Prithee speak!
> 'Tis thy love calls on thee- thy king, thy servant.
> No? Not a word? All prisoners to pale silence?
> I'll prove a kiss.

[482] Pollard, p. 107.
[483] Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 67, p. 69. Cambridge Core ebook.

(4.3.86-89)

The Lady's poisoned kiss, however, finally silences the Tyrant, cutting short his narrative and his ventriloquism of her own.

Kevin Crawford questions why Govianus, after being admitted in disguise, does not kill the Tyrant with his sword when they are alone, but instead '*chooses* to extract his revenge in a method that places the body of his lover in a metaphorical sexual embrace with another man, and in front of him as well'.[484] This argument, however, overlooks the fact that it is the Lady who first mentions that the Tyrant will request a cosmetologist for her, suggesting that this method is her idea, but also that through the orchestration of death by kiss, the Lady is able to be part of the revenge. If she is able to sense what happens to her body, this necrophilic kiss is not a further prostituting of her corpse, but a final opportunity for the Lady to repulse the Tyrant's sexual assault on her body, which she has been unable to do before. Thus, like Gloriana, but much more fully embodied, the Lady becomes the avenger although she is dead.

In an inversion of the return of Hermione, the Tyrant is 'mocked with art' (*The Winter's Tale*, 5.3.68). Govianus throws off his disguise and reveals himself, first so that his revenge may be suitably acknowledged, and second so that he can address the Tyrant as a 'sacrilegious villain' (5.2.126) and berate him for his crimes as a 'thief of rest, robber of monuments!' (5.2.127). Unusually, Govianus' complaints against the Tyrant are not primarily about his necrophilia, but about his disturbance of the Lady from her eternal slumber. The Tyrant's unnatural and unending lust is only a minor consideration after his crimes of waking the lady and disturbing her rest and peace of mind, and his covetousness in wanting to gaze

[484] Kevin Crawford, '"All his intents are contrary to man": Softened Masculinity and Staging in Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 16 (2003), 101-129 (pp. 114-115) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24322897> [accessed 20 July 2021].

on her and 'please the wickedness of thine eye' (5.2.130).[485] The Lady's reappearance at this point, however, shifts the male gaze from her abused corpse to her vengeful ghost. When she appears on stage to congratulate her 'truest love' (5.2.163) Govianus, the Tyrant is also able to see the ghost of the Lady for the first and last time as he dies. Naming her as 'Mortality's earthquake!' (5.2.154), the Tyrant endows the Lady with the ability to break his hold on life and his possessive imaginings of her as his own. The resonance of his words with the biblical description of the earthquake that occurs at the time of Christ's death places this moment as one of divine reckoning. The effect is further emphasised by the subsequent crowning of Govianus and the court's hailing of him as king, the noise of which the Tyrant transforms into more meteorological judgement: 'That thunder strikes me dead' (5.2.179). The thunder present here is only metaphorical, unlike the muted thunder of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, though it still functions to hail the actions of the revenger and to signal that the play exists within a world of divine omniscience and omnipresence, even if divine will is sometimes temporarily superseded by human action.

Despite the death of the villain, the ending of the play remains an uncomfortable one. The Lady disappears after commending Govianus for his vengeance, but returns once more at his declaration that he now wants the Lady as his corpse queen too:

> And since the body of that virtuous lady
> Is taken from her rest, in memory
> Of her admired mistress, 'tis our will
> It receive honour dead, as it took part
> With us in all afflictions when it lived.

[485] The Tyrant is the literary predecessor of the Grimm brothers' Prince, who orders his servants to carry round the body of Snow White so that he may look at her wherever he is in the castle.

> Here place her in this throne; crown her our queen,
> The first and last that ever we make ours,
> Her constancy strikes so much firmness in us,
> That honour done, let her be solemnly borne
> Unto the house of peace from whence she came
> As queen of silence.
>
> (5.2.195-205)

Govianus' desires for the body of the Lady are hinted at earlier in the play, after the Lady's suicide. Like Romeo, Govianus kisses the corpse of his beloved: 'I will kiss thee / After death's marble lip' (3.250-1). His desire to crown the Lady as his queen, however, contrasts acutely with the Tyrant's sexual motives and draws on the crowning of other corpses in earlier literary works, such as that of the eponymous heroine at the end of *Sophonisba*, and in historical legend in such as that of the dead Inês de Castro by Pedro I of Portugal. Like Leontes after the death of Hermione, Govianus will take no other wife. Whilst his urge to memorialise her absence in this way seems sweet and touching, and, as Andrea Stevens argues, 'Under the play's campy sensationalism thus lurks an unexpectedly hopeful story about the afterlife of love,' Govianus' desire to crown a dead woman queen is still unnatural and, more importantly, not wished by the Lady herself, whose body is still being carried around and made part of a court where she has no desire to be.[486] Govianus protests that the Lady 'need'st not mistrust me' (5.2.206) because he 'cannot reverence chastity too much' (5.2.209), fundamentally mistaking what she is concerned about — that her body will not be returned to its tomb, rather than the molestation of her corpse. Yet in the exclamative 'O' (5.2.205) that he uses to greet the 'blessed spirit' (5.2.205) of his love echoes the words of the

[486] Stevens, p. 134.

dying, lecherous Duke and suggest the thin line between the actions and impulses of the necrophiliac and those of the revenger.

Govianus' lengthy protestations are ultimately unconvincing to both audience and ghost, and the stage directions note that the Lady deliberately '*stays to go out with the body, as it were attending it*'. There is a sense in Govianus' last speech that he protests too much. After all, the audience knows he is capable of failing to fulfil the Lady's wishes through his earlier disobedience of her request that he kill her, and he has actually yet to fulfil the Lady's request that he restore her rest. Additionally, Govianus' delighted exclamation upon first seeing the Lady's ghost, 'If this be horror, let it never die!' (4.4.48), indicates his willingness to endure the macabre and the terrifying in order to be with the Lady, no matter what her physical state. The uncomfortable undercurrents that tie the Tyrant and Govianus together and link Vindice and the Duke are unconsciously echoed in what Govianus means to be words of reassurance to the Lady. He tells her that 'Thy body shall return to rise again, / For thy abuser falls, and has no pow'r / To vex thee farther now' (5.3.161-3), clearly indicating his belief in her resurrection at the day of Judgement. Beneath the Christian imagery, however, is the cynical suggestion that the Lady's body will rise again when the next abuser takes his place and she is once more taken from her tomb and paraded round the court, much as Govianus himself is now doing. On a metatextual level, the Lady will be forced to rise again each night the play is performed. She is made to return, cyclically, each time the motif of the sleeping corpse is reused by a new writer, making her rests short-lived.

Painting the Sleeping Corpse: The Futility of Resurrection in *The Duke of Milan* (1621)

The final play considered in this chapter is Philip Massinger's *The Duke of Milan*, a text that relies on Thomas Lodge's 1602 translation of the works of Jewish historian Josephus to rework of the story of Herod and Mariam. The play is also 'a blatant imitation of *Othello*'

according to Ruth Vanita, and in its final scene of a Duke being murdered by the kiss of a poisoned corpse, a reprise of both *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*.[487] Whilst the treatment of the motif in this work serves mostly to repeat what we have already seen in this chapter in the presentation of the use and abuse of the female sleeping corpse by the men around her, *The Duke of Milan* does reinsert what has been missing from these earlier Jacobean revenge tragedies, namely female solidarity in the face of male brutality. This solidarity may be brief and ultimately ineffective in its failure to stop the revenger or to really achieve anything of note, but its reappearance is important because of its echoes with the relationships between women and sleeping corpses in works such as *The Golden Legend*, *Eliduc*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

In Act Four, the eponymous Duke, Lodovico Sforza, acting on the deliberate misinformation of his brother-in-law Francisco, who seeks revenge for his spurned sister Eugenia, stabs his wife Marcelia to death in a fit of jealous rage. As the Duke's mind turns to madness upon learning his wife is in fact chaste and he has been deceived, his doctors are forced to pretend that the Duchess is only terribly hurt, rather than actually dead, and that they have administered her with a 'sleepy potion' to aid her recovery.[488] There are no Cerimons amongst the Duke's doctors, however, and acknowledging that 'The body too will putrify, and then / We can no longer cover the imposture' (5.2.135-6), Sforza's physicians recognise the futility of their short-lived actions: the Duke is going to work out eventually

[487] Ruth Vanita, 'Men Beware Men: Shakespeare's Warnings for Unfair Husbands', *Comparative Drama*, 28.2 (Summer 1994), 201-220 (p. 204) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41153689> [accessed 21 June 2021]. This recycling of texts and recognition of allusions to earlier plays was not only expected by the audience but also 'Part of the appeal of the play'. See Martin Wiggins, *The Assassin in Decline* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 193.

[488] Philip Massinger, *The Duke of Milan*, in *The Selected Plays of Philip Massinger*, ed. Colin Gibson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5.2.90. All subsequent references to this play will be given parenthetically. For an overview of Massinger's work and evolving critical attitudes to his writing, including his savaging by T.S. Eliot, see Rui Carvalho Homem, 'Philip Massinger: drama, reputation and the dynamics of social history' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 212-225.

that Marcelia is never going to wake up and his madness will return. Yet Sforza has already been on the cusp between sanity and madness throughout the play in both his passion for his wife and his belief that his doctors are 'earthly gods' (5.2.49) who know 'hidden secrets that restore / To life death-wounded men' (5.2.53-4). In that he is an analogue of King Herod, Sforza's unwavering faith in his physicians is unsurprising. After all, Herod in Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, upon being told by the messenger Nuntio that his wife's 'body is divided from her head', counters with the belief that 'Why, yet methinks there might be found by art / Strange ways of cure. Tis sure rare things are done / By an inventive head and a willing heart'.[489] Herod's inability to conceive of his wife's permanent death is presented as patently absurd. He has no recourse to medical counsel, viewing the resurrection of his wife as purely a matter of having only enough desire and aptitude to achieve a 'cure'. Yet Nuntio's plain dismissal of the King's wish, 'It is as possible it should be seen / That we should make the holy Abraham live, / Though he entombed two thousand years had been' (5.1.95-97), indicates what Herod is really asking for — a miracle. Certainly, re-attaching the head of a corpse to its body was not beyond the abilities of the divine: there are numerous hagiographical accounts of saints and martyrs reattaching their own heads, or carrying them round with them and of this dismemberment proving little hindrance to their lives.[490] Herod cannot ask for a miracle, however, because he has effectively killed his idol. Having treated Mariam, his 'heav'nly beauty' (5.2.243), with devotion in life, in death he has no one to turn to or who will plead for intervention for him. Likewise, Sforza has treated Marcelia as an idol throughout the play, much to the disgust of his side-lined mother and sister. Now, at her death

[489] Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington and others (London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 5.1.90 and 5.1.91-3. All subsequent references to this play will be given parenthetically.

[490] For a good overview of the numerous decapitated saints in medieval literature and their relation to the headless Green Knight, see Mary-Ann Stouck, 'Of Talking Heads and Other Marvels: Hagiography and Lay Piety in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Florilegium*, 17 (January. 2000), 59-72 <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/flor/article/view/15362> [accessed 01 / 03 / 2021].

bed, he makes his mother and sister kneel 'prostrate at her feet' (5.2.132) as he does likewise to 'confess' (5.2.114) his sins and fit a suitable punishment for himself in Hell, recommending that the 'cursed hand and arm that guided / The wicked steel, I'll have them, joint by joint, / With burning irons sear'd off, which I will eat' (5.2.126-128). Sforza's cannibalistic division of himself is an inversion of his desire to see Marcelia whole once more, and places him within a long tradition of cannibalism (whether of the self or of others) presented as an act of repentance and retribution, particularly in relation to accusations of adultery.[491] His cannibalistic fantasies are interrupted, however, by his doctor's warning that he will wake the 'sleeping' Marcelia and then by the arrival of Francisco, who is disguised as a Jewish doctor, as well as Francisco's sister, Eugenia, disguised as his assistant.[492]

Francisco is an honest charlatan and readily admits to the Duke's friend Pescara that he cannot make Marcelia live again as he is 'no god' (5.2.140). What he can do is preserve her in such a way that she will look alive:

> I'll work the senseless trunk t'appear
> To him as it had got a second being,
> Or that the soul that's fled from't, were call'd back,
> To govern it again. I will preserve it
> In the first sweetness, and by a strange vapour,
> Which I'll infuse into her mouth, create

[491] See, for example, the Young Queen whose husband forces her to eat her lover in Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's collaborate seventeenth-century play *The Bloody Banque*t, the consumption of the adulterer by the twelve women he has seduced in the anonymous *lais Ignaurés,* Tale 4.9 of Bocaccio's *Decameron* where the lover's heart is unknowingly eaten by the adulterous wife, or even Count Oringle's attempt to force Enide to eat at her wedding feast whilst the body of her husband Erec lies on the dining room table in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*.

[492] Francisco's disguise as a Jewish doctor is probably a remnant from the tale as a record of Jewish history. Transposed to an Italian court, however, it appears to be antisemitic and connects uncomfortably with baseless accusations against Jews in the medieval period of blood libel and interference with gentile corpses, discussed in Chapter One in relation to Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale*.

> A seeming breath. I'll make her veins run high too,
> As if they had true motion.
>
> (5.2.142-149)

Francisco, even in his disguise as a doctor and role as revenger, is honest about his inability to resurrect the dead and leaves miraculous healing for divine intervention. Instead, his production of life makes him less a doctor and more a theatrical prop maker, turning Marcelia's corpse into an automaton that is unable to rot, breathes, and appears to have pumping blood. Francisco's medicine is cosmetology, yet ironically this substitution of make-up for medicine is what Sforza has unknowingly asked for, when he remarks that the physicians looking after Marcelia 'have a patient / On whom to express the excellence of art' (5.2.54-5). Francisco is a blunter kind of Paulina in his emphasis on his doctoring as art, without magic or miracle. In his support of Francisco, Pescara also stresses the theatricality of medicine, remarking that Sforza's 'physicians are / Mere voice, and no performance' (5.2.163-4). As Tanya Pollard notes, 'In the effort to revive Marcelia, art competes with, and ultimately replaces, religion, as it does in the idolatrous attachment to the painted corpse both here and in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*'.[493] Francisco's art will literally turn a body into a sleeping corpse, one unable to wake, but with all the seeming attributions of a sleeper — breath, motion, and internal warmth — caught eternally on the cusp of waking.

Francisco's solution to Marcelia's death is translated, however, into an act of Christian marvel. Pescara tells the Duke that 'I have found / A man that can do wonders' (5.2.164-5), calling his work a 'miracle' (5.2.168), and Sforza, believing the disguised Francisco to actually be helping cure the Duchess, calls him 'my good angel' (5.2.168). In Lussurioso's words, Francisco has, however, only 'rubbed hell o'er with honey' (*Revenger's*

[493] Pollard, p. 112.

Tragedy, 2.2.22). As with Mariam, the corpse of the Lady, and Gloriana's skull, Francisco's art only conceals the truth of death and acts as a vehicle through which to express his revenge. Painting her cheeks, lips, hands, and finally using on her mouth 'A precious antidote old ladies use / When they would kiss, knowing their gums are rotten' (5.2.190-1), Francisco poisons the corpse, with misogynistic side commentary.

In contrast, Eugenia, the actual wounded party, is horrified by the actions of her brother and is sorry Marcelia is dead, 'She never injur'd me' (5.1.34). Eugenia recognises that the real villain of the play is Sforza and that her quarrel is not with the woman he chose instead of her. Likewise, she vehemently disagrees with her brother's choice to interfere with Marcelia's corpse: 'to tyrannise upon the dead / Is most inhuman' (5.2198-9). They are her last words in the play and remake Francisco into a type of the Tyrant, one who has doubly victimised Marcelia in both life and death in the name of justice for his sister, but who utterly fails to take her wishes into account. Once again, the ego of the revenger is more important than the reasons why he has avenged, a point underscored when, as his disguise is about to be revealed by another, he cuts off their speech in order to reveal himself and to eulogise his successful plan:

GRACCHO: I am out of breath,
But this is-
FRANCISCO: Spare thy labour, fool, - Francisco.

(5.2.219)

Eugenia's objections come too late to stop her brother, but the fact that she registers any objection at all increases her nobility and restores the idea of sisterhood to the motif of the sleeping corpse. Ronald Huebert argues that 'Eugenia's influence has the effect of

transforming Marcelia into another forsaken woman (in a metaphorical sense) and into another feminist (at least in embryo)', and while this latter point is debateable, Eugenia and Marcelia are bound together in female solidarity by the poor treatment of the men who claim to love them, though it has no effect on the ultimate outcome of their lives.[494] Eugenia ends her life in a convent on Sforza's dying orders where he hopes she will pray for his soul, in perhaps a more realistic ending to the narrative of one man loved by two women so positively concluded in *Eliduc*. In the convent at least, Eugenia can be embraced into a sorority of women without the intervention of men, whilst Sforza is reduced to 'ashes' (5.2.261).

These ashes are both literal and metaphorical. Having kissed what he thinks is simply his sleeping wife, Sforza tastes the poison, only to cry, 'O now I feel / An Aetna in my entrails!' (5.2.245-6), the exclamative 'O' paralleling the Duke's cry of agony in *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Earlier in the play Sforza has attempted to justify his request that his wife be killed should he die by comparing his situation to that of 'Indian princes, [who] when they die, / Are cheerfully attended to the fire / By the wife, and slave, that living they lov'd best' (2.1.361-3). Now it is Sforza experiencing such a metamorphosis in the burning effects of the poison as he accompanies Marcelia to the grave. Love and lust are frequently depicted as fiery and all consuming, and this play is not the first to reference characters feeling Aetna's heat.[495] Sforza's internal combustion and his metaphorical transfiguration once more reflect the close relationship between ruler and landscape as embodied in the *Arcadia*'s Basilius, in this case translating Sforza's unstable rulership and violent, devastating passions into a deadly intestinal eruption. His courtiers also recognise the political instability he has created through his actions, concluding that 'there's no trust / In a foundation that is built on

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[494] Ronald Huebert, '"An Artificial way to Grieve": The Forsaken Woman in Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ford', *ELH*, 44.4 (Winter, 1977), 601-621 (p. 613) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.2307/2872427>.

[495] For numerous examples of love and lust being portrayed as hot and fiery experiences see Lawrence Babb, 'The Physiological Conception of Love in the Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama', *PMLA*, 56.4 (December, 1941), 1020-1035 <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.2307/459016>.

lust' (5.2.268-269). Unlike Sforza, who refuses to acknowledge the realities of life and death, Pescara and the court refuse to attempt to bring Sforza back to life. Pescara remarks that 'It is in vain to labour / To call him back' (5.2.265-6), a comment that indicates that they are unable to restore Sforza to life, but also that they are unwilling to bring him back, it being much less 'labour' to begin afresh. Instead, Sforza will remain as an 'example' (5.2.267) of poor leadership and poor emotional governance to both the Milanese court and to the audience, whilst Marcelia will be able finally to rest quietly in a tomb. Francisco's future off stage execution, meanwhile, demonstrates what Bowers argues is the play's 'refusal to give a sympathetic gloss to a villainous revenge made for a good cause' and the presumption of the revenger to enact what should be Heaven's prerogative.[496]

Curiously, Sforza's reference to Aetna connects the final moments of this revenge tragedy back to hagiography. Amongst her many divine attributes, Saint Agatha was well-known for her ability to protect the faithful against fire. As a result of the proximity of her shrine in Catania to the Mt. Etna, she was particularly credited with the ability to prevent eruptions of the volcano and to divert the flow of its lava. As Paul Oldfield notes, these miracles were remarked upon by medieval chroniclers including Roger Howden and Gervase of Tilbury, and medieval Christians saw the saint as emblematic of 'goodness and purity in a landscape of hell, purgatory, sinister natural forces and pagan communities'.[497] Protestant theology also invoked Etna. Peter Marshall records that 'Protestant theologians […] were not above recycling graphic medieval vision literature, or, like Odilo of Cluny in the tenth century, adducing the roarings of volcanoes like Vesuvius and Etna as evidence of the fate awaiting the damned'.[498] It is no coincidence that Middleton has his Italian Duke reference a

[496] Bowers, p. 194. Bowers points out that this moral is explicitly stated by the Judge in Massinger's *The Fatal Dowry* (1619) and staged in *The Unnatural Combat* (1621) where the villain Malefort Senior is killed by a bolt of lightning. See Bowers, pp. 191-194.
[497] Paul Oldfield, 'The Medieval Cult of St Agatha of Catania and the Consolidation of Christian Sicily', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* 62.3 (July 2011), 439-456 (p. 455) <doi:10.1017/S0022046911000844>.
[498] Marshall, p. 191.

volcano well known for its theological connotations to the female saint connected with it, but transplants its eruptions to Sforza's innards where he has made a hellish emotional landscape for himself. Having killed the saint he created of his wife, he has no recourse to divine help, and so must metaphorically burn instead.

The Lingering Ghosts of Hagiography and the Sleeping Corpse in the Seventeenth Century

Jacobean theatre does not kill off the sleeping corpse motif, any more than the Jacobean era sees the disappearance of saints or the representation of their lives, on stage or in print. Instead, Jacobean writers mediate the past by rewriting *vitae* into the genres of romance, parody, and revenge tragedy. Gina Di Salvo discusses how Thomas Deloney's *The Gentle Craft* (1597) and William Rowley's *A Shoemaker, A Gentleman* (c. 1618) 'reworked the vitae of SS Crispin and Crispianus into separate romances'.[499] Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* (c. 1620), meanwhile, presents the martyrdom of Saint Dorothea, a virgin saint who appears in Osbern Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*: the play is, as Jane Degenhardt acknowledges, a 'seemingly controversial adaptation of a medieval virgin martyr legend, a genre that was largely suppressed by the English Reformation'.[500] Critical response is divided as to how to interpret the drama. Degenhardt sees the play as using a model of Catholic martyrdom which stresses female virginity and sexual inviolability to resist the threat of Islamic conversion and the Ottoman Empire. Thomas Moretti, on the other hand, argues that 'the play […] asked audiences to evaluate images based on general religious affiliation (Christian or pagan), to be tolerant of mounting ceremonialist sentiments, and to enjoy

[499] Gina M. Di Salvo, 'Saints' Lives and Shoemakers' Holidays: The Gentle Craft and the Wells Cordwainers' Pageant of 1613', *Early Theatre*, 19.2 (2016), 119–138 (p. 120) <http://dx.doi.org/10.12745/et.19.2.2706.>.
[500] Jane Hwang Degenhardt, 'Catholic Martyrdom in Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martir* and the Early Modern Threat of "Turning Turk"', *ELH*, 73.1, (Spring 2006), 83-117 (p. 83) <DOI: 10.1353/elh.2006.0001>.

vestiges of traditional religion that made for terrific theater'.[501] Nova Myhill, however, proposes that *The Virgin Martyr*'s 'representation of Dorothea's martyrdom as simultaneously spiritually authentic and theatrically constructed […] suggests that either interpretation depends upon the audience's choice of the type of spectacle they are witnessing'.[502] Whilst the play offers a Protestant version of a Catholic hagiography, ultimately 'the play suggests that 'making death a miracle' is finally an interpretive rather than a performative act'.[503] Jacobean saints and sleeping corpses may appear on stage, but in being reworked into new, acceptable versions of the motif they are held at a distance, inextricably tied to the unacceptable arts of 'sorcery, conjuring, and necromancy' and necrophilia as Helen Parish identifies.[504] The sleeping corpse is also explicitly offered as entertainment through theatrical spectacle. Peter Marshall gives the example of an anti-Catholic pamphlet from 1624, which presents the appearance of Saint Lucy to a young woman as part of an inheritance scam run by a group of Jesuits. Marshall notes that John Gee, the writer of the pamphlet, was unimpressed with the vision because

> popish apparitions displayed poor production values: always a woman 'arrayed in white, white, white … white from heaven, and white from purgatory … Apparitions from the dead might be seen farre cheaper at other Play-houses. As for example, the ghost in Hamlet, Don Andreas ghost in Hieronimo.[505]

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[501] Thomas J. Moretti, 'Via Media Theatricality and Religious Fantasy in Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* (1622)', *Renaissance Drama*, 42.2 (Fall 2014), 243-270 (p. 244) <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1086/678141>.
[502] Nova Myhill, 'Making Death a Miracle: Audience and the Genres of Martyrdom in Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr'*, *Early Theatre*, 7.2 (2004), 9-31 (p. 9) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43499226> [accessed 06 April 2021].
[503] Myhill, p. 27.
[504] Helen Parish, '"Impudent and abominable fictions": rewriting saints' lives in the English Reformation', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32 (2001), 45-65 (p. 47) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2671394> [accessed 16 June 2021]. Parish focuses her argument on the sixteenth-century rewriting of the 10th century Saint Dunstan into a magician and servant of the Devil.
[505] Marshall, p. 244.

To that list he could have added the ghost of the Lady in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, and the spirit of Gloriana spiritually tied to her skull in *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Govianus' assertion, ''Tis time the spirit of my love took rest; / Poor soul, 'tis weary, much abused and toiled' (*The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, 5.2.94-5), applies as much to the Lady as construct as to her ghost, and to the constant rewriting of the motif of the sleeping corpse over the centuries.

Conclusion

In Oxford, 1650, twenty-two year old Anne Greene was charged with killing her unborn child. Though she protested she had miscarried the foetus, she was found guilty and subsequently executed by hanging. Her corpse was given to physicians at Oxford University for dissection, but when the coffin was opened, she was 'observed to breath[e]'.[506] Consequently, the doctors

> ordered some to rub and chafe the extreme parts of her body […] in the mean time, powring in a spoonful or two of the cordiall water […] they caused her neck, and also her temples to be anointed with confortative oyles and spirits […] and ordered an heating odoriferous Clyster to be cast up in her body, to give heat and warmth to her bowels.
>
> (p. 3)

Thanks to the quick response of the physicians, Anne revived.

Anne's story, printed in a pamphlet by Richard Watkins as *Newes from the Dead* (1651), defies easy genre classification. The application of oils, hot drinks, rubbing, and other medical interventions to Anne's body by the physicians has remarkable parallels with Gower's description of Cerimon reviving Apollonius' wife, and the story could therefore be read as an exemplum against lust. It can also, however, be read as a *vita*. Watkins records that the prosecutor, Sir Thomas Read, dies three days after Anne's execution. Though Watkins restrains himself from viewing this as a negative miracle, remarking that 'hee was an old

[506] Richard Watkins, *Newes From the Dead* (Oxford: Leonard Lichfield, 1651), p. 2. Wellcome Collection Online. After the account of Anne's recovery, the rest of the pamphlet is made up of collected poetry commemorating the event from various writers. All subsequent references to this text will be given parenthetically.

man, and such Events are not too rashly to be commented on' (p. 7), his authorial interjection quelling the possibility that Read was struck down by God speaks strongly to a belief in direct and powerful divine intervention. Watkins concludes his account of Anne's resurrection by noting that

> within the space of a Moneth, was she wholly recovered: and in the same Room where her Body was to have been dissected for the satisfaction of a few, she became a greater wonder, being reviv'd, to the satisfaction of multitudes that flocked thither daily to see.
>
> (p. 6)

The description of Anne as a 'greater wonder' reminds the reader once again of the Catholic miracle tales Sidney so disparaged as 'lying wonders'. Cristina Bacchilega notes that 'fairy tales are also referred to, though less commonly, as "wonder tales" because […] they emerge in part from the secularization of medieval miraculous tales'.[507] Warner defines wonder as 'compounded of dread and desire at once, attraction and recoil, producing a thrill, the shudder of pleasure and of fear. It names the marvel, the prodigy, the surprise as well as the responses they excite, of fascination and inquiry'.[508] Viewed in this way, *Newes from the Dead* becomes a wonder tale, a fairy story. This definition also allows for the literature considered in this thesis to be viewed as a collection of wonder tales, in that they amaze, and horrify, in equal measure. Dread and desire can be found in the presentation of the powers of sleeping corpses in hagiography; the casual justification of the rape of a sleeping corpse by a lover in medieval romance; the unexpected body horror of the sleeping corpse in pastoral romance;

[507] Cristina Bacchilega, *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), p. 194.
[508] Marina Warner, 'Introduction', in *Wonder Tales: Six Stories of Enchantment*, ed. Marina Warner (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 3-17 (p. 3).

the uncomfortable family reunions in Shakespeare's late romances; or the painful but justified deaths of the villains of Jacobean revenge tragedy. Considering and compiling this range of genres has been necessary in order to chart the transformation of the sleeping corpse motif from biblical sources, but it has also been important to offer close readings of comparative texts across disciplines so as to challenge established critical viewpoints and open up new areas of thought. Bruce Rosenburg has questioned why, despite the clearly intertwined nature of fairy tale and medieval literature, the study of the former has been seen as a lesser priority by scholars, resulting in so little being written that combines the two disciplines.[509] This division, however, speaks to a larger problem across academic study which can often be insular within fields. Modern scholarship can also be uncomfortable or dismissive of particular works that are studied, as Alicia Spencer-Hall has discussed in relation to hagiography and the language used by scholars.[510] In considering how *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* narratives function in conjunction with traditional or canonical literary texts, this thesis has attempted to engage in a dialogue across time and disciplines, whilst being aware of the prejudices that can be brought into scholarship, particularly when the stories being studied might seem strange or unusual to contemporary thinking.

These prejudices can include an unconscious attempt to flatten any nuance in relation to gender or to make hasty assumptions about what stories from centuries ago might say about women. It is easy to argue that *Sleeping Beauty* and the sleeping corpse motif are a product of the patriarchy, and it is undeniably true that many of these narratives do contain misogyny. In a poem from *Newes from the Dead*, Robert Sharrock, a fellow of New College Oxford, concludes with the lines: 'Well, for this trick Ile never so be led / As to believe a

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[509] Bruce A. Rosenburg, *Folklore and Literature: Rival Siblings* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 7-24. Cross collaboration across fields can be difficult when folk and fairy tale scholarship is often a divided discipline itself. See Alan Dundes, 'The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 78. 308 (April-June, 1965), 136-142.

[510] Alicia Spencer-Hall, 'The Horror of Orthodoxy: Christina Mirabilis, Thirteenth-Century "Zombie" Saint', *Postmedieval*, 8.3 (2017) 352-375 <DOI:10.1057/pmed.2016.19>.

Woman, though shee's dead'.[511] Sharrock's smug amusement at what he perceives to be the inability of women to do anything, even die, without deceit certainly feeds into one aspect of the sleeping corpse motif where women are seen as inferior, devious, and sinful. As this thesis has demonstrated, however, the position of women within the motif is much more complex. At the same time as *The Golden Legend*, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, or 'The Second Nun's Tale' place women in positions of authority, medieval romances such as *Perceforest* relegate them to requiring rescue, or in *The Squire of Low Degree*, being the butt of the joke. Though many sleeping corpse narratives contain rape, the women at their centres become the heads of powerful dynasties, and often it is their maternal abilities and instincts which save them, rather than the intervention of men. Pastoral romances like *Arcadia*, *Endymion*, or *Endimion* emphasise and subvert the expectations of women as passive sleepers and transform male sleeping corpses into grotesque parodies of their female antecedents or trap them in eternal slumbers. Even in texts where women are reduced by the power and position of men, there is still room in narratives such as *Eliduc*, *The Winter's Tale*, or *The Duke of Milan* for female solidarity, companionship, support, and the possibility of queer space.[512]

It is also important to note that many of the lynchpins of the motif, which have provoked so much controversy in contemporary culture, are absent or subverted in the earliest sleeping corpse narratives. A kiss of true love, or a happy ending that concludes with marriage, is not an essential component of the motif. These naïve romantic symbols replace divine or medical intervention, but also indicate an assumption by later writers that the sleeping corpse is a body that needs to be woken, or that it is a body without agency. Many of these changes speak to wider cultural concerns about the role of the saints in Christianity and

[511] Watkins, p. 8.
[512] See, for example, Lewis C. Seifert, 'Introduction: Queer(ing) Fairy Tales', *Marvels & Tales*, 29.1 (2015), 15-20.

the position of women, as seen by the need for Jacobean playwrights to distance and subvert the components of the motif in *The Revenger's Tragedy* or *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*. By the twentieth century, the demand for writers to wake *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White* with a kiss to redeem them from their sleeping corpse state also emphasises the position of these narratives as now firmly for children, and thus the need for a happy ending.

Ultimately, the willingness of writers to retell and rewrite 'mouldy tales' is because we are still asking the same questions around life and death that medieval people were. Sleeping corpse narratives cannot provide any definitive answers concerning the quantifiability of life, what happens to us after we die, whether it is possible to postpone the moment of death, or whether we can speak with the departed. What these narratives can do, however, is offer readers ways in which death can be negotiated, if not overcome. In all of these narratives, love, (divine, romantic, familiar, or vengeful) allows for time to be paused and for the natural ending of things to be delayed for a little while.[513]

Culturally, the obsession with these types of narratives at a fundamental level speaks to the idea of, and desire for, immortality. In a world increasingly beset by the catastrophic effects of climate change, war, natural disaster, and, in the past months, global pandemic, stories which revolve around the preservation of a person and the potential that they might come back despite their apparent death entertain, but more importantly, offer hope. In many ways these are the same concerns that people in medieval England had. Whilst in contemporary society hope often lacks the religious component at the heart of early sleeping corpse narratives, the desire to be remembered, and in being remembered return in some way to those who love us despite death, is a very natural and very human response.

[513] Questions of this kind only become more complex with advances in medical understanding and technology, often leading to difficult decisions for medical and judicial authorities.

As *Newes from the Dead* demonstrates, neither interest in the return of the dead or the motif of the sleeping corpse disappear with the decline of Jacobean revenge tragedies on the stage. In the following centuries, as Alexandra Walsham and other critics have shown,

> assumptions about miracles, prodigies and providence, ghosts, angels, demons, and other inhabitants of the invisible world, survived and adapted to the intellectual and cultural challenges of a period immortalized as the "Age of Reason", in a manner that clouds the very concept of Enlightenment itself. [514]

The 'lying wonders' of Catholic miracle stories become subsumed into a broader tradition of the sleeping corpse motif as entertainment, but also of scientific and theological enquiry. Tourism replaces pilgrimage. Spiritualists replace saints.[515] The fear of being buried alive grips the public imagination, fed by lurid accounts by anatomists, scientists, and fiction writers.[516] Ultimately, the motif of the sleeping corpse finds its way into gothic horror narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Gothic narratives draw on the past and have, as Adam Bryant Marshall points out, their 'roots in medieval romance', with this relationship being

> reinforced by the typical gothic tale's setting and plot: such tales usually take place in "an antiquated or seemingly antiquated place" (such as "a castle'" or "a graveyard"),

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[514] Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation and "The Disenchantment of the World" Reassessed', *The Historical Journal*, 51.2 (2008), 497-528 (p. 501) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20175171> [accessed 03 August 2021].
[515] 'The feminine medium, in its corpse-like state, could gain access to the realm of the dead and enter into a dialogue with the deceased'. See Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 4.
[516] For an overview of the many real and fictional cases of premature burial and revivification see: Larry Dossey, 'The Undead: Botched Burials, Safety Coffins, and the Fear of the Grave', *EXPLORE*, 3.4 (July/August 2007), 347-354, Fiona Subotsky, *Dracula for Doctors: Medical Facts and Gothic Fantasies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 95-96, and David Keyworth, 'Was the Vampire of the Eighteenth Century a Unique Type of Undead-Corpse?', *Folklore*, 117.3 (December 2006), 241-260.

> and involve the unearthing of "secrets from the past...that haunt the characters" in the form of ghosts, specters or monsters that rise from within the antiquated space. [517]

As a genre, gothic literature is obsessed with the question of what it means to be alive, and the often liminal state of the living and the dead.[518] It is unsurprising then that the motif of the sleeping corpse is transformed by the genre into one of the most famous literary monsters ever created: the vampire.[519] The fatal kiss of the corpse in Jacobean revenge drama becomes the vampire's sharp toothed bite, whilst in a complete reversal of the holy sleeping dead, the vampire is characterised as a figure rejected by God and repulsed by holy items such as crosses. A creature that must sleep in its coffin, the vampire makes pleasant euphemisms about the sleeping dead into a frightening reality. John Kerrigan argues that the vampire 'highlights in revenge tragedy horrors of a kind which rationalistic analysis plays down. For a start, vampires epitomize the vengefulness of the "undead"'.[520] The vampire takes the negative miracles of saints to new and depraved extremes. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) would be directly influenced by earlier versions of the sleeping corpse such as *Cymbeline*: Sophie Duncan traces how Henry Irving's 1896 production of the play, specifically the scene of Giacomo creeping out of the chest to loom over the sleeping Innogen, helped to shape the characterisation of Lucy Westernra. She notes that both women 'experience death and rebirth within texts saturated with liminal states of being: sleep, mesmerism, life-in-death, the afterlife, reanimation, and transitions between the above', with both texts centring around the idea that 'the dead refuse to stay dead. As in *Dracula*, the only way to ensure death is by

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[517] Marshall, p. 34. Marshall quotes H.P. Lovecraft, who points to the influence of the incident between Sir Launcelot and Hallewes on Western horror writers. See H.P. Lovecraft, *The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature*, ed. S.T. Joshi, 2nd edn (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2012), p. 31, quoted in Marshall, p. 46.
[518] For some of the Victorian novels which feature the return of the female figure from the dead, and the use of contemporary medical science by their authors to justify this, see Andrew Mangham, 'Life After Death: Apoplexy, Medical Ethics and the Female Undead', *Women's Writing*, 15.3 (2008) 282-299.
[519] Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film* (New York: Camden House, 2010).
[520] John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 38. Oxford Scholarship Online.

beheading, the ultimate fate of the Undead Lucy and Cloten'.[521] Matthew Bourne would also play with the idea of vampires and sleeping corpses when he put them in his critically acclaimed 2013 ballet of *Sleeping Beauty* in a fusion of gothic, fairy tale, romance, and hagiographic tropes. Sleeping Beauty is cursed by vampires rather than fairies, and her love interest chooses to become a vampire in order to wait out her century of sleep.

The motif continues to regularly crop up in modern media, whether in the horror of Norman Bates treating the mummified corpse of his mother as alive in *Psycho* (1960), or the black comedy of *Weekend at Bernie's* (1989), with Larry and Richard desperately manipulating the corpse of their boss in order to maintain the fiction that he is not dead, a decision which leads to an unintended necrophilic encounter between the corpse and his living girlfriend.[522] The huge success of series such as Stephenie Meyer's 2005 *Twilight Saga,* and the resurgence of an interest in zombies in the twenty-first century, including in the adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Warm Bodies* (2013) shows that appetites for narratives which play with ideas of mortality and how human beings can truly quantify death have not gone away. Even video games such as *Persona 5: Royal* (2019) or *The Witcher Three: Wild Hunt* (2015) include moments where characters who are believed to be dead miraculously return to life, or in the case of *Persona 5: Royal,* are cast into an eternal slumber should the player fail to beat the final boss.

Snow White and *Sleeping Beauty* continue to remain cultural touchpoints. Ironically, the man who did so much to iconize their stories for twentieth-century audiences, Walt Disney, is subject to his own sleeping corpse conspiracy theory, which claims Disney is stored under the California *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride, having been cryogenically frozen

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[521] Sophie Duncan, 'Shakespeare and vampires at the *fin de siècle*', *Feminist Theory*, 17.1 (2016), 63–82, (p. 75) <DOI: 10.1177/1464700115620861>.

[522] For some of the myriad ways the motif has appeared in contemporary media which are too numerous to mention individually here see: <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/FauxDeath> [accessed 03 August 2021].

after his death in 1966 in order to be reawakened in the future.[523] Whilst the theory has no basis in truth, one of Disneyland's other attractions, Snow White's Enchanted Wish, has been the focus of recent controversy. After being closed for over a year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the park reopened on April 30th 2021, with the ride in question upgraded with new lighting, animatronics, but more importantly a new ending, where Snow White was woken with a kiss by Prince Charming. Two reviewers of the ride mentioned that they found this problematic, arguing that 'It's hard to understand why the Disneyland of 2021 would choose to add a scene with such old fashioned ideas of what a man is allowed to do to a woman'.[524] Their conclusion, however, was that the 'final scene is beautifully executed — as long as you're watching it as a fairy tale, not a life lesson'.[525] This measured review predictably drew incandescent responses from a variety of media personalities, including the ever sanguine Piers Morgan, who argued that anyone who disagreed with the non-consensual kiss 'would prefer for Snow White to be dead, and that seems a highly "problematic" place for these supposed feminist warriors to find themselves'.[526]

Clearly, *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty* will continue to remain flashpoints around arguments of consent and the kinds of stories deemed appropriate to tell children for a while to come. As this thesis has shown though, this debate is simply the latest iteration of a narrative that has continued to change over centuries. No doubt future generations of writers will continue to transform the motif, using it to challenge, interrogate, and subvert ideas of

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[523] For further details of the conspiracy and its discreditation see David Blatty, *Is Walt Disney's Body Frozen?* (2020) <https://www.biography.com/news/walt-disney-frozen-after-death-myth> [accessed 20 May 2021].
[524] Julie Tremaine and Katie Dowd, *Disneyland's new Snow White ride adds magic, but also a new problem* (2021) <https://www.sfgate.com/disneyland/article/2021-04-snow-whites-enchanted-wish-changes-witch-16144353.php> [accessed 20 May 2021] (para. 9 of 10).
[525] Tremaine and Dowd, para.10 of 10.
[526] Piers Morgan, 'Leave Snow White's Prince alone, you insufferable woke brats - I do not consent to you cancelling him as a predator for kissing her to save her life. Love, PIERS MORGAN xxx', *Daily Mail*, 6 May 2021, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9546003/PIERS-MORGAN-Leave-Snow-Whites-Prince-insufferable-woke-brats.html> [accessed 7 May 2021] (para. 38 of 46).

gender, community, and even death itself. As this thesis has shown, the motif of the sleeping corpse never truly dies.

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