

The Book, the Mirror, and the Living Dead: necromancy and the early modern period

Sean Lovitt

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Abstract

The Book, the Mirror and the Living Dead: Necromancy and the Early Modern Period

In early modern England, necromancy was a general term applied to the practice of black magic. Manuals for summoning demons, the dead, and other reprobate apparitions were available to the practitioners of this art, and descriptions of necromancy appeared in other genres ranging from theory to fiction. What the necromancer practiced in secret became a popular narrative made up of elements gleaned from the writings of supporters and detractors of magic. Orthodox Christians, Occultists, and skeptics all denounced the activities of necromancers by publishing descriptive accounts. These divergent bodies of literature inadvertently diffused a legend of the necromancer into public discourse. This thesis explores the curiosity and wonder that these narratives of necromancy provoked as they were staged in the theater. I examine Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* as the culmination of public concepts of necromancy and, in turn, I elucidate what this play has to say about the necromantic characteristics—specifically, taboo interests and excessive accumulation—of the surrounding culture. Likewise, I investigate the presence of necromancy in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in order to analyze the fantastic characteristics of the Ghost and its influence on Hamlet's actions in the play. The fantasy of necromancy—of delving into taboo subjects and bringing forth aberrant apparitions—materializes in drama, articulating curiosity and wonder as affects rather than as the technical instruments of epistemology.

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The Cabinet: imagining necromantic manuals in John Dee's library

They seek neither truth nor likelihood; they seek astonishment.
They think metaphysics is a branch of the literature of fantasy (Borges xvi)

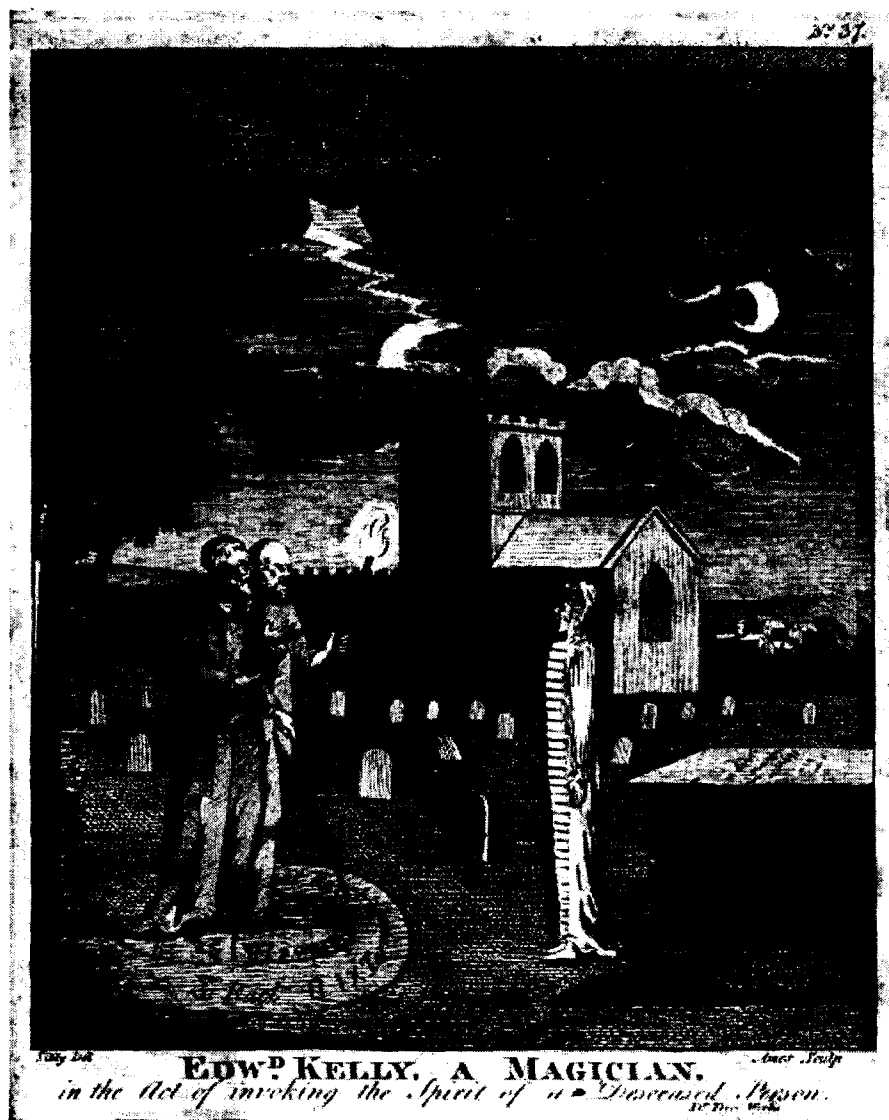


Figure 1. An engraving from Ebenezer Sibley's *Illustration of the Occult Sciences* (1784)¹

In an archetypal image of necromancy, two robed men stand in a magic circle facing a reanimated body in a funeral shroud (Figure 1). In the early modern period, necromancy was a category that included a range of prohibited magical practices,

¹ This image is in the public domain and available online on various webpages.
<<http://www.fromoldbooks.org/Sibly-Astrology/pages/edward-kelly/edward-kelly-494x638.jpg>>

epitomized by illicit attempts to resurrect the dead. Set in the gloom of night in a lonely churchyard with the town barely visible in the background, this depiction of black magic immediately summons up notions of forbidden and deeply secret activities. The reanimated body is a grisly reminder of the taboo interests of magical practitioners. One man is decorated with various emblems that signify his role as a magician. In his left hand, he holds a wand that points to the cryptic symbols and angelic names inscribed in the circle. These symbols invoke the idea of magic in the viewer, in part, because they are unfamiliar. The ritual is symbolized by two other aspects of the image, both of which add to the aura of mystery. The first is the other man, who holds a torch in one hand and gesticulates with his other. His wide open mouth and theatrical posture suggest that he is performing the ritual invocation or commanding the dead to speak. Curiously, the caption that tells the viewer that what is depicted is an invocation of the dead, ascribes the act to Edward Kelley, "a" single magician.

The orator, along with the words he speaks, remain obscure. The script for his speech is metonymically present in the form of a book, the second mystery, which is held open to be read in the first magician's hand. The pages face away from the viewer. The book is, in fact, almost entirely obscured by the shadows of this night scene. Edward Kelley's accessories—significantly, the book and the second man—illustrate how the transmission of necromancy is dependent on embodying forbidden subjects in a mysterious but illustrative form. The threat that black magic poses, the ability to transform a churchyard into fertile grounds for profane transgressions, becomes an image for contemplation. It is as a representation of necromancy that this image can be aligned with the suspicious practices of others. Figuratively speaking, the ambiguous second man

in the engraving can be stamped onto separate people as the stigma of necromancy. This stigma implied that the person in question had broke with natural and spiritual law and, by doing so, had achieved impossible feats. It is unclear whether the diffusion of this kind of imagery, along with accusations of necromancy, suppressed the appeal of diabolical transgressions or if it increased the public's fascination.

This image is not simply an elucidation of necromantic practice but a complex manifestation of the public's imagination. The second man in the picture is often thought to be an overtly public figure, John Dee. On the whole, Dee was not a stereotypical occultist, secluded and esoteric. He published books on mathematics and navigation, as well as acquiring England's "largest and most valuable library and museum" (Sherman xiii). In *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*, William Sherman contends that Dee's contributed to the state as an adviser to governmental, commercial, and scholarly networks (23). His reputation as a black magician began with an astrological consultation with Elizabeth I while she was still a princess. Dee was arrested on the charge that he "endeavored by enchantements to destroy Queen Mary" (Clulee 33).² The struggle to clear his name of charges of conjuring continued long after Mary's death. Sherman points out that Dee petitioned James I to help him in this cause, which illustrates that Dee remained a public figure with some influence in court even though he was burdened by his own notoriety (19). The source of his public influence is intimately connected to the origins of ignominious reputation. For Sherman, Dee's closest similarity to black magicians is his intellectual power, which provoked "anxiety, resentment, and violence" (51). The fact that "the first age of printing was also

² Quoted in *John Dee's Natural philosophy*, Nicholas Clulee remarks that this charge was "substantially correct" (33). However, he adds that the government informant also accused Dee of having a familiar spirit that had blinded the informant's children.

an age of censorship and book burning” (Sherman 51) illuminates how Dee's social status could be met with different responses. The anxiety aroused by Dee's specialized knowledge was channeled into a legend reclassifying him as a necromancer.

Gyorgy Szonyi locates the association of this image with Dee as a product of seventeenth century popular imagination (287). Certainly, Dee's reputation as practitioner of black magic grew at this time, however, locating a source that associates him with this image proves difficult. Szonyi does not name a source that corroborates the allegations that Dee “raised the dead” (287). Of the wide array of magical practices that invoked unsanctified powers, the particular kind of black magic Dee was associated with in the seventeenth century was consorting with demons. Stories of Dee's forays into cemeteries to raise the dead may be a much later invention³ that requires unpacking to understand. For a seventeenth century source of Dee's growing reputation, Szonyi offers Meric Casaubon's publication of John Dee's transcription of angelic conversations in 1659. Casaubon prefaces his publication of these secret conversations by warning his reader that Dee spoke to demons not angels (Szonyi 277). Casaubon's interest in sabotaging this Renaissance scholar's reputation did not include an equal critique of Dee's associate in his attempts to communicate with angels, Edward Kelley. Szonyi points out that Casaubon “did not deal in depth with the role of Kelley in the angelic conversations” (277), which is strange since, as Nicholas Clulee reminds us, only Kelley is said to have seen and heard the angels (Clulee 204). It was the same Edward Kelley who is depicted in this engraving who had mediated for John Dee, with a crystal ball, messages from angels. This magical practice, known as scrying, was the closest that Dee came to performing

³ A quick image search on Google for “John Dee” or “necromancy” will bring up this engraving without sources.

black magic. One can assume that Kelley's spiritual mediation for Dee lead to Dee's later association with demonic magic.

Tracking the textual inspirations for these legends reveals more than a network of magical practitioners and practices. The example of Edward Kelley shows the urge among writers to invent and add new elements to infamous events. It was not just John Dee who was willing to accept Kelley's magical powers and transcribe them. There is a long tradition of writers who, even when their expressed intent is to depreciate magic, ascribe preternatural abilities to Kelley. The original publication of the story in which Kelley raised the dead appeared in John Weever's *Ancient Funeral Monuments* in 1631. Weever names Paul Waring as the source of the tale and as Kelley's magical accomplice (Waite xxvii). According to Weever, Paul Waring accompanied Edward Kelley to a cemetery with the expressed intent of conjuring the dead. The nineteenth century magic historian, Arthur Edward Waite, relates that when Ebenezer Sibley produced an illustrated version of this story in the eighteenth century, he added details and a conclusion. Kelley's resurrection of the dead is placed in a Faustian framework; Sibley ends his narrative by recounting how some believe that Kelley made a pact with the devil and was later carried off to hell (Waite xxvii). The engraving of Kelley raising the dead first appears in this context, which Waite calls a "tissue of falsehoods" (xxvii).

Despite Waite's demystification, there is some basis for the speculation that Kelley conversed with demons. In John Dee's diaries, Dee recounts that Kelley voiced an interest in contacting reprobate spirits (Clulee 212). Furthermore, Clulee points out that Kelley structured the angelic conversations based on models from black magic (212). By placing magical symbols underneath a crystal ball, the basis of Kelley's scrying ritual took on an

appearance similar to the magic circle in the engraving. Sibley's image draws upon Kelley's fascination with systems of demonic magic. It remained for Sibley to reinscribe Kelley's interests with a popular form and setting. This fiction is radically reconfigured when applied to John Dee. Since it was Dee who held the book while Kelley spoke to spirits the two figures in the image are inverted. Dee becomes the magician in the foreground, conducting the magic. Thus, the urge to fictionalize appropriates a central figure in early modern history. Suspect associations are converted into a narrative image. As an image, it can be separated from the subjects depicted to expand its diffusion. The only material artifact that could attest to the validity of these claims is Dee's written accounts of magic. The magic book is a focal point of the image. It parallels the shrouded body in that it thwarts its own promise for more information. This frustrated desire for a clearer picture of the event is embodied by the reiteration of obscurity in the image.

The fact that Dee chose to transcribe the spiritual visions of Edward Kelley, knowing that he was interested in diabolical subjects, poses an interesting problem for trying to separate necromancy from Dee's pursuits. Unlike atheism, as Stephen Greenblatt describes it, black magic was not "thinkable only as the thought of another" (22). The proliferation of instructional manuals for illicit magic demonstrates that black magic was not only a fascinating or threatening subject but also a genuine practice to which certain people subscribed. The notorious Johann Faust, the model for many literary depictions of magic, used his transgressive interests as an advertising technique, calling himself "the prince of necromancers" (Wenterdorf 201). Dee, however, did not subscribe to necromancy, interpreting his own magical pursuits as a sacrosanct addition to his estimable learning. Indeed, he ignored Kelley's own fears that the angels that they

contacted together were wicked spirits deceiving them with descriptions lifted from other books. When Kelley showed Dee a page in Cornelius Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* that precisely repeated information that the angels had offered them, Dee argued that this was evidence for Agrippa's credibility rather than the deception of evil spirits (Szonyi 278). This incident, recorded in Dee's diary, is a failed attempt by Dee to contain the illicit nature of Kelley's activities in a pious framework. His magical practice, and, by association his magical library, are framed within the interests of Edward Kelley. Although Dee remains the dominant voice in the stories that are written about him, the stories have their root in his desire for Kelley's oral narrations. Kelley's inventive descriptions of conversations with spirits circumvent Dee's containment strategy, outliving the occultist's epistemology. Dee became entangled in the growing fiction of the necromancer to which Kelley was, in part, a contributor.

Investigations into Dee's diverse collections help complicate the picture of the early modern magician. Sherman combats an argument that he deems "The Yates Thesis," after the scholarship of Frances Yates who popularized an interpretation of Dee's occultism that viewed his magical interests as the motivating factor in Renaissance intellectual achievements (12). In place of an occult model, Sherman argues that Dee's various interests are encyclopedic in nature. Dee's "textual remains" generate competing portraits (Sherman 43) that cannot be synthesized into a single concept. Dee's encyclopedic interest in a variety of subjects is understood in an architectural model. Rather than situating magic as an occult kernel to his studies, Dee's various interests are represented in his multifaceted Mortlake home. Sherman illustrates how Dee's library is positioned in relation to his scientific instruments, laboratories, and the surrounding area.

An urban dwelling with open areas of study for visiting scholars, Dee's home is characterized as a humanist museum (Sherman 21). The museum has a civic purpose, making available a wide range of subjects for investigation. Dee's private collections of maps, compasses, astronomical instruments, antiquarian documents, books, and "natural wonders," (Sherman 34) played a crucial part in the education of the larger community. Opposed to an anachronistic private/public dichotomy, Sherman offers the contemporaneous word "privy" to describe how Dee's house behaved like a membrane in order to "let certain people, texts, and ideas in and kept others out" (49). This description places Dee's magical interests on the shelves of an accessible library, amongst various other modes of study.

Dee's transcriptions of the angelic conversations, however, did not end up on display in a museum until decades after his death. The story of their discovery shows how the membrane of his library produced competing evaluations of his knowledge. Sherman says very little about Dee's hidden book. The angel diary appears in Sherman's narrative amongst the various acquisitions of Dee's property. The first redistribution of the Mortlake museum happened while Dee was still alive and in Prague. Dee returned home to find that his museum had been "spoiled" (Sherman 52). The ambiguity of Dee's term has led to the recurring story that Dee's house was ransacked by angry townspeople taking revenge on the conjuror in their midst. Of course, Sherman contests this story that neatly fits into "the myth of the magus" (15). He argues instead that there is more evidence that Dee's possessions were stolen by his former associates "envious of his power" (52). This claim is in accordance with the value assigned to his library and instruments by later collectors. Upon Dee's death, his collections were reacquired and his

land was bought by Robert Cotton who combed it for buried manuscripts (Sherman 30). Dee's possessions inspired avarice in his contemporaries more than they inspired condemnation. His magical learning was a part of a valuable collection of early modern paraphernalia.

The book chronicling his magical endeavors has a history that varies from the rest of his library. It was found hidden in a chest that had been acquired as furniture. This book does not easily fit into the public face of his collection that Sherman describes. Its value was not even recognized by its new owner who allowed his maid to use it as waste paper (Sherman 31). Its contents describe the use of reflective surfaces to invoke spirits, and, as such, belongs among his collection of curiosities. The value of this book is that it records the use of his “famous crystal ball” and his “collection of mirrors” that “included an obsidian disk of Spanish-American origin used for communication with angels, and several used for optical experiments and illusions” (Sherman 34). Sherman writes that this collection was used as well in order “to amuse the queen” (34). It is through optical illusions performed for the aristocracy that Dee's magical experiments begin to derive a public face. His ability to produce wonders compounded his reputation as a conjurer. Barbara Traister, in *Heavenly Necromancers*, points out that Dee's arrest for astrology coincided with his creation of a stage prop that appeared to be a flying beetle (18). The growing suspicion of Dee's conjuring was directly related to the public's interest in seeing marvels performed. Dee participated in this trend by hiring Kelley to take the power of these devices to another level. Kelley's ability to see angels by staring into a mirror is a supernatural extension of the natural wonders that were popular additions to cabinets of curiosity. Dee's magical diaries are a transcription of these performances that take

wonders into the realm of fantasy.

According to Steven Mullaney the cabinet of curiosity is emblematic of the early modern cultural current that sought to dramatize cultural productions (65). In *The Place of the Stage*, he describes a typical English cabinet belonging to Walter Cope. The catalogue of his collection contains such disparate objects as “[a]n Indian stone axe, 'like a thunderbolt,' A stringed instrument with but one string. The twisted horn of a bull seal. An embalmed child or *Mumia*. The bauble and bells of Henry VIII's fool. A unicorn's tail . . .” (60). What Mullaney lists in his work is extensive but inevitably incomplete. What his cross section of the various objects reveals is that there is no defining boundary for this type of collection. Rather, the cabinet of curiosity is “characterized primarily by its encyclopedic appetite for the marvellous or the strange” (60-61). What accounts for this “heteroclit order” of things is the dramatic presentation of culture as estranged and othered. The combination of familiar and unfamiliar displays culture as something to perform rather than understand. What Mullaney calls a “*rehearsal* of cultures” applies to John Dee's supplication to the queen in his treatise entitled *The Compendius Rehearsal*. Part of the function of this treatise was to clear Dee's name of the stigma of conjurer (Mullaney 70). Mullaney reads this rehearsal as part of the “larger dramaturgy of power and its confrontations with the forbidden or the taboo” (70). By performing identities, the forbidden and othered qualities are safely incorporated into a dramaturgical culture. “The cultural license” offered by these performances is compared to the theatrical stage, which “was also . . . a strange thing in and of itself” (Mullaney 75). Mullaney argues that the change that transformed the “rehearsals” of wonder-cabinets into the space of scientific inquiry is discontinuous from their original purpose. He argues that:

[t]he museum as an institution rises from the ruins of such collections, like country houses built from dismantled stonework of dissolved monasteries; it organizes the wonder-cabinet by breaking it down—that is to say, by analysing it, regrouping the random and the strange into recognizable categories that are systematic, discrete, and exemplary (60-61).

If there is any continuity it is that the dramatizing of threateningly strange things operated to domesticate them, readying the display of culture for this next development. This domestication is invariably incomplete. Despite Dee's declaration of scholasticism and repudiation of conjuring, he is remembered for his curious involvement in magic.

It is not my concern to dispel the reader's interest in magic. In fact, it is one of the aims of my argument to rehabilitate this fiction of the necromancer. Although Dee never conjured any dead bodies from the grave, the motivation for constructing that story illustrates an element of our fascination that is worth exploring. To compare these stories of necromancy to the products of cabinets of curiosity is to admire an aspect of them that is often debased. Philip Fisher, writing on the scientific value of wonder, criticizes magic and cabinets simultaneously. He contends:

[i]t was on the grave of magic tricks, religious miracles, and, especially, 'Wonder-cabinets'—those museums of prescientific confusion about wonder where two-headed calves, bleeding crucifixes, and scientifically interesting stones and magnets were jumbled together—that the new concept of Cartesian wonder was

erected. (47)

What he calls prescientific confusion is the product of an early modern epistemology.

Christopher Pye explains that the marvels in a cabinet were:

constituted within the vast web of similitudes or correspondences that make up the universe. If the small space of the cabinet can be seen to approximate or even conjure the world, that is because the world is constituted in terms of exactly such metaphorical correspondances between microcosm and macrocosm, man and world, mundane and divine. (131).

Yet, there is more to the collecting of cabinets of curiosity than the reproduction of the known world or cosmos. Pye modifies this description by asserting that “[s]uch accounts of the wonder cabinets explains everything about them except their most salient feature: their preoccupation with precisely what is singular, odd, and unclassifiable, with ‘the rarity’” (131). For Pye, the rarity “represents something in addition, a supplement to knowledge” (133). It is this supplement—threatening to transgress the normative and enter the taboo—that ties together the necromancer and the curiosity.

The collector and the necromancer both are concerned with displaying qualities that extend beyond the domesticated. In both cases, their boundary breaking is realized as a performance within these boundaries. The display of obscure animals works best when posed within the home. Equally, the impossible and frightening exploits of the necromancer are only legible in the cultural productions that represent them for a mass

audience. However, this adaptation does not necessarily imply that the impact of these displays are congruent with cultural decorum. In fact, in the case of collectors, the attempts to establish an appropriately rational and scientific basis for collections were often overwhelmed by the competing tradition that valued objects for their ability to produce awe. In “The Cabinet Institutionalized,” Michael Hunter explores the genesis of the modern museum and discovers that even after the curators established their categorical rationale for their collections, donors still used “the criteria of rarity and curiosity” for discerning the appropriate form for gifts (165). The theatrical display of these curiosities has a semiotic similarity to how necromancers were imagined to display their spiritual manifestations. In Imperato's illustration of his cabinet, the collector directs attention to the strangely lifelike animals with a long staff (Figure 2). The performance of this display of the dead is eerily similar to the image of Kelley with his wand, strange symbols, and dead body. Walter Benjamin describes the performance of collection in similar magical terms:

The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them . . . for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object (“Unpacking” 59)



Figure 2. Woodcut from Imperato's *Dell'Histoire naturelle*.
(Reprinted in *Cabinets of Curiosity* 12)

Magic, in this case, is the capacity for addition, for producing the apparition of strange objects within the familiar environment. While this process is easily understood as cultural appropriation, there is also an element of cultural production. A dramaturgical fiction develops through these performances, which exists in excess of rational explanation, in response to the public's fascination.

The fascination with rarity, especially the terrifying or shocking anomaly remains in Western culture. In Pye's account the rarity is an agent for the "limitless desire for something more" (133). "[T]wo headed calves [and] bleeding crucifixes" (Fisher 47)

belong to the sphere of fantasy as much as science. Fisher's fear that the astonishment provoked by this limitlessness is the first step toward "a total surrender to religious discipline" (Fisher 54) ignores the other outgrowths of these fantasies. It is equally possible that the religious treatises against unrestrained curiosity spawned an interest in their most salient protagonists, the necromancer. Likewise, secular mediums are inclined to produce seemingly inexplicable wonders for the sake of entertainment. Moreover, the dramaturgical impulse to recreate cultures and nature in performative scenes is alive and well in the dioramas of modern museums. These reanimations of the dead are practically necromantic, invoking curiosity and wonder through dramaturgy. This thesis will explore the impulse to add to the dramaturgy of necromancy where it converges with the characteristics of cabinets of curiosity. I will employ plays that were contemporaneous with this mode of collecting to analyze how the elements of curiosity and wonder work in these dramatic counterparts. While I intend to rehabilitate the study of necromancy as a legitimate form of knowledge, this does not mean that I will be uncritical of the transgressive desires that necromancy evokes. Rather, I will employ early modern theatre to illustrate how the fascination with the demonic is conjured into a fiction that articulates responses to the normative world, which are both problematic and informative.

The chapters that comprise this thesis will apply three elements of necromancy, which are shared by cabinets of curiosity. The themes of curiosity, wonder, and the dramatizing of alien subjects will be explored within *Doctor Faustus* and *Hamlet*.

The first chapter discusses Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in relation to the history of necromancy. Faustus's curiosity for forbidden subjects will be explored through a narrative concerning the role of magic books in early modern culture. The

demons in the play are interpreted as spectacular manifestations of these books.

Furthermore, their demonic characteristics are understood to be a composite of the knowledge promised by these prohibited sources and the reputation that magical learning attracted within the culture at large. Magic is situated within the cultural anxieties surrounding excessive learning. Specifically, Faustus's black magic is associated with the sensual gratification produced by accumulation of experiences. As such, Faustus's pact with the devil mirrors a wider trend, dramatizing the access to diverse cultural productions made available through territorial expansion and travel. While invoking the powers of demons, Faustus simultaneously invokes the powers of this emerging culture. This chapter analyzes how the inquisitive scholar is implicated in a cultural process and how a cultural process is implicated in Faustus's necromancy.

The second chapter illuminates the connections between the Ghost in *Hamlet* and the performance of wonders through optical illusions. While optical science endeavored to explain anomalies as tricks of the eye, mirrors and other optical devices were used as special effects to reproduce fantastic visions for fascinated audiences. The Ghost's appearance on the stage is analogous to these wonders. The wonder produced by the Ghost in this play will be contrasted to attempts to explain away supernatural phenomena. The desire for conclusive explanations is outflanked by this play's interest in causing confusion and awe. The investigative impulse provoked by encounters with wonders has an alternative objective, the reconstruction of a story that challenges the categorical rationale of the court. Hamlet does not investigate the murder of his father in order to incriminate the guilty as much as he appropriates the spectacular nature of the Ghost. The production of the play-within-the-play is the outcome of Hamlet's encounter with the

Ghost. This chapter will illustrate how Hamlet's play dramatizes the spectral presence in the court.

**The Book:
representations of forbidden texts in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus***

The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are 'status quo' is the catastrophe. It is not an ever-present possibility but what in each case is given. Thus Strindberg (in *To Damascus?*): hell is not something that awaits us, but this life here and now. (*Arcades* 473)

The books that appear in Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*, are manuals of black magic. Despite frequent attempts to situate Faustus either among the high philosophical tradition of early modern occultists or the flagrantly demonized character of the folk magician as witch, Faustus's source for his magic comes from his study of necromancy. What is peculiar about the necromantic tradition is its tendency to absorb other magical traditions by adding or exposing a demonic character without eliminating their scholastic origins. Necromancy distances itself from witchcraft because it remains a practice of an educated elite. Furthermore, necromancy differs from hermetic and natural magic as it avows a demonic origin for an assortment of arcane knowledge. However, these practices can be reclassified as necromancy if they are considered to have transgressed sanctioned boundaries by searching for forbidden knowledge.

The diversity of subjects that are conflated to produce the concept of necromancy is illustrated in the play through Mephistophilis' donation to Faustus of miscellaneous volumes for conjurations. The idea that Faustus learned from a demon called Mephistophilis originates in Christian treatises. It is not Marlowe's reading of a magical manuscript but *The English Faust Book*, a treatise against magical practice, which inspired his work. The *English Faust Book* ends with the discovery of Faustus's autobiography after his death. The narrator indicates that

this history has been related to discourage others from Faustus's interest in the devil (151). Additional sources are necessary for the narrator to conclude Faustus's postmortem story. Interestingly, one of these fictional sources defies the concept of conclusiveness. Faustus is said to have returned from the dead to relate “many secret things the which he had done and hidden in his lifetime” (150). As the anonymous author wraps up the story with a moral, they inadvertently imply that the discovery of forbidden knowledge is ongoing. Marlowe latches onto the curiosity to know Faustus's illicit experiences. Whereas the narrator cautions the reader to “take God always before our eyes” (151), Marlowe's reading of *The English Faust Book* inspired him to put the demons and black magicians on the stage. Black magic is mediated through a polemical attack which, indirectly, serves to enhance the fundamental power of this practice, curiosity. Marlowe adds to the growing collection of works that produced the figure of the necromancer. The public image of necromancers, defined by their inclination to explore forbidden subjects, develops from an amalgamation of sources that display their practice for others. Marlowe's readiness to incorporate conjuration books alongside the demons and apparitions from the *Faust Book* exhibits his commitment to necromantic subjects despite—or as a result of—their condemnation.

The title page of *The English Faust Book* announces “The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus” (67), which Marlowe simplifies for his play as “The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus.” By recategorizing the story as a tragedy, the play relinquishes the original moral judgment. Instead of accentuating the pious alternatives to Faustus's ‘damnable

life,' the play focuses on the tragic heroism of the necromancer. The reframing of the story presents the apparition of ghosts and demons from the perspective of Faustus, not a moralizing narrator's. At the outset of the play, the Chorus introduces Faustus as the personage they "must perform" (1.1.8), as if the narrator will take on the magician's garb. The Chorus requests a judgment of "good or bad" (1.1.9) only of the performance, not of his morals. The audience is asked to show its approval through applause (1.1.10). They are meant to enjoy the portrayal of Faustus's learning experiences, which escalate from his doctorate in theology to his fall into the "devilish exercise" of "cursèd necromancy" (1.1.20-26). His illicit practice is understood to be an excess of "learning's golden gifts" (1.1.25). His studies in theology are not set in opposition to his necromancy, except as a limit to what one should know. The audience is implicitly asked to transgress that limit by following the scene into Faustus's private study. In this setting, the audience will be exposed to Faustus's secret and forbidden acts. The play promises to show the magician at work. Just as Faustus is about to begin, an angel intrudes on the scene commanding Faustus to

... lay that damnèd book aside

And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul

And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head

Read, read the scriptures! That is blasphemy. (1.1.101-105)

Fortunately for the voyeur, the play is able to proceed, when a demon quickly

appears to usher Faustus on with promises of power over the elements (1.1.106-9). Faustus, who was immersed in his “heavenly” books of necromancy (1.1.80), is left to continue in his reverie. The apparition of demons disrupt any attempts to purify knowledge with spirituality by drawing Faustus back into worldly interests and the sensual pleasures of books. The fact that Faustus conceives of his books as heavenly confounds the distinction that the angel has tried to make. The angel's entreaty to Faustus to read scriptures rather than blasphemous books is ignored. The demon acts as a manifestation of the book, embodying this mixture of spiritual and material delight. The audience follows Faustus's gaze upon the book with the promise that it will yield more forbidden apparitions.

Demons and ghosts are the recurrent specters of forbidden information, which manifests in the forms of stage props and costumed devils. Faustus, as their stage director, takes on the guilt of taboo interests that society tries to efface. Nevertheless, he is presented as a sympathetic protagonist. The impulse to know what Faustus is doing increases when he is momentarily offstage. Two scholars interrogate his servant Wagner because they have not seen Faustus in a long time. When they are told that he is with his magician friends, Cornelius and Wagner, they decide that he has “fall'n into that damned/art” (1.3.234-5). Yet, this scene is less about condemning Faustus than it is about increasing the fascination for his activities. It sets the stage for the culmination of Faustus's study. In this momentary break from the stage, Faustus has prepared his magic in order to present the audience with the spectacle of demons. The demons that appear to Faustus are the symbolic embodiment of his learning, offered to the audience for their enjoyment.

In the end, Faustus is sacrificed for his spectacular crimes but he suspends a final judgment. When judgment is called down on Faustus, he calls out “I’ll burn my books—ah, Mephastophilis!” (5.2..1508). This final appeal is ignored; the books are saved. Like the repeatability of the play itself, the books are left unharmed in the audience’s imagination. The play’s moral stance is as ambivalent as its inseparable mixture of high and low learning. The presence of the magic book in the play was already evidence of the durability and influence of banned books. What remains of the magic handbook in the play, however distorted by the legacy of moral verdicts, serves as the loci of forbidden knowledge. In the hands of Faustus, it suggests the immanence of evil within the curiosity for knowledge. Since the audience’s curiosity has implicated them in the apparition of demons, there will be no final exorcism, no complete disavowal, or catharsis. The evil spirits endure with the remains of the book and the audience remains fascinated with the necromancer.

Occult Subjects

This section will explore the relationship between magical literature and their theatrical representation. Richard Kieckhefer has written the most comprehensive study on the historical practice of necromancy. He situates the necromancer’s handbook amongst the anxieties spawned by increased literacy and production of texts during the middle ages.⁴ In his book *Forbidden Rites: A*

⁴ In a recent study of *Doctor Faustus*, Sarah Wall-Randell speculates that Marlowe may have been influenced by a legend concerning the origin of the printing press. In her essay, “Doctor Faustus and the Printer’s Devil,” Wall-Randell recounts the story of Joan Faustus’s invention of the printing press as described in John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*. Although this Faustus was initially unrelated to the

Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century, he offers a book-length annotation of a surviving example of the “once . . . flourishing genre” (25). These manuals were often compilations, borrowing from other books, as well as from orthodox liturgy (*Forbidden* 3). Kieckhefer describes their value as “a mirror of the surrounding culture,” even if “the mirror is a distorting one, a deliberately transgressive adaptation of what the society takes to be holy” (4). For the black magicians who possessed these forbidden materials, as well as the inquisitors that hunted them down, the physical book merged these influences to create a power and character of its own. The book itself embodied taboo magic in an incarnate form. They were conceived as a dwelling for demons or a physical manifestation of evil spirits. As such, necromantic manuscripts were perceived as a necromancer’s affiliate. Christian authorities, quite literally, “treated [it] as if it were a human subject, to be examined and, once found guilty, executed [it] by burning” (7). Although the inquisitors intended to purify society through the destruction of dangerous resources, this judgment of the magic manual had the unintended effect of endorsing their numinous power. Necromancers already offered a sacred status to these texts in their practice of keeping them in manuscript form and storing them secretly (8). By publishing their characteristics in an exaggerated form, the inquisitors made them available for the public imagination. The magician's prop

magician, their stories subsequently became intertwined. The “seemingly impossible multiplicity and perfection” of the books produced by a printing press aroused the suspicion of demonic assistance (261). The idea that this Faustus had allied himself to the devil led to later conflations with his magician counterpart. Wall-Randell believes that this conflated legend was in circulation when Marlowe was writing his play. She recognizes a similarity between the play and these legends in which books are endowed with a demonic aura. The idea that a profane book has an aura at all, she argues, would be a problem in the iconoclastic environment of Protestant England (275). I will argue that it is precisely this aura and the surrounding controversy that makes the demonic book valuable and powerful.

was personified with transgressive powers, introducing an artificial world that enabled public fantasizing.

Additionally, a magic manual provides a script. The descriptions of raising condemned spirits are “formulas meant for enactment, a guide for ritual action” (*Forbidden* 13). Books of necromancy can be posited as an alternative script, intentionally opposing the morals of the community that produced them. Magical transgressions are guided by a desire for power and sensual gratification. Kieckhefer warns that

[t]he glorification of the transgressive and the vilification of prosecutors has perhaps too often blinded us to the recognition that much magic was intended for sexual coercion and exploitation, or for unscrupulous careerism, or for vigilante action against thieves that would easily lead to false accusations (11).

It is impossible to rehabilitate these magical aspirations by reducing them to an idealized concept of transgression. Necromancy is intimately related to implausible fantasies of fulfilled desires. Necromancers do not challenge established boundaries to transform them with an altruistic aim. Rather, they perform rituals to gain access to what has been kept hidden from them. Accordingly, the appearance of specters that promise sensual gratification is perfectly suited to a theatrical adaptation. It is in this profane light that the scripting of necromancy for the stage should be understood. Although the circulation of magic manuals was limited,

Elizabethan dramatists derived from magic rituals the prototype of a script. In a play, sexual and other prohibited experiences that were reputedly available to necromancers could be reenacted for a wider audience.

The prop and the script that black magic furnishes for the playwright are supplemented by the stories that grew around their legendary proprietors. The legend of Faustus developed within the movement to rehabilitate magic. The historical figure, Johann Faust, was brought into the public light by his connection to the renowned occultist, the abbot Johannes Trithemius. Trithemius's project was to establish magic as a legitimate practice within the bounds of orthodoxy. He delineated his form of magic, in part, by differentiating it from disreputable forms, such as witchcraft (Brann 4). Scholars interested in Faustus have placed him on both sides of this spectrum. Depending on the scholar's bias, he has been included in the tradition of occultism or witchcraft.⁵ Trithemius was the central forerunner in Renaissance occultism, carefully distinguishing his scholarly and spiritual methodology from the witch's sacrilegious folk magic with powers gained solely through devil worship. In this section, I will examine Faustus's relationship to the occultists and leave his similarities to witches for later. This relationship is complex since Johann Faust's contemporary, Trithemius, excluded him from the higher forms of magic. In his letters, he ridiculed the historical Johann Faust as a charlatan, "deserving to be scourged with rods" (quoted in Wenterdorf 201). This severe denigration by a fellow magician illustrates that for most of the

⁵ Paul Kocher, in "The Witchcraft basis in Marlowe's 'Faustus,'" calls Faustus a witch based on his assumption that it is a fitting term for "anyone who performs supernatural acts by demonic agency" (10). Barbara Traister, however, recalls that there is an important distinction between folk tradition and philosophically informed magic (20). She concentrates on Faustus's connection to the latter.

philosophical occultists, pronouncing yourself the “prince of necromancers,” as Johann Faust reportedly advertised himself (Wenterdorf 201), was anathema to their current project. Occultists wrote books of theory “grounded in metaphysics and cosmology, [which] lent new respectability to nondemonic magic” (*Magic* 201). They advocated magic that revealed hidden wisdom through the aid of benevolent spirits (Traister 7-11). Problematically, benevolent spirits were not easily distinguished in the public mind from other concealed powers, such as demons.

The legends of Faustus manage to aggregate together both the scripts of necromancers and the writings of detractors of black magic, producing an elaborate story. Trithemius's attempts to defame Faustus backfired when he was subsequently entangled in legends associated with Faustus. When a letter that he wrote describing his practice of sending secret messages mediated by angels fell into the wrong hands, he was outed publicly as an occultist (Brann 7). His notoriety as a magician increased over the next century. His communication with angels was transformed into consortium with devils in the public imagination. Brann notes the parallel with Faust:

Trithemius according to a story put into circulation during the latter half of the sixteenth century, was once summoned into the presence of Maximilian I where, in a dramatic demonstration of necromantic powers for which he had earned widespread notoriety, he conjured from the dead, together with sundry ancient heroes, Maximilian's own deceased wife Mary of Burgundy.

That a similar tale was contemporaneously afloat concerning a certain Doctor Faustus, who was said to have performed a comparable feat for Maximilian's son, Charles V, was not lost to the demonological critics of both men (40).

His attacks on Faust's necromancy, therefore, rebounded. Brann argues that "Trithemius himself, through his contributions to the literature of demonology, can be said to have inadvertantly contributed to a climate of opinion that could turn his legend to a far more sinister purpose" (161). He helped create a climate in which people suspected other people of participating in secret acts. The letter describing his occult magic was included by his detractors amongst his demonology. Both of these practices were conflated when they offered the public the image of a magician secretly transgressing sanctioned actions. From this image a legend was developed in order to elaborate on their supposed activities. The public's curiosity for these stories put them into circulation, where they were expanded upon, until they were prepared for dramatic reenactments.

The incorporation of various cultural figures into a story produces a protagonist. Faustus's legend follows Trithemius's, as if he repeated his acts for the next generation. It comes as no surprise, then, that Faustus has been compared to Trithemius's pupil, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. Trithemius's unsolicited legacy shaped—just as it was shaped by—the public's expectations of magical characters. Jan Kott, in his expanded study of *Doctor Faustus*,⁶ locates three forms Agrippa

⁶ Kott treats many of the same themes in a personal essay on *Doctor Faustus*. He conjectures on various sources for Faustus, including another magician not mentioned here, John Dee. My citations refer to

takes in the play (Kott 3). To begin with, Faustus's associate, Cornelius, who facilitates his initiation into magic, is Agrippa's namesake. Agrippa appears again in the dialogue when Faustus invokes his name, yearning to be as "cunning as a Agrippa was" (1.1.150). This exclamation alludes to the presence of Kott's third Agrippa, which is Faustus himself. Kott believes Marlowe's Faustus is modeled on the historical occult writer. Modifying this argument, I contend that the three Agrippas parallel three forms Agrippa has taken in Western culture. They are his theories of magic in *The Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, his written retraction of magic, and his aura as a necromancer that continued after his death.

The first of these is embodied by Cornelius. Even more than his friend Valdes, Cornelius is intent on Faustus's magical study. Valdes lists extravagant things that magic will offer but it is Cornelius who intones that "[t]he miracles that magic will perform/Will make thee vow to study nothing else" (1.1.169-70). He reinforces the need for study by highlighting the necessity of learning astrology, languages, and the qualities of minerals (1.1.170-2). Faustus is inclined to see a demonstration of magic. Valdes encourages them to make "haste . . . to some solitary grove" (1.1.184) but Cornelius disagrees. He advises "first let him know the words of art,/And then, all ceremonies learned,/Faustus may try his cunning by himself" (1.1.191-3). Cornelius does not offer to participate in magic; he only presents the means to learn it.

He functions in the play similarly to the theoretical works of Agrippa. *The Three Books of Occult Philosophy* are an amalgam of various magical practices. These books are concerned with the study of magic, which allows the adherent to

understand how it operates. The descriptions of “occult properties” (Agrippa 46) and the working of sympathetic magic (Agrippa 50) significantly dwarf the descriptions of incantations. The power of magic is attributed to celestial forces more often than demonic forces (Agrippa 496). Nevertheless, his work shows traces of necromancy that a magician could draw upon. Robert West notes that Agrippa's use of the antiquated word *daemon* for the intended receiver of his magical commands was easily confused with the “peculiar Christian usage” for fallen angels. This was especially the case since he used the word interchangeably for both beneficent and malignant spirits (West 21). The rituals Agrippa describes stipulate observances to inferior spirits that hypothetically stay “within the bounds of orthodox Catholicism” (West 124). However, his warnings against idolatry of these spirits (Agrippa 496) went unheard by the detractors of this form of magic. The attempt to contact demons, from a Christian perspective, implicated the magicians in a demonic pact. In the *Demonologie*, King James I (then James IV of Scotland) argued that magicians knew they were aligning themselves with demons despite what they said (West 137). Magical theory is harvested for its implicit necromantic material.

In Marlowe's play, the studious Agrippa is coupled with a theatrical performer. Agrippa later disowned magic, claiming that it was all illusion. The songs and artificial lights which “moved the imagination and spiritual harmony of the soul” were reinterpreted as mere legerdemain (Agrippa 605). Magic created “delusions, which are made according to appearance only, by which magicians show phantasms, and play many miracles by circulating frauds” (Agrippa 705). For

this later Agrippa, the performance of magic is no different from the performance of “stage players” (705). It is this Agrippa who inspires Marlowe's Faustus to believe he can become like him. He transforms magic into stage performance. He sets the scene of the stage, telling himself,

Now that the gloomy shadow of the earth,
 Longing to view Orion's drizzling look,
 Leaps from th'antarctic world unto the sky
 And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath,
 Faustus, begin thine incantations (1.3.244-8).

Faustus's words move the whole stage into an aesthetic realm fitting for black magic. He embraces the theatricality of magic as its efficacy. Agrippa's repudiation of magic is turned on its head as the theater appropriates this magical quality attributed to it. His belief that he can “dissuade others from [the] destruction” of his youthful “curiosity” (705) is annulled by suggesting that it would make good theater. Drama offers an alternative medium through which the spectral experiences promised by black magic can be realized. By accepting the staginess of magical performance, the theater is able to proffer an appropriate setting.

Of the three Agrippas, the aura of the necromancer is the most enduring. The curiosity that Agrippa meant to expel reappears in cultural productions in the form of a legend. After his death, stories still circulated of his dealings with the devil. One story tells of how he had a demon familiar in the form of a dog or as

Robert Burton tells it, his “dog had a devil tied to his collar” (90). In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in England almost one hundred years after Agrippa's death, Burton recounts this anecdote, along with the story of Trithemius raising the dead, as if they were fact. Along with these stories, books were published that were spuriously attributed to Agrippa. The *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* is less of an academic treatise than a manual for practicing black magic (West 11). The anonymous author who wrote it, the so-called “pseudo-Agrippa,” picked up on the necromantic elements in Agrippa's work and brought them into the foreground. Even so, Paul Kocher contends in “The Witchcraft basis of Doctor Faustus” that, the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* attempts to make the whole process of conjuring seem a rite of holiness”(23). However, necromantic rituals were marked by explicit invocations of God and angels and other names that could serve to bind demons (*Forbidden* 127). A characteristic trait of necromancy is that it brings together various sources. Agrippa criticized necromancy for this reason, describing it as “prophane observations mixed with the ceremonies of our religion, with many unknown names, and seals intermixed, that thereby may terrify and astonish the simple and ignorant” (Agrippa 696). This critique illuminates the subsequent appropriation of Agrippa by the transgressive hand of necromancy. *The Fourth Book* shows Agrippa being unwillingly drawn into the intermixed auspices. The aura of Agrippa the necromancer channels incongruous themes in order to imagine a profane story. Marlowe endows Faustus with this aura in order to develop him as a character.

The fact that rituals are indiscriminately bound together contaminates them.

This contamination of the sacred with the profane gives rise to suspicions that they have demonic origins. Faustus participates in this amalgamation. Contrary to Kocher's allegation that "Marlowe casts aside this pretense [to sacred ritual] and makes the ceremony a dedication to Satan from the beginning" (Kocher 23), Faustus relies on the aid of God. In his invocation of Mephastophilis, he anagrammatizes the Latinate name of God and calls upon the Trinity in a quasi-vulgate prayer (1.3.251-265). In the supplication that follows he mixes holy and infernal hierarchies. In Latin, he calls upon the gods of Hades, the trinity, the elements, along with various demon names and Christian implements.⁷ Mephastophilis uses the semi-scriptural fractions of Faustus's invocation as a palimpsest. He rewrites Faustus's supplication to divine aid as "one rack[ing] the name of God,/abdur[ing] the scriptures and his saviour Christ" (1.3.293-4). Faustus's prior proclamation that "there's virtue in my heavenly words" (1.3.271), which had the power to compel a demon to come from hell, is recanted. Faustus is quick to agree with Mephastophilis that he has already abjured the Trinity and prayed devoutly to the prince of hell (1.3.297-300). However, the reinscribed meaning that Mephastophilis gives to Faustus's devout words cannot efface their presence in the text. In fact, the commingling of sacred phrases with profane phrases is what gives the demonic its transgressive power. He begins his forays into magic exclaiming that he is awed by the "force of magic and [his own] spells"

⁷ David Wootton, the editor of this edition of *Doctor Faustus*, gives a translation of Faustus's ritual: "May the gods of Acheron . . . be propitious to me. May the threefold spirit of Jehovah . . . aid me. Greetings to you spirits of fire, air, water, and earth. Beezlebub . . . Prince of the East, monarch of flaming hell, and Demagorgon . . . we bed you that Mephastophilis may appear and rise up. Why do you delay? By Jehovah, by Hell, and by holy water I now sprinkle, and by the signs of the cross I now make, and by my prayers, may Mephastophilis, whom I hereby summon, rise before me" (14-15).

(1.3.275) but he is soon enraptured by the transgressive power of the demonic itself. Since the demonic permeates all that he does, Faustus's aspirations to become Agrippa leads him to perform the part of a "pseudo-Agrippa."

Faustus's failure to bind demons with a sacrosanct ritual can be read as his failure as a magician. As an alternative reading, I argue that this lack of sanctified binding in his ritual is what propels the story, engendering the proliferation of spectral and demonic images. In *Heavenly Necromancers*, Barbara Traister suggests that Faustus, in his haste to make demons appear, omits the elaborate ceremonial preparations that the early modern occultist considered necessary for the "purification" of their ritual powers (93). However, it is precisely the ritual's lack of purity that entices Mephistophilis's appearance. Faustus asks if his "conjuring speeches" raised Mephistophilis (1.3.290). The demon denies that he was compelled by the speeches; he came because Faustus has damned himself (1.3.296). Faustus modifies the understanding of "damnation" by confiding that he "confounds hell in Elysium" (1.3.303-4). His abjuration of heavenly powers is founded in his mixing of Greek and Christian narratives. Faustus does not bind Mephistophilis with a standardized ritual because he refuses to accept a single tradition. His interest in necromancy is influenced by his desire to accumulate learning. Demons are not bound but unleashed through the narrative escalation of his experiences.

Traister recognizes the difficulty of staging the painstaking and primarily cerebral ritual preparation within a play (21). Yet, she misses the play's attempt to do so through allusion. Faustus begins this ritual referencing astrological and

temporal signs suggesting he has prepared a particular hour to conduct this stage, which he has also arranged for by prayers and sacrifices (1.3.244-250). While he commences this staged ritual by anagrammatizing “Jehovah,” the preliminaries he alludes to are prayers and sacrifices to devils (1.3.250). This device transforms ritual preparation with one of the many intrusions of demons that forward the plot. This miscellany of the holy and the infernal is characteristic of the play and, indeed, of necromancy itself. This characteristic is shared by the Renaissance interest in encyclopedism. In “Doctor Faustus and the Printer's Devil,” Sarah Wall-Randell contends that the magic books that Faustus acquires throughout the play are symbolic of the early modern attempts at compiling a comprehensive encyclopedia (271). Although necromancy is a particular genre—studies of its manuscript form show it to be unlikely to find books of particularly demonic magic bound with texts on other subjects (Klassen 21)—the compilation form of many of these manuscripts binds together an array of practices, beliefs and fears under the heading of the demonic.⁸ *Doctor Faustus* mirrors this miscellaneous set of demonic rituals by drawing on its power to diverge from the orthodox script of liturgy into a heretical hotchpotch. The formulation of his heretical mixture implies the backdrop of the early modern world with its fashion for accumulating knowledge. The body of knowledge that was assembled to produce the public image of the necromancer is mirrored in Faustus's own ritual preparations. The fact that this desire for accumulation is attributed specifically to the over-inquisitive necromancer is a problem that this chapter will explore. Faustus's preparation is a

⁸ Frank Klassen analyzes an English manuscript similar to the Munich manual discussed by Kieckhefer. He describes this manual for necromancy, catalogued as Rawlinson D-252, saying “a single formal hand has copied a wide-variety of short texts in a notebook clearly for personal use” (21).

“transgressive adaptation” of traditions (*Forbidden* 4) that alludes to a back-story. The provision of this back-story instills the audience's anticipation of sundry spirits taking over the stage.

The Tragicomedy of Faustus

The previous section of this chapter established the elements of necromancy that apply to its dramatic representation in Marlowe's play. In this section I will explore how these elements are combined into a type of narrative that I will call a narrative of accumulation. Jan Kott notes the overall heterogeneity of the play, which combines “tragic discourse in blank verse; anachronistic morality of the late Middle Ages; interludes with ribald jokes and coarse humour; the masques and anti-masques; the dumb-show; Italian *lazzi* from the *commedia dell'arte*; the parody of liturgical rites and exorcisms . . .” (Kott 21). What he terms the “polytheatricality” of the play allows for multiple layers with different significance to coexist. Kott argues that the polytheatricality of *Doctor Faustus* offers “anachronistic emblems” of medieval Christian morality, such as the ascending throne of heaven and the jaws of hell (Kott 18), to make one of their final appearances on the stage” (Kott 13). For Kott, Faustus “rejects God” just as he rejects “the arrogance of scholars, the ignorance of doctors, and the guile and subversion of lawyers” (Kott 13). Faustus takes a last look at his scholastic training at the outset of the play. He begins with the exclamation “[s]weet *Analytics*, 'tis thou hast ravished me!” (1.1.36). He immediately second guesses the worth of Aristotelian arguments, asking “[i]s to dispute well logic's cheifest end?/Affords

this art no greater miracle?" (1.1.38-9). This query sparks a series of references and counterarguments in which Faustus descends through subjects searching for their limitations. An assemblage of Latin quotes appear on the page alongside names of authors from antiquity. At the end of each subject he comes to a similar conclusion. He has "attained the end" of philosophy, medicine, law, and theology, and he sets them aside in search of something else. When he comes to theology, he finds its limitation to be that sin leads to death (1.1.70). Unsatisfied with this restriction, he turns to black magic as an alternative. Kott's Marlowe "believed neither in guardian angels nor in the conjuring of spirits" (Kott 20). Hence, Faustus dramatizes the disillusionment with various modes of belief. As a result, the polyphony of these contesting voices, anachronistically sounding in the play, reverberate through the hollowness of the representation. From Kott's perspective, the assemblage coalesces into proto-atheism.

I will argue instead that Faustus's recollection of these ideas stimulate a desire to add to his collection of experiences. At the end of his academic studies, these books are shelved in order to free Faustus to repeat the ravishment they had earlier supplied. The narrative of accumulation is instigated by a rejection of completion or conclusiveness. Faustus yearns for the sensual stimulation of acquiring new ideas. The inadequacy of his prior learning is a catalyst for seeking out additions to his library. The epistemological crisis that Kott describes appears more anachronistic than the angels and demons of medieval morality play entering onto the early modern stage. Nevertheless, Kott's atheistic reading merges with necromancy along the lines that begin with the dissatisfaction with the supposedly

ultimate answers. Faustus's disappointment with medicine mirrors his problem with theology. He laments that physicians cannot raise the dead:

Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,
Whereby whole cities have escaped the plague
... Wouldst thou make men to live eternally?
Then this profession were to be esteemed. (1.1.50-6)

Although Faustus has saved whole cities, he cannot handle the finality of this loss in the midst of his memories. He turns toward necromantic manuals⁹ with their exciting variety of “[l]ines, circles, signs, letters, and characters,” which he admits is what “[he] most desires” (1.1.81-2). Faustus's contemplation of “necromantic skill” (1.1.138) lead him to exclaim “[t]is magic, magic that hath ravished me” (1.1.143). The hope that he will raise “shadows,” like it was said that Agrippa had done (1.1.150-1) subsidizes the losses of his medical practice. His love of education is regenerated by the idea of additional learning, functioning as a sensual aid. These shadows, as the outcome of necromancy, represent the potential sensual gratification supplied by further accumulation.

The ambiguity of the word “shadows” supplies Faustus with a wide range of potential encounters. In his book *Invisible World*, Robert West indicates that

⁹ The ability to raise the dead is, of course, the origins of necromancy. The Latin combination nekroi and mantia, meaning the divination of the dead, by this time had been conflated with the similar sounding “negromancy,” meaning black magic. David Wootton points out that this word appears as “negromancy” in the A-text of *Doctor Faustus* (1.1.25). This conflation between all forms of black magic and the specific practice of raising the dead can be traced to their near-homonymic similarity and their mutual practice of raising spirits.

Agrippa made little effort to differentiate between essential spirits, such as demons, and the separated souls of departed people (West 181). This statement is not precisely true. What Agrippa does offer in *The Three Books of Occult Philosophy* is not a canopy term for spirits but an encyclopedic description of different beliefs. When speaking about ghosts, he recalls the writings of diverse authors, relating them side by side. Plotinus's description of the transmigration of souls (593) is followed by Ovid's four part division of a person's spiritual composition (594), followed by the belief in returning spirits with "fleshly desire" (595), and so on. West focuses on this latter example, pointing out the unorthodox nature of believing in spirits with earthly passions (52). It is the unorthodox nature of this example that aroused suspicion. It coincided with Christian writers' presumption that ghostly apparitions were, in fact, a demon in disguise (West 48). Yet, it is Agrippa's listing of various beliefs without any hierarchical preference that makes his account truly unorthodox. The problem Agrippa poses to orthodoxy is not, as West contends, that there are no distinctions made. Agrippa offers a multitude of classical distinctions from which to pick and choose. The proliferation of spirits is enhanced in Agrippa's attacks on necromancers, where he reprimands them for using "unknown names" to invoke astonishment (Agrippa 696). Necromancers can invent demons by invoking strange names that entices their audience's curiosity. Faustus latches onto this curiosity, calling on the obscure demon, Mephistophilis to ask him a multitude of questions. After their relationship is established, his first request of this demon is "[t]ell me: what is that Lucifer thy Lord?" (1.3.307). Whenever Faustus grows familiar with one subject, he is offered a new demon or

specter to marvel over. Like Agrippa's descriptions of spirits, these apparitions do not need to cohere. They simply unfold the plot by adding new events to witness.

Christian writers since Augustine believed alternative beliefs were masks of the devil. After Faustus has exhausted his books of necromancy, his curiosity returns to sin and God. He has raised up spirits from classical Greece, queried Mephistophilis on the nature of the cosmos, yet, still he wants to know more. He asks Mephistophilis “who made the world?” (2.3.694) but Mephistophilis denies him, ending the lesson with “[m]ove me not, for I will not tell thee” (2.2.697). Faustus is left alone, complaining “[t]is thou hast damned distressed Faustus' soul” (2.2.704). There is a direct correlation between Faustus's distress and the limits to what he can know. His concern with damnation is not inspired by morality; it is prompted by his failure to know everything.

Luckily for Faustus, Mephistophilis returns with Lucifer and Beezlebub to put on a play with Christian themes. Lucifer's production of the *Seven Deadly Sins* resituates it among the other demonic apparitions. This play within a play is meant as a “pastime” (2.3.729-30). It seems paradoxical that Lucifer stages a morality play in order to convince Faustus “not to think of God” (2.3.722). However, Lucifer tells Faustus that the sins of this play show him that “in hell is all manner of delight” (2.3.778). Demons parade across the stage in costumes of sins that subvert moralistic judgment. Faustus condemnation of Gluttony is nothing more than playful harassment. He quips “thou will eat up all my victuals” (2.3.781). Furthermore, Faustus reverses roles by treating the play as if it were food. He exclaims, “this feeds my soul” (2.3.797). By including this play among other

demonic material, pious contemplation is reconstituted for heretical consumption. After Faustus is allowed to ask each sin in turn their character, Lucifer offers him another book to occupy his mind. Lucifer proclaims that the new book will enable Faustus to “turn thyself into what shape thou wilt” (2.3.803). There is a movement to supply Faustus with the spectacle of all his desires. This trajectory is motivated by an underlying demonic agency that animates the multiplicity of images he sees. When demons produce a play, they present the content as a collection of forms that induce curiosity and desire.

The comic scenes express an anxiety about the presence of demons that is channeled into parody. Black magic is placed in the hands of clowns. Various fears concerning magic crop up when Robin steals Faustus's magic book. Robin, although uninitiated in magic, is able to summon Mephastophilis. This feat is reminiscent of the cautionary tales of the sorcerer's apprentice, who unleashes uncontrollable forces (*Forbidden* 8). Literature on infernal subjects and the clown's possession of it reflect contemporary anxieties pertaining to the mixing of high and low. Suddenly, the book inherently contains numinous and dangerous power. Mephistophilis notes this power saying, “How I am vexèd with these villains' charms!/From Constantinople am I hither come,/Only for pleasure of these damnèd slaves” (3.2. 1026-28). Yet, the demon does not offer an explanation for Robin's unexpected command of magic.

The only sign of Robin's affinity with magic is the sustained display of sleight of hand that precedes his conjuration. He and his companion Rafe secretly pass a goblet of wine back and forth, deceiving the Vinter who has come for

payment (3.2.998-1006). The Vinter's accusations that they have the goblet are eventually met with threats by Robin. "Stand aside, you had best, I charge you in the name of Beezlebub" (3.2.1004-5), Robin warns, escalating the situation with the invocation of demons. Robin's carnival tricks are supplanted by his intent to "gull him supernaturally" (3.2.991). The clown's folk magic operates as a kind of preparatory ritual for his necromancy. Since he has deceived the Vinter's eyes with his dexterity, the sudden appearance of Mephistophilis is not necessarily supernatural. However, as Stuart Clark points out, orthodox writers often described the skills of demons as especially adept legerdemain (*Thinking* 246). Demonic powers were debased as mundane. Thus, Mephistophilis's ability to instantaneously shift settings is comparable to scene changes in the play. The correlation between necromancy and the clown's juggling characterizes them both as theater. However, the interrelationship between the two is illustrated through an escalation of the powers of spectacle. The clown's interest in illusion leads to dabbling in dangerous forces. The intermixing of the pursuits of intellectuals with profane appetites produces a volatile melange. The parody of black magic cultivates anxieties and criticisms as aspects of its enchanting power. The humor of this scene does not undermine the belief in magic; it helps incorporate the anxieties of detractors for the amusement of the audience.

The addition of a demon to the cast of clowns contributes to the power of spectacle. Initially, the incredulous Vinter is not fooled by Rafe and Robin's trickery. When Robin tries to increase his prestige with demonic reinforcement, all the characters are compelled to submit to the spectacle. Robin's position is reversed

when Mephistophilis casts spells to transform him into an ape (3.2.1034). This reversal restores the play's coherence after the internal contradiction that allowed Robin to forcibly summon Mephistophilis when Faustus could not. Mephistophilis justly punishes these villains for disrupting his role. His ability to antagonize these villains leaves the audience to wonder what allowed them to conjure him in the first place. It could be suggested here that Robin is reading from the book that Mephistophilis has obtained for Faustus that holds "spells and incantations" that allow him to "raise up spirits when [he] please[s]" (2.1.615-6). If Robin is profiting from Faustus's deal with the devil, then he is facilitated by a strange text. The book that takes the stage in the comic scenes comes from a different realm of knowledge than the books that have appeared thus far. Robin's reading of this book reflects the spontaneously invented "dog latin" expected of a lower class, illiterate character. After threatening the Vinterwith an obscure name, Beezlebub, Robin assures the Vinter of clarification saying, "I will tell you what I mean" (3.2.1007). He reads from the book "Sanctobulorum Periphrasticon! . . . Polypragmos Belseborams framanto pacostiphos tostu Mephastophilis! etc" (3.2.1009-10). Out of all the words uttered by Robin in his brief ceremony, only Mephastophilis's name is intelligible. Conjuraton has become satire but it is satire in service of intensifying the demonic illusion. These unfamiliar words echo Agrippa's attack of the necromancer's use of "unknown names" to increase the astonishment of others. What can account for the contradictions in these scenes is the dramatist's wish to display the powers of words, props, and costumes. This display of illusion overwhelms the need for sense but it also overwhelms incredulity. The

intensification of the illusions—from legerdemain to conjuration to metamorphosis—blends low humor with demonic power.

Of course, the audience does not have to believe in demonic magic to enjoy the play. What the audience is confronted with is the possibility that the lack of integrity it produces is enjoyable. Robin is left transformed but he is not perturbed. He considers his predicament “[h]ow, into an ape? That's brave! I'll have fine sport with the boys; I'll get nuts and apples enow” (3.2.1034-5). The initial confusion of his identity is overcome by his fantasies of accumulation.

The inclusion of this scene following Faustus's correspondingly incredible tricks he plays on the pope, including stealing his wine (3.1.894), exposes a connection between the grave magic of Faustus and this ridiculous counterpart. One could find a unifying quality amongst them by arguing that all magical power appearing in *Doctor Faustus* is reduced to spectacle. The spectacle, emptied of power, is lampooned by the incredulous Marlowe. However, this reduction is premature in that it does not take into account how the spectacles in *Doctor Faustus* utilize magic to highlight the sensual power of theater. Although Robin's magic supplies humor to the play, magic, more generally, supplies the play with a medium that makes various desires tangible. Alternatively, one could read the insertion of these comic scenes as products of multiple authors, whose opinions and beliefs on magic could never gel. The writer of the serious and speculative scenes involving Faustus's and Mephistophilis's discourse on magic has an opposing concept regarding the nature of magic to the playwright who penned the comic scenes. Judging by the internal contradictions, I am inclined to believe that

the play is composed by multiple authors.¹⁰ Yet, as I have noted, these contradictions coexist within a single scene. They produce an effect that is characteristic of staging black magic. By creating a space where demonic forms can appear, the play permits the reproduction of anxieties and desires surrounding magic without canceling one another out.

Even as the play presents magic as spectacle or a false power, it is simultaneously presented as fantasy that could capture the desires of a diverse crowd. Yet, both Robin's uncomplicated fantasy, to "make all the maidens of our parish dance at my pleasure stark naked before me" (2.2.949-50) and Faustus's more sophisticated wish to "see all the characters and planets of heavens" (2.1.618-19) reveal a power that is beyond their command. The incredulous Faustus "think[s] hell a fable (2.1.573), while, the naive Robin boasts he can easily fulfill his desires with the book despite his illiteracy (2.2.971). Nevertheless, they are both just as overwhelmed by the magical spectacles produced as the authorities they intended to victimize, the unsuspecting Vinter and Pope. The play forces the audience to accept this demonic presence no matter which perspective—credulous or incredulous, magical aspirant or Christian detractor—they take. Since the demonic thrives amongst conflicting beliefs, whether or not one responds to the display of magic with longing or anxiety, the specters of demons remain to haunt the stage. Faustus's lack of belief is overridden by the presence of demons. The spectacle is not empty in *Doctor Faustus*; it fills Faustus with a desire for

¹⁰ David Wootton, editor of the edition of *Doctor Faustus* that I have employed, says that it is known that two playwrights were commissioned to write additions for the play. However, it is unclear which scenes are the additions (xxvii). He remarks that the contradiction between Faustus's and Robin's abilities to compel Mephistophilis has been considered as evidence that Marlowe did not write the latter scene (3.2.1028 note 67).

knowledge. Robin's pastiche of his necromancy summons up the anxieties and enjoyment of this knowledge. Consequently, the apparition of Mephistophilis indicates the potential for multifarious experiences that are presented as desirable curiosities, attainable through the power of the stage.

A Pact with Hell

The previous section of this chapter illustrated how *Doctor Faustus* accumulates a series of events into an aggregation of spectacles. In the next section, I will argue that Faustus's attempt to possess these spectacles as objects converts the world into commodities, which includes himself. The depiction of Robin and Rafe showed the results of the lower class intervening in the spectacle. Ultimately, they are absorbed into the images by their metamorphosis. This characterization of the lower class as beasts implies the metaphorizing perspective of the elite. The interest in these characters is initiated by the lower class's ability to entertain with their buffoonery. Yet, it is accompanied by the fear that the lower class could return the gaze and look upon things outside their station. On the other hand, Faustus's fate is determined by the illicit interests present in his own social sphere. His subversion of values exemplifies a different permeation of high intellectualism with low pursuits. Reflecting on the blasphemy in the play, Kott directs attention to the “old and respectable tradition” of *parodia sacra* (Kott 10), a festive blending of sacred and profane rituals originating amongst the clergy. This established perversion of holy days is described by Stuart Clark, when he cites descriptions of the clergy wearing their vestments inside out, reading scripture upside down, and wearing

orange peel instead of glasses (*Thinking*, 18). These clerics went as far as to sing wanton songs at mass, practically inverting the sanctified rituals. Clark argues that these inversions were the prototype of the rituals that witches were later accused of performing (*Thinking* 18). Men in ecclesiastic office and among the educated elite originated the activities that we know as witchcraft. The later character of the witch is what Kieckhefer calls “a particularly tragic case of women being blamed and punished for the misconduct of men” (*Forbidden* 12). Faustus's behavior far exceeds the temporary inversion of the sacred contained in a festive occasion. The rituals he performs establishes permanent allegiance, which was traditionally “seen as a formal act analogous to feudal homage” (*Magic* 197). His illicit desires reconstitute his relationship to the social order.

Drawing on Kieckhefer's history of necromancy, Michael Bailey demonstrates how the confluences of black magic under the heading witchcraft began. Kieckhefer situates the production of these forbidden rituals in a “clerical underworld” developing from an increased influx of people educated in universities, who reached clerical status only to be left unsupervised and unemployed (*Forbidden* 12). Bailey adds that the orthodox clerics analyzing magic based their model of magic on what was closest at hand. They thought of all magical rituals, including witchcraft, as similar to the formal rituals they performed. The clerical character of magic was not solely formed by the apostate practitioners, rather, inquisitors and famous witch hunters like Bernard Gui, added to the intellectualized sculpting of this model (Bailey 967). Of course, Faustus, the divinity school dropout, fits this model perfectly. His character blends the elevated

character preferred by necromancers themselves and the impious profile submitted by the inquisitors, making him immediately recognizable to audience members who sympathize with either camp.

Richard Halpern, in his essay "Marlowe's Theater of Night," argues that Marlowe reshapes Faustus's deals with the devil, remodeling the pact on new economic relationships. As the feudal petty producer was replaced by a proto-capitalist worker, the witch's pact is transformed into a contract (461). Looking at the letters of a later playwright, Robert Dalborne, to the owner of the theater where Marlowe's plays were performed, Philip Henslowe, Halpern establishes illuminating connections between Faustus and Dalborne's descriptions of his contract. "Dalborne pledges his faith and Christianity" to Henslowe in these letters imbuing his contract with a "Faustian register" (457). This connection is not a coincidence for Halpern but a "crude interpretation of Marlowe's play" (457). Halpern goes on to suggest that the play itself was intended to mirror the economic interactions between Marlowe and theater owners. Mephistophilis, "the purveyor of special effects," provides to Faustus the things he cannot attain through writing (459). By selling himself to the devil, Faustus mimics the playwright's sale of a play as a commodity (459).

Graham Hammill concurs that *Doctor Faustus* is concerned with the logic of capital and commodity exchange. In his essay, "Faustus's Fortunes," Hammill argues that the focus on literary language works to turn objects into commodities. Language that allows for the suspension of disbelief is, for Hammill, the condition for assigning the symbolic value to a commodity (310). Since "the signified is

subordinated to the signifier” in language stable meaning is suspended, allowing Faustus to treat all objects as exchangeable (330). Faustus renounces the fixed values endowed by God for “endless exchange” (330). For Hammill, Faustus's inclusion in this system of exchange turns his soul into a commodity detaching it from the power of thought. As a kind of proto-wage laborer, Faustus is attached to the unthinkable because his thoughts are only “an automated motor in the machinery of market” (Hammill 329). Hammill laments Faustus's inability to rethink his position in relation to the market.¹¹ Halpern is more optimistic suggesting that Marlowe's depiction of Faustus's world as empty semblance is a critique of commodity culture (490). My argument is closer to Halpern's in that I will show how Faustus's reconstitution of his world into attainable objects mirrors the cultural marketplace. However, Faustus's role in this commodity culture is not to condemn this culture but to articulate an aspect of it by immersing himself in it. From this perspective, culture is not seen as empty but a complicated source of sensual experiences even if these experiences are commodified.

Faustian magic is invested in the profane aspects of culture. Faustus meets his end in the *English Faust Book* in the same manner as his theatrical successor, unable to transcend his own sinful life, even in his own imagination. Moreover, the Faustus of the play completes his entanglement in sin. He does not take the opportunity to counsel his fellow scholars to “have God always before your eyes”

¹¹ In opposition to readings of Faustus as a humanist morality play about over-thinking, Hammill suggests we, as readers, need to supply more analysis. His concluding remarks are a call for responsibility: Given the complex interactions between this commodification and the literariness that assumes it, given the sheer forcefulness of both Western literariness and what must now be considered global capitalism, and finally given the inability for Faustus to break out of literary forms because of his desire not to know, it is more important to think through the consequences and effects of 'the forme of Faustus fortunes,' no matter how unthinkable they may seem, since, living out the effects of 'the Renaissance,' we can only consider these fortunes to be our own (331).

(*EFB* 148) as he recounts his damnation. Instead, when he considers God, he immediately follows it with thoughts of hell. He confesses,

And what wonder I have done all Germany can witness, yea, all the world;
for which Faustus hath lost both Germany and the world, yea, heaven
itself—heaven the seat of God, the throne of the blessed, the kingdom of
joy—and must remain in hell for ever; hell, ah, hell for ever! Sweet friends,
what shall become of Faustus, being in hell forever? (5.2.1407-13).

Faustus has reached the end of his performance and at the limits of what he can show is hell. This speech is not a repentance. He remains fixated on the fate of the wonders he has produced. Furthermore, he seems curious about what his own fate holds, wondering what hell will be like. When he is asked to repent, his response serves to increase his passion. He cannot call “[o]n God, whom Faustus hath abjured,” he complains, “I would weep, but the devil draws in my tears. Gush forth blood instead of tears, yea, life and soul, O, he stays my tongue! I would lift up my hands, but see—they hold them, they hold them!” (5.2.1415-20). His wish for redemption is only ever articulated in a negation of the possibility. These negative prayers keep the tension consistent with no release or expectation of salvation. Divine forces are immaterial. They are referenced to enhance the profane character of his pursuits, increasing their terrible power without a tangible option for relief.

The traditional story of the demonic pact was told through treatises, similar to the *Faust Book*. Except, in these *Exempla*, the protagonist would invariably

repent and be saved. These prototypes for Faustus were based on the story of Theophilus of Adana. As Kieckhefer describes, they are “moral literature [that] often represents necromancy as a fascination of youth, which the practitioners outgrow and renounce as they become older” (*Magic* 154). Theophilus, a sixth century bishop, was said to have sold his soul to the devil but then prayed for and received intercession from the Virgin Mary. Making repentance more attractive than the magic is not the prerogative of Marlowe’s play. Rather, Marlowe’s tragedy emphasizes the finality of Faustus's commitment to iniquity. The slight epilogue attempts to moralize:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
 And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough
 That sometime grew within this learned man.
 Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
 Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
 Only to wonder at unlawful things,
 Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
 To practice more than heavenly power permits. (Epilogue 1510-17)

The metaphorization of Faustus in this epilogue functions as an elegy rather than a sermon. The mournful imagery bemoans his untimely end. There is an emphasis on Faustus's qualities as an intellectual and producer of wonders. Like the poet who writes these lines, Faustus has offered images that inspire wonder in the wise. The

weakness of the message, that one should wonder *at* Faustus from a critical distance, is engulfed by the sympathetic imagery. One could be left with the impression that this passage is meant to “entice” more than “exhort.” The audience is called to once again “regard his hellish fate” (Epilogue 1512) as the final lines of the play draw attention to the territory that lies beyond what “heavenly power permits” (Epilogue 1517). Faustus's unbreakable vow to hell continues to direct the audience's gaze, even when it is repudiated.

Faustus does not forswear his pact. In fact, he renews it just before the end of the play. The repetition of the pact reflects Marlowe's interest in representing this traditional story. Marlowe takes the idea of doubling the pact from *The English Faust Book*, which shows Faustus reconfirming his allegiance to Lucifer. When the stories of Faustus borrow from the exempla tradition, this episode is multiplied. The pact is a central focus of interest that makes the story attractive to repeat. The play picks up on this repeatability, adding to the accumulation. Through these proliferating sources, the notion of the demonic pact becomes a widespread phenomenon. From the perspective of Marlowe's Faustus, the world in which the pact takes place is reconstituted through his consortium with demons. Faustus asks Mephistophilis for an explanation for his presence on earth:

Faustus. Where are you damned?

Mephistophilis. In hell.

Faustus. How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

Mephistophilis. Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it. (1.3.318-21)

His initiation into demonic company begins with a survey of the geography of hell. Mephistophilis maps hell onto the sensual world, relocating the satanic domain within physical reality. Contrary to Faustus's expectations, these two spheres are not separate. Hell is found everywhere that the joys one experiences are not "the eternal joys of heaven" (1.3.323). The immanence of hell is the reason why Faustus cannot summon Mephistophilis out of hell; he is already there in the fabric of the everyday. Mephistophilis reveals that there is not one hell but "ten thousand hells" (1.3.324). Instead of portraying a specific set of beliefs about hell, the play offers demonic knowledge that parasitically assails the membrane that separates their domain from the sensible world. The "[d]esper in God" that Faustus displays before signing the pact is accompanied by his new "trust in Beezelbub" (2.1.442). He has found a relationship with the multiplicity of demons inhabiting the profane world. A connection with demons is already there, waiting to be uncovered in the cultural fabric as part of its constitution. The infestation of demons is equal to the proliferated sources that Marlowe draws upon.

The pervasiveness of demons is matched by Faustus's widespread ambition to accumulate the wealth of the world. Faustus's initial desires for treasure are globalized in comparison to the localized treasure hunting of the necromantic manuals. While these manuals often have spells for finding buried gold (Klaassen 23), Faustus, spurred on by Cornelius, believes demons will "dry the sea/And fetch the treasure of all foreign wrecks" (1.1.177-8). The Faustus of the *Faust Book* begins with the standard search for gold. His treasure hunting expedition sends him

outside of Wittenberg, digging underneath the ruins of a chapel (*EFB* 142). Yet, his taste for travel soon leads to descriptions of a grand tour of the continent, reminiscent of travelogues. The play's subsequent representation of these travels illustrates what Barbara Mowat calls “unexpected connection between the explorer/conquerer and the sorcerer” (Mowat, 30). Faustus’s interest in travel stems from his fantasies of envisioning his own encyclopaedic set of the world. His hesitation to sell his soul to the devil quickly becomes an exuberant exclamation of anticipation at the thought of being a “great emperor of the world” who could “make a bridge through the moving air/To pass the ocean with a band of men” (1.4.349-51). His topographical vision is enhanced by poetically interweaving the world, as he imagines “join[ing] the hills that bind the Afric shore/and mak[ing] that country continent to Spain” (1.4.352-3). This string of poetic conquests culminates in a unified state. Faustus foresees this territory as future “contributory to [his] crown” (1.4.354-6). Imagining this power satisfies his desires. He is content to “live in speculation of this art” (1.4.358). Necromancy offers him a fantasy of the world that he can sensually possess and contemplate its poetic value.

Necromancy relies on its ability to invoke an analogous power. Kieckhefer quotes rituals that act in the name of God in order to appropriate the aura of divine authority for infernal purposes (*Forbidden* 140). Faustus chooses secular models to emulate. His invocation of imperialism appropriates the fantasy of global acquisitions for himself. Among his most disturbing utterances, he envisions demons that would “fly to India for gold/Ransack the ocean for pearl,/And search all corners of the new-found world” (1.1.114-16). This speech summons up what

must have been a common fantasy in the midst of expanding colonial exploration. His friend Valdes encourages the analogy with colonialism, assuring him that “[a]s Indian Moors obey their Spanish Lords,/So shall the subjects of every element/Be always serviceable to us three” (1.1.154-6). The images that are conjured up are charged with the power of Western expansion. Although Faustus never occupies a seat of power, his visions are characterized by current trends in the acquisition of wealth from beyond the state's boundaries.

Faustus's transgressions are intimately related to a boundary crossing marketplace. Demons assist him in acquiring a multitude of experiences beyond his domain. This is the central remuneration of the exchange with Mephistophilis. The pact galvanizes the space of the stage with the spectacle of inaccessible knowledge. Faustus's scholarly knowledge is supplemented by the manifestation of distant locations made tangible by magical invocation. Faustus anticipates the tyrannical power to “wall all Germany with brass” (1.1.120) and invent “stranger engines for the brunt of war” (1.1.127). However, his overreaching draws foreign elements into the magical space he creates. When he travels from Germany to Rome he alters his relationship to the familiar space he inhabits. Necromancy has the unexpected effect of permeating the pre-existing structures with a necromantic element. Faustus's explorations are described as if the foreign places are magically summoned into his present position. Faustus chronicles his journey:

Having now, my good Mephistophilis,

Passed with delight the stately town of Trier,

Environ'd round with airy mountain-tops,
 With walls of flint and deep-entrenchèd lakes
 Not to be won by any conquering prince;
 From Paris next, coasting the realm of France,
 We saw the river Maine fall into Rhine,
 Whose banks are set with groves of fruitful vines,
 Then up to Naples, rich Campania,
 Whose buildings, fair and gorgeous to the eye,
 The streets straight forth and paved with finest brick,
 Quarters the town in four equivalents.
 There we saw learned Maro's golden tomb . . . (3.1.823-834).

Faustus's short narration of his travels through the continent presents foreign rivers, groves, buildings and cities in a torrent of nouns that act as if they are props marshaled briefly onto the stage (3.1.822-843). The metonymic style suggests his earlier description of his scholastic learning, which is echoed in his interest in Virgil's tomb. The listing of academic subjects led him to necromancy, whereas, this trail of emblematic words leads him to Rome. However, it is a Rome that appears like a necromantic vision. Faustus is confronted with the vision of the city but must ask for confirmation. He inquires of Mephistophilis "what resting place is this?/Hast thou, as erst I did command,/Conducted me within the walls of Rome?" (3.1.841-3). These questions are cleared up by the physical set of the city, now present on the stage that was just recently Faustus's England, where demons had

paraded in the masks of sin. The city to which Faustus directs the audience is likely a backcloth, owned by Marlowe's theater company, the Admiral's Men, cataloged as the "city of Rome" amongst their stage props (3.1.850 note 20). The conversion of places into pieces that can fit on the stage is reminiscent of the acquisition of foreign assets for consumption. Faustus's travels transform the landscape into commodities.

The representation of international exploration exhibits a world corrupted by his gaze. Faustus's and Mephistophilis's infiltration of the Pope's private chamber supplies them with another location to add to their spectacular display. They torment the pope by making his food inexplicably disappear. The Pope's meal has been acquired from various locations across Italy. As the Pope announces the origin of each dish, Faustus snatches it away. After having lost his appetizer from Milan, the Pope begins on his the dish "sent [to him] from the Cardinal of Florence (3.1.890). Upon hearing its derivation, Faustus announces, "You say true, I'll ha't" (3.1.891). Faustus is motivated less by a desire to exploit the Pope for political gain than to acquire Italian goods. Faustus employs his demonic magic to appropriate the Vatican's power to amass merchandise.

There is a similarity between the Pope's sanctioned desires and Faustus's that his magic exposes. The scene is set up as a satire of the Vatican but it reveals more than opposing beliefs. The irony that the Pope interprets Faustus's magic as the presence of a ghost suggests a fascination with transgressive acts. The Cardinal of Lorraine is the first to interpret the theft of the Pope's food as "some ghost newly crept out of Purgatory, come to beg a pardon" of the Pope (3.1.895-6). The

Pope immediately begins to cross himself, while his Catholic followers sing prayers. The Friars' prayer ironically ridicules Catholic rites:

Cursèd be he that stole away his Holiness' meat from the table.

Maledicat dominus

Cursèd be he that struck he that struck his Holiness a blow on the face.

Maledicat dominus . . . (3.1.917-20).

Their beliefs in Purgatorial spirits lead them into a contest with Faustus in which they try to curse him. The fact that, unbeknownst to the Catholics, they are actually faced with magician aided by a demon suggests that Faustus is parodying Catholic belief. The credulous Catholics fall victim to demonic forces posing as Christian spirits. The Pope's wish to dispel the ghost exposes his wish to believe there is a ghost in the first place. Catholics are revealed to have a fascination with spectral things that could allow them to fall under the powers of hell. Furthermore, the exorcism ritual looks similar to Faustus's invocation of spirits. They call on God, invoking him through Latin terms, for the low purpose of revenge for lost luxury items. The Catholics and Faustus are engaged in a kind of magical contest. In this context, it is not surprising to acknowledge that the religious ritual of exorcism is analogous to necromantic invocation, the two words being interchangeable at times (*Forbidden* 127). The play draws an equivalence between blessings and magic, when Faustus calls the rituals meant to send him to hell "tricks" (3.1. 901). The Pope retaliates against the tricks Faustus has played on him with his own tricks.

The play rescripts acts of consecration as driven by the same energy as necromancy. By aligning the Pope's desires for ghosts with Faustus's desires to commune with demons, there is a reciprocal exchange that situates all as attempts to transgress boundaries. This demonic meaning appears on the stage, as if the backcloth of the set had been flipped to expose the warp threads that hold it together, revealing the effaced desires of the culture that constituted it.

The play does not contain the desire to see ghosts within satire. Although the haunting of the Vatican is parodied in an orthodox Protestant fashion, it is followed by a series of scenes exhibiting sympathy with the fascination in spectral forms. Through demons, Faustus mediates the desires of his patron, the Emperor Charles V. The Emperor authorizes transgressive desires. He has heard of Faustus's ability to produce "rare effects of magic" (4.1.1042) and his desire to witness these rarities first hand ensures that Faustus "shalt be no ways prejudiced or endamaged" (4.1.1048-9). Faustus resurrects Alexander the Great and his paramour to "satisfy [Charles V's] just desire" (4.1.1075). It is established that Alexander and his paramour is accomplished by the aid of his "familiar spirit" (4.1.1043-44) and they are not "true substantial bodies" (4.1.082), but are "such spirits as can lively resemble Alexander and his paramour" (4.1.1086-7). Emperor Charles V's unorthodox wish to see his antecedents offers him an image of "this famous conquerer" (4.1.1070). Alexander is contextualized as the prototype of modern imperialism but he appears as the product of demonic agency. When Charles V's fantasies that developed while he was "solitary set within [his] closet" (4.1.1057) appear in public, they are cast in a demonic light. The demonic spectacle

illuminates the dark corners of the empire, shifting them into center stage as illicit productions. The ghosts are silent, perfect reproductions of imperial power. In Faustus's hands, Alexander and his paramour become the prototypical commodities at the root of culture.

Faustus reveals that the desire to see images that transgress boundaries is a ubiquitous fantasy. The pact that enabled this fantasy grows to subsume him. Faustus reestablishes his bond to hell in order to see Helen of Troy. He has already made Helen appear for the benefit of other scholars. Her initial apparition presented a specter akin to Alexander. She is silent and the scholars are ordered to be silent as well (5.1.1289). There is no communication with this specter. However, this spirit in the play grows progressively more tangible. When Helen reenters the stage at Faustus's behest, he is able to speak to her and even touch her. Faustus requires her "sweet embracings" to resign the pact (5.1.1351). The verisimilitude of his earlier apparitions only foreshadow Faustus's production of a body to fulfill his desires. As a stage figure, she progresses from a spectacular prop, invoked by magic, passing over the stage (5.1.1290) to a physical character. Indistinguishable from a genuine body, she implicates the real world of the play in these magical productions. Conversely, Faustus scripts himself into the classical source that he draws her from:

I will be Paris, and for love of thee;
Instead of Troy shall Wertenberg be sacked
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,

And wear my colors on my plumèd crest;

Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel

And then return to Helen for a kiss. (5.1.1364-9)

The conflation of the literary world with Faustus's theatrical world is performed for the reward of this kiss. In order to fulfill his desire to hold one of his apparitions, he takes on part of her identity. In turn, she becomes just as real as Faustus. The pact with hell upholds a pact with fantasy.

Faustus becomes part of the assemblage of cultural icons. As Kott argues, Helen is another example of the antiquated emblems that constitute the play. In this case Homeric myth is mediated through Lucian's 2nd Century CE text, *The Dialogues of the Dead* (Kott 16). In this source, Helen appears as a featureless skull, prompting the ironic remark about her beauty causing the mobilization of ships and destructive wars (Heckscher 296). Marlowe recontextualizes this remark as Faustus gazes on her full beauty:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships

And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Sweet Helen make me immortal with a kiss.

Her lips sucks forth my soul: see where it flies!

Come, Helen, give me my soul again.

Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,

And all is dross that is not Helena. (5.1.1360-4)

The play restores her face with her original features, undoing Lucian's memento mori with the realization of Faustus's desires. The demonic production of aesthetic creations inscribes them with a transgressively sexual nature. The play sexualizes the longing for resurrection, underscoring the subversion of orthodox eschatology. His sexual consummation with Helen allows his soul to circulate within a spectral world. This version of immortality is found in the spectral representations of a text, which reanimates these figures. No longer Lucian's death's head, he kisses the "heavenly" visage of Helen (5.1.1350). His soul passes back and forth between them, contained within the profane world. This theatrical simulation of transcendence is the effect of the pact with Mephistophilis, which ensures his permanent inhabitation of the profane world despite his imminent death. Faustus will die, damned to hell, but accompanied by the profane emblems that he has spent the play repetitiously representing. He becomes a part of the forms that structure his culture.

Faustus's eagerness to see "some demonstrations magical" (1.2.183) quickly leads to him selling his soul. Mephistophilis's descriptions of hell make Faustus covetous. A hell that "hath no limits, nor is circumscribed/In one self place" (2.1.567-8) is fascinating to him. He responds to the possibility of hell on earth with ease saying, "Nay, and this be hell, I'll willingly be damned here. What? Walking, disputing, etc. But leaving off this, let me have a wife" (2.1.585-7). His consummation of this wish comes in the form of Helen. In his embrace with Helen, his desires coalesce. Effectively, the demonic territory he has explored has taken on

a physical form. Faustus decides that he could inhabit this form of Helen saying, "Here will I dwell" (5.1.1363). A tangible hell does not exist in the source text, where hell is described as "perpetual darkness," which "hath many figures, semblances, and names, but cannot be named nor figured in such sort unto the living that are damned" (*EFB* 85). Marlowe's Mephastophilis has filled the nothingness of hell with worldly spectacle. The play transubstantiates hell into the world itself. Given Faustus's willingness to enter into a relationship to this sensual hell, his final lines are puzzling. He anticipates his death with strain:

Ah, Faustus—

Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,

And then thou must be damned perpetually.

Stand still, you ever moving spheres of heaven,

That time may cease, and midnight never come!

Fair nature's eye, rise rise again, and make

Perpetual day; or let this hour be but a year,

A month, a week, a natural day,

That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

O lente, lente currite noctis equi!

The stars move still; time runs; the clock will strike;

The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.

O, I'll leap up to God! Who pulls me down? (5.2.1450-62)

Instead of reading this as repentance it can more profitably be considered in terms of a sexual climax. The spiritual confession is desecrated. An oblique Latin line appears in the middle that is lifted from a love poem (5.2.1459), not a prayer. The tensions between high and low are invoked to create an orgasmic outpouring of images. Furthermore, his effort to forestall the climax sustains the sensation. As the culmination of the pact, this scene is an extension of his kiss with Helen. It places his final moments in a proliferation of cultural images. Faustus “stages” his death to enter into the world of his own accumulation. He has an “incurred eternal death” (1.1.333), which refurbishes him for demonic spectral displays. His dramatic exit is the fulfillment of his conversion into a demonic world of curiosities that are fitting for theatrical reproduction.

Faustus enters the stage, “supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer” (Benjamin 34). Walter Benjamin's analysis of Charles Baudelaire's situation in the cultural marketplace is fitting for Faustus's pact. Susan Buck-Morss acknowledges that in describing the nineteenth century marketplace as hell Benjamin modeled it on the hell that he described in his earlier analyses of early modern culture (Buck-Morss 186). Furthermore, the commodification of Baudelaire in this market is decidedly Faustian. The concept that the intelligentsia is compelled to sell themselves into a material hell is conceivably based on the Faustian myth.

Benjamin's analysis of the baroque concept of the world as hell concludes with the rejection of the world for the sake of an immaterial higher good. Yet, Buck-Morss contends that this is not Benjamin's own position (174). She argues

instead that Benjamin believed that to reject the empty world of things after a prolonged accumulation was a treacherous leap that denies the objective world (175). Her reading of Benjamin offers an alternative, “empathizing with the commodity” (186). Taking up the standpoint of the commodity means to dismantle the dream world of the private consumer, whereby one recognizing oneself in the objects in a system of exchange (Buck-Morss 184). For Buck-Morss, the fantasies of the private consumer are opposed by the hollowed out state of the commodity form (177). Yet, this formulation needs to take into account that when people become commodities they are not “hollowed out” but still filled with thought and capable of communicating sensations. When Faustus sells himself in the play, he plays the role of—capable of speaking for and to—the commodified person.

Faustus articulates the sensations experienced in a burgeoning marketplace. Without recognizing the sensual affect of these exchanges, the public taste for the spectacular form that these commodities take is rendered illegible. There is more to Faustus's consumption of knowledge than what an emptied out world could supply. While the indiscriminate proliferation of consumable objects is the motor of an emerging capitalism, the various forms that these objects take in culture potentially inspire a dissident self fashioning. Faustus is not an autonomous subject; he fashions himself after a cultural production, produced by a market for necromantic subjects. However, his desire for knowledge not only binds him to the system of exchange, it motivates him to overreach his station. His access to education, and his desire for more than he has, leads him to discover an aspect of cultural production that undermines its own hierarchy. Faustus's hubris, the desire to have

more than one is granted, is also capitalism's. Even though fantasies of attaining goods and knowledge are at the root of his submission to hell, it is also these fantasies that are the most volatile product of society's spectacles. The desire to have more increases the plurality of goods in exchange, which includes dissident ideas gleaned from cultural productions. Faustus articulates only that forbidden knowledge is already in circulation. In the next chapter, I will examine how a contribution to the dissemination of spectacle can act as an intervention, disrupting the authoritative order that attempts to control how images are circulated and interpreted. This argument will be illustrated through Hamlet's production of the play-within-the-play as inspired by his experiences with the Ghost.

The Mirror: looking at fear and wonder in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Whether I believe in ghosts or not I say: 'long live the ghost' (Derrida 1983)

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the order of the court is structured by surveillance. Sentinels, spies, and an inquisitive aristocracy make up a large portion of the body politic. Together, their perspectives converge to manifest a recognizable State, appearing on the stage. When a ghost enters the line of sight, the structuring principles are shaken. The audience's ability to discern the implications of the political events are troubled by the recurring interference of this paranormal manifestation. On stage and in critical interpretation, the presence of the Ghost leads to a multitude of interpretations. In a play overwhelmed by the preoccupation with seeing, it is difficult to believe that anything has escaped the interrogating eyes of the multitude of spectators. Yet, the lingering specter remains a riddle without definitive explanation. Neither the secret it reveals to Hamlet nor its identity as the ghost of Hamlet's father is ever confirmed. Rather than uncovering the truth, perplexity ensues from its appearance, contributing to a terrible sense of fear and wonder. It is this sense that Hamlet acquires from the ghost, remembering and inheriting it, as he enigmatically conducts himself throughout the play. Hamlet's performances in court are an act of intervention into the daily spectacle, exploiting the interpretation of the seen in order to open up questions in a public forum.

Hamlet's melancholy demeanor or 'antic disposition' is a production, or reproduction, of the secret of the ghost. This secret is embodied in this spectral form, at once an image of bodily corruption and implicating the State in that

corruption, as well. Operating as an agent of uncertainty, the secret exposes a gap and recovers something lost to the Danish court. However, this something is as spectral as its ghostly mediator. The crime that precedes the play produces an investigation. Yet, this investigation does not explain the Ghost's presence in the court as much as it restructures the crime, producing a story. The narrative of this restructuring is the motor to the play; a story of investigation. In this case, investigation is understood to be opposed to the explanations that fit neatly into the established court. The Ghost represents the effaced elements of normative decorum, generating additional possibilities that decentralize the established order. Various discourses in the early modern period attempted to explain and contain apparitions in their systems, including the theological discernment of spirits, the skeptical explanations of illusions and tricks, and the sovereign's disenchanting gaze. Here, it will be argued that Shakespeare presents anomalous appearances in a way that undermines these rationalizations. By bringing the spectral into focus within the public domain, Hamlet's application of indeterminate images illuminates the incompleteness of these narrative framings. Outside of the frame, there is always a remainder, a riddle or a corpse, fascinating the inquisitive spectator, who is awestruck with fear and wonder.

Riddles and Corpses

In his prefatory essay to his own piece of theater, Nicolas Abraham laments that "[t]he final scene of *The Tragedy of Hamlet* does not close the dramatic action, it simply cuts it off" (2). The lack of a proper conclusion in the play is presented as

a case for Abraham to supply one. “The Phantom of Hamlet or the Sixth Act” is his attempt to resolve the action of the play. In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, he explains, “[t]he action, laced with visions and intrigues, simulation and madness, grinds to a halt stripped of protagonists. As the curtain falls, only corpses and riddles are left, silent like the night of Elsinore. Having lost all hope of seeing the mystery unraveled, the spectator remains bewildered” (2). Fortinbras ends the scene with a truncated stage direction saying, “Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this/Becomes the field but here shows much amiss/Go bid the soldiers shoot” (5.2.385). The last remaining action promised at the end of the play seems to end mid-line.¹² The sight of the dead is perturbing, drawing consideration that cannot be resolved. The order to remove the bodies provokes anticipation rather than closure. Thus, the focus remains on the bodies as they are taken from the stage. This incomplete command calls attention to a stage riddled with corpses, corpses that remain riddles. Beginning with the appearance of the Ghost, riddles linger in the play as if they are carried in the fumes of corpses. Marcellus’s memorable exclamation, “[s]omething is rotten in the state of Denmark” (1.4.90) follows the exit of the ghost. Consequently, Marcellus follows after the figure that prompted his realization of this condition. The Ghost is an incongruous image that inspires an ongoing investigation into the state of things.

Nicolas Abraham, dissatisfied with this open-endedness, set out to write the “Sixth Act” as an antidote. As a distinguished psychoanalyst, he places his creative writing within a therapeutic framework, stating “I seek to ‘cure’ the *public* of the

¹² The Arden editors quote the 19th century scholar, George MacDonald, who writes, “The end is a half-line after a riming couplet—as if there were more to come—as there must be after every tragedy (464)

covert neurosis that the *Tragedy of Hamlet* has, for centuries, inflicted upon it” (4). He reads *Hamlet* as the presentation of something hidden, which is “the living-dead knowledge of *someone else’s secret*” (3). Therefore, there is a repressed knowledge that is transferred to Hamlet that is not Claudius’s but a secret kept by the living-dead, old Hamlet. Abraham’s addition to the play shows the Ghost revealing his own shameful act, the secret assassination of Fortinbras’ father (9). The enigmatic narrative qualities—Hamlet’s delay in taking revenge leading to the confusing massacre at the end—are explained as Hamlet’s unconscious awareness of the details revealed in the Ghost’s appended confession. Abraham structures his story from the elements from the play, such as the fixation on poisoning, which function as clues to a prehistory of the narrative. Of course, by building his narrative from mementos of the original play, Abraham offers clues to seek out when returning to view or read the play. Looking at the clues in *Hamlet*, it becomes clear that the story already unfolds around the presentation of a prehistory. Horatio relays events to Hamlet that took place before the play, “[a] figure like [Hamlet’s] father” had appeared for two nights “[i]n the dead waste and middle of the night” (1.2.195-8). This figure, which had left Horatio’s companions with “fear-surprised eyes” (1.2.202), is interpreted by Horatio as a sign of “some strange eruption to our state” (1.1.73). What immediately erupts in the state is Hamlet’s series of questions that follow from Horatio’s story. The Ghost is a representative of an un-narrated prehistory¹³ that produces a story about investigation. Contrary to Abraham’s

¹³ Ernst Bloch calls the events that proceed a story “the un-narrated factor” (219). He points out that “[i]n the detective novel the crime has already occurred, outside the narrative; the story arrives on the scene of a corpse” (219). The function of the story is to show “a process of reconstruction from investigation and evidence” (213). This process is driven by the primordial event or “un-origin” that created the corpse.

intent, his solutions contribute to this tradition of puzzling that the spectator or reader of this play enjoys. This explanation of the Ghost's identity triggers additional rereadings rather than a resolution or a remedy. By provoking an investigative impulse, the Ghost's appearance is the condition from which a story will proceed.

Before setting Nicolas Abraham and his "cure" aside, it is important to note his motivation to cure the public of a popular play. His reason is twofold: he believes the audience shares with Hamlet an unconscious anxiety or "uneasiness" that not all has been revealed and what has been revealed is a lie (Abraham 2-3). Speaking to the latter concern, Abraham asserts that "[t]his is what spectators and critics alike have, for nearly four hundred years, failed to consider. The 'secret' revealed by Hamlet's 'phantom,' and which includes a demand for vengeance, is merely a subterfuge" (3). The claim that this possibility has not been considered obscures the long history of individuals concerned with the deceptions of ghosts. Christopher Pye recounts the correspondence of notable Shakespeare scholars J. Dover Wilson and W.W. Greg engaged in discussing this issue just before Abraham's birth. It is Claudius's delayed reaction rather than Hamlet's that sparks these critics' apprehension about the Ghost's credentials (Pye 105). Pye points out that Claudius does not "respond to the prologue, which mimics precisely the details of the crime, whereas he *does* respond to the play-within-the-play proper, which

The recognition that "a crime, usually a murder, precedes the beginning" (213), instantiates an investigation. He associates this crime with the biblical fall, a realization that the world is corrupt (219). Although the detective story as a genre arose from evidential procedure in court cases, he argues that the narrative of investigation is "unmistakably independent of the detective figure" (219). The prehistory is relayed "in accordance to the rules of detection, only in the plot and as plot itself" (220). The narrative device that structures plot from the investigation and representation of an immemorial crime is already present in *Hamlet*.

represents the crime in a more veiled form” (106). His contradictory actions do not prove that Hamlet is lying, rather, they suggest that the King is uncertain how to respond. During the dumb-show, the King remains suitably silent. However, after the speeches by the Player King and Queen, Claudius responds with questions. Between scenes he asks, “Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in’t?” (3.2.226-7). Initially he was subdued but the full-blown spectacle causes him bewilderment. A basic depiction of events does not have the same nuanced effect on the King. Eventually, the strength of the spectacle forces the King to evacuate the theater, calling for lights (3.2.261). What Hamlet displays for the court is the power of spectacle to overwhelm the King’s composure. It is not simply the events related that affect the King but their revelation through a display that induces uncertainty. Like the Ghost, the play-within-the-play operates by creating a surprise-effect with images that disrupt the composure of the viewer.

In order to examine how the “veiled form” of representation works to affect the recipient, I will begin by examining the surprise-effect of the Gravedigger’s macabre riddles. The Gravedigger and his companion enter with a series of jokes about the nature of Ophelia’s death that, with mispronouncing Latin conclusions—“Argal” instead of ergo (5.1. 12)—mock deductive reasoning. Afterward, the Gravedigger raises the question “[w]hat is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright or the carpenter” to which the second man replies “[t]he gallows-maker, for that outlives a thousand tenants” (5.1.36-40). Not completely satisfied with this answer, the Gravedigger has his companion repeat the question in return:

2 Man. Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright or a carpenter?

Gravedigger. Ay, tell me that and unyoke.

2 Man. Marry, now I can tell.

Gravedigger. To't

2 Man. Mass, I cannot tell.

Gravedigger. Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating. And when you are asked this question next, say a gravemaker. The houses he makes lasts till doomsday. Go get thee in and fetch me a stoup of liquor. (5.1 46-56)

This section is a clear example of a riddle in the play, as it presents a challenging question with a surprising answer. The potential for a more curious answer provokes the riddle to be answered again. The riddle works to break down sequential expectations, soliciting a cycle of rereading. Furthermore, the expected engineering example is subverted with a macabre tone. The houses that gravemakers build act as a memento mori, undermining the solidity of the masons, shipwrights and carpenters constructions. The grave's strength lies in its disruption of the sequential.¹⁴ Assumptions are replaced with a fascination for disturbing imagery. The break down of a linear sequence through discordant insights renews

¹⁴ Susan Stewart comes to a similar conclusion when comparing how different souvenirs work to narrativize experience. She argues that collected mementos of death “mark the horrible transformation of meaning into materiality more than they mark, as other souvenirs, do the transformation of materiality into meaning. If the function of the souvenir proper is to create a continuous and personal narrative of the past, the function of such souvenirs of death is to disrupt and disclaim that continuity” (140).

an investigative impulse that counteracts conventional understanding.

In order for the morbidity of these scenes to have a discordant effect, they must merge the surprise with a melancholic response. Overhearing the comic relief of the Gravedigger, Hamlet is horrified by the threat that the scene is dissipating into absurdity. He asks, "Has this fellow no feeling of his business?/'A sings in grave-making" (5.1.61). Horatio accounts for the Gravedigger's lack of sensitivity suggesting that "[c]ustom hath made it in him a property of easiness" (5.1.63-4). The singing of the Gravedigger is countered by Hamlet imagining a decomposed skull singing (5.1.71). Initially, this description of the dead is meant to restore a proper hierarchy, whereby the skeletons are invested with aristocratic identities that illustrates how the Gravedigger "o'erreaches" his station by abusing them (5.1.71-75). However, Hamlet's regenerative imaginings of these corpses quickly degenerates into riddle-like wordplay. While he reproaches the Gravedigger for appropriating the graves as his personal stage, he begins to play along. Hamlet contests the Gravedigger's right to claim possession of the grave by punning on the verb "to lie". He ironically declares that "I think it be thine, for thou liest in't" (5.1.105). When the Gravedigger retorts that he does not lie in it, Hamlet immediately qualifies his position, quibbling "[t]hou dost lie in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick. Therefore thou liest" (5.1.117-119). The right to this location no longer depends on aristocratic titles, it is the property of skeletons. To some extent, Hamlet has relinquished the class differences in order to playfully speculate on the dead. His next subject for introspection and idealization is the skull of a jester, Yorick. He compares this "fellow of infinite jest" (5.1.175) to the

putrefied corpse of Alexander the Great (5.1.187-8). Yorick combines play and horror better than the Gravedigger's jesting. Yorick's decaying skull leads to the surprising inference that "the noble dust of Alexander" could be found "stopping a bung-hole" (5.1.193-4). Hamlet's sarcastic comment that the Gravedigger's comedy was a "fine revolution an we had the trick to see't" (5.1.85-6) can equally describe Hamlet's imaginative debasement of Alexander. However, the trick that allows Hamlet to reconsider the dead is his incorporation of a highly serious interest within a playful analysis. The morbidity of his playfulness applies his inquisitive impulse to break down categorical distinctions, perpetuating riddles that undermine the discrimination between high and low.

The investigation into the prehistory of the play recurrently leads to contemplating the dead. Thus, the prehistory appears in the figure of disintegrating skeletons and perplexing apparitions. As a result, the investigative impulse is fixated on communicating with the dead. This desire to speak to and for the dead can be discovered throughout the play. Horatio takes up this task after the death of Hamlet. He requests to speak to the "unknowing world" to disclose "[h]ow these things came about."

So shall you hear

Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,

Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,

Of deaths put on by cunning, and for no cause,

And this upshot purposes mistook

Fallen on th'inventors' heads. All this can I

Truly deliver. (5.2.363-369)

After all the haphazard intrigue of the play and its gruesome conclusion, Horatio promises to speak for the bodies strewn about the castle and “[t]ruly deliver” (5.2.369) the story as it unfolded. Speaking truly requires the inclusion of the many unsightly and inexplicable events of the play. The promise to hear them is never fulfilled by Horatio in this scene, and so, his words are meant to trigger the audience's recollection of earlier events. This moment is not the first time Horatio has attempted to speak with or for the dead. The play opens with Horatio calling out to the unresponsive Ghost “What art thou . . . ?” (1.1.45). Horatio’s attempt to make the dead speak bookends the play, creating a circuit. As the only reliable witness surviving at the end of the play, his scholarly voice becomes a focal point for his audience, hoping to hear the story. This unfilled gesture to tell the story, returns the audience to the beginning of the play where they are once again confronted with these obtrusive images.

Fear and Wonder

The previous section looked at how the enigmas in the play have been interpreted as lies and established an alternative reading that reconsidered their role as generators for investigation. This section will examine how the narrative of investigation is propelled by a combination of fear and wonder. The opening act of the play is marked by an enigmatic figure that calls for mediation, which motivates

the action. First Horatio and then Hamlet step outside of the castle walls in an attempt to discover the Ghost's history. Although his initial requests for the Ghost to speak are thwarted, Horatio begins to tell the story of the Ghost based on its appearance:

Such was the very armour he had on
 When he the ambitious Norway combated
 So frowned he once, when in an angry parle
 He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice
 'Tis strange (1.1.58-62),

Here Horatio discerns the Ghost as the “image” of the King (1.1.80). He continues to narrate the King’s warlike deeds, resituating the dead in the battlefield, which, as Fortinbras later notes, best becomes the dead (5.2.385-6). When the Ghost reappears on the scene, interrupting Horatio’s interpretation of its first appearance, Horatio’s narrative control over the figure is lost. “Stay, illusion” (1.1.125), Horatio commands or pleads. Calling the Ghost an illusion problematizes the ontology of the Ghost. While open to mediation, the image of the Ghost disrupts straightforward interpretation.

Horatio struggles to fit the Ghost into categories. He begins to question it as he would different species of spirits, rather than the King, interpreting its purpose as those of traditional revenants, who return to solicit good deeds, divine the future, or locate buried treasure, “[f]or which they say your spirits oft walk in death”

(1.1.128-138). The singularity of the King, whose memorable life may be recounted in great deeds, has been replaced by a spectral presence. This presence physically intrudes on the narrative and, simultaneously, exists solely as an image, an illusion, which cannot be physically warded off or arrested by the guards' partisans. "[T]he show of violence" has no effect because the Ghost is like "the air, invulnerable" (1.1.143-4). The insubstantial Ghost has the ability to nullify the guards' role and perplex their understanding. It "usurp'st" the night in the form of a man that they know to be buried, appearing before their eyes and forcing Horatio to believe it is present by his "sensible and true avouch" (1.1.45-56). How, then, is this absent person made present on the stage?

Early modern ghosts took on many forms but the most common was the manifestation through the condensation of air. According to Michael Cole, spirits could materialize from the fog, mist and smoke (623). Writing on particularly demonic spirits, Cole explains that these evil spirits take shape from the same cloud-like material as angels, illustrating a difficulty for the observer who detects shapes in the air. Hamlet exploits this representational equivocation while sky gazing with Polonius. As one of the court spies reporting to Claudius, Polonius' intention is to monitor Hamlet as he directs him to a rendezvous with his mother. Hamlet distracts Polonius by redirecting his attention:

Hamlet. Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Polonius. By th'mass and 'tis like a camel indeed.

Hamlet. Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius. It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet. Or like a whale?

Polonius. Very like a whale. (3.2.367-373)

With Polonius distracted from his original request on behalf of the queen, Hamlet finally agrees to visit her. If Polonius is endeavouring to discover Hamlet's plans—which incidentally lead to Polonius's death in two scenes—it is Hamlet's "pranks" (3.4.2) that have obstructed him. These clouds, whether read as physical or imaginary, behave like demonic illusions. Stuart Clark, in his anatomy of early modern vision, *Vanities of the Eye*, explains that, although demonic and supernatural manifestations were "confined to the natural world," they were able to deceive the senses with near complete veracity (124). The ability to shape the natural world into an optical illusion calls into question the rationalization of sight. The early modern attempt to establish "an objective and logical basis for vision" established by "the evidence of the eyes" (*Vanities* 1) was obstructed by the perpetual concern that what was seen could be faked. Demonic control could "expose perspective's claims to objectivity and truth by adapting perspectival techniques for yet more manipulative and deceitful purposes . . . while evoking wonder and astonishment at the visual effects" (*Vanities* 3). By forming imaginary shapes from clouds, Hamlet is playing the devil's part, who was known for fashioning spectral images.

Clark points out that, especially in Protestant England, "[t]his is what most ghosts were—shapes of the dead shown demonically to the living" (*Vanities* 208).

What one sees in this case was balanced by the political protocols of religion and rulers. One must remember that it was “forbidden to see a soul returning from Purgatory in Geneva after the Reformation but still required viewing just over the border in France” (*Vanities* 1). Hamlet’s encounter with a ghost, a theatrical addition to the story within post-Reformation England (Greenblatt 206), opposes the protocols opposing this vision. His ability to assert some measure of control over what is seen, whereby Polonius sees anamorphic clouds when Hamlet sees “churchyards yawn” as “hell itself breaks out/Contagion to this world,” begins with Hamlet’s entry into “the very witching time of night” (3.2.378-380). Although he is confronted by particularly foul clouds, he does not hesitate to move closer to this contagious manifestation. In fact, he participates in structuring the image as alarming. Initially, the sepulcher in the churchyard yawned, “oped his ponderous and marble jaws” (1.4.50), to cast up the shape of his dead father. The image of the King is imagined to be more than “airs from heaven or blasts from hell” (1.4.40). The armored exterior that Horatio recognized is internally grafted with the buried bones of his “dead corpse” (1.4.52). Whereas Horatio and his companions are content to recognize the Ghost as an image “like the King” (1.1.56), Hamlet finds substance in the specter. For him, the apparition of the Ghost is not solely a spectacle to look upon or a supernatural stranger to speak with. From the specter, Hamlet retrieves a creative impulse and a methodology that begins with his impulse to add an interior to this spectral image.

In *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Stephen Greenblatt elucidates the connection between Hamlet’s interlocution with the Ghost and the Christian methodology of

discretio spirituum. This clerical practice was used to discern ghostly manifestations, placing them into known categories. A strategy of “familiarity, containment, and control” (Greenblatt 110) through questioning the ghosts’ origin and intention, this practice is exemplified by Horatio’s scholarly inquiry. Horatio’s questions, coupled with imperative commands—“[s]tay, illusion If there be any good thing to be done/That may to thee do ease and grace to me,/Speak to me” (1.1.126-130)—fit the formula, as Greenblatt contends, of the clerical exorcists (Greenblatt 210). Alternatively, Horatio’s final question in this series, “if thou hast uphoarded in thy life/Extorted treasure in the womb of the earth-/For which they say your spirits oft walk in death-/Speak of it, stay and speak” (1.1.135-8), alludes to another tradition of ghosts. Since Catholic spirits returned from Purgatory to plead for prayers (Greenblatt 41), Horatio allows for the possibility that this Ghost is not holy.

As Robert West recognizes, the ghost who returns to divulge the location of treasure, “as opposed to the drab, candle-begging ghost of Catholic theology” (West 52), is a different species. Similarly, Greenblatt’s chief source on ghost beliefs, Jean-Claude Schmitt, contrasts the miraculous tales of ghosts returning from Purgatory to another genre frequenting collected by the church members, “tales of marvels” (Schmitt 79). Schmitt explains that

the miracle invited one to rely on one’s faith to accept the total power of God, who was upsetting the order that he himself established. Human reason could only bow before such phenomena. On the other hand, the

marvellous aroused the *curiositas* of the human mind, the search for hidden natural causes, ones that would someday be unveiled and understood (79).

To accept that the ghost may not be sent by God was to accept that the marvel one experiences derives from something other than the sanctified social order. Greenblatt equates the feeling of facing the marvelous with wonder, as “an experience that precedes a secure determination of good or evil” (107). Horatio is powerless to force the Ghost to unveil its purpose and, as it exits, leaving the companions once again with “fear-surprised eyes” (1.2.202), a decision on its ontology is deferred to an indeterminate “someday.” By granting the Ghost indeterminacy, it escapes the “colonizing [of] the imagination” (Greenblatt 85) that the doctrine of Purgatory and other establishment explanations of ghosts instituted.

In his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, Agrippa offers categories for spirits from a magical perspective. Like Christians writers he allows that there is a distinction between blessed spirits and wicked. In the latter category, he includes a variety of evil spirits such as hobgoblins, but says that if it is uncertain whether a spirit is good or evil it may simply be called a ghost (567). When Hamlet approaches the Ghost he identifies its “questionable shape” (1.4.44) but does not command it to answer. His listing of the likely purposes of the ghost never formulates into an inquisition. Rather he announces various possibilities:

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,

Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
 Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
 That I will speak to thee. I'll call the Hamlet . . . (1.4.40-44).

The difference between Horatio and Hamlet's method is pointed out by Greenblatt, who contends that "the paired options . . . make clear that Hamlet goes into the encounter fully understanding the dangerous ambiguity that characterized all spectral returns. But there is the odd sense in which Hamlet leaps over the questions that were traditionally asked of 'questionable' apparitions" (Greenblatt 239). Hamlet's understanding of spirits fits in an indecorous tradition, the magical communication with the dead. By defining the Ghost as questionable, Hamlet allows this spirit to evade the sanctioning process. Rather, its magical appearance on the stage is an occasion for people to marvel. When Hamlet's friends see the Ghost, Barnardo asks "[l]ook 'a not like the King. Mark it Horatio" to which Horatio's singular remark is "[m]ost like. It harrows me with fear and wonder" (1.1.42-43). When it does not fit into conventional explanations, the animated form of someone who is dead causes both fear and wonder. Hamlet, who follows the Ghost, rather than trying to force it to stay and speak, comes into close contact with these contagions.

Fear and wonder are traditionally opposed. In *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetic of Rare Experiences*, Philip Fisher calls them "equally possible alternative responses to the sudden and the unknown" (92). Wonder produces an investigative impulse to acquire new experiences and formulate explanations for

the extraordinary, whereas fear induces “a kind of obsessive fixed attention” that focuses on a single memory to the exclusion of all other details (39). Hamlet's reaction to the Ghost displays an obsession with a memory:

O all you host of heaven, O earth—what else?—
 And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold my heart,
 And you sinews, grow not instant cold
 But bear me swiftly up. Remember thee?
 Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past . . . (1.5.91-100).

Yet, Hamlet's agitation after meeting the Ghost is coupled with excitement, rather than fear of its return. There is a sense of satisfaction brought about from his experience, although, it is definitely not the “delight” that Fisher associates with wonder. The contemplation of the abnormal and grotesquely strange produces a different form of fascination. Fisher juxtaposes the delight of wondering and the awful tinged with fear (90). Wonder can “renormalize [the] world, by fitting the exceptional back into the fabric of the ordinary” (48). However, what provokes Hamlet's interest are those things that cause awe. He is not interested in the delight of a new discovery but the shock of a horrible revelation. The “dead corpse” bursts from the solid ground of the kingdom, “making night hideous, and we fools of

nature/So horribly to shake our disposition” (1.4.52-55). The information the Ghost carries cannot be domesticated because it is precisely the horrors that the normative world has tried to bury. Hamlet reacts to the Ghost's speech with startled exclamations, crying “Murder!” at his words (1.5.25). By investigating something that inspires fear and wonder in its viewer, Hamlet is actively engaged in uncovering the blemishes that mark where the fabric of the normative is unraveling.

The Perspective Glass

The fascination with an aberration causes a shock that is coupled with investigative interest. Hamlet is not dumbfounded by this image, rather, he is motivated to action. This section will outline the actions inspired by the Ghost. The play-within-the play will be paralleled to the production of a marvel. This connection is complicated by Hamlet's stated concern with depicting a realistic replica of the world. By staging a play, he means to verify and uncover what he believes is concealed by the daily drama of court life. Predictably, his stage directions for the play-within-a-play are rife with the contradictions of representation. Setting up the play that enacts the fratricide of a king is arguably the closest Hamlet comes to explicitly telling the secret imparted to him by the Ghost. He hatches his plan in a soliloquy:

... I'll have these players

Play something like the murder of my father

Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
 I'll tent him to the quick. If 'a do blench
 I know my course. The spirit I have seen
 May be a de'il, and the de'il hath power
 T'assume a pleasing shape. Yea, and perhaps
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,
 Abuses me to damn me! I'll have grounds
 More relative than this. The play's the thing
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. (3.1.529-540)

At first bemoaning the idea that a theatrical player "in a fiction" could have more effect than he has (2.2.486-97), Hamlet is quick to realize the potential for this medium to cause a reaction for his own enterprise. If the players dramatize "something like the murder of [his] father" (3.1.530), this "something like" could draw forth the "something" within Claudius's conscience. The events on stage would reflect on the surface on the King's face for Hamlet to see.

What this something is becomes increasingly ambiguous since his intent to affect Claudius's conscience is subordinate to his desire to open up the question of the Ghost. Hamlet behaves as if using art as a "mirror up to Nature" (3.2.22) can expose both his source and the culprit. The theatrical mirror, reflects the concealed act that precedes the play, and, ostensibly, conveys it through naturalistic verisimilitude. He directs the players to

Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance—that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature . . . to hold as ’twere the mirror up to Nature to show Virtue her feature, Scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (3.2.17-24)

By advancing a replication as naturalistic, Hamlet implies he will establish the reality of the crime. In order to achieve this feat, he inserts a dozen additional lines, gleaned from the words of a “questionable” ghost to modify a fictional play. The element of simulation, the rewriting of a recent murder, and the inclination to create theater over enacting revenge all complicate his direction to “[s]uit the action to the word, the word to the action” (3.2.17-18).

In a play motivated by a specter, neither Hamlet nor Shakespeare is primarily concerned with realistic action, nor are they foregrounding definite qualities that had previously remained hidden. The Ghost's revelations are accompanied by the commandment to enact revenge but Hamlet's subsequent actions alter the audience's understanding of his agreement to these terms. I am not suggesting, as has often been the case, that Hamlet suspends acting. Hamlet does not spend the play in a doubt-induced paralysis brought on by the indeterminacy of the Ghost. Rather, he appropriates the Ghost's indefinite qualities—not solely to self reflect but—to implement its spectral power into the activities of the court. Hamlet sets up a courtly drama where the focal point of the spectator's gaze is

multiplied and redirected. Elsinore is already overrun with spying eyes, conducting surveillance on Hamlet, attempting to garner meaning from his actions. If Hamlet's only intent was to show that his father was murdered, presumably there would be an overabundance of audiences to hear his testimony. Likewise, if he were to cut down his uncle in passionate revenge, there would be a multitude of witnesses to interpret the meaning of his actions. Hamlet's "delay" works to undermine the finality of these interpretations.

The indirectness of "The Mousetrap" is analogous to the optical experiments of the early modern period. Hamlet's urge to "[c]onfound the ignorant and amaze indeed/The very faculties of eyes and ears" (2.2.500-501) with a theatrical performance finds a parallel in the staged illusions of ghosts. The appearance of the word "mirror" in his stage directions is reminiscent of the mirrors used to stage these illusions. Furthermore, the careful arrangement of perspective, whereby the King watches the stage while Hamlet watches the King suggests a system of mirrors rather than a direct mimesis of events. Iain Wright, investigating the appearance of specters in *Macbeth*, points out that Shakespeare embeds a stage direction in the play that calls for the use of a perspective glass (215). Wright argues that not only did Shakespeare know about such optical devices, he wanted to use them to create special effects for the stage (216). There were various models for how one might make a ghost appear with mirrors and optical devices. The nineteenth-century optical illusionist, Sir David Brewster, speculated that Elizabethans made ghosts using a concave mirror that reflected a something like a hologram in mid-air. This floating image is augmented with

smoke to “widen visibility” (216). Nostradamus was believed to have performed another, more complex, apparition of specters with mirrors to show Catherine de Medici the future of her line (Figure 3). Wright explains that he “rigged up a kind of periscope, so that the mirror into which Catherine looked was aligned with another one, hidden above, and that in turn showed a concealed room in which actors were performing” (217). When Hamlet speaks of mirrors, he speaks about direct reflection. However, his reference to the metaphor of the mirror as theater is complicated by these other uses for mirrors, especially since the arrangement of the play-within-the-play is inspired by contact with a ghost. When Hamlet arranges the stage to show “occulted guilt” (3.2.76), he is making it appear where before it was not visible. By making the invisible visible, Hamlet arranges spectacles like one would produce ghosts.

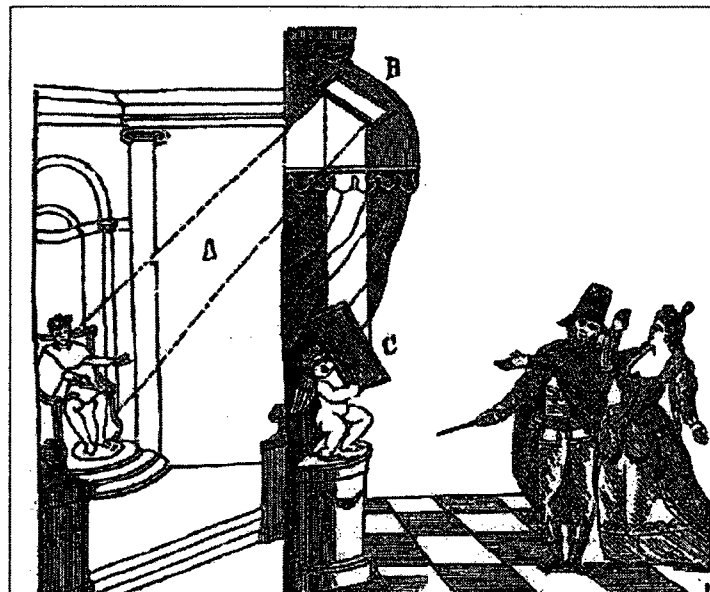


Figure 3. Nostradamus shows Catherine de Medici the future of her line.

Source: Étienne Robertson, *Mémoires récréatifs, scientifiques et anecdotiques du physician-aéronaute E.G. Robertson*, 1831-33
(Reprinted in Wright 217)

For some of Shakespeare's audience, the idea of a ghost on stage would have brought these kinds of mirror devices to mind. When Hamlet brings the story of the Ghost into the court theater, he recreates a medium that produces specters. The story of the former king is played by actors on the stage. However, this operates indirectly, whereby the Ghost's story is brought into the court and reflected through three mediums. Hamlet, Claudius, and the players all form a system of mirrors that bring this story to light. The technique that Nostradamus used to bring an outside performance into an adjacent room would have been impossible to perform for a large audience. Of course, it would have been unthinkable to attempt in the open-air Globe theater in the daytime. Yet, even in a darkened court theater as described in *Hamlet*, the ability to mirror an image clearly enough for a large group was hindered by the low quality mirrors of the period. Wright explains that when nineteenth-century writers described these illusions, they advocated the use of plate-glass, which had not been invented at this earlier time. The Elizabethans could not make mirrors large enough without blurring the image (219). Faced with these "major technical difficulties" (Wright 219), Shakespeare would have to turn to more figurative ways to represent ghosts. Whereas Wright suggests other inventions, such as early magic lanterns (222), I suggest that the staging of specters is reflected in Hamlet's orchestration of visual perspective. Although Hamlet does not attempt to literally produce a specter on stage, the early modern production of specters through the manipulation of perspective impacts his conceptualization of theater. Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost leads him to think of ways to reproduce the amazement caused by such an

experience. Instead of manufacturing a lens for the court to directly see Claudius's crime, Hamlet fabricates a space that heightens the artifice of how things are seen. The encounter with the Ghost is mirrored on the stage; it is structured as a kind of allegory for the affect of a spectral apparition.

A Phantom Cell

In order to fully understand Hamlet's ability to conjure up Claudius's evanescent past, we must return to the other conjuration, the encounter with the Ghost on the borders of Elsinore. The previous section illustrated how Hamlet employs the spectral, whereas, this section will explore how the Ghost produces his actions. In contradistinction to treatments of Hamlet as an autonomous individual, this section will show how the spectral itself generates actions, transforming Hamlet and his companions into a "phantom cell" in the midst of the court. The Ghost appears in a darkness so complete that friends must repeatably ask one another to identify themselves. There is suspicion in the air, as the border guards refuse to directly answer one another. The play begins

Barnardo. Who's there?

Francisco. Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

Barnardo. Long live the King.

Francisco. Barnardo?

Barnardo.. He. (1.1.1-3)

This scene can be read as an instance of interpellation, where the guards' identities, not yet presented in the darkness, on the border, must be formed by the authoritative call of the state. Christopher Pye reads *Hamlet* as “about the workings of interpellation, the experience of being called into a symbolic destiny” (108). Hamlet, called by the Ghost, exclaims, “The time is out of joint; O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!/Nay, come, let's go together” (2.1.186-8). After facing the Ghost, Hamlet is compelled to action. Just as Hamlet calls to his friends to join him in this cause, the ghost of “the King that's dead” (1.1.40) solicits allies. Establishing allegiances is the main concern of the opening scene.

In the first lines, this call is answered by a shibboleth of loyalty to the crown, “[l]ong live the King” (1.1.3). In light of the events that unfold, one must ask of this shibboleth, which King? The traditional saying that signified the quick succession of kings, preventing the throne from ever being empty, “the King is dead. Long live the King”, echoes in this scene. It insinuates an ambiguity in kingship. After this short changing of the guard, more newcomers arrive, who after they have identified themselves as fellow guards, Horatio and Marcellus, Barnardo requests “to once again assail [Horatio's] ears/That are so fortified against our story” (1.1. 30-31). By this request, Barnardo hopes to convince Horatio to join them in peering into the darkness, not for enemies but for another King. From out of this darkness, a perfectly visible apparition appears, as Barnardo proclaims, “[i]n the same figure as the King that's dead” (1.1.40). The reappearance of this dead king turns their shibboleth of identity into a riddle, haunted by the ghost of its former body.

The Ghost's appearance is an intervention. The guards' attempts to identify each other in the darkness is supplanted by the entrance of another King, who intrudes on the stage like the light in a camera obscura (Figure 4). Barnardo welcomes Horatio and Marcellus to the military bulwarks as one would to a dimly lit theater. Hearing voices in the darkness, he calls out to his friends:

Barnardo. Say, what, is Horatio there?

Horatio. A piece of him.

Barnardo. Welcome Horatio, welcome good Marcellus.

Horatio. What has this thing appeared again tonight?

Barnardo. I have seen nothing. (1.1.-18-21).

Out of this nothing, whereby only pieces of people can be identified, the Ghost appears “[i]n the same figure like the King that's dead” (1.1.40). What strikes them as eerie is that the Ghost appears in this likeness of the King. What is extraordinary is that the image appears in a set that has been established as pitch-black, as if illuminated. The Ghost penetrates the scene like a shaft of light that creates a form in the darkness. The camera obscura, Wright points out, was a common form of projector at the time. It is constructed from a small hole in a dark room, the light that shines through projects an inverted image of an exterior scene on the opposite wall (Wright 219). The Ghost appearing from Purgatory presents an alternative image of kingship to that of the living King, Claudius. This image that appears before the guards embodies the dead aspects of kinship, spectrally reappearing in

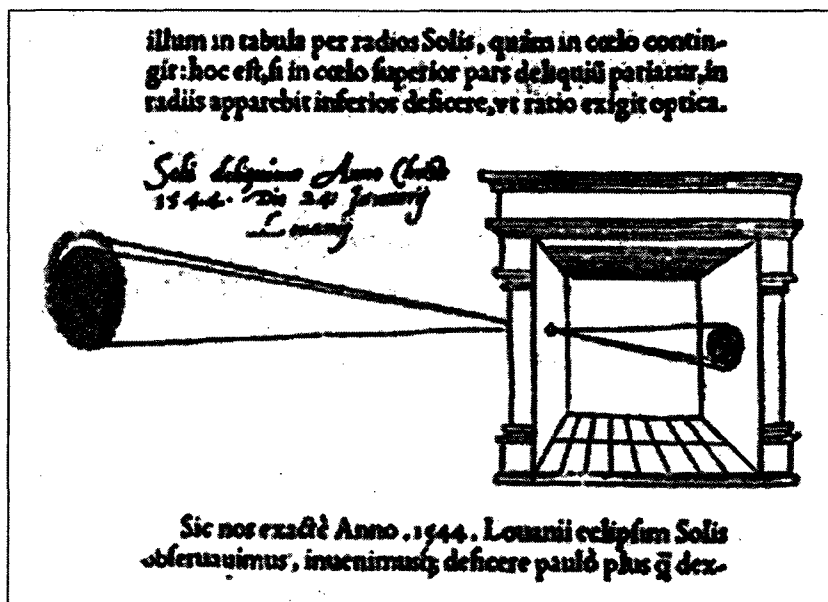


Figure 4. The first known illustration of a camera obscura, here being used to observe a solar eclipse
Source: Reinerus Gemma-Frisius, *De Radio Astronomica et Geometrica*, 1545
(Reprinted in Wright 220)

sharp contrast to the established setting. As the dead king, he is symbolically the inverted image of their shibboleth. Through a theatrical display, the Ghost reformulates their allegiances to the King to the King that is dead.

This dead King marks the boundaries that are nearly invisible at night, immediately dredging up memories in the guards of the history of the border's delineation. Horatio exclaims at the sight, [s]uch was the very armour he had on/When he the ambitious Norway combated" (1.1.59-60), going on to explain that this fight lead to the acquisition of Fortinbras of Norway's lands to old Hamlet. This narration brings them to present events and the reason for their occupation of the bulwarks, the renewed threat of Fortinbras's heir on their borders (1.1.78-106). Looking out from the borders of Elsinore for a foreign enemy, the guards discover the Ghost. In turn, Hamlet joins their watch, looking for the Ghost and soon

discovers a domestic enemy, the other king of Denmark. To find this out, Hamlet must move deeper into the void of night surrounding the castle, beckoned by the gestures of the mysteriously illuminated ghost. In counterpoint to Horatio's conjuring tactics that attempt to stay the ghost, Hamlet allows himself to be lead away, leaving his friends, the castle and the known territory. Despite the protestations of Horatio who warns that the Ghost could lead him blindly into the sea or over a cliff (1.4.69-70), Hamlet resolves that if "[i]t will not speak: then I will follow it" (1.4.63). The ensuing debate amongst the companions has Horatio behaving toward Hamlet as he did the Ghost, unsuccessfully attempting to make Hamlet hold his ground. After Hamlet has moved across the boundaries of the ramparts into the threateningly unstable ground, the Ghost redirects his attention back to the kingdom and back into its recent past to divulge the secret of his death. After a brief disappearance off stage, the Ghost and Hamlet reappear in the night. Hamlet attempts again to conjure the Ghost to speak but it is Hamlet who is now bound to the Ghost. The conversation begins with an ominous interchange. Hamlet supplication, "[s]peak, I am bound to hear" is answered with an injunction, "[s]o art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear" (1.5.6-7). From outside the court, in the formless night, the Ghost is able to disclose, and Hamlet is bound to hear, that "the whole ear of Denmark/Is by a forged process of my death" (1.5.35-36). In effect, the Ghost forms an alternative space to the one forged by his brother Claudius, where he is able to speak.

Two more subjects are soon added to this strange space to create a virtual state that opposes the present one in Elsinore proper. Quickly acknowledging that

the Ghost's appearance heralds that "[s]omething is rotten in the state of Denmark," Hamlet's companions briefly deliberate whether to trust the powers-that-be but reject this option in favor of following Hamlet. Horatio's trust that "Heaven will direct it" is countered by Marcellus's charge, "[n]ay, let's follow him" (1.4.91). Of course, following their friend Hamlet includes following the Ghost. They are still off stage while the Ghost recounts to Hamlet the events that were buried with him to secure the Crown for Claudius. The lengthy description of old Hamlet's death overturns the accepted narrative of his poisoning. Allegorically interpreting Claudius's fiction that a serpent stung him, the Ghost reveals that "[t]he serpent that did sting thy father's life/Now wears his crown" (1.5.36). The hermeneutical unmasking of Claudius's creative deception is followed by the Ghost's meticulous poetic analysis of Claudius's crime:

... thy uncle stole
 With juice of cursed hebona in a vial
 And in the porches of my ears did pour
 The leperous distilment whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through
 The natural gates and alleys of the body
 And with a sudden vigour it doth possess
 And curd like eager droppings into milk
 The thin and wholesome blood. So it did mine . . . (1.5.61-70)

The hyperbolic terms that the Ghost uses to describe his body hints at further metaphors to be unraveled. The poisoning of the King's ear alludes to Claudius's fabrication of the events that permeated the state through "[t]he natural gates and alleys" of the credulous citizens' ears. It suggests, in fact, that it was this persuasive fiction, which legitimized Claudius's succession, that truly killed the former King. Without any power over his own legacy, the King was poisoned along with the body politic. However, the Ghost does not correct Claudius's falsehoods with a sober truth but ostentatiously elaborates his testimony, participating in the metaphorization of events. By the end of this speech, Hamlet is captivated and responds with an outpouring of empathetic exclamations, "O all you host of heaven, O earth—what else?—/And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold my heart . . ." (1.5.83). His empathetic identification with the Ghost climaxes as he swears allegiance to the ghost of the dead King. Curiously, the companions who have followed Hamlet successively swear to Hamlet and then to the Ghost without hearing any of the revelations. There is something about the Ghost's presence that affects these investigators deeper than the exposition of the truth.

What kind of thing is this Ghost that it can alter their perceptions of the order of things in the kingdom without certifying its own position within it? Before divulging the Ghost's postmortem testimony to his companions, Hamlet ensures their fidelity by asking, "you'll be secret?" (1.5.121). Once agreed, he discloses to them in the cryptic statement "[t]here's never a villain dwelling in all Denmark/But he's an arrant knave" (1.5.122-23), to which his interlocutors respond "[t]here

needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave/To tell us this” (1.5.124-25). Hamlet's evasiveness has two functions: where this mystery increases the sense that there is some concealed threat to Denmark that should make them wary, it also keeps the secret as a secret that they must swear by. As a result, Marcellus and Horatio do not swear to revenge the murder but to keep the Ghost a secret. Hamlet requests that they swear “[n]ever to make known what you have seen tonight” (1.5.143) and, as a cryptic prelude to the violence to come of this pact, he asks them to swear by his sword (1.5.154). Perhaps accepting this cryptic language is what it means to “be” secret, not just to keep it.¹⁵

Nothing is a thing

The previous section explored how a secret can be the basis for a collective bond. This section will show how this secrecy manifests itself in the social sphere as a form of communication. Cryptic language certainly has a role to play in the court, one that Hamlet deploys throughout his courtly intrigues. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern inquire into the whereabouts of Hamlet's first victim in his revenge plot, the freshly killed body of Polonius, Hamlet responds to these spies with seemingly revealing riddles that misdirect the investigation. Rosencrantz directly demands “[m]y lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King” which Hamlet characteristically evades:

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, in *The Gift of Death*, argues for precisely this kind of secret keeping. He writes of secrecy as being in secret, “[t]o share a secret is not to know or to reveal the secret, it is to share that we know not what: nothing that can be determined” (80). For Derrida, this means that what is transmitted is a nonhistory that calls the recipient to start over, to reinvent the traditional.

Hamlet. The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing.

Guildestern. A thing, my lord?

Hamlet. Of nothing. Bring me to him. (4.2.23-28)

These short lines that garner excessive attention do not easily yield any meaning but as quizzical abstractions they facilitate many connections. By associating the missing dead body with the body of the King, Hamlet points to another body that resides within kingship. The search for Polonius's body is reminiscent of Hamlet's own investigation into the death of the former King. The abstracted state of the dead as "bodies" makes them a "thing", which one can embody. The ability to separate the body and the King is a reminder that this title is another kind of body manifested through legitimate rulership. Rosencrantz and Guildestern come to Hamlet searching for the particular body of Polonius but are treated with a theoretical discourse on the relationship between the King's two bodies. While associating the other, spiritual, body of legitimate Kingship with the Ghost would explain why "the King is not with the body" (4.2.25-26), this explanation does not resolve what the "thingness" of the King is. For Hamlet, this thing is a thing "[o]f nothing" (4.2.28), emptying out the title of any solid legitimacy. This discourse, posed in the form of a puzzle, cannot decisively identify the characteristics of the bodies Hamlet discusses. Hamlet brings back to the court the immateriality of the Ghost, which mirrors the spectrality of the past back to the present state and, therefore, its indeterminate foundations.

The play's concern with narrating the departed presents an interesting paradox, whereby the dead King is allowed to authorize the story of his own demise. This involves the common—yet still curious—gesture of staging the absent corpse of the late King through a spectral representation. If the King is a thing of nothing, then in the play's world, nothing must also be a thing. Christopher Pye elaborates on this possibility, arguing that “to know that the King is a thing of nothing, that he at once falls short of and goes beyond any empirical manifestation insofar as he is king, insofar as he embodies the social and symbolic field as such. And yet, if the thing can be nothing, doesn't that also imply the perhaps more troubling inverse: that nothing—the pure abstraction of the body politic—might be a thing, of sorts” (145). The Ghost is the tangible presence of this intangible absence, which has been temporarily excluded from the order of Claudius's court. When Hamlet comes face to face with this manifestation of the King's other body, he is confronted with a crime that established the state and enters into a secret pact to undo it. Hamlet allies himself with an inversion of sovereignty, which manifests the qualities of the body politic in a corrupted and corrupting form.

Pye suggests that the sovereign's spectral body is almost indistinguishable from other supernatural manifestations, particularly demonic possession and witchcraft. He examines the Renaissance belief that these demonic forces do not have a specular image (46). As such, he equates the ephemeral essence of the witch with the subjecthood that precedes subjectification, the inner being that must be excluded in order for one to situate oneself and know oneself specularly. What is left of the vanished subject, reconstituted within the realm of social relationships, is

a residue “that is not reducible to what gives identity its form and contour” (46). Borrowing from Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, this surplus residue is described as the froth in the mirror. Scot describes the gaze of old women:

in whome the ordinarie course of nature faileth in the office of purging their naturall monethlie humores, shew also some prooffe hereof. For...they leave in a looking glasse a certaine froth, by meanes of the grosse vapors proceeding out of their eies. Which commeth so to passe, because those vapors or spirits, which so abundantlie come from their eies, cannot pierce and enter into the glasse, which is hard, and without pores, and therefore resisteth: but the beames which are carried in the chariot or conveyance of the spirits, from the eies of one bodie to another, doo pearse to the inward parts, and there breed infection (Scot 399).

Scot offers this power of the humors to explain how one bewitches with the eyes, even though he does not believe that it is possible. Utilizing and elaborating on Agrippa's repudiation of magic, Scot's book is, up until this point, a protracted explanation of the supernatural, exclusively in materialist terms. Although Pye disregards the humoral theory, he appropriates the metaphor of the froth to apply to qualities that are excluded from identificatory relation which, nevertheless, cause endless fascination. Pye points out that “[a]fter his encyclopaedic debunking of demonological practices (literally after the chapter entitled 'A conclusion against witchcraft'), Scot acknowledges that something remains unexplained: fascination”

(47). As the cloudy residue of the forgotten past, condensed into the out-of-place image of the King that is dead, the Ghost gives a specular form to this fascinating pseudo-material. As if the froth in the mirror could be read like clouds, this image simultaneously presents a recognizable shape without allowing itself to be physically incorporated into the known. However, the Ghost is a thing that can be imagined, depicted and communicated to others. As the delineated image of something that is dead and gone, it is the positive image of a kind of nothing represented for contemplation. It operates like the written word “nothing,” simultaneously signifying negation while reinscribing something in legible characters.

As a thing that communicates, the Ghost is close to the communicability of melancholy in humoral theory. It is fitting that Hamlet in his melancholy state is the first to hear from the Ghost. He is predisposed to his “antic disposition”,¹⁶ showing signs of it even before his encounter. Hamlet enters the play wearing black mourning clothes, signifying the grief over the loss of his father, prompting the King to ask “[h]ow is it that clouds still hang on you?” and the Queen to follow with the request that he “cast thy nighted color off” (1.2.66-68). Already, Hamlet appears to have the dark obscurity of the ghost of his dead father that he is accused of seeking out (1.2.71). Hamlet responds by objecting that he is more than his visible character, which is merely a role “that a man might play” and that he

¹⁶ Alison Thorne, in *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare*, concentrates on Hamlet's examination of his own subjecthood. However, she comes to a similar conclusion regarding the role of the Ghost in Hamlet's activities. She explains that “while the ghost's theatricality does nothing to dispel the uncertainty concerning its true status and motives, it is this aspect of the visitation that seems to make the deepest impression of Hamlet, resonating as it does with his own self-dramatizing propensities. It is therefore no accident, I suggest, that he decides to assume an 'antic disposition' directly after their first encounter, since the ghost's 'questionable shape' and histrionic mode of address act as a catalyst and a model for that invention” (118).

possesses something “within that passes show” (1.2. 84-85). Hamlet indicates that he is more than that which can be represented on stage, proposing that he has an interior life. An interior world is staged by this suggestion, occupying an invisible space only indicated by the barrier of these disputative words.

This interior, unlike a fully fashioned subjectivity, is characterized by his incomprehensibility. It bears an undeniable likeness to the secret he carries with him, imparted by the Ghost. After meeting with the Ghost, Hamlet is prepared for the adversaries who survey his actions for meaning. Upon his meeting with Polonius, Hamlet tests out his “antic disposition” he intends to play with a string of strange statements, saying to his older interlocutor “ . . . yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am—if, like a crab, you could go backward” (2.2.199-201). To this contrivance, Polonius replies, “[t]hough this be madness yet there is method in't” (2.2.202-3). While Polonius attempts to understand him, Hamlet disrupts his inquiry by exploiting the various possible responses to his questions. Polonius simply asks him “What do you read, my lord,” to which Hamlet replies in abstraction, “[w]ords, words, words.” Polonius tries again to find out what he is reading, asking more precisely “[w]hat is the matter, my lord,” to which Hamlet responds with a question—“[b]etween who?”—that undermines the sense of Polonius's expression (2.2.188-91). Whatever Hamlet contends was out of reach of the show has taken on a role in the play through a refinement of his melancholic persona. As the memory of his father, this melancholy manifests by suggesting a hidden depth. Conterminously, the advent of this indiscernible interior sphere interrupts and reconditions the conceptualization of the play's action by rearranging

the way in which actions are perceived and understood. Hamlet publicly bemoans the superficial identification of his character but is able to exploit the inability to completely interpret his actions. The Ghost's charge to revenge his death is taken up by Hamlet in a secretive fashion that disrupts Claudius's court. By exploiting the attempts to analyze him, Hamlet produces an unsatisfiable fascination.

Hamlet's disposition is not individualistic but dangerously communicable. The hidden motive for his actions appears on the stage as a demonic possession, which is characterized by its ability to intrude and spread. After encountering the Ghost, he infiltrates the castle, allied to this otherness. Moments after his vow to the Ghost, his friends, Horatio and Marcellus, are conjured into the pact by the Ghost beneath the stage. Shortly thereafter, Hamlet implores the informants, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to let him conjure them as well (2.2.249). Claudius, recognizing the threat that Hamlet poses to his realm, sends him away to his death, saying “do it, England!/For like the hectic in my blood he rages/And thou must cure me” (4.3.63-65). As a result of the play-within-the-play, Claudius is afflicted, as if with an infection, begging that Hamlet will be removed from the stage, almost explicitly asking for Shakespeare's English audience for accordance. The threat to Claudius is the potential expansion of this phantom cell, which could reorganize how the state—and the legitimacy of his position in it—is perceived.

Both the Ghost and Hamlet's interiority are theatrically manifested as an alternative to Claudius's rule; neither is quarantined from the dramatic representation of the court. By presenting themselves as unrepresentable, their role is to exploit a disjuncture in the expected interpretation of the courtly action. The

Ghost appears where Denmark is rotting, where Hamlet perceives in the dilapidated grounds that “time is out of joint” (2.1.186). But they offer no viable alternative. The court is infected with a spectral body that reflects back the emptiness of sovereignty and the state. The alternative King that Hamlet nominates is already departed and ontologically unstable. It is this instability or absence that is imbued with meaning in the play. Although Hamlet does not make a competing claim to the established throne, it is not enough to say that Hamlet empties out the meaning of the court's official and sanctioned titles and roles. The Ghost's physical presence reveals both the falsity of Claudius's legitimacy and the ways in which this power is mediated.

The Ghost directs attention to the spectacle at the root of state formation. Conjuring the affinity group to swear together the Ghost calls out from beneath the stage. Like ventriloquy, the voice is disembodied and reembodyed by the stage itself. I am less interested in how this disappearing subject analogizes the impossibility of self reflection—a topic Pye explores with Hamlet's and Ophelia's later disappearances—than with how this legerdemain mimics the interpellation of the legions of subjects in the state. Likewise, the froth in the mirror in Scot's description is not just the absence of a reflection; it is the material by which supernatural phenomena is transmitted. By directing our gaze to what a mirror is meant to do and is not, the froth reminds us of the mediator, the mirror.¹⁷ The voice that occupies the space of the stage is the stage itself. It embodies the topography

¹⁷ Once again, Alison Thorne concurs with this argument, even if she is attempting to analyze self reflection rather than the formation of a group. She supplies an analogy between Hamlet and Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, arguing that, by heightening the illusion, that the painting can “make us aware of the mirror *as a mirror*” (126).

that constitutes this imaginary state and solicits the players, Hamlet and his affinity group, to swear to its mediation. It is the stage, imagined as a pitch black night that can manifest ghosts, that causes endless fascination. Like an abandoned building that is believed to be haunted, it is not empty because it produces an affect, a suspicious feeling of a presence. By undermining the solid meaning supported by the state and the sovereign, the Ghost produces his own tangible experience of fear, fascination and conjured enchantment.

An Enchanted Castle

The previous section analyzed how the Ghost enchants the Danish subjects, producing an awareness of the efficacy of spectacle. This section will offer some concluding remarks regarding the political objectives of Hamlet's method. The preoccupation that began this chapter—Nicolas Abraham's aspiration to cure the public of the play's affect—is Claudius's not Hamlet's. Claudius's role in the play is to inspect others in order to explicate and rationalize their actions. His project is to maintain the status quo. The legitimacy of the status quo is problematized by the revelation that the “whole ear of Denmark” has been beguiled by “a forged process” (1.5.26-7). Although Hamlet is aware of the cause of Denmark's corruption, he does not divulge and explain this information. Hamlet neither explicitly demystifies Claudius's claim to kingship nor directly enacts his revenge. As a follower of the questionable Ghost, Hamlet stages a play. The artificial mediation is revitalized with Hamlet's initiative to have the players “[p]lay something like the murder of [his] father” (2.2.530). The dozen additional lines that

he contributes to the purportedly traditional narrative of *The Murder of Gonzago* implicates him in the forging process. While creating a competing spectacle can illuminate the spectacular elements of the court, the play-within-the-play could simply reinforce its author's legitimacy. As a playwright, Hamlet can open up the question of legitimacy for public debate or he can assert his own authority. The attempt to unravel Claudius's legitimacy through theatrical additions treads on dangerous ground.

Significantly, the character of the Ghost is also an addition to Shakespeare's source story. Greenblatt reminds us that the Ghost appears alongside Shakespeare's decision to make the murder a secret (206). In the story of Amleth, the murder was known by everyone but with the introduction of a secret, there needed to be a ghost to return to tell it. Hamlet acts as the representative of the Ghost by plotting to reveal this secret in the play-within-the-play. If we consider that what is lodged in the play is Hamlet's secret, which is the buried truth of the Ghost, then what is hidden in Hamlet passes into show. Hamlet's claim that he has "that within that passes show" (1.2.85) must be reevaluated in light of his appetite for theater. He does not transcend the theatrical, achieving an unrepresentable interiority within himself but contributes additions to a story. By channeling his interior into a play, he passes show like passing excretion, secreting the theatricality of the Ghost that he has internalized. The lines that are arguably Hamlet's additions are:

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing,
Considerate season else no creature seeing,

Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
 With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
 Thy natural magic and dire property
 On wholesome life usurps immediately. (3.2.248-53)

While these are the words spoken by the play's murderer, the suspected murderer in the audience reacts adversely to this description, leaving the room to Hamlet and his associates. Hamlet usurps the stage, and consequently the court, to adorn it with abject words—black (like his own bile), rank, blasted, infected—which are excreted from his encounter with the Ghost, who imparted this secret. Hamlet intentionally contaminates the court with imagery of what it has eliminated, decomposing the visual structure arranged by Claudius and his spies; in this undertaking he does not delay.

What Hamlet produces resists the purification of the theatrical as it was traditionally presented to sovereigns. In early modern court tradition there was a form of theater, known as the “sortilege,” that bears a resemblance, albeit reversed, to the play-within-the-play. Stuart Clark offers a description of a variety of these productions in his book on black magic, *Thinking with Demons* (638-650). In these festival plays, there was an enchanted castle with members of the royal court held captive. The rescue of these captives from a conjurer's illusions was staged before the sovereign to signify their own disenchanting powers. Often, the disillusionment of the castle was attributed to the gaze of the princely spectator. Clark credits the power of the princely delivers to “the king’s viewing point . . . the line of the royal

gaze ordered the illusions of the stage into a reality” (643). The sovereign rationalized the theatrical imagery into the reality of the court. In Hamlet's deployment of this traditional arrangement, the centrality of the sovereign is used against the King. Clark indicates that the roles of protagonist and antagonist, sovereign and magician, were not as clearly demarcated as expected. In describing these productions, Clark argues that:

intrinsic to court festivals that they should evoke admiration by combining sheer physical magnificence with wonderful technical effects. And the demands of wonder and illusion were, again, perfectly met by the instant dissolutions and miraculous transformations wrought by the numinous powers of kings (646).

Not only was the magnificence of the magician's powers essential for the display of power but the sovereign's power had a magical quality to it, as well. The theater, arranged to appreciate the power of the sovereign's gaze, opens up the possibility of questioning the source of the King's power.

Although Hamlet, as Prince of Denmark, theoretically holds the royal power to vanquish the illusory power of the usurper, *The Mousetrap* does not dismantle the theatricality of Claudius's court. As an alternative, Hamlet exploits the perspective of the King by placing undesirable subjects in his frame of vision. In his explanation of why Claudius does not immediately respond to these scenes, Pye suggests that he is absorbed in the fascinating show that has made him forget

himself (106). In my reading of Hamlet's production, the sovereign gaze is subverted in its activity of compartmentalizing the illusion. The story of the King's death is dredged up like the body resurfacing from its grave and delivered to Claudius as a gruesome inheritance. Nevertheless, it is displayed in such an indirect way that Claudius cannot receive it. The un-narrated factor, the facts of the King's death, that motivate the action of the story toward a clear exposition that never comes, appear only in troubling images that fascinate without being explained or contained. When not fixated on the play, the King spends his lines asking questions that only receive incomprehensible responses. He remains bewildered, only expressing his frustration and ire at the unsolvable riddles, lamenting "I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These words are not mine" (3.2.92-93).

The play-within-the-play frustrates Hamlet's audience's attempts to assert themselves. This element of his intervention into the court spectacle does not contain itself to the authoritative perspective of the King. Ophelia, too, turns to Hamlet for explanations that she does not receive. After the dumb-show she asks, "What means this, my lord?" to which Hamlet replies, "It means mischief" (3.2.129-130). The iconoclasm of his mischief is supplemented by open misogyny and sexual harassment. Ophelia tries Hamlet again, asking if the prologue "[w]ill 'a tell us what this show meant" inciting Hamlet to answer with the cryptically sexual response "[a]y, or show that you will show him. Be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means" (3.2.136-9). This banter continues throughout the play, captioning the events. Hamlet's control of the scenes—Ophelia remarks that he is "as good as chorus" (3.2.239)—is a kind of personal signature for the

play-within-the-play. It is not surprising that Hamlet's antic disposition at times verges on imitating the sovereign subject. What is remarkable is that he is closest to a modern notion of subjecthood when he is acting out his misogyny. His attacks on Ophelia have little to do with his mission received from the Ghost. They can be understood as his personal passion supplementing his authoritative role in the play. The centralized role of the dramatist—the victory of the literary author over political authority—is produced at the expense of marginalizing alternative voices and questions.

The gathering of the court to witness this play has the potential of becoming a public forum.¹⁸ The play-within-the-play decentralizes the sovereign, opening up the space for inquiry. The King is forced to play a non-traditional role in the playhouse. Clark points out that the gaze of the King was often supplemented by a stage performance of a sovereign invading the enchanted castle (637). In *Hamlet*, the castle is invaded by enchantment, reversing the choreographed positions. However, a traditional hierarchy is restored in Hamlet's suppression of Ophelia. With her death, Hamlet manifests a different kind of sovereignty. At her grave, wonder takes on a personalized form that can be invoked for self-aggrandizing

¹⁸ For an alternative and more successively political project dealing with spectral projections, see the work of Krzysztof Wodiczko. Throughout the 1980s, he projected controversial imagery onto important monuments. Opposed to political propaganda, he states that his projections “illuminate the relation between image and architecture” (145). His projections of nuclear missiles onto the east and west side of a civil war monument were intended to create a public space to discuss the power relations as the Cold War drew to its close. In an interview he recollects the outcome: “So i wanted to see various possibilities. But since everyone was interested in convincing others of his or her own reading, only a few seemed to notice that the various readings were simultaneously possible. One reading was that the missiles were two phallic symbols. Another was that the projection was about disarmament, the nuclear freeze, the liberal position. And a third group spoke of the interdependence of the superpowers, the fact that they are locked together, that they cannot exist without each other, and there is a frightening similarity between them. Because the debate was open and easily heard, all the readings were most likely received by everyone, and hopefully this social and auditory interaction helped the visual projection survive in the public's memory as a complex experience. For a moment at least, this 'necro-ideological' monument became alive” (147).

purposes. Hamlet stands above Laertes at the edge of Ophelia's grave to announce:

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. (5.1.243-7).

Here, Hamlet ends the riddles with this conclusive answer. The source of wonder is usurped by the “I,” entitled to personally represent the state. What had previously had the potential to open up questions of legitimacy, resurrect the effaced, and contribute to the public becomes a fantasy of self identity at the expense of others.

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