Moving Imitation: Performing Piety in Early Modern English Literature

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MOVING IMITATION: PERFORMING PIETY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

a dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

MOVING IMITATION: PERFORMING PIETY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Using the rich concept of *imitatio* as an organizing theme, this study explores the tangibility of faith and a privileging of an affective, embodied religious subjectivity in post-Reformation England. *Moving Imitation* asserts that literary and devotional concepts of *imitatio*—as the Humanist activity of translation and as *imitatio Christi*—were intensely interested in semiotics. Indeed, if the Renaissance was a period in which literary *imitatio* flourished, advancements in translation theory were not unaccompanied by anxieties—in this case, anxieties about the stability of language itself. Likewise, as iconophilia turned into iconophobia, a similar anxiety about the reliability of signs also characterized the turmoil of the English Reformation. *Moving Imitation* examines the overlapping qualities of both types of *imitatio* in order to point out how an important devotional aesthetic in the period involves a type of embodied imitation. The human body’s resonance with the humanity of Christ and the pre-Cartesian worldview that saw the human body as fully engaged with what we consider to be more cognitive functions contributed to a privileging of the body as an acceptable sign of true devotion.

Beginning with Sir Thomas Wyatt’s paraphrase of the traditional penitential psalms, *Moving Imitation* explores the translation of penitence in Wyatt’s work, and argues that a focus on David’s outward gestures and body lends a firmness to a work that is otherwise anxious about the mutable nature of human words. Chapter two examines the suffering bodies in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* and their enactment of a visible *imitatio Christi*. Terms such as “members” function in its corporeal and communal senses in *Acts and Monuments*, for the marks of one’s membership in the “true church” are born, literally, on one’s members. Although much of Foxe’s argumentation includes polemical disputes that seek to shut out a *copia* of meanings to the words, “This is my body,” Foxe as an editor exploits the polysemous nature of the body in its corporeal and communal sensibilities. The performative aspects of martyrdom pave the way to a discussion of what I call transformative *imitatio* in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *The Winter’s Tale*. Although the theater’s ability to “body forth” its fiction is a source of anxiety for antitheatricalists, proponents of the stage saw it as a way to defend the theater. *Moving Imitation* notes that the characterization of the stage’s dangers—the ability to *move* people’s affections—articulates an important Reformist desire: that the individual subject should not only be affected, but also be galvanized into devotional imitation. Such interest in action becomes important in *Hamlet*; if the central dilemma of the play (Hamlet’s inability to take action) is considered against a common religious dilemma (how one stirs oneself towards genuine worship) the solutions as well as the problems overlap. Through the statue scene of *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare defuses the danger attributed to the stage by animating a potentially idolatrous image with life; in ways that were only hinted at in *Hamlet*, *The Winter’s Tale* makes use of the lively bodies onstage.
to suggest that the presumed connection between idolatry and the imitative stage is an unwarranted one, and “to see… life as lively mocked” can help to perform redemption.
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INTRODUCTION

VERSIONS OF IMITATIO

This dissertation examines how the semantically rich concept of *imitatio* helped shape the responses triggered by the religious anxieties of the English Reformation. While the theory of literary imitation in the Renaissance differed from source to source, its wide influence in the period is undeniable and has generated much fruitful scholarship.\(^1\) Aside from its ubiquity in early modern culture, one of the most intriguing aspects of early modern *imitatio* is the fact that the translator is conceived to be both the subject and object of translation—that is, as one imitates and produces a new work of one’s own, the activity of translation begets a kind of transformation within the writer himself. Since Humanists viewed education as an ethical as well as an intellectual endeavor, *imitatio* was an important pedagogical tool in instilling not just proper writing techniques, but cognitive and ethical patterns of behavior as well. Indeed, the multiple metaphors used to describe good and bad works of imitation are indicative of how *imitatio* was viewed as an organic process; in its apian, digestive, filial, and simian images, imitation operates, at a fundamental level, as a *conversion* process. To quote Petrarch’s advice: “Take care that what you have gathered does not long remain in its original form inside of you: the bees would not be glorious if they did not convert what they found into something different and something better.

Although the literary and devotional definitions of the term *imitatio* are not conventionally paired, I see articulated in the converting effects of the good imitator an important desire in early modern religion: imitation that results in comprehensive change. Just as the metaphor of a bee’s activity reflects the ideal translation of language and
ideas, the bee’s ability to extract and convert manifests the essence of the devout soul. In his popular guide to private devotion, Francois de Sales borrows from the familiar literary metaphor in order to illustrate his point about personal piety: “Watch a bee hovering over the mountain thyme; the juices it gathers are bitter, but the bee turns them all to honey—and so tells the worldling that though the devout soul finds bitter herbs along its path of devotion, they are all turned to sweetness and pleasantness as it treads.”\(^2\) The life of Christ illuminates the “path of devotion,” and the concept of *imitatio Christi* was seen as an important touchstone for personal piety in early modern England.

Just as the literary understanding of *imitatio* did not have a fixed definition, *imitatio Christi* also operated as a loosely-defined term in early modern England. Functioning as an important religious ideal, *imitatio Christi* emphasized Christ as the perfect example for believers to follow, and was further popularized through Thomas a Kempis’ fifteenth-century work. Although Kempis’ Latin work operated originally within the context of Catholic piety, popular Protestant translations such as Thomas Rogers’ 1580 version points to how the idea of *imitatio Christi* remained a vibrant notion in Elizabethan England.\(^3\) Passages such as Ephesians 5:1-2 provided scriptural impetus for imitation as worship: “Be ye therefore followers of God, as deare children, and walke in loue, euens as Christ hath loued vs, and hath giuen himselfe for vs” (Geneva version). Indeed, the logic of correlation and imitation is found everywhere in Scripture, and is a particularly important idea in the Pauline epistles. In emphasizing the correspondence between Christ (referent) and the believer (sign), the theme of *imitatio Christi* pointed to the unbridgeable gap between oneself and one’s model (doctrine of
depravity), and yet operated as an viable mode of Christian self-fashioning (doctrine of sanctification).

It is here in the realm of signs that *imitatio* (as Renaissance Humanist literary activity) and *imitatio Christi* (as a devotional ideal) meet. As Thomas M. Greene has pointed out, if the Renaissance was a period in which *imitatio* flourished, the innovations were not unaccompanied by anxieties—in this case, anxieties about the stability of language itself. Indeed, advancements in translation theory also made Humanist scholars aware of the unstable nature of language—how the present language “supplies only a treacherous gloss” upon the lost past—and the work of *imitatio* pointed to the impossibility of “true” replication (8). In his work on language and meaning in the Renaissance, Richard Waswo takes a similar view and asserts that new interpretative techniques employed by Renaissance scholars ultimately led to the questioning of the very nature of what constitutes reality. Waswo contends that since traditional Platonic dualism was undermined by the difficulties of translation, meaning was unwittingly becoming divorced from its reference in ways that anticipate postmodern formulations of the sign.

While the critics mentioned above do not engage directly with religious texts of the period, a similar anxiety about the slipperiness of signs characterizes the turmoil of the English Reformation. As iconophilia turned into iconophobia, the religious rift of the Reformation questioned (and literally tore down) traditional signs of faith. In the Eucharistic debates—what Thomas Cranmer called “the pith of the matter” of the English Reformation—we see such interrogation of signs take center stage. As the focal point of Reformation controversy, the Eucharistic debate makes clear the critical connection
between translation and religion. According to the Reformers, priests had misconstrued the words “Hoc est corpus meum” by understanding the figurative words as literal ones and, in their transformation of a trope into flesh, subsequently polluted the gospel with base materialist theology. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that in important Protestant texts such as John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments, the papists’ carnality is linked to their mistranslation of scripture: their sins are portrayed as philological as well as religious violations of the truth.

Using the Humanist literary activity (and anxieties) of imitatio as a starting point, this dissertation explores imitatio’s role as an important technique not just in literature, but also in the arena of religious devotion. Specifically, it argues that the profound epistemological crises brought on by the Reformation made the concept of imitatio all the more relevant, especially as a way to negotiate the devotional landmines of hypocrisy and idolatry. It is here that the human body becomes a surprisingly reliable sign of right imitation. Despite the body/soul dualism attributed to traditional Christian doctrine, Christ’s incarnational certitude and the privileging of immanence authorized the human body as an appropriate sign of devotion. At first glance, this is perhaps most surprising in light of the iconoclastic theme found in Protestant devotional aesthetic. Critics have summarized the differing paradigms for Catholic and Protestant aesthetics as a competition between images and words, which value certain methods of cognition over others. However, though Reformist claims of a transcendent mode of knowledge—exercising the mind’s eye versus the “idolatrous” physical eye, for example—would seem to reject the human body as a viable form of knowing the divine
Other, Protestant anti-materialism treated the human body more ambivalently and, at times, with surprising affirmation.⁷

The fact that Christ’s identity was understood as incarnate complicates the sola scriptura thrust of the Reformation, and this study examines the desire for a tangibility of faith in Reformation England. In this way, matters that stand beyond the bounds of ocular proof help organize my dissertation chapters: Sir Thomas Wyatt’s translation of repentance in The Penitential Psalms; issues of true martyrdom in John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments; and the performance of verity in William Shakespeare’s Hamlet and The Winter’s Tale. Although these texts vary in genre, they all point to an embodiment of proof that privilege the human body as a trustworthy sign. As I discuss later, the body’s resonance with the humanity of Christ, and the pre-Cartesian worldview that saw the human body as fully engaged with what we consider to be more cognitive functions, contributed to a privileging of the body as an acceptable sign of true devotion in a religiously fraught age. More than the fallen language of man, the language of the body was deemed to be more reliable, and the body was perceived to be a stable vehicle that could enact, and even trigger, right imitatio.

IMAGE AND WORD

Although my project functions microscopically as an examination of the conceptual overlaps between various forms of imitatio, it also participates in a larger critical discussion surrounding early modern iconoclasm. Described by Michael O’Connell as a phenomenon that begins in the 1520s and, when it begins, “it is with such suddenness and intensity that there is no question of checking abuses and reforming excesses. [Iconoclasm] is directed against the entire system of worship and devotion and
aims to replace it with a radically different system based on verbal structures” (50).

Although Protestant iconoclasm is an undisputed phenomenon in England and captures the spirit of the Reformist movement, the human body operates as a safe *imago Dei*, and offers an alternative to the conflict paradigm traditionally ascribed to the Catholic-image and Protestant-word relationship. Focusing on how the human body was viewed as directly in alignment with emotions helps to fill in some of the gaps in sectarian aesthetics; that is, even as the corporeal “real presence” became relegated to the realm of language and metaphor, the nature of true faith still took on an embodied, material quality in the period.

It is helpful here to make the distinction that St. Paul makes between the flesh and the body in the New Testament. Although the flesh (*sarx*) and the body (*soma*) became virtually indistinguishable in the aftermath of Augustinian thought, the body was seen as a more neutral vehicle.⁸ In Pauline thought, the human body functions as an important metaphor (the body of Christ and individuals as members of that body) and also as a way to *enact* one’s connection to the divine. This is the logic behind harsh Pauline rebukes such as the one found in the first letter to the Corinthians: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid” (1 Corinthians 6:15 KJV). The slippage between figurative and physical domains becomes apparent through the use of the term *members*; what one chooses to do with one’s physical members in effect can disqualify one from being a spiritual member of the body of Christ.

While the scope of my project does not allow me to trace the history of the devotional body, I am indebted to medieval scholarship that shows the importance of the
body in religious practices, and finds the blurred boundaries between sensation/reason to be helpful in formulating my own thoughts about how the body was seen as a legitimate sign of devotion. Early modern critics’ works such as Katherine E. Maus’s study on inwardness and early modern theater also usefully demonstrate the centrality of religion in understanding subjectivity in the period. In particular, Maus focuses upon the epistemological anxieties posed by hypocrisy. She states:

On the one hand, the theistic context in which the problem of human inwardness is posed provides a standard of what would constitute certainty. On the other hand, faith itself encourages a kind of mistrust: for what is most true about human beings in such a system is simultaneously least verifiable.

Like Maus, I also focus on the notion that faith is beyond ocular proof in this work; however, I propose that rather than actions, it is words that are frequently viewed as inadequate signs of “true” faith and are seen as agents of hypocrisy. Scriptural passages such as Matthew 7:21 had always made the need for distinguishing between true and false believers relevant—“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven”—yet the religious turbulence of the Reformation made the work of distinction-making even more urgent, and language itself seemed to pose the greatest threat to religious integrity. The logocentric aesthetic of Reformist doctrine rejected empty rhetoric that claimed faith but did not practice it; yet the practical piety that characterized Protestant devotional works required an embodied dimension in imitation and devotion.
EMBODIED DEVOTION

While the importance of holistic worship is not a novel idea in Scripture, I suggest that the reason for how the body could be seen as a conduit and as a stable sign of devotion by Protestant divines was strengthened by the uniquely embodied way in which interiority was understood in the period. In her work on dominant habits of thought in the Renaissance, Debora Shuger has noted how “religion… supplies the primary language of analysis” for this culture;¹¹ this study extends this observation in order to focus specifically on the affective, embodied language with which believers were exhorted to see themselves. The tactility of faith embedded in Scripture becomes more significant in a culture that understood terms such as “affections” and “passions” as being anchored in the body.

The primacy of the body in Renaissance literature has long been noted; however, greater attention needs to be paid to the permeability of the body and its role in shaping subjectivity.¹² This study’s approach to subjectivity and its embodied aspects draws upon a non-Cartesian understanding of the self, whose impact upon early modern literature has been studied by critics such as Gail Kern Paster, Michael Schoenfeldt, and Mary Floyd-Wilson.¹³ The productive, liminal status of the body in early modern imagination results partly from a pre-Cartesian paradigm that did not separate the physiological from the psychological, a blurring of boundaries that did not draw a division between what we now consider to be interior (the mind) and the exterior (the body). The permeability of selfhood challenges traditional thoughts about noncorporeal inwardness, which see the body as the mind’s instrument and product.¹⁴ It is significant, then, that true knowledge of the divine is frequently described in terms of affections and passions in many
devotional works. In a period in which the psychological was not yet removed from the physiological, the affective terminology with which the believer was encouraged to view his relationship with God required him to be moved not just rationally, but emotionally and bodily as well. It is precisely the kind of unintentional transformation that happens in good *imitatio*.

Two works by the Cambridge divine William Perkins serve to illustrate the above point regarding embodied *imitatio*. In *A Case of Conscience* (1592) and *A Declaration of the True Manner of Knowing Christ Crucified* (1596), Perkins addresses the contemporary religious anxieties surrounding election and true knowledge. Indeed, the full title of Perkins’ *A Case of Conscience* is instructive, since it includes the phrase, “How a man may know, whether he be the son of God or no”—a succinct formulation that captures the religious concerns of the day. The method by which Perkins takes up this question is dialogical in nature; after the preface in which he addresses the “godly reader,” the rest of the work is made up of a dialogue between the Church (expressing anxieties of the general Christian) and John (taking voice from the first epistle of John). The dialogue provides a fascinating glimpse into how religious anxiety fuels the desire for assurance. The voice of the Church constantly undermines the confidence with which the Apostle John speaks; following the declaration that Christ is the propitiation for the whole world, for example, the voice of the Church asks, “Be it that I knowe him to be my aduocate: may I not be deceaued? Howe may I knowe, that this my knowledge is effectuall to saluation?” Here lies the crux of the matter in the diverse array of devotional works in Tudor England—the distinction between true and false knowledge of God.
While the answer seems frustratingly circuitous in *A Case of Conscience*, Perkins is more forthright in his later tract, *A Declaration of the True Manner of Knowing Christ Crucified* (1596). If Perkins’ tone in his earlier work is one that attempts to be reassuring, it is decidedly more resolute in this later tract. Addressing a “common sinne of men at this day” in which men only have a shallow understanding of Christ crucified, Perkins expounds on the nature of truly knowing Christ, and employs the language of embodiment in order to do so. The reliance upon the human body seems to be catalyzed by how false knowledge is construed: for Perkins, the way towards true knowledge is pitted against the fallacious pathway of partial knowledge—an inadequacy signaled by the poverty of mere mental knowledge, which, as Perkins points out, even the devils have. Referring to such inadequate knowledge as knowledge consisting of a “swimming in the braine, which doth not alter and dispose the affection of the whole man,” his preface makes clear that it is not mere rhetoric that counts as true knowledge, and lays out the following steps: “to be touched with an inward and a lively feeling of our sinnes” and “secondly in the Passion, as in a myrrour, to behold and in beholding to labour to comprehend the length, the breadth, the height, the depth of the love of the father.”

Two elements are striking here: the value placed upon emotive knowledge (“lively feeling”) and the construction of devotion as “labour.” They point to a significant assumption about devotion—that man is inherently resistant to worship—and to the body as a productive site for inciting true devotion. Human depravity necessitates that admonishments towards active and feeling devotion become uttered, and Perkins notes how one moves toward such authentic devotion through “labour.” Of course, the Reformist emphasis on *sola scriptura* meant that much of that labor involved the activity
of reading and understanding the vernacular Bible; yet, as Perkins (along with other
Reformist writers) asserts, mere mental knowledge is not enough. He states in *A
Declaration* that worthwhile knowledge “must not be onely speculative, that is, barely
conceiued in the braine, but it must be experimental: because we ought to haue
experience of it in our hearts and liues, and we should labour by all meanes possible to
feele the power of Christs death.” Perkins’ works point to a theme apparent in many
Reformist devotional texts—the rejection of a compartmentalized knowledge of God—
and indicate the importance of the human body in authentic *imitatio Christi*.

This notion is graphically demonstrated in Perkins’ reference to the Old
Testament story of Elijah and the widow. Citing the prophet as a model of someone who
truly knows God, Perkins urges the reader to know Christ crucified in the same way that
Elijah revived the child of the Shunamite widow: that is, by lying on top of the dead
boy’s body and resurrecting him through a kind of body-to-body resuscitation. Perkins’
vivid description is worth citing here at length, as he exhorts the reader toward an
imitation of the prophet’s ways:

> Even so, if thou wouldst be revived to everlasting life, thou must by faith as it
> were set thy self upon the cross of Christ, and applie thy hands to his hands, thy
> feete to his feete, and thy sinful heart to his bleeding heart, and content not thy
> self with Thomas to put thy finger into his side, but even dive and plunge thy self
> wholly both bodie and soul into the woundes and bloode of Christ.

Although Perkins’ language is figurative here, his encouragement for believers to “dive
and plunge thy self wholly both bodie and soul” attests to the importance of
understanding true devotion in embodied terms. Perkins instructs the reader to set
himself upon the cross “by faith,” since one must know Christ experientially and with a kind of visceral vigor. Only then will proper emotions and faith be stirred in the believing individual, so that there will be an assurance of true knowledge.

Perkins’ directions for “true knowledge” are striking but not uncommon in Reformist rhetoric. As Richard Strier notes, although western tradition typically vilifies strong passions, they are a necessary component in Christian doctrine since they drive the naturally stony, cold self to desire the divine other. Consequently, various devotion manuals portray devotion as a process, within which the body is a positive prerequisite to positioning and driving oneself towards sincere devotion. George Downname’s treatise on “practical prayer,” for example, defines prayer in this way: “True prayer is not a bare reading or recitall of any form of prayer without understanding, without affection, without devotion, without faith; but a religious service devoutly offered unto God out of an upright and pure heart.” The gap between sign and thing becomes most vulnerable to attack within the context of prayer; the right feelings must be stirred in order to breach any gap between reciting and understanding. Perhaps appropriately, then, Downname places affection as the second step in an implied process involving understanding, affection, devotion, and faith.

As Cynthia Garret notes regarding English prayer manuals, they “do not advise the reader to feign an emotion he does not feel” (339). Yet devotion manuals also acknowledge that the believer needs incitement—a stirring up of one’s affections in order to pray, since the doctrine of utter depravity dictates that the believer is not inclined towards prayer. Thus, the instruction manuals on devotion implicitly contain the idea that sincere devotion requires work that incorporates the external and internal orderings
of the body. George Downname, for example, includes a section on “holy gestures” in *The Doctrine of Practical Prayer* and labels them as *honorem signi*. He states: “Now our bodies and members thereof, as they are the instruments so also the *indices* and manifesters of our souls: and therefore the signes of those graces which we contein in our souls must (when they may conveniently) be expressed in the body.” Citing how “gesture and voice do greatly serve to help both the attention of the mind and intention of the affections,” Downname later concludes that “in publick prayers they are also good means to excited and stirre up one another.”

**ERASMUS AND ETHICAL IMITATIO**

Erasmian notions of true eloquence crystallize the notion of being stirred *first* in order to enact good *imitatio*, and offer another bridge between secular and devotional concepts of the word. Widely circulated in the early sixteenth century and the subject of much controversy in Erasmus’ lifetime, *Ciceronianus* (1528) attacks the rigidity of “Ciceronian” eloquence made popular in certain schools of rhetoric. Through the voice of Bulephorus, Erasmus formulates his ideas about what constitutes good *imitatio*: mainly, that in order to be a true imitator of Cicero, the *spirit* of Cicero must be imitated rather than following him to the letter. The dialogue touches upon common conceptions of *imitatio*: good imitation is like bees gathering honey, not the activity of apes and crows; good imitation enlivens one’s natural talents, whereas bad imitation kills and deadens. While the list of reasons for abandoning a literal following of Cicero is long, the ones of central interest to this study involve an affective principle at work—that is, unless one’s eloquence *moves* the listener, one’s attempts are futile. It is a concept that
defines the difference between good and bad imitation for Erasmus, and an idea that lies at the heart of English devotional aesthetic.

Like other Humanist thinkers, Erasmus displays a growing awareness of linguistic mutability as he points to historic appropriateness as a central element for what constitutes good imitation. According to him, the greatest linguistic faux pas involves the use of pagan terminology when speaking about Christian subjects; because we no longer live in the times of Cicero but in an age of Christianity, one must accommodate one’s language appropriately. He states through Bulephorus:

Wherever I turn I see things changed, I stand on another stage, I see another theater, yes another world. What shall I do? I, a Christian, must speak to Christians about the Christian religion. In order that I may speak fittingly, shall I imagine that I am living in the age of Cicero and speaking in a crowded senate in the presence of the senators on the Tarpeian Rock? (62)

Bulephorus then goes on to cite an uninspiring example of a speaker who spoke in Roman terms about the death and resurrection of Christ. Although this speaker spoke elegantly, “in so Roman a fashion spoke that Roman that I heard nothing about the death of Christ… he said almost nothing on the subject which he seemed neither to know nor to care for, nothing to the point, and moved no one’s feelings” (65). Rather than adding elegance to his speech, the speaker’s anachronistic approach resulted in failure.

In light of the emphasis placed on affections in a devotional context, the description of the speaker’s failings is significant, for success is construed in terms of knowledge and emotions. The dialogue makes clear that in order to possess the true spirit of Cicero, one must first possess a thorough knowledge of the subject and be deeply
moved first in order to move others. In this way, pleasurable eloquence is not enough, since it does not effect true change. Bulephorus advises the following to those who desire to make an impact on the audience:

It is not enough to arouse in the reader little temporary feelings of delight; emotions worthy of the Lord must be aroused. And you cannot do this unless you have the subject you are handling thoroughly mastered: for you will not inflame if you yourself are cold; you will not set the reader’s mind on fire with the love of celestial things, if you yourself are but lukewarm. (119)

The steps toward good imitatio involve a transformation that is judged to happen within oneself first: “You will not inflame if you yourself are cold; you not set the reader’s mind on fire with the love of celestial things, if you yourself are but lukewarm.” It is an injunction that is echoed and, perhaps more importantly, idealized in devotional tracts. The flourishes of eloquence are not to be preferred over substance; consequently, “That which merely furnishes amusement cannot continue to please, especially if those who are reading have the end in view not only to speak with greater polish, but to live better” (116). Here, it becomes apparent that Erasmus reached for a type of imitatio that resided not just in speech, but would be embodied in a lifestyle.

**Overview of Chapters**

Although I work specifically with the Humanist literary technique, imitatio, in chapter one of this study, the way I use the term imitatio is closely aligned to the general term imitate as well. As even a cursory look at the Oxford English Dictionary shows, the term imitate possesses a wide spectrum of meanings. Understood in its classical context, imitation as mimesis highlighted the gap between the real and the counterfeit—reason
enough for poets to be exiled in Plato’s Republic—and this image of art as a counterfeit, illegitimate imitation is an idea that haunts the period’s most ambitious works. While it is not my intention to excavate the full range of meanings held within the term imitate, I want to establish the relevance and complexity of the term imitate as it functions in literary and religious contexts. Interestingly, the first recorded use of the word is found in Thomas More’s On the Passion (1534) in which he applies the verb to how believers ought to relate to Christ’s sacrifice: “He that so receiueth the bloude of hys redeemer, that he will not yet imitate and follow his passion” (OED). From the start, the believer’s action of imitation is directly connected to his devotional sincerity, if the object of imitation is Christ.

In this way, the motif of imitatio—in its literary, emulative, transformative, and antitheatrical aspects—guides the organization of my chapters. Though placed in chronological sequence, I do not mean to ascribe teleological meaning to the list; the genre-crossing from Wyatt to Shakespeare is meant to highlight the overlaps in embodied imitatio rather than reify these texts. The first chapter examines the relationship between secular and religious imitatio in Sir Thomas Wyatt’s literary works. Building upon Thomas M. Greene’s work on Renaissance imitatio, I argue that Wyatt was enabled towards productive imitation through a focus on the body—a technique that results in a diachronic reproduction of the original work. While the bulk of the chapter focuses on Wyatt’s religious translation, The Penitential Psalms, the beginning pages examine his Petrarchan imitative works. They argue that the presentness attributed to Wyatt’s successful Petrarchan imitations is achieved through an emphasis on the speaker’s
body—a strategy that carries over to the expression of penitence in his arrangement of the seven traditional penitentiary psalms.

Whereas chapter one focuses solely on textual imitation, chapter two looks at a more religious form of emulative *imitatio* through John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. The concept of *imitatio Christi* is highly relevant to the genre of martyrology. Keeping Foxe’s Protestant agenda in mind, this chapter examines the editorial strategy that Foxe employs in his massive and hugely influential work. Analyzing select accounts of Henrician and Marian martyrs, I argue that Foxe creates a community of the true church by deploying double levels of meanings to words such as *members*—that is, in order to count as a member of the true church, one must be willing to subject one’s members to pain and martyrdom. While both sides of the Eucharistic debate would reject the slipperiness of the sacred host operating on literal and figurative levels, the martyrs use a kind of semiotics that insists upon the relevancy of both in Foxe’s work. After examining how the body in pain is made to serve as an undeniable real presence of faith in Foxe’s work, I study the didactic strategy of emulative *imitatio* and, specifically, its impact upon the kind of “audience” that gathered to witness these martyrdoms. Fleshing out the Greek meaning of *martyr* (witness), the spectators are given an important place in both the visual and narrative descriptions of martyrdom, and point to the dramatic components evident in *Acts and Monuments*.

Such dramatic elements in *Acts and Monuments* pave the way to a discussion of the stage, and the last chapters on *Hamlet* and *The Winter’s Tale* explore how a transformative notion of *imitatio* permeates the antitheatrical and devotional writings of late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Building upon scholarship that identifies
the proximity between the pulpit and the popular stage, the chapters examine the ambivalent values placed upon “lively” portraiture in antitheatrical and devotional discourses. The public stage’s infectious and stirring effects were seen as chief reasons for denouncing the playhouse as the “devil’s pulpit.” The dangers of theater—that of stirring the members of the audience—are viewed more favorably, however, by contemporary religious discourses that worry over a listless and ardor-less spirit. After establishing the connecting element of “lively portraiture” in antitheatrical and devotional discourses, I explore how the transformative powers of the stage play out in central moments of *Hamlet*. In the stifling confines of Elsinore, Prince Hamlet identifies the play as the thing to “catch the conscience of the king.” As a means toward representing an invisible interiority, the body is at once anathema and a site for truth for Hamlet, and ultimately plays an instrumental role in the prince becoming “Hamlet the Dane.”

The “lively portraits” in *Hamlet* give way to the lively statue of Hermione in the spectacular ending to *The Winter’s Tale*. The work of remembering from the previous chapter becomes an embodied re-membering in the celebrated ending to the play. Building upon the previous chapter’s notion of positive performance—one that can enact action and not merely counterfeit it—this last chapter examines the imitation of reality and the central role that Hermione’s body plays in the work of redemption in the play. Arguing that Leontes’ jealousy can be understood in terms of contemporary notions of idolatry, I point out how the wintry world of the first three acts requires the warmth of Hermione’s breathing body in the final scene. Specifically, because Leontes insists on seeing her as merely flesh—“no barricado for a belly”—in his self-referential, idolatrous
gaze, the redemption that the king needs to undergo is a re-recognition of her status as a fully human being.

The relevance of the body in early modern culture is undisputed; indeed, the seemingly endless proliferation of figurative and analogical imageries that converge upon the body during the Renaissance has led to the characterization of the period as a culture of anatomization and blazoning. Only recently, however, have our readings of the body in early modern culture begun to move away from an anachronistic imposition of a post-Cartesian split between mind and body. While an exploration of the corporeality of inwardness has begun, further work needs to be done linking the culture of embodiment with religion in the early modern period. Using the rich lens offered via *imitatio*, this study examines the implications of holistic imitation in all of its diverse manifestations.
CHAPTER ONE: SIR THOMAS WYATT AND THE TRANSLATION OF
DEVOTION

EARLY MODERN TRANSLATION CULTURE

Ranging from the halting efforts of schoolboys to polished productions of great
poets, the term *imitatio* encompassed a wide range of literary activities in Tudor England.
Although this chapter focuses on the imitative practices of a single “great poet,” Sir
Thomas Wyatt, it is important to note from the outset that early modern literary culture
was a culture of translation. Belying the Romantic notion of an author having “original”
creativity, early modern authors engaged in and thrived upon imitation—a technique that
was part pedagogical, part rhetorical, and all pervasive. In the religious domain, the term
*imitatio* held greatest resonance with the traditional devotional paradigm of *imitatio
Christi*. While the religious definition of *imitatio* was not always conflated with its
literary counterpart, it is significant that the literary and devotional activities of imitation
were often placed within the same network of associations. In his translation of Thomas
a Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ* into English, for example, Thomas Rogers writes of the
natural human inclination to imitate, which he attributes partly to nature and “partlie
because we are Englishmen who of al other people are most famous, and infamous too
for imitation.”¹ This comment on national character is followed by the statement:

A shame were it therefore for us to imitate so painfulie as manie do in eloquence
Cicero; in philosophie Aristotle; in lawe Iustinian; in Physick Galen for worldlie
wisedome; yea to imitate, as most do, the French in vanitie, the Dutch in luxurie,
in brauerie the Spanish, the Papists in idolatrie, in impietie and al impuritie of life
the Atheists, and not to folowe our Sauior Christ in heauenlie wisedome.

Rogers argues that the ubiquitous presence of imitation in English culture makes the
English particularly able to engage in Christ-like imitation, and his belief in such
“natural” English capacity provides added fuel to his prefatory fervor. That Rogers is so
easily able to list the diverse types of imitation—cognitive, external, ethical—attest to
the seamlessness with which the term imitation encompassed multiple sites of knowledge
that make up selfhood in early modern England.

Although the importance of the dual influence (and confluence) of classical and
Christian traditions is one of the first tenets of Renaissance culture taught in the
undergraduate classroom, it is important to note that the term imitation takes on a
peculiarly vibrant and tactile quality for Wyatt through such a culture of secular and
biblical imitations. Indeed, it seems appropriate that the metaphor of digestion is used to
describe both the process of translation and scriptural learning, for each venture is
frequently imagined as a kind of anabolic, bodily process. The activity of imitation was
not compartmentalized into one specific category, but was one that involved the whole
person. It is significant, too, that imitation was viewed not simply as a mental exercise,
but as an important activity towards self-framing and self-development. Not only did
the religious use of the word “imitation” possess a sliding relationship with subjectivity—
one that encompassed inward and outward conformity—but Renaissance humanist
endeavors also viewed the activity of imitation as one that helped to shape selfhood.
In light of the ways in which imitation was understood in such far-reaching and embodied ways, what becomes notable through the case of Wyatt’s works are the ways in which these notions shape the nature of subjectivity in his imitations of Petrarch and Scripture. Wyatt’s place in English poetry has fluctuated in critical approval over the years, a kind of “continuall chaunge” that the self-ironizing poet himself would appreciate. From being known as the father of the “drab age” to the current status of someone exemplifying “modern” subjectivity in early modern lyric poetry, Wyatt has been the subject of much critical attention in Renaissance studies. While it is not my intention to rehash the various interpretations of Wyatt’s poetry, I seek to reconsider his works in light of two concerns: first, the connections between the “secular” and “religious” imitative works by Wyatt; second (and in relation to the first), the embodied method of constructing subjectivity in Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalms*. Whereas previous critical efforts to examine Wyatt’s secular and religious works of imitation have tended toward reification of one “type” against the other, I explore the ways in which a dialectical relationship can exist between them. Indeed, though much work has been done on the topic of Renaissance *imitatio*, it has been primarily limited to translations of secular materials. Conversely, due to a tendency to be preoccupied with sectarian poetics and politics, scholarship on Wyatt’s psalm translation has not fully treated the epistemological complexities involved in translating devotion. Since both types of translation possess greater similarities than disparities, it is useful to examine early modern psalm translations within the existent theories of dilemmas facing Renaissance *imitatio*. 
Thomas Greene’s work on Renaissance imitation explores the combination of anxiety and creativity involved in Renaissance imitation, and it is worth touching upon Greene’s salient points on this topic before moving on to consider the methodology of imitation in Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalms*. Building his argument on the Derridean “iterability” of drifting inherent in all languages, Greene describes the “tragic sense of loss” that Renaissance writers experienced. As they realized the unstable nature of language, the irretrievable nature of the classical past also became painfully clear to them. This irretrievability was imagined as a historical as well as a cultural gap, a breach in time that ultimately led Renaissance writers to acknowledge the linguistic distance between sign and thing. Such developments toward a diachronic perspective of the word impacted the humanists’ endeavors toward imitation deeply. As Greene puts it:

> If a remote text is composed in a language for which the present supplies only a treacherous glossary and if it is grounded in a lost concrete specificity never fully recoverable, then the tasks of reading, editing, commenting, translating, and imitating become intricately problematized—and these were the tasks that preoccupied the humanists. (8)

Yet, as Renaissance writers faced the etiological problem of “constructing retrospectively a past from which a literary work could visibly emerge without damaging anachronism,” the recognition of the historicity of the signifier was one which ultimately led to positive and productive imitation—what Greene terms *heuristic* or *dialectical* imitation in his categorization of humanist imitation (33). Acknowledging its dependence and yet not crippled by its predecessors, heuristic imitation “becomes a kind of *rite de passage* between a specified past and an emergent present… It points to a dependence which it
then overcomes by a declaration of conditional independence” (41). This kind of imitation is a far cry from the modern-day Bloomsian anxiety of influence, and again points to the importance of understanding how authorship and imitation complemented one another during the early modern period.

For Greene, Wyatt’s translations of Petrarch’s sonnets epitomized this model of heuristic imitation for Renaissance England. As one of the earliest respondents to the Italian literary Renaissance, Wyatt began to translate from Petrarch’s works after his visit to Italy in 1527, and he (together with Surrey) is often cited as the forerunner for creating the English sonnet. George Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) would acknowledge the national literary implications of Wyatt’s imitative efforts as one in which he “greatly polished our rude & homely maner of vulgar Poesie” and through which he became one of the “reformers of our English meetre and stile.” Greene’s praise of Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations is perhaps just as enthusiastic:

The shadings in Wyatt’s play with subtexts, like the shadings of self-presentation, are curiously, hauntingly modern. Standing at the opening of the mature humanist endeavor in England, Wyatt at his ablest demonstrated the potential force of diachronic poetry with a subtle power only a few of his successors would surpass. (263)

Greene largely attributes Wyatt’s successful imitation to his ability to tauten the dramatic intensity of a poem, an ability that is only possible through recognizing the diachronic nature of language. In many of Wyatt’s imitations such as “The longe love,” the circularity of Petrarch’s works is transformed into “a unique, unrepeatable plot” (251). The generic ‘I’ of the Petrarchan lover becomes the specific ‘I’ of Wyatt’s speaker—a
specificity and uniqueness that are formed through recognizing the inevitable and productive *iterability* of language.

While there is no need to review Greene’s analysis of Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations at length here, it is nonetheless important to consider how the creation of diachronic poetry intersects with embodied subjectivity in Wyatt’s works. What I am aiming for here is not a semantic analysis that compares Wyatt’s faithful (or faithless) translation of Petrarch’s lyric poems, but an investigation into the particular tangibility and firmness in Wyatt’s imitative efforts—that is, the element of *tangere* that is largely absent from the original Petrarchan works. In comparison to the original sonnets, Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations are notable for their personal specificity. The public, universal aspects of Petrarch’s poems become erased by the solipsistic tendencies of Wyatt’s speaker—tendencies which are essential for creating subjectivity in Wyatt’s imitative works. Although there is general critical agreement on the historical specificity of Wyatt’s lyricism, little work has been done to connect the ways in which an awareness of and an emphasis on the body helps to create such diachronic subjectivity. Wyatt’s imitations are works that manifest historical specificity and create lyric subjectivity through their preoccupation with the body. The diachronic method of imitation in these poems involves a heightened awareness of the physical presence of the speaker, a physicality that signaled specificity and locality.

The insistent historicity of the body is one that interrupts the teleological impulse of a universalized, public reading, an interruption that resembles the “unrepeatability” of Wyatt’s imitations. A Petrarchan imitation that displays such moments of embodied and unrepeatable subjectivity is the sonnet, “The longe love.”
The longe love that in my thought doeth harbar
And in myn hert doeth kepe his residence
Into my face preseth with bold pretence
And therein campeth, spreding his baner.
She that me lerneth to love and suffre
And will that my trust and lustes negligence
Be rayned by reason, shame, and reverence,
With his hardines taketh displeasure.
Wherewithall, vnto the hertes forrest he fleith,
Leving his entreprise with payne and cry,
And there him hideth and not appereth.
What may I do when my maister fereth,
But in the felde with him to lyve and dye?
For goode is the liff ending faithfully.

Greene comments regarding this translation that the omission of “sometimes” (talor) in Wyatt’s version has the effect of breaking out of a familiar ritual and leading to “tauter dramatic intensity” in the poem (252). While this is true, it is also worthwhile to note that the speaker’s physical body also “adds” to the dramatic intensity and contributes to the sense of “real” risk in the poem. Moreover, the tactile details suggest that the mistress arouses external as well as internal responses from the speaker, forming an external readability that ultimately displeases the mistress.

Such physical responses of the speaker to love can be noted in the changes between the original Petrarchan and Wyatt’s translated version. The “forehead” (fronte)
in Petrarch is translated into “my face” by Wyatt, a difference in anatomical location that displaces love from the traditionally rational place of the forehead to the greater expressive site of the face. The figurative language of the description of love as someone who “sometimes come forth all in armor into my forehead, there camps, and there sets up his banner” takes on greater concreteness in Wyatt’s translation, which states that love “into my face preseth with bolde pretence, / And therein campeth, spreding his baner.” The added attribution of “bolde pretence” to love disarms the potential for agency from the speaker and emphasizes his helpless state before the boldness of love. Moreover, the use of the verb “spreding” evokes the image of a physiological response that takes place on the lover’s face, an allusion perhaps to a spreading blush that alerts the lady to the speaker’s desire for her. Likewise, Wyatt’s translation of the place to where love flees in reaction to Laura’s anger, “hertes forrest” instead of al core, establishes a firmer image than the abstract image of the heart. The “hertes forrest” touches several levels of connotations—the tangled growth of a forest, the place of the hunt for “hertes”—and stresses the material element present in the entire endeavor.

Another Petrarchan imitation that illustrates such instances of embodied subjectivity is Wyatt’s rendering of Petrarch’s sonnet 190. Here, the looseness of Wyatt’s translation makes its relationship to the original an almost unrecognizable one. The una candida cerva and the pristine symbolism associated with the sacred symbol of Laura all but disappear in Wyatt’s version, “Whoso list to hunt,” in which the unknowable evanescence of the white doe becomes the known wiles (and wildness) of “the doe”. Although the wearied worldliness of Wyatt’s speaker in “Whoso list to hunt” has been much commented upon, I would like to focus on the physical imagery in this
poem as a network of images that generate lyrical subjectivity. While critics note that Wyatt typically ignored the physical aspect of the lady in his Petrarchan imitations, I argue that physical awareness is a pertinent factor in Wyatt’s translations. It becomes transferred and transformed, however, into an awareness of the speaker’s own body rather than that of the lady. Even as the speaker admits that it is his “mynde” that is principally wearied from partaking in the “vayne travaill,” there is an insistent physical presence in Wyatt’s imitation of Petrarch that is wholly devoid in Petrach’s “Una Candida Cerva.” The enjambed line, “But as she fleeth afore, / Faynting I folowe” enacts the physical difficulty of the hunt, and the alliteration sounds out the laborious act of someone fainting and following. Moreover, while there is no possibility of holding the sacred doe in Petrarch, the voice of the speaker who advises those “who so list to hunt” is one that possesses the implied prerequisite of prior experience. The ‘I’ is the voice of an experienced, albeit unsuccessful, hunter, who can personally attest to the weariness of the “vayne travail.”

Despite their differences, each of the speakers in Petrarch’s and Wyatt’s sonnets experiences a similar loss of control in their relationship to the doe. The ethereal imperiousness of the white doe in Petrarch’s sonnet becomes a worldly disdainfulness on the part of Wyatt’s hind, and the doe’s inaccessibility is created through the engraved words born on the collars on their necks. For Petrarch, the dignity of the words graven around the sacred doe/Laura is a testament of her freedom: “Nessun mi tocchi... Libera farmi al mio Cesare parve” (“Let no one touch me... It has pleased my Caesar to make me free”). Wyatt’s hind also bears similar words of inaccessibility, since his sonnet ends with the couplet, “Noli me tangere, for Caesar’s I am, / And wild for to hold though I
seem tame.” The mandatory aspect of both “Nessun mi tocchi” and “Noli me tangere” at first makes these phrases interchangeable, yet a closer inspection shows their relationship to be otherwise. The multi-valenced aspect of this Latin phrase—“Noli me tangere”—opens a fascinating moment of intertextuality in Wyatt’s poem, a heteroglossia of voices that seem to slyly undermine the permanence of these graven and inscribed words and illustrate the difference of tangere between the original and the imitation. On one hand, Wyatt invokes the well-known Latin motto: “Noli me tangere quia Caesaris sum,” which Caesar’s hinds bore around their necks as they were set free. On the other hand, the words Noli me tangere echo the similarly well-known first words that the resurrected Christ speaks in the Gospels to Mary Magdalen (John 20:17). The ramifications of these competing and/or complementary echoes are fascinating: the evocation of Christ’s sacred body mingles with the conventional “wildness” of female sexuality, and the former infuses the latter with sacred otherworldliness.

In both readings of Wyatt’s translations of Petrarch’s sonnets, then, it is evident that Wyatt is drawn towards establishing a tactility of images. The heuristic imitation that Greene saw reflected in Wyatt’s works—the recognition of diachronic language and the reworking around the “tragic loss” of linguistic rupture—becomes, for Wyatt, a felt immanence of the lover, which in turns shapes the nature of subjectivity in these works. Although it is presumptuous to conclude that all of Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations involve such tactics of tactility, it seems significant that the most effective of Wyatt’s imitations make use of a tactile subject. Such a tendency becomes significant when examining the portrayal of the beloved. It is a commonplace observation that much of the sensual imagery of the lady disappears in Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations, since the physical
presence of the lover is emphasized through an effacement of the beloved. Indeed, the operations of Petrarchan economy are such that the creation of the poet’s identity is established through a necessary absence of the lady, an absence that opens up a space for the speaker to fill.

One Wyatt poem in which the description of the lady is readily available is “They flee from me.” While “They flee from me” is not an imitation proper, I focus on it because it poetically enacts the imitative process that I have been tracing thus far, and because the tactile qualities of the poem take on heightened importance in the poem:

They flee from me that sometime did me seek
With naked foot stalking in my chamber
I have seen them gentle tame and meek
That now are wild and do not remember
That sometime they put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range
Busily seeking with a continual change
Thanked be fortune, it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better; but once in special,
In thin array after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,
And she caught in her arms long and small;
And therewithal sweetly did me kiss,
And softly said, Dear heart, how like you this?
It was no dream, I lay broad waking
But all is turned thorough my gentleness
Into a strange fashion of forsaking
And I have leave to go of her goodness
And she also to use newfangledness
But since that I so kindely am served
I would fain know what she hath deserved. (1-21)

The omitted *talar* from “The Long Love” is explicitly present in the beginning of this poem, as the speaker begins by recollecting the actions of the deer-women that “sometime” did him seek and “sometime” put themselves “in danger” to take bread from his hand. The repeated use of “sometime” establishes a continual pattern in which the present speaker no longer participates (or is able to participate). The imperfect tense of the first lines becomes perfective with the words “but ons in speciall” in line nine, as the general pattern of the past is broken to accommodate a particular event, and the retelling attains specificity and locality. The creation of real experience in the poem is, again, one that employs tactile imagery. Yet the dream-like element of *tangere* noticeable in the Petrarchan imitations is absent in this poem; here, in the wilderness of a Tudor courtier’s bedroom chamber, everything happens in the harsh reality of “brode waking.”

While the speaker in “They fle from me” strikes a familiar pose of recounting his experience, the confidence with which the speaker in “Whoso list to hunt” offered his advice is absent. Instead, the validity of his personal experience hangs in doubt, and it is this anxiety to express the truth of his memories which provides the necessary pressure for identify formation in the poem. The lines “I have sene theim gentill tame and meke / That nowe are wyld and do not remember” present a contrast between the “have sene”
and the “nowe.” The dissonance between the two time periods makes the subjective memory of the speaker suspect—a misgiving confirmed through the later, unprovoked protest, “It was no dreme.” Although like many of the other poems, the mode that the ‘I’ of the poem takes is one of complaint, the words “do not remember” seem to pinpoint the reason for such a complaint: the only person who remembers the way things used to be is the speaker, for “nowe they raunge / Besely seeking with a continuell chaunge.” Indeed, the “wildness” of the women is paired with their amnesia over how they once used to be in the line, “That nowe are wyld and do not remembre.” The subjectivity of the speaker is created by recognizing the disparity that exists between how things were (which only he remembers), and how things are now.

Because the speaker’s memory in “They fle from me” must, in effect, compete with the present for its reality, the method of remembering is of particular importance. Significantly, the method Wyatt chooses is one of embodied memory—the concreteness of bodies, which lends locality and credibility to his recollection. For this reason, the generally absent details of the lady’s presence are emphasized in this poem, since the lady’s presence as a tactile subject is a necessary element of subject formation for the speaker. While the speaker’s presence seems subordinate to the woman’s, the subjectivity of the speaker attains greater validity through the material solidity of the woman’s interaction with him. The tactile present-ness of the “ons in speciall” memory serves to refute the possibility of untruth in the speaker’s construction of himself, as the speaker recalls:

… but ons in speciall,

In thyn arraye after a pleasaunt gyse,
When her lose gowne from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her armes long and small;
Therewithall sweetly did me kysse,
And softely said, dere hert, howe like you this?

Besides the passivity of the speaker and the switching of traditional amorous roles in this moment, what become noticeable here are the tactile qualities of the woman. She emerges from the unnamed, numerous “they” in this “ons in speciall” memory with physical boldness that matches her breathy question to the speaker.

While the concreteness of her “armes long and small” lends firmness to the memory, it is interesting to note the ways in which the speaker himself is aware of the physicality of his memory. That is, the artfulness of these lines is matched by the artful arrangement of the woman’s actions in the speaker’s memory, which becomes lyrically evident through the regular meter and smoothness of these lines. The underlying anxiety of the speaker and the amnesia of the deer-women are solved through this retelling of the past. Yet, the resemblance between his memories and fantasy/dream is one that even the speaker himself must acknowledge, since the poem comes to an abrupt caesura and an end-stopped line, “It was no dreme: I lay brode waking.” The passivity of the speaker is apparent through the verb “lay,” and the paralyzing effects of living in memory become conveyed through the contrast between the speaker’s inactivity and the women-deer’s busy activity.

The complexity of the last line of the poem—“I would fain know what she hath deserved”—and how to decipher its layers of irony are pointed reminders of the central problem of uncertainty in Wyatt’s poem, an uncertainty that is built on an unstable
system of semiotics. Like the speaker in the Petrarchan imitations, the speaker in this original lyric is petulantly passive; he is a product of women’s “new fangilness,” which leaves him stewing in his own “gentilnes.” The term “gentilnes” itself is an unstable marker of selfhood for the speaker, however, since the “continuell chaunge” of his world involves linguistic change as well. As Greene puts it, “[Wyatt] has to deal with linguistic as well as political and sexual ‘new fangilnes’; words as well as men slide from their slipper top” (258). Because the relationship between signifier and signified was becoming increasingly complex in Tudor England, one way for the speaker to combat such erosion of meanings is to establish the physical immanence of the woman and of the event. In Wyatt’s poem of a disillusioned courtier who cannot keep up with the “straunge fashion of forsaking,” the distance between past and present is marked by words such as “gentilnes” and “goodness,” whose terms he thought he knew and had played well by, but whose meanings escape him “nowe”.

**Shared Anxieties Between Secular and Devotional Imitatio**

What this brief foray into Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations and lyric poetry is meant to establish is the way in which a focus on the body interacts with linguistic mutability in order to form subjectivity in Wyatt’s works. The recognition of unstable words and their “continuell change” is an inevitable and ultimately productive apprehension; through its historicity, the body becomes a countering anchor against the tide of linguistic changeability. A similar fusion between semiotics and the body occurs in Wyatt’s religious imitations, which have tended towards critical reification. Yet, reflecting his culture and world, Wyatt ranged freely between “secular” and “religious” modes of
writing; indeed, not only was he one of the first English writers to experiment with the Italian sonnet form, Wyatt was also one of the first poets to set the psalms to English meter.

While Greene’s notion of a “tragic sense of loss” may not be so pertinent in biblical translation, the challenges (and innovations) in both types of Wyatt’s _imitatio_ are shaped around a belief in the inherent instability of language. Since the _agon_ of penitence is built upon the acknowledgment of one’s propensity towards falsehood, in which the utterance of prayer itself holds potential for hypocrisy, the status of language was of key importance in the psalms. Indeed, in Wyatt’s _The Penitential Psalms_, King David’s subjectivity is partly created through a rejection of human _logos_, since the recognition of his sins also involves the recognition of the fallen and unstable nature of his words. Wyatt’s David seems to share the Augustinian notion that truth is ultimately not conveyed by words and that words are subordinate to revelation—an idea that becomes apparent in his distrustful attitude towards the stability of human words. As a result of anxieties surrounding verbal instability, the communication involved in prayer becomes embodied in key moments of Wyatt’s work. In the same way that tactility creates subjectivity in his Petrarchan imitations, then, a preoccupation with the body in worship creates subjectivity in Wyatt’s work of religious imitation. It is true that an invisible interiority is privileged in Wyatt’s work when, for example, David states that repentance itself is a rejection of “owntward dede, as men dreme and davyse,” since “the sacrifice that the lord lykyth most / Is sprite contrite” (409-501). Yet even as an “inward Syon” must be built through such hidden measures, the prologues’ emphasis on David’s body and the performative aspect of prayer point to how repentance can also be
experienced outwardly (504). Scriptural belief in the insufficiency of “words alone” becomes amplified in this work, in which the act of penitence forms the center and creates space for subjectivity.

THE PLACE OF THE PSALMS IN EARLY MODERN CULTURE

Most Wyatt critics attribute Wyatt’s translation of the penitential psalms to the year 1541 and to his imprisonment in the Tower. Although these psalms have received less critical attention than Wyatt’s “secular” lyrics, *The Penitential Psalms* has become increasingly important in examining Wyatt’s poetic technique. In his own time, Wyatt was praised for his work on the psalms. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, praises the courtier poet for painting “the lyvely faythe and pure, / The stedfast hope, the swete returne to grace / Of just Davyd by parfyte penytence.” Wyatt’s *Psalms* is also a work that has invited general critical agreement on the fundamentally Reformist nature of its poetics. In “Thomas Wyatt’s Paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms of David,” for example, Robert Twombly interprets Wyatt’s psalms as “a shrewd, germinally Protestant-Evangelical psychological drama of the outcast” (345); Elizabeth Heale asserts in *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* that Wyatt’s psalms are “distinctly Reformist [and] their program emerges subtly from Wyatt’s careful versions of his unimpeachably Catholic sources” (159). Even Stephen Greenblatt, whose Foucauldian interpretation of Wyatt’s work renders the idea of authenticity problematic, states regarding Wyatt’s psalms: “Wyatt captures the authentic voice of early English Protestantism, its mingled humility and militancy, its desire to submit without intermediary directly to God’s will, and above all its inwardness” (115). Yet examining David’s “parfyte penytence” in light of
sectarian poetics seems to predetermine what one can expect to discover in this fascinating work of translation. Although there are certainly Reformist qualities to the representation of inwardness in Wyatt’s psalms, the tendency to make a sharp distinction between Catholic and Protestant poetics limits the ways in which Wyatt’s rich work can be discussed. What seems more relevant during this time is the complex representation of devotional inwardness—indeed, the translation of it—in these psalms.

The first English translation of the Psalms was made by George Joye in 1530 and more than seventy different versions were published between 1530 and the end of the century. Like most humanist scholars who did not know Hebrew, Wyatt translated from a non-Hebraic version. While Wyatt’s other sources include the Latin Vulgate, the Great Bible, Tyndale, and Campensis, his main source was Pietro Aretino’s prose paraphrase of the seven traditional psalms. Aretino’s influence is the most noticeable because of Wyatt’s adoption of his dramatic narrative structure. Although the traditional medieval grouping of the seven penitential psalms—psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143—had already bound these psalms together, the use of a prologue before each psalm solidifies the narrative elements between the psalms and dramatizes the story of David as a teleological story of penitence. In his bricolage use of different sources, Wyatt seems to heed Petrarch’s view of translation: “I quote the authors with credit, or I transform them honorably, as bees imitate by making a single honey from many various nectars.” While the “various nectars” are acknowledged, the choices Wyatt makes in his representation of David’s penitence are the “honey” that is of primary interest in this study. In general, I agree with H. M. Mason’s evaluation of what the variety of sources reveal about Wyatt—that he was not a sectarian and that what Wyatt was interested in
was “getting at the truth of the psalms by all the avenues open to him.” And the “truth of the psalms” is, for Wyatt, the representation of prayer—the mechanics of which involve the external signs of the body.

The characteristic of the psalms as having a powerfully instructive value for the individual Christian has long been observed in the history of the psalms, and Calvin famously characterized the psalms as a “glass” in which one may view “the anatomy of all the partes of the Soule”. Barbara Lewalski points out that the psalms served as a “compendium of all theological, doctrinal, and moral knowledge in lyric form” and that they were widely accepted as a model and chronicle of spiritual experiences (41). Indeed, what becomes apparent over and over again is the psalms’ unique example as a source and model for Christian subjectivity. As Luther wrote in *A Manual of the Book of Psalms*:

> You have therein, not only the works and acts of the saints, but their very words and expressions, nay, their sighs and groans to God, and the utterance in which they conversed with him during their temptations; and all these are recorded in such a lively and descriptive manner, that those saints, though now dead, seem still to live and speak in the Psalms. (6)

Wyatt’s work seems intensely interested in tracing such “inmost sensations and motions” of the soul, yet as Luther’s description of the psalms indicates, the primary characteristic of the psalms is the transmission of “the very hidden treasure of their hearts’ feelings.” The effort to provide access to such hidden things involves the acknowledgment of how difficult the process is, for the act of recording the song which “from his hert owt brynges” is to admit that the recording itself is an imperfect artifact (425). Perhaps
appropriately, then, the narrator mentions before Psalm 51 that David’s song is one “that I not wither he crys or singes,” as the song/cry of prayer becomes indistinguishable (426).

Wyatt’s Penitential Psalms attempts to translate the knotty issue of genuine penitence and, as a result, the work provides an early sixteenth century glimpse into a lyrical representation of devotional subjectivity. More than just a metrical precursor to the Sidney-Herbert Psalter, Wyatt’s psalms provide an example of prayer that negotiates the contemporary religious landscape through its alternation between a third-person prologue and a first-person psalm proper. By employing an alternating structure between the prologues and the psalms proper, Wyatt’s translation of the psalms stages a dialogue between the visible and invisible expressions of devotional inwardness. And, as this oscillation between the representation and articulation of inwardness makes clear, it is one that must be ultimately anchored by King David’s embodied devotion, since the inherent instability of human words necessitates an exteriorization of inwardness. Like the Petrarchan imitations in which the body provides the diachronic lightening rod through which subjectivity could be channeled, a similar combination between immanence and imitation occurs in these psalms.

Before entering into a reading of Wyatt’s Psalms, I want to pause here to clarify what I mean by the words “inward” and “inwardness”. I consciously use the word “inward” over “inner” to refer to the quality of intimacy in these penitential prayers; the latter term connotes a sealed-off inaccessibility, whereas the former term has a directionality that addresses some type of an audience within the speaker. The belief in an unseen other opens up inner speech to accommodate more than the solipsistic self, unlocking inward discourse to the divine Other as well as to others engaged in the same
work of prayer, and this sense of audience plays an important role in how Wyatt saw the psalms as a potential model for prayer. Indeed, the didactic function of the psalms is explicitly expressed in Psalm 51, the centerpiece of the penitential psalms: “Then shall I teach thy wayes unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto the.” Moreover, the notion that the psalms held an endless repository of experiences—both personal and communal—for the Christian individual was a commonplace belief in the sixteenth century, since the psalms were perceived as a guide to the various experiences of one’s spiritual journey, serving an instructional purpose as well as an associative one.

THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS

In accordance with the principle of hiddenness and inwardness in the period, the poem constructs David’s devotional subjectivity through an inaccessible interiority. This becomes apparent in the first of Wyatt’s Penitential Psalms. Although many try to ease the king’s despair, David states in Psalm 6 that God alone knows what he is undergoing and “That to my hert thes foes have non acces” (168). At a general structural level, this distance from the “hert” seems to be created through the alternation between prologue and psalm in Wyatt’s work. Told in the third-person voice of the narrator who describes King David’s state before each psalm, the prologue offers us a view of King David’s preparations for penance before we are plunged into the uncomfortable closeness of the first person voice of the psalms themselves. Perhaps appropriately, the prologues are the sites in which David’s prayer most resembles performance, with the narrator describing the posture and arrangement of David’s body. Each prologue, in effect, sets the stage for the subsequent psalm and allows the reader to visualize David between each psalm through the perspective of the third-person narrator. In this way, though Wyatt’s work is
generically a far cry from Shakespeare’s staging of the body in devotion, I see the gap between the lyric and the dramatic being bridged through the performative body in devotion.

The pairing of prologue and psalm display a contrast not only in the voices utilized, but also in the meter and cadence of these voices. After the hearing the Davidic ‘I’ voice psalm 6 in terza rima, for example, the ensuing prologue states in a different voice and meter:

Who so hathe sene the sikk in his fevour,
After treux taken with the hote or cold
And that the fitt is past off his faruour,
Draw fainting syghes, let hym, I say, behold
Sorwofull David after his languour,
That with the treys that from his iyes down rold,
Pausid his plaint, and lad adown his harp,
Faythfull record of all his sorrows sharp. (184-192)

In contrast to the first person voice of the psalms proper, the narrator’s voice in the prologues is mostly that of a didactic observer whose chief function is to serve as the reader’s eyes; just as the harp is the “faithful record” for David, the narrator in the prologues serves as a recorder who provides access to David’s inward penitence. Yet even as the prologues provide narrative continuity and access to David’s intense solitude, they also foreground the mediated aspect of these psalms by reminding the reader that his/her accessibility to David is at best a limited one. In the prologue before Psalm 51, for example, the narrator comments regarding the hidden quality of David’s prayer, “But
that so close the Cave was and unkowth / That none but god was record off his payne” (415-16). Although King David is offered up before the gaze of the reader, what is emphasized again and again is that “none but god” is fully knowledgeable of his experience.

Critics have interpreted the significance of the prologues and their relationship to the psalms proper in various ways: Robert Twombly, for example, saw the prologues as being “dramatically superfluous” and concluded that Wyatt’s work was thus too idiosyncratic to be didactic in nature; others have located the dramatic element in the psalms rather than in the prologues. 16 Recently, Rivkah Zim has read the prologues as enacting a kind of a sermon glossing the spiritual confusion within the psalms themselves: “The role of this narrator who addresses only the reader, not David, is to act as a guide to the reader, ‘speaking alongside’, or paraphrasing and expounding the psalmist’s self-expression” (47). Although Zim’s reading rightly notes the didactic function of the prologues, she does not sufficiently consider how the prologues point to David as an example of true penitence. The prologues’ function of displaying the setting and preparing the reader to encounter the Scriptural Word resembles the longstanding tradition of a “composition of place, seeing the spot” prevalent in Catholic meditations. 17 Based on such meditational practices espoused by Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises, the “composition of place” involves placing oneself in the dramatic situation of the scriptural scene.

Louis Martz points out in The Poetry of Meditation that “the practice of dramatizing theological points, after the manner of Gospel parables, has become almost second nature to the meditator,” and asserts that such Catholic traditions of meditation
gained popularity in Protestant England because they satisfied “a deep inner need” in their rich and imaginative meditative practices (29). Whether or not Wyatt was responding to an overtly Catholic method, Wyatt’s use of a Catholic source in Aretino shows his attraction to the imaginative framework that the prologue-psalm structure offered.\(^{18}\) What seems important in the prologues’ ability to set up a dramatic “composition of place” is their ability to offer a sense of immediacy to the reader, a kind of visualization of the scene that the medieval writers such as St. Bonaventure wrote about in his *Meditations on the Life of Christ*:

Be present… endeavour to reconstruct the scene… For if you wish to gather fruit from these things, imagine that you are actually present when the Lord Jesus says or does them; as if you heard with your own ears, and saw with your own eyes, and attend with your whole mind and heart. (359-60)

In dramatizing David’s penitential prayers before God, the prologues in Wyatt’s psalms allow the insistent “I” of the ensuing psalms to attain greater poignancy, since the reader must “endeavour to reconstruct the scene”—that is, the setting and posture of penitence—before taking on the voice of penitence in David’s prayers. The composition of place allows the compendium nature of the psalms—its first person, third person, and communal voices—to merge into the idiosyncratic voice of the psalms proper.

This traditional meditative practice is also one that foregrounds the body of the believer through its encouragement toward rich imaginative practices. Indeed, as works on medieval devotional practices show, the incarnational aspect of Christ is one that invites visceral imaginings of the place and personhood of the passion and resurrection.\(^ {19}\) The resurrected Christ himself points towards the important physicality of his body, as he
asks his startled disciples, “Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me here” (Luke 24:39). The proven godhead of Christ is directly connected to the touchable reality of his body, and his historical embodied presence. The kind of impersonation that the composition of place requires, then, is the type of embodied \textit{imitatio} that enables what would otherwise be an unreachable subjectivity on the part of the believer.

The incarnational, concrete aspect of Christ’s personhood has had a long tradition of sparking devotional subjectivity. As Sara Beckwith writes in her work on the role of Christ’s body in medieval devotional imitation, “The irreducible origin and accompaniment of imitation is the human body itself, which ambivalently codes the body as representative (body as vehicle) and experiential (body as agent)” (61). As noted throughout this study, such notions of imitation form an important part of the devotional aesthetic in Tudor England and allow the body to be a stable sign and even a catalyst for right imitation. In Wyatt’s translation of the psalms, the references to the posture of penitence and the gestures of repentance underscore the embodied aspect of \textit{imitatio} that forms an important counterpart to the instability of fallen language. Even as the lyrical nature of the psalms is apparent through the careful arrangement of rhythm and meter, the body of David provides an experiential and embodied outlet of emotions that serves an important didactic function. Through these preparatory prologues in which repentance gains visibility and embodiment, the inherently resistant state of the reprobate can be properly stirred toward devotional imitation.
The “composition of place” also seems relevant to Wyatt’s work because the tradition acts to safeguard the lyric ‘I’ of the psalms proper from being misleadingly confusing. Since the movement toward genuine repentance is enacted through the dramatized setting and visualizations within the prologues rather than solely through the psalmist’s language in the psalms proper, such dramatic components allow the lyric ‘I’ from becoming too self-referential. This is in contrast to the Petrarchan paradigm in which the speaker’s stable words are set in contrast to the fickleness of the mistress. With an ending couplet such as, “My wordes nor I shall not be variable, / But always oon, your owne boeth ferme and stable,” for example, the Petrarchan speaker can assert the immutability of his words (and his accompanying steadfastness). In contrast to such confidence, the position of penitent David is to acknowledge the instability of his human words, since fallen logos is part and parcel of the postlapsarian condition. Perhaps appropriately, then, one of the primary methods of characterizing God is to portray divinity in direct contrast to man’s mutability. David states in the beginning of Psalm 38, for example:

O Lord as I the have both prayd and pray,

(Altho in the be no alteration

But that we men like as our sellffes we say,

Mesuryng thy Justice by our mutation)

Chastice me not, O lord, in thi furour,

Nor me correct in wrathfull castigation.

The subordinate thought in parentheses—“Altho in the be no alteration”—forms the backdrop against which the psalmist asks for forgiveness, the a priori given that helps to
form the speaker’s paradigm. Moreover, with the use of the collective “we,” David includes not just himself to this preset understanding, but all of mankind as well. Man’s collective “mutation” provides the necessary foil against which God’s justice can be measured.

Visualization and who has access to sight are important themes throughout Wyatt’s work, and the power of sight is established from the beginning lines of the first prologue. Setting up the story of David and Bathsheba from 2 Samuel 11, the narrator states: “Love to gyve law unto his subject hertes / Stode in the Iyes off Barsabe the bryght; / And in a look anone hymselff convertes, / Cruelly plesant before kyng David syght” (1-4). As in “The long love,” love is portrayed as a separate agent who animates a passive subject into action in his psalms. This time, however, Love is an almost satanic figure who influences his subjects through “venemd breth,” “creping fyre,” and “moyst poison,” which is only possible after having “first dasd his Iyes” (6, 8, 10, 5). The resulting state of being “launcyd” by Love’s poison is David’s love for Bathsheba, as we find out through the narrator: “The forme that love had printyd in his brest / He honorth it as thing of thinges best” (15-6). It is a type of idolatry that would have been instantly recognizable. Although Cupid’s tyranny is couched in familiar Petrarchan terms that focus on the lover’s sight, the strong emphasis on vision also draws on traditional biblical motifs involving sight and conversion. This loss of sight seems to prepare David’s eyes to eventually turn inward, so that he can later say, “And in my syght my synn is fixid fast, / Theroff to have more perfett penitence” (443-4). The conversion of his sight first requires blindness, however, as David’s obsession with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah are formulated in terms of a moral loss of sight: “He blyndyd thinkes this
trayne so blynd and closse / To blynd all thing that nowght may it disclosse” (31-2).

Here, David’s fundamental failure is his blindness in believing that there is an action undisclosed to God, an act that is quickly nullified by Nathan who “spyd out this trecherye” (32). The triple blindness in lines 31-32 is interesting, as if the possibility of avoiding God’s gaze—“to blynd all thing that nowght may it disclosse”—needs to be encased in multiple layers of blindness in order to even consider that an all-seeing God may possibly be in the dark. Once David realizes that his actions have been disclosed, he enters the setting in which he will sing his psalms, a dark cave “wherein he might hym hyde, / Fleing the light, as in prison or grave” (62-3).

Even as David must move into a space of darkness in which he wrestles alone with his sin, this typological figure of repentance becomes all the more exposed to the reader’s sight. That is, although David’s gaze ultimately becomes one of inward introspection, the narrator’s voice functions to draw the reader’s gaze to behold the outward signs of his penitent state. This is done by providing the necessary details which, even as David himself forgets about them, act to emphasize his material body. In preparation for psalm 130, for example, the narrator describes David as being lost in his thoughts and yet describes his posture. Consequently, we are provided with a representation of what inward rumination looks like: “And while he ponderd thes thinges in his hert, / His knee, his arme, his hand, susteind his chyn, / When he his song agayne thus did begynn” (661-3). Just as the body is mastered by Love in the first prologue, the body is mastered through prayer, and it becomes necessary to visualize the posture of penitence.
The prologue between Psalms 32 and 38 functions in the same way; the narrator remarks upon David’s silence after he finished his song: “Ryght so David that semid in that place / Marble ymage off singuler reuerence / Carffid in the rokk with Iyes and handes on high, / Made as by craft to plaine, to sobbe, to sygh” (306-09). Even as David falls silent, his prayer continues through the correlating image of his body. His uplifted thoughts are literally embodied in his “Iyes and handes on high.” The comparison of David’s body to a “marble ymage… carffid in the rokk” is disturbing, however, for though it is an “ymage off singuler reuerence,” it bears a dangerous similarity to graven and idolatrous images. The words “semid” and “made as by craft” also contribute to the note of artificiality in this scene, especially as Wyatt translates the original la man de l’arte as “craft”. Indeed, at this moment in the psalms, Wyatt’s David seems to resemble the marble images of saints that iconoclastic Reformists blamed Catholics for worshipping falsely. What connections can anything “made as by craft” have with genuine worship? Such was the Reformist cry against the aesthetic accoutrements of the Catholic Church. The representation of David’s penitence seems to safely negotiate iconoclastic anxieties because of the stability given to the sign of his body. It is an image, but it serves a didactic function by invoking recognizable gestures of penitence. Again, the reasoning behind the composition of place is helpful, since the Catholic view of images explained the images’ positive purpose in this way: “That we may call to remembraunce the manifolde examples of virtues, which were in the sainctes, whom they do represent.”22 The artifact of worship becomes acceptable when its purpose facilitates spirituality, a tenet that Wyatt’s prologue seems to follow in its concluding lines:

He then Inflamd with farr more hote affect
Of god then he was erst of Bersabe,
His lifft fote did on the yerth erect,
And just therby remaynth the tothr kne;
To his lifft side his wayght he doth direct.
Sure hope of helth, and harpe agayne takth he;
His hand, his tune, his mynd sowght his lay,
Wyche to the Lord with sobre voice did say. (317-24)

The detailed description of what someone who is “inflam’d” for God looks like provides a set of directions for how to compose the body, down to where the feet and knees should be placed.

Although such attention to David’s posture of prayer may seem trivial, it plays into the didactic program of the prologues. As mentioned above, such an emphasis on the bodily posture of prayer was not counterintuitive to early modern conceptualizations of the self. Indeed, belying our postmodern notions of the directionality of the relationship between the mind and body, the body was believed to influence emotions and not just to reflect them. As Zirka Filipczah points out in an essay on Renaissance poses, “The position and movements of the body loomed so important because they were believed to influence emotions, not just reveal them” (71). Because of the two-way directionality between outward form and inward posture, the body provided a legitimate means of verifying and even encouraging inward sincerity. As George Downname remarked regarding prayer, “Where he [the Lord] requireth the inward worship of the soul in prayer, as honorem facti, the honour of the deed, there also he requireth the outward of the body when it may be conveniently exercised, as honorem signi, the
honour of the signe.” Just as the body played an important part in David’s sin with Bathsheba, the body plays a similarly important role in David’s “far more hote affect / Of god,” as inwardness and desire acquire a physical dimension and the body becomes an acceptable and honorable sign.

In her work on the history of prayer in early modern England, Ramie Targoff writes about the importance of the body in worship precisely for these reasons. Targoff states, “There were no absolute divisions between sincerity and theatricality, inwardness and outwardness within the early modern English church” (4). Citing how Tyndale writes of bodily pleasure involved in true prayer in his Exposition of Matthew, Targoff argues that Tyndale’s work marks “the initial articulation in English Protestantism of an evaluative model that relies upon the external body for determining sincerity and hypocrisy at prayer” (9). The idea that the body acts as a physical barometer for how to measure sincerity in prayer seems to be at work in the prologues in Wyatt’s psalms. Whereas Targoff is interested in the rise of common prayer for Protestant England through a correlating justification of “bodily reverence,” I am interested in how the body functions as a measure of faith for individual prayer in Wyatt’s psalms. Indeed, Targoff makes clear that she does not regard Wyatt’s psalms to be a part of public devotion: “Wyatt’s taste for enjambment and parenthetical musings create a rhetorically as well as psychically complex petition that seems inherently unsuitable for congregational reiteration” (79). What Targoff notes in communal prayer seems to be an equally important measure of sincerity in Wyatt’s work, for even though translating the psalms mitigates the possibility for wrong worship, Wyatt’s need to foreground the body is a testament to how invisible worship needed its material aspect, both in common and
individual prayer. Wyatt’s David occupies the hidden space of the dark cave (or the prayer closet), and again and again, the narrator instructs us to “behold” the body in penitence—a set of instructions to enter the scene through a composition of body as well as through a composition of place.

A contemporary translation of St. Cyprian’s commentary on the Lord’s Prayer (1539) also stresses the importance of the worshipper’s body in prayer, stating that “divine eyes must be pleased both with the behaivour of the body, and manner of speche.” Cyprian alludes to the example of the publican and the Pharisee in Luke 18 in order to discuss the behavior of the body in prayer:

It behoueth the to praye to god inwardelye. But yet well beloved brethren, he that doth pray, shuld not forget, after what maner in the temple the publycane prayed with the pharisee, his eies not vnsemely lifted vp to heuen, nor his handes insolently stratched out, knocking his brest, and acknowlegynge his secrete & hydden synnes, lamentably desyred succour of goddis meecy.

Though St. Cyprian notes that prayer is primarily an inward operation, he references the publican and the signs of penitence exemplified in the passage. Likewise, Thomas Becon writes in his 1542 treatise on Basil’s prayer: “Nowe as concernyng the externall gesture in prayenge, as knelyng, knockyng on the brest, lyftynge vp of the handes. &c. in asmuch as they be indifferent, & we reade that they were vsed of Christ & many holy men in times past, they are not to be despised.”

The physical preparations in the prologues lead to the paraphrases of the psalms proper, and the narrator’s third-person voice gives way to David’s first-person prayers. In contrast to the relative stability of signs in the prologues—signs of genuine penitence
manifest through the narrator’s description of David’s body—the psalms proper exhibit an anxiety over the slipperiness of language. This becomes particularly evident in the penitential prayer *par excellence* in Scripture, Psalm 51, and it is important to examine Wyatt’s translation of this psalm in order to see how David’s words are construed in contrast to God’s words. As Hannibal Hamlin explains in his work on early modern psalm culture, Psalm 51 occupied a significant space in both public and private spaces in early modern society: the *Misere mei deus* played a central role in liturgy as well as in individual prayers during the sixteenth century and its recitation figured importantly in serving as a kind of verbal “proof” for genuine inward penitence. For example, it was a standard part of the execution ritual for prisoners to echo the words of biblical penitence. Moreover, the successful recitation of the first verse of Psalm 51 in Latin also served as legal evidence that one was a clergyman in court, which allowed the accused to take advantage of a legal loophole known as “benefit of clergy”. Indeed, in all the key spaces that make up a person’s life—religious, judicial, and even the threshold space of capital punishment—this penitential psalm played an important role in articulating an unseen sign of inwardness: piety, penitence, and purity.

Yet, if knowledge of Psalm 51 played a crucial role in early modern England, its stress on inwardness made it equally vulnerable to doubt—that is, the state of “a broken and a contrite heart” is one that stands beyond ocular proof. Wyatt’s translation of this highly-charged Davidic psalm shows him translating inwardness in tandem with the surrounding prologues, an act that ultimately stabilizes the slippery nature of language noted within the psalm itself. Critics have rightly noted that Wyatt drifts from Aretino’s prose version more and more freely with the progression of each psalm. By the time
Wyatt arrives at Psalm 51, Wyatt diverges from Aretino’s text in both the prologue to the psalm and in the psalm proper. The prologue to psalm 51 begins with an image of a pilgrim that Wyatt creates on his own:

Lik as the pilgryme that in a long way
Fayntyng for hete, provokyd by some wind
In some fresh shade lith downe at mydes off day,
So doth off David the weryd voice and mynd
Tak breth off syghes. (395-400)

Through the image of the fainting pilgrim, Wyatt emphasizes David’s weariness in “voice and mynd” and invites the reader to imagine the pilgrim’s physical distress. David’s state before prayer is conceived in terms of physical exhaustion, as Wyatt emphasizes the labor involved in prayer. In contrast to the outdoor images of “hete,” “wind,” and “fresh shaade” associated with the pilgrim, however, David’s dramatic situation is to experience their utter absence as he sits in the darkness of the cave. Since it provides an isolated space of confession, the cave offers an appropriate stage for the enactment of repentance. The prologue’s emphasis on David’s physical isolation in the cave known to “none but god” becomes a spiritual isolation in Psalm 51, as David declares to God, “To the alone, to the have I trespast, / Ffor none can mesure my fawte but thou alone” (416, 445-6). The culpability of David’s actions becomes solely measurable by God, which is stressed by the repetition of “the” and “thou”. The private voice of prayer, emphasized by the remote setting of the cave, is one that can only be heard by God. This acknowledgment of sin against God “alone” is followed by an affirmation of divine character, which is specifically related to the stability of divine
speech. David states, “Pardon thow than, / Wherby thow shalt kepe still thi word stable, / Thy justice pure and clene; by cawse that whan / I pardond ame, then forthwith Justly able, / Just I ame jugd by justice off thy grace” (451-55). The repetition of the word “justice” and the use of its various forms (justice, justly, jugd) in these lines form a linguistic counterpart to God’s “stable” word. Indeed, the witty play of language becomes a sign of human transgression. In contrast to divine stability is David’s sense of his instability as he declares about himself in the following line: “Ffor I my sellff, lo thing most unstable” (456). The use of the word “unstable” is Wyatt’s own addition for this verse and seems to point to the nature of sin as mutability. Moreover, his deliberate cross-reference back to God’s “word stable” defines David’s transgressions as a verbal offence, an instability in his words that measures the distance between divine and human speech and points to the imperfect nature of prayer itself. Perhaps appropriately, then, the “operation” that David exhorts God to perform near the end of the psalm is one that must start with his mouth, as he states, “Thow must, o lord, my lypps furst unlose” (494).

The typical movement from self-reproach to an affirmation of God’s character in the psalms takes on a specifically verbal aspect in Wyatt’s psalms, one that highlights the difference between the divine, stable word and the penitent’s own unstable words.

The oscillation between David’s outward motions in the prologues and his inward monologues in the psalms converge after Psalm 51. Although it prefaces psalm 102, the prologue following Psalm 51 is an extension of the prior psalm in that it records David’s reaction to the prayer he has just made. This prologue also continues the theme of verbal instability from Psalm 51, and provides a fascinating endnote to the dilemma of speech and mutability through its representation of David’s body. After uttering the famous
prayer of Psalm 51, David appears amazed at his own capacity to express divine truth. Like the prior prologue, this prologue is also largely independent from Aretino’s version, and uses direct speech for the first time in the work. The narrator remarks upon the profound nature of the just-uttered prayer, the “grettnes” of which astonishes the psalmist himself. David talks to himself in wonder: “I sinner, I, what have I sayd alas? / That goddess goodness wold within my song entrete, / Let me agayne consider and repete” (514-6). The repetition that follows is a silent one, and what follows is a fascinating moment in the poem where the “diepe secretes” of God are considered wordlessly by David:

And so he doth, but not exprest by word:
But in his hert he tornith and paysith
Ech word that erst his lypps might forth afford.
He poyntes, he pawsith, he wonders, he praysyth
The marcy that hydes off justice the swourd,
The justice that so his promesse complysyth,
For his wordes sake to worthless desert,
That gratis his graces to men doth depert. (517-524)

There is no access to how David “tornith and paysith / Ech word,” except through the unconscious pantomiming that ensues. The anxiety over his own verbal instability is mitigated by this second attempt at considering God’s “diepe secretes,” but this is an act that is only recognizable to the reader in terms of David’s outward actions: “He poyntes, he pawsith, he wonders, he praysyth.” This re-enactment of the previous psalm becomes embodied prayer and, as his prayer attains complete invisibility, the instability attributed
to human language is avoided altogether in his inward repetition of the previous psalm. The outward deed as a sign of genuine piety becomes acceptable, as the already-uttered prayer converges with David’s bodily signs of prayer.

CONCLUSION

As Stephen Greenblatt has noted, all translation is an act of interpretation. In translating the seven penitential psalms, Wyatt interprets the activity of prayer as communication whose inwardness must also be an embodied one. The emphasis he places on David’s material surroundings and physical body paints a portrait of prayer whose inwardness is not purely a matter of invisible prayer, for the prologues and the psalms engage in dialogue with one another to create an acceptable inwardness. Even when the prayer is stationed within the most revered canon of scriptural prayers, the “unstable” words of the penitent need to be accompanied by physical signs that signify repentance to the outward eye. The prerequisite for inwardness—the acknowledgment that there can be a discrepancy between one’s inner and outer actions—is formulated in Judeo-Christianity as a distrust of oneself and, in particular, of one’s spoken words. For this reason, only the divine word is imagined as completely free from the epistemological uncertainties surrounding the language of prayer. The linguistic gap that formed the sense of “tragic loss” for humanist imitative endeavors had grappled with the unstable nature of words; in religious imitative endeavors, the same awareness of verbal instability combines with the foregrounded body to produce subjectivity. Perhaps appropriately, then, Wyatt’s dangerous combination of the words “tourne” and “translate” in Psalm 102 are attributed to God, as the change implicit in both of these words are safely allowable within the stable context of divine translation. David addresses divine sovereignty by
stating near the end of psalm 102, “Tourne, and translate, and thei in worth it tak” (624).
The turning here is not the fickle turning of fortune or hap or word to which man is so susceptible, but the divine and natural turning of earthly things: “But thou thy self the self remaynist well / That thou wast erst, and shalt thi yeres extend” (625-6).

The ideas brought forth in this chapter—the stable sign of the body and the problems of representing authentic devotion—form important underpinnings for the remainder of this study. The rest of this dissertation continues to explore the performative nature of the body hinted in this chapter; namely, the spectacles of bodies in pain in John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments and the pleasurable (yet highly decried) spectacles of performing bodies on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. If Wyatt’s David unwittingly plays a didactic role through the dramatic elements of the work’s prologues, the performing bodies in the subsequent chapters are presented with a kind of conscious didacticism that draws upon contemporary religious polemics. The movement from lyric to works such as Acts and Monuments, Hamlet, and The Winter’s Tale is also one in which I hope to show the relevance of imitatio in its various aspects. The “private” concerns of the lyric psalms make up the matter of concern in the “public” domains of Smithfield and the stage.
INTRODUCTION

Whereas the previous chapter identified an embodied brand of textual *imitatio* in Sir Thomas Wyatt’s secular and religious works, this chapter investigates the devotional paradigm of *imitatio Christi* in John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, touching matters of the Church* (1563 and subsequent editions). Perhaps more than any other literary category, the genre of martyrology provides a natural connection to the devotional concept of *imitatio Christi*. The lives of the martyrs offer models for imitation while testifying to the reality of the miracles promised in Scripture. In the pages of hagiography and martyrology, the term “imitate” takes on an explicitly emulative connotation and, moreover, operates as an implicit function of the genre. As James Truman notes in his work on Reformation martyrology, “The story of the martyrs’ suffering is designed to testify to the true faith and advocates its adoption; it is thus crucial to Foxe’s project that his text itself inspires imitation beyond itself” (56).

Moving from textual *imitatio* to the devotional ideal *imitatio Christi*, this chapter examines the strategy of emulative imitation that *The Book of Martyrs* (as it was popularly known) employs. Although it was commonplace to praise the acts of the martyrs, Foxe’s work is unique in that it emphasizes the attainability of martyrdom. He accomplishes this through a series of devices: the gender and class-crossing accounts of the martyrs; the inclusion of tactile details; and an emphasis of the body in pain. While I touch upon the first two points, I focus especially on this last strategic element as a way
to account for why *imitatio Christi* takes on such strikingly vibrant aspects in Foxe’s work. When Foxe asks the general reader, “They offered theyr bodies willing… And is it so great a matter then for our part, to mortifie our flesh, with all the members therof?” it is clear that he considers the community of believers to be forged through the common experience of suffering—a suffering that is not mere abstraction, but embodied in flesh and blood (16). Foxe deploys similar semiotics with important words such as “members” in his work; that is, “members” functions equally in its corporeal and communal senses in *The Book of Martyrs*, for the marks of one’s membership in the “true church” are born, literally, on one’s members. Although much of Foxe’s argumentation includes polemical disputes that seek to shut out a *copia* of meanings to the words, “This is my body,” Foxe as an editor exploits the polysemous nature of the body in its corporeal and communal sensibilities.

Unlike Elaine Scarry’s theory of the dissolution of the self through the suffering body, the description of the body in pain serves to authenticate the martyr’s inclusion in the “true” church, and is essential to his/her religious integrity. Various critics note the graphic descriptions of martyrdoms in *The Book of Martyrs*. Helen C. White observes, for example, that for Foxe, “Literally nothing is too terrible to tell; indeed, it is precisely in the handling of the horrible that his extraordinary gifts are most powerfully revealed.” John R. Knott notes that Foxe’s “task, as martyrologist, was to persuade his readers that his ‘saints’ did indeed die mildly, with spiritual rejoicing, while experiencing horrific torments” (722). I would add to this that Foxe’s task was to also persuade the reader that anyone was eligible for martyrdom. In this way, while critics such as Mark Breitenberg have discussed the textualizing process of “the word made flesh” in Foxe’s Protestant
martyrology, I am interested in examining the material aspect of faith and the peculiar way in which truth is “bodied forth” in this work. How does Foxe’s work exhibit a material faith, since most of the work is devoted to denouncing the gross materiality of the Catholic doctrine of presence? If the vocabulary of idolatrous images and empty presence permeate this work, in what capacity does the human body serve the Protestant agenda?

The frontispiece for the second edition of *The Book of Martyrs* provides a visual clue to such questions; divided in half, one side represents the “true” Reformed church, and the other the false church of Roman Catholicism. The panel with the lifted host of the mass is offset with the opposing panel of the burning bodies of saints—a sacramental switch that, as Janel Mueller has pointed out, shifts “transubstantiation from the domain of miracle to that of natural law, where the entire embodied experience of human beings unfolds” (171). Mueller’s essay on the construction of selfhood in Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* identifies the kind of conflation that occurs between Protestant and Catholic ideas about the real presence, and points to the liminality of the body that informs my own thoughts about the Eucharistic debate. Mueller suggests that the Protestant rejection of the real presence is, in effect, compensated by the “burnt offerings” of the Marian martyrs. Although the Reformists resisted the doctrine of transubstantiation, the bodies of the martyrs, in a sense, “filled” the gap left by the elevated host.

Building on Mueller’s analysis, I propose that Foxe identifies the suffering Protestant body as an inviolate sign of religious truth—a connection that further destabilizes the false sign of the Catholic host, and also blurs the traditional binary between Protestant-word and Catholic-image. While critics have recognized the importance of
Foxe’s work to Protestant Reformation history (indeed, Patrick Collinson goes so far as to write, “an account of the Protestant Nation without Foxe is indeed Hamlet without the Prince”), additional study needs to be done on how Protestant iconoclasm and images interact in The Book of Martyrs. Again, a consideration of semiotics is useful. In a work that scrutinizes the gap between res and verba through the debate over the “real presence,” Foxe invests the bodies of the martyrs with surprising stability. Indeed, even though Foxe fulfilled his Protestant agenda by emphasizing the bodies of the martyrs, it is clear that this reliance on material, visible signs did not sit uneasily with him. I propose that this strategy is in response to the particularly linguistic texture of the Eucharistic debate itself, and that in a world of fallen signs and philological uncertainty, the believer’s body, and specifically, his/her performance at the stake, provided an inviolate sign of who belonged to the “true” church. In contrast to the dubious sign of the Eucharist, the suffering body—in its perceived connection to the incarnate Christ and its New Testament status as a temple of God—was a sign of the new covenant of faith that the English Protestant Church was, even then, building up.

The emphasis on the corporeal dimensions of martyrdom is not only motivated by the limits of language, but serves to highlight the futility of language in the hands of Catholics. Indeed, the performance of piety frequently operates as a Protestant strategy against the “cavelling” Catholics. Though impressive, the verbal virtuosity of the martyrs pales in comparison to their embodied argument, for the logos of the disputations is superseded by the ethos of their martyrdom. This becomes particularly evident in the cases of the martyrs John Hooper and Thomas Cranmer, whose suffering bodies are highlighted and whose bodily performances are shown overtaking their voices as the
primary vehicle of testifying to the truth. Their cases make clear the ironic fact that in a work that records argument after argument for and against the notion of transubstantiation, Protestant proof for truth is found not just in the examination room, but at the sites of the burnings. If, as Breitenberg suggests, *The Book of Martyrs* provides a kind of conduct book for the Protestant community to follow, the bodily behavior of the martyrs was also crucial for the formation of that community (401-402).

Using select accounts of Henrician and Marian martyrdoms, I trace the notion that the preacher and martyr John Bradford utters during his examination: namely, that “faith is more than man can utter” (7.180). This definition of faith shapes the performances of the martyrs, and mediates the epistemological anxieties wrought by the Eucharistic controversy. After examining specific accounts, the rest of the chapter considers the dramatic aspect of Foxe’s work and how the legacy of the true church is enabled through the spectacle of the martyrs. The focus also turns onto those who witness the burnings of the martyrs. By doing so, the last portion of the chapter offers a way to look ahead to the kind of transformative *imitatio* that will take center stage in the next chapters. In ways that anticipate the kind of competition that antitheatricalists would decry later on in the century, the spectacle of the martyrs’ deaths overshadowed the execution sermons of the Catholic priests.

**John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments**

Perhaps one of the most significant accomplishments of Foxe’s monumental work is that it promoted and created the fantasy of English Protestantism as part of a grand, teleological narrative of the one true church. While living away from England during the reign of Queen Mary, Foxe collected documents that would eventually end up in *Acts and
Monuments. Filled with a cornucopia of “anecdotes, autobiographical memoirs, legal examinations, sermons, ballads, beast fables, letters, tales, romanticized adventure narratives,” Foxe’s work knit together divergent sources and was dedicated to the new queen, in whom he saw the fulfillment of God’s divine plan for England. As various Foxean critics have noted, through its copia of content, Acts and Monuments demonstrates notions of authorship that render modern ideas of “textual integrity” immaterial. Although ostensibly addressed to Queen Elizabeth, a paragon of learning in his eyes, Foxe’s decision to write in the vernacular also shows whom he had in mind as his true audience was: the general populace. In his 1583 prefatory letter to Elizabeth, Foxe describes the ignorant mass in the following way:

Who, as they haue bene long led in ignoraunce, and wrapt in blindenesse for lacke specially of Gods word, and partly also for wanting the light of history, pity I thought but that such should be helped, their ignoraunce relieued, and simplicity instructed.

As I discuss in greater detail later, Foxe’s work fulfills the didactic criteria of traditional martyrologies by instructing the reader in the true history of the church and by teaching the reader to properly respond to scenes of martyrdom. Through eliciting sympathy and admiration from his readers, Foxe hoped to create a community of readers and believers that would emulate the lives of the martyrs in his text. It is through such imitation that the Protestant community would be replicated and expanded.

Foxe’s prose style is heavily influenced by the urgency of living in “these dangerous times,” and the belief that the history of the English people enacts the providential history of a clash between good and evil. Consequently, Foxe is able to
turn the argument of tradition (if the Catholic church is false, why would God have allowed it to exist) against the papists, since the Roman Catholic Church is the predicted false church of scripture. Protestant history implicitly answers the question of authorized lineage, which interrogators frequently phrase as, “Where was this Church and religion forty years ago, before Luther’s time?” Instead of a new religion possessing potentially heretical roots, Foxe presents the Protestant martyrs within an unbreached continuum of martyrs. Closely related to his eschatological history is Foxe’s agenda to train the reader to distinguish between true and false religions. In his 1583 edition’s preface to the general reader, Foxe writes:

Now for as much as the true Church of God goeth not lightly alone, but is accompanied, wyth some other Church or Chappel of the deuill to deface and maligne the same, necessary it is therfore the difference betweene them to be sene, and the descent of the right Churche to be described from the Apostles tyme.

(11)

Because of the troubling phenomenon of doubles in the history of the Church, Foxe is determined to make the “difference betweene them to be sene.” More than doctrine, it is the actions of these martyrs that would mark the “difference” between the true and false church.

Although Foxe works to present a continuous line of legitimate martyrs, his work is nonetheless “modern” in the sense that his accounts do not attempt to merge the historical distance (and difference) between the primitive and the present church. In this way, Foxe’s work distinguishes itself from Catholic predecessors such as The Golden Legend. As Knott notes, “He collapsed the distance that medieval hagiography tends to
open up between the saint and the ordinary human” so that anyone could “play” the role of a martyr (729). I suggest that the humanness becomes signified through the human body in Foxe’s work; indeed, the grand teleology underlying the phrase “true religion” is mingled with homely details of the martyrs as well as the supernatural accounts of their perseverance. Some involve, for example, the earthy effects of prison hygiene; part of Alice Benden’s sufferings is described as having spent nine weeks in the same clothes in her jail cell, “whereby she became at the last a most piteous and loathsome creature to behold” (8.327). Other details are slyly humorous, as Foxe reports Rowland Taylor’s relief that he should burn rather than hang: “And, there, hanging by the hands… quoth he, ‘What a notable sway should I give if I were hanged’ meaning for that he was a corpulent and big man” (6.700). The inclusion of these features has the effect of making the martyrs seem more real and, ultimately, more imitable. They are saintly, but their saintliness is something that can be found on earth. While their place in Foxe’s compilation of martyrs points to their saintliness, Foxe also grounds his stories of such Protestant heroism in the material world.

While diverse in class and gender, the martyrs found in Foxe’s accounts bear similarities that work to smooth out differences. Throughout Foxe’s compilation of stories, the primary characteristic of a martyr remains the same: fortitude in face of extreme pain. The often grisly details of their suffering are captured through the description of what happens to the human body when it is exposed to extreme heat—the cracking and popping of sinews, the scorching of hair—and the martyrs’ supernatural endurance is underscored through the descriptions of their joy in face of pain. At the same time, because the martyrs themselves are presented as having doubt over their
ability to perform piously at the stake, their “supernatural” endurance is depicted as human. In this way, the body in pain serves a pivotal role in Foxe’s didactic agenda of evangelism and imitation; that is, the fortitude of the martyrs remind the reader of divine sustainment. At the same time, the details of the body in pain localize the supernatural event as something that can be imitated. Much like the body’s ability to trigger locality and presentness in Wyatt’s works, the recent memories of the century’s religious turmoil made the martyrs’ bodies more movingly effective.

**THE EUCHARISTIC DEBATE**

The cases of the Tudor martyrs make clear the central position of the Eucharistic debate. Before diving into individual accounts in Foxe’s work, it is necessary to obtain a clearer sense of the language and logic of the debate. As the primary cause of imprisonment and argument, the Eucharistic controversy was a semiotic and religious crisis that touched upon the interpretation of the words, “This is my body.” Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out how the Eucharist and the problems of “leftovers” equipped Protestants with much ammunition to protest the logic of transubstantiation. In his essay, “The Mousetrap,” Greenblatt notes: “The consecrated bread had been transformed by the touch of the transcendent, but its material accidents stubbornly persisted and were unnervingly subject to the disgraces to which all matter is vulnerable” (147). By the logic of “real presence,” anyone who consumed the host—whether a person or a mouse—received the body of Christ.

Whereas the Catholics blamed the Protestants of draining the host of sacred properties through their insistence on figurative presence, the Protestants argued that the incarnational certitude of Christ’s human and historical body could not allow his body to
be in multiple places at once. It is interesting that, despite the level of polemical
vehemency, both sides of the debate seized upon the materiality of Christ’s body as their
baseline of argument. Indeed, the historical and human nature of Christ serves as a
pivotal argumentative tool in the hands of Protestant polemicists; what becomes apparent
in arguments against the real presence is the centrality of Christ’s physical body in the
midst of rejecting gross materialist theology. As John Phillpot, Archdeacon of
Winchester and one of the martyrs in Foxe’s *The Book of Martyrs*, states:

> But bodily to be present, and bodily to be absent; to be on earth, and to be in
> heaven, and all at one present time; be things contrary to the nature of a human
> body: ergo, it cannot be said of the human body of Christ, that the selfsame body
> is both in heaven, and also in earth at one instant, either visibly or invisibly.
> (6.408)

Reformists rejected the gross materiality of the doctrine of real presence, yet they also
protested against it because it did not allow Christ’s body to be physical *enough*—that is,
subject to natural laws being true “to the nature of a human body.”

John Bradford, one of the notable martyrs in Foxe’s work, offers a similar
argument against the doctrine of real presence in his *Two Notable Sermons* (1574).
Bradford makes a connection between the material reality of Christ (his human nature)
and the figurative meaning of the Lord’s Supper in the second sermon. He states that by
believing in the doctrine of transubstantiation, “the propertye of the humane nature of
Christ is denied,” since “it is not of the humane nature, but of the deuine nature to be in
many places at once.” That is, the *particular* “real presence” of Christ is authenticated
through the denial of *general* “real presence.” If believers insist on the verity of the
doctrine of real presence, they perform the heresy of denying the human aspect of Christ’s identity.

The importance attached to the incarnational aspect of Christ provides a way to understand the insistent corporeality of Foxe’s martyrs, then, since the primary sign of the humanity of Christ was physical pain. As Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out in her “answer” to Leo Steinberg, it is the centrality of suffering rather than sexuality that defined what it meant to be human for the late medieval subject. Although Bynum focuses mainly on late medieval thought, the important connection between Christ’s humanity and suffering remained vibrant in the sixteenth century. While it is plain that the martyrs are imitating Christ and previous martyrs, their suffering bodies become especially suitable for imitating Christ. The perception of Christ’s life as incarnational and historical added to the tangible nature of faith; the martyred bodies and their connection to Christ’s humanity offer another way to understand how the human body provides a “middle” ground between the traditional binary between Protestant-word and Catholic-image.

I see this desire for materiality and physicality manifesting itself in the way that scriptural allusions and metaphors take on literal meanings in *Acts and Monuments* and other Protestant works. That is, part of the devotional concept of *imitatio Christi* for Protestants seems to require a kind of literalization of figurative concepts found in scripture. For example, Bradford’s *Two Notable Sermons* includes this idea about what will happen to those who repent: “That as with his eyes, toung, handes feete &c he hath displeased God, doing his own wyl; euen so now with the same eyes, toung, eares handes, feete, &c he may displease his own selfe, and do Gods wyll.” Bradford imagines
the abstract concept of repentance in embodied ways: the many members with which one had displeased God become an avenue through which one can now please God. In the cases below (especially Cranmer’s), I continue to consider the materiality of faith that insists on literal renderings of images.

THE CASE OF JOHN HOOPER

The account of John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, serves as a representative sample of the embodiment of religious truth in Foxe’s work. As in the other accounts, the “singular virtues” of Master Hooper are related with much reverence. Like others, Hooper is shown displaying remarkable dignity and calm at the stake, and is seen echoing the scriptural martyrs as he cries, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit!” Hooper’s stoicism is perhaps all the more amazing due to the gruesome circumstances of his death. We learn through Foxe that multiple fires had to be lit because of the cold and wind, which kept the blaze from wholly lighting. The protracted length of his sufferings (three quarters of an hour) is something that Foxe makes certain to emphasize after describing his death, as if to remind the reader of Hooper’s legitimacy. Due to the flames, Hooper soon loses the ability to speak. Foxe describes the scene in the following way:

But when he was black in the mouth and his tongue swollen, that he could not speak, yet his lips went till they were shrunk to the gums: and he knocked his breast with his hands, until one of his arms fell off, and then knocked still with the other, what time the fat, water, and blood, dropped out at his fingers’ ends, until by renewing of the fire his strength was gone, and his hand did cleave fast, in knocking, to the iron upon his breast. So immediately, bowing forwards, he yielded up his spirit. (6.658)
Foxe’s description is clinically descriptive, even detached, and his own comments do not intrude upon the scene. Much like the narrator in Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalms*, he is content to let Hooper’s body speak for itself, and we are led to witness a similar scene of devotional gestures that authenticate the moment.

Though Hooper’s account may seem unique in the extensive amount of graphic details offered to the reader, it is not uncommon in *Acts and Monuments* to find Foxe providing unflinchingly accurate portrayals of what happens to the human body when it is exposed to fire: the skin pops and bursts with blood and water; the lips shrink to the gums. What is perhaps most notable about Hooper’s case (a fact which Foxe highlights) is the description of his insistence on still “speaking” even after his capacity to speak is gone. Hooper accomplishes this through the activity of knocking at his breast, a dominant image in this scene through which Hooper communicates control in the midst of immolation and confirms his piety. Whereas the loss of his voice could be seen as a sign of Hooper’s deterioration, his gestures serve to strengthen his status as a martyr and points to the kind of embodied *imitatio* hinted at in the earlier chapter. Hooper’s religious integrity is closely tied to the performance of his body, which, in its suffering, bypasses any hint of hypocrisy.

The knocking of the breast invokes the traditional posture of penitence found in Luke 18, a scriptural place in which the outward actions of the sincere publican are praised above the showy and smug prayers of the pharisee. While the *locus classicus* for authentic prayer, Matthew 6, emphasizes elements of hiddenness and secrecy, the story of the repentant publican was also widely recognized and one that Hooper could invoke and imitate. Sermons on prayer evoke the story of the publican and Pharisee, and praise the
publican for his humble posture that communicate more clearly with God. The evocation of this moment in scripture where the *gestures* of penitence speak more loudly than the self-satisfied words of the Pharisee seem appropriate to the scene of Hooper’s execution, especially in light of the fact that Protestant executions were preceded by sermons. Although accused of heresy by the sermonizing priest, Foxe infuses this moment of immolation with scriptural authority that allows Hooper’s performance to physically deny the charge of heresy and, consequently, to subvert the message of the Catholic authorities.

It must be acknowledged, of course, that what I allude to as Hooper’s “performance” at the stake arose from circumstances that were beyond his control, and is not a performance in the playing sense. However, circumstances necessitated his actions, and they involved a desire for communication, since a common tactic deployed against the Protestant martyrs took the shape of enforced silence. Although some of the martyrs spoke until their capacity for speech was gone, the enforcement of silence often occurred even before they suffered from the flames. Silence was often implemented, for example, by having the martyrs wear close-fitting hoods to their execution sites. As the account of Rowland Taylor’s martyrdom details, this was done “wherefore [the Catholics] feared lest, if the people should have heard them speak, or have seen them, they might have been much more strengthened by their godly exhortations, to stand steadfast in God’s word, and to fly the superstitions and idolatries of the papacy” (6.695). Many martyrs were self-consciously aware of what was at stake during their hour of death, and in this way, Hooper’s insistent bodily communication was aimed at evangelizing the earthly audience.
In light of this didactic motivation, it is at first surprising to find that the spectacular suffering body should be placed in the middle of Hooper’s account rather than serving as a culminating end piece. Rather than ending the narrative with the description of Hooper’s death, what closes the account are Hooper’s letters to various people. The odd arrangement of material, however, points to rather than detracts from Foxe’s editorial sense. This becomes apparent when looking at the purpose of the letters following the grisly account of Hooper’s death: exhortation. Coming at the heels of Hooper’s martyrdom, these letters gain a kind of posthumous authority, since Hooper’s words of advice attain greater authority through his spectacular death. Foxe seems to fully recognize the rich potential of this moment, since he exhorts the readers to read them as a remembrance unto Hooper. They are “most fruitful and worthy to be read, especially in these dangerous days, of all true Christians, who, by true mortification, seek to serve and follow the Lord” (6.662).

It seems clear, too, that these letters were written for public viewing, even if addressed to private persons such as family members. As if in agreement with his future editor, Hooper’s letters testify to a similar awareness of the importance of embodied *imitatio* as an authorizing technique. In his letter to “relievers and helpers in the city of London,” for example, Hooper thanks various people in London for their provision of material relief during his time in prison. After thanking them, he encourages them to willingly suffer and to live for a heavenly reward. The tenuous reality of Hooper’s present situation clearly affects his words of advice to fellow believers, and what stands out in his instructions of proper devotion is his emphasis on the outward body. As if imagining his imminent immolation, Hooper writes of using “both your inward spirits
and your outward bodies” to behave properly to God, for there cannot be division between the two. He writes:

Therefore, dear brethren, pray to the heavenly Father, that as he spared not the soul nor the body of his dearly beloved Son, but applied both of them with extreme pain, to work our salvation both of body and soul; so he will give us all grace to apply our bodies and souls to be servants unto him: for doubtless he requireth as well the one as the other, and cannot be miscontented with the one, and well pleased with the other. Either he hateth both, or loveth both; he divideth not his love to one, and his hatred to the other. Let not us therefore, good brethren, divide ourselves, and say our souls serve him, whatsoever our bodies do to the contrary for civil order and policy. (6.671)

Here, Hooper draws upon the logic of reciprocation: since God “spared not the soul nor the body of his dearly beloved Son,” so believers also ought not to be divided in serving God with soul and body. It is, in essence, the logic of imitation and one that Foxe himself employs again and again through the discrete narratives of martyrdom. As Hooper denounces the practice of casuistry as a division of selfhood, one can see him thinking about his future imitatio Christi, and his anticipation of martyrdom makes the visibility of inner and outer conformity of faith all the more important.

THE CASE OF THOMAS CRANMER

Another striking example of embodied devotion can be found in the account of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his martyrdom during the Marian regime. Although the description of his life and death match the typical template found in Foxe’s work—a virtuous life, calling to religion, and martyrdom—the account of
Cranmer’s martyrdom differs in a crucial way: unlike the others, he succumbed to the temptation of recanting his Protestant beliefs. Foxe describes how after almost three years in prison, the papists through “all crafty practices and allurements they might devise” tried to persuade Cranmer to recant (8.80). Although Foxe supplies much dramatic energy to the description of the constant urging that Cranmer was under, he stops at attributing a fixed reason for the Archbishop’s recantation: “It might be supposed that it was done for the hope of life, and better days to come: but, as we may since perceive by the letter of his sent to a lawyer, the most cause why… was that he would make an end of Marcus Antonius, which he had already begun” (8.81). Though Foxe remains ultimately ambivalent regarding the real reason for Cranmer’s recantation, he is certain about its meaning: “But so it pleaseth God, that so great virtues in this archbishop should not be had in too much admiration of us without some blemish… that in him should appear an example of man’s weak imbecility” (8.81-2). The archbishop, like all of the martyrs in Acts and Monuments, communicated lessons through exemplification.

While the performative aspects of Hooper knocking at his breast are ambivalent, Cranmer’s actions at the stake seem self-consciously coded as a performance. That is, the account of Cranmer’s martyrdom makes clear the fact that he calibrates his performance at the stake in direct reaction to his earlier recantations, and he concentrates especially upon the “guilty” member of his body: his hand. As Cranmer announces to the people, the hand that signed the false recantations would be the first thing to burn at the stake. While Cranmer’s actions differentiate him from other martyrs, what I want to point out in the dramatic nature and logic of Cranmer’s determined deed is a strange reversal of the traditional semiotic stance of Protestantism. Cranmer’s insistence on
allowing his “guilty” hand to burn first materializes Christ’s figurative language about sin: “Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foote cause thee to offend, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life, halt, or maimed, then hauing two hands, or two feete, to be cast into euerlasting fire” (Matthew 18:8). Cranmer’s confession of his cowardice focuses upon the hand that signed the false recantation, and provides a material focus for his act of repentance. It also allows him to put distance between himself and his guilty act. He states, “And forasmuch as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished therefor; for, may I come to the fire, it shall be first burned” (8.88). By choosing to let his hand burn first and announcing this decision to the people around him, Cranmer visibly purges the guilt of his earlier recantation before the eyes of witnesses.

Although initially grouped with Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley as an ardent attacker of the doctrine of transubstantiation, Cranmer would eventually commit the kind of casuistry that Hooper denounced by signing a letter of recantation. It was a recantation that the Catholics triumphantly circulated during Queen Mary’s reign, and due to the notoriety of Cranmer’s actions, Foxe needed to treat his re-instatement carefully. I suggest that the reason why both Foxe and Cranmer invest heavily in the performance at the stake is because the integrity of Cranmer’s words had become suspect. Consequently, his behavior and visage received great attention. Foxe reports the Archbishop’s behavior during the execution sermon in this way: “Cranmer in all this mean time, with what great grief of mind he stood hearing this sermon, the outward shews of his body and countenance did better express, than any man can declare” (8.86). Foxe emphasizes the truthful sign of Cranmer’s body, and attributes greater eloquence to his bodily expression
that what “any man can declare.” The stable sign of the body is further emphasized when Foxe later states that in Cranmer, “A man might have seen the very image and shape of perfect sorrow lively in him expressed” (8.86).

After the funeral sermon and Cranmer’s surprising disavowal of his former recantation, the archbishop is reported to be tied to the stake. The description of Cranmer’s death forms one of the more memorable scenes in *The Book of Martyrs*:

> And when the wood was kindled, and the fire began to burn near him, stretching out his arm, he put his right hand into the flame, which he held so steadfast and immovable (saving that once with the same hand he wiped his face), that all men might see his hand burned before his body was touched. His body did so abide the burning of the flame with such constancy and steadfastness, that standing always in one place without moving his body, he seemed to move no more than the stake to which he was bound. (8.90)

The dominant image here is not immolation, but immovability, for Cranmer refuses to be moved by pain. Like the other martyrs in Foxe’s work, Cranmer is “unmoved” by the effects of the fire. Significantly, the language used to describe Cranmer’s literal steadfastness here blurs with a figurative immovability of faith, and the body is invested with a stability that can no longer be found in his words. Indeed, the only discernible movement in this still scene is the movement of his guilty appendage, which he extends into the flame so that it may burn first. In doing so, Cranmer insured that he visibly kept his word.
THE SEMIOTICS OF ANNE ASKEW

What becomes apparent in accounts like Cranmer’s is the kind of counterintuitive semiotics deployed by Protestant martyrs. Whereas the Marian martyrs insist on the figurative reading of the words, “This is my body,” in the examination room, martyrs like Cranmer ask for both a figurative and literal interpretation of his body. In light of the way in which words like “members” operate in Foxe’s work, I turn our attention to the semiotics employed by another Reformation martyr, Anne Askew. I argue that unlike many of the martyr accounts in Foxe, Askew’s recording of her suffering body does not partake in the kind of body-as-proof semiotics. This becomes especially apparent when comparing her account and the comments made by her editor, John Bale. Although both Askew and Bale use the term “weak” to describe her character, for example, it is evident through the context in which it is used that Askew uses this strategically as a figurative weakness; for her editors, however, Askew’s weakness is primarily physical in nature. While she deploys her weakness as a sign, her editors insist on its real presence.

A Protestant convert from Lincolnshire, Askew was imprisoned twice in March 1545 and June 1546, and was sentenced to death by fire at the age of 25. She recorded her examinations and smuggled the manuscript out of prison through her maidservant. In the year after her death, the Protestant exile and minister, John Bale, published her work alongside his own extensive commentary. Askew’s narrative would later become a part of Foxe’s Acts and Monuments, which helped establish her as a popular figure of Protestant martyrdom well beyond the sixteenth century.10 Despite the critical prejudice against Bale and a general preference for Foxe—the latter having been deemed to present a “purer” presentation of Askew’s voice—it is clear that both men actively edited
Askew’s manuscript. Although recent interest in recovering early modern women writers has placed a premium on locating Askew’s “voice,” the edited nature of her work makes it difficult to locate such a clear-cut version of her selfhood. While it is true that Foxe’s edition is less fragmented than Bale’s edition, I agree with Thomas Freeman and Sarah Wall’s opinion that, “precisely speaking, [Askew’s Examinations] does not exist” (1168). That is, the search for an “authentic” narrative voice becomes destabilized within the circumstances surrounding the production of Examinations: Askew’s work is fundamentally an edited work and, as such, needs to be considered in its entirety. For these reasons, I refer to both Bale and Foxe’s editions in my discussion of Askew’s narrative.

What, then, should we make note of when reading this striking narrative? The editorial strategies involved in the presentation of Askew’s work provide a clue, for both Bale and Foxe emphasize similar aspects within Askew’s narrative: her physical vulnerability. Bale introduces Askew as “a gentylwoman verye yonge, dayntye, and tender” and places Askew within a recognizable genealogy of female martyrs. He describes their similarities in this way: “Blandina was yonge and tender. So was Anne Askewe also. But that which was frayle of nature in them both, Christ made most stronge by hys grace” (10). Through such prefatorial comparisons as well as editorial insertions throughout the course of Askew’s narrative, Bale continually foregrounds the weakness of Askew’s female body, and this strategy allows him to emphasize the intervention of divine grace. While Bale draws parallels between Askew and a prior female martyr, however, Askew subscribes to a more general scriptural martyr and compares herself to Stephen or Job from Scripture.
The distinction between Askew’s editors and her own voice becomes most pronounced when referencing the treatment of her suffering body. Indeed, Bale almost gleefully elucidates upon her experience on the rack and points out the barbarity of her torturers, Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and Richard Rich, in the latter examination. In his usually scathing prose, Bale states: “Marke here an example most wonderfull, and se how madlye in their ragynge furyes, men forget themselves and lose their ryght wittes now a days” (128). Bale interprets their involvement in Askew’s torture as a sure sign of their identity as “false christians,” and he validates his conclusions through the material evidence provided through Askew’s body in pain. He builds his case in this way:

Where could be seane a more clere and open experyment of Christes dere membre, than in her myghtye sufferynges? Lyke a lambe she laye styll without noyse of cryenge, and suffered your uttermost vyolence, tyll the synnowes of her armes were broken, and the strynges of her eys peryshed in her heade. Ryght farre doth it passe the strength of a yonge, tendre, weake, and sycke woman (as she was at that tyme to your more confusyon) to abyde so vyolent handelynge, yea, or yet of the strongest man that lyveth. (129)

Unlike her torturers, Askew is a “dere membre” of Christ’s true church and her membership is made most clear through her “myghtye sufferynges”. Bale alludes to Askew’s Christ-like behavior by comparing her to a lamb and, again, references her feminine tenderness with the list of adjectives “younge, tendre, weake, and sycke”.

Foxe’s version shapes Askew’s narrative through less noticeable ways, yet a familiar centering of her body is evident in his versions of her work. While he does not attach the kind of elaborate “elucidation” that Bale does to his presentation of Askew’s
narrative, Foxe formulates her experiences in similar ways. This becomes apparent through his Latin epitaph on Askew in the *Rerum*. Appended to her narrative, this poem reveals an interpretation of her sufferings akin to Bale’s in that it focuses on her body in pain. The epitaph reads:

Lictor incaestis manibus cruente,
Membra quid frustra eculeis fatigas,
Vique uirtutem laceras puellae
Te melioris?¹³

By using the word *puella*, Foxe emphasizes the girlish nature of the body on the rack—another version of Bale’s favored adjectives, “yonge and tender”—and asks the reason for the virtuous girl’s sufferings. The lurid description of her limbs and bones being broken and severed in a later stanza culminates in the image of the one thing that is left intact—her tongue—as he writes: “Sola enim nullis potuit moueri / Lingua rupturis”¹⁴ (21-22). Perhaps appropriately, the traditional sign of female fault—the too-active tongue—is left intact and becomes a sign of Askew’s heroism.

Although the editors foreground the female suffering body in the *Examinations*, Askew’s narrative is one that challenges the emphasis on her frail body. Indeed, Askew remains largely silent over her experience on the rack. There is only one reference to her physical torture. In the latter examination, she records her experience on the rack in the following way:

Then they ded put me on the racke, bycause I confessed no ladyes or gentylwomen to be of my opynyon, and thereon they kepte me a longe tyme.
And bycause I laye still and ded not crye, my lorde Chauncellour and master Ryche, toke peynes to racke me their owne handes, tyll I was nygh dead. (127)

With a chilling brevity of the words, “and thereon they kepte me a long tyme,” Askew leaves the experience of being tortured largely undescribed. Rather than focusing on her pain, she provides the details of her figurative weakness.

While Askew employs a general rhetorical tactic that utilizes the fact of her “weaker sex” freely, she makes clear to the reader that it is a conscious choice on her part. In this way, whereas her editors impress upon the reader Askew’s physical weakness, Askew’s narrative stresses her argumentative prowess through tapping into existent models of femininity. When accused of having too few words by a frustrated examiner, for example, Askew responds: “God hath geven me the gift of knowledge, but not of utterance. And Salomon sayeth that a woman of few wordes is a gift of God.” Here, Askew relies on biblical presentations of womanhood to evade her questioner’s attempts to convict her of heresy. Interestingly, as evidenced by her answer, she does not equate a woman’s silence with inadequate knowledge; instead, she claims the gift of “knowledge, not of utterance.” When later ordered to answer the hypothetical question, “If the host shuld fall, and a beast ded eate it, whether the beast ded receyve God or no?” Askew again utilizes a similar plea of female weakness, since she tells her examiner, “I was but a woman, and knewe not the course of scoles” (34). Yet, even as Askew claims to be “but a woman,” she insinuated that the masculine “course of scoles” is ultimately foolish. What becomes clear throughout the two examinations is her ability to sidestep questions through verbal alacrity. Her response to the declaration that she would be
burned for heresy, Askew answers, “I had searched all the scryptures, yet could I never finde, that eyther Christe or his Apostles putte anye creature to death” (181).

Although Askew is not afraid to foreground her identity as a woman in order to maintain a self-protective silence during her interrogations, it is also clear that she does not use her gender in the same way that Bale (and, in a more moderate sense, Foxe) does. Whereas they focus on the weakness of Askew’s physical body, Askew focuses on her verbal and mental “weaknesses” as a woman; however, it is a weakness that claims wisdom in ways similar to St. Paul’s declaration about wisdom and foolishness: “For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness” (1 Corinthians 3:19). In body, however, she refuses to identify herself as a young woman, nor does she ever choose to dwell on her physical pain. Though she would not deny her weakness, it is a weakness that does not operate merely physically—an interpretation that her future editors fail to grasp.

**Drama and Audience in Foxe**

With some exceptions to the rule, I have been arguing so far that the various accounts of the martyrs enact a smoothing out of differences—a process that becomes manifest in the uniformity of the martyrs’ stoicism and bravery at the execution sites. Another recurrence that can be seen at the execution sites is the behavior of the spectator in Foxe’s work. In continuing to trace the emulative ideal of imitation in Foxe’s *The Book of Martyrs*, I want to shift my attention to the audience at the execution sites and examine the imitative exchange that occurs there. Fleshing out the exchange implicit in the Greek term *martyr* (or *witness*), these spectators are an important part of Foxe’s editorial strategy and form a significant aspect of the work of transmission that
happens in a martyrology. Indeed, accounts such as Cranmer’s death show how effectively his performance at the pyre impacted the people surrounding him. Foxe describes Cranmer’s actions as intentional, so “that all men might see his hand burned before his body was touched.” A similar focus upon the audience becomes apparent in the account of John Hooper’s execution. Foxe draws attention to the people by reporting how there is “nothing to be seen” in every corner except “weeping and sorrowful people.” Like Cranmer, Hooper is also self-consciously performative in his death. Described as embracing and kissing the very materials that would help to set him aflame, Hooper is literally set upon a stage of sorts—“he looked upon all the people, of whom he might be well seen (for he was both tall, and stood also on a high stool).” In both Hooper’s and Cranmer’s executions, the interaction between physical gestures and spectator participation becomes an integral part of their martyrdoms.

The rest of this chapter investigates the exchange that occurs between a martyr and the watching attendants at the execution, and in doing so, looks ahead to the drama chapters. Huston Diehl’s work on the reformation of the stage provides an insightful analysis of the ways in which Foxe utilizes a variety of elements in his martyrology, and I rely upon her work in order to examine the dramatic components in Acts and Monuments. As Diehl observes, while Foxe is determined to be iconoclastic in his method, he nonetheless “constructs the history of the Reformation as a riveting and dynamic drama” (24). She points out that the martyrology’s dramatic elements are visibly apparent, since much of the work is printed in dialogue format. However, whereas the medieval illustrations had only focused upon the figures of the martyrs, the illustrations in Foxe offer a wider lens through which the reader is allowed to see the
crowd of spectators and, as a result, to also become a participant. Diehl points to moments in which Foxe “reforms” the reader’s gaze by using illustrations that draw attention to idolatrous aspects of images, and sees Foxe utilizing the elements of drama to further his Protestant agenda. In this way, she questions the “widely held assumption that the reformed religion is essentially antitheatrical and thus necessarily hostile to the London theater that flourishes under Elizabeth and James” (25).

While I do not yet want to dive too deeply into the nature of the hostility that antitheatricalists would hold later on in the century, the characterization of the typical audience member is important when investigating the spectator in Acts and Monuments. I argue that the kind of audience that is constructed in Foxe is notably different from the average spectator that antitheatricalists such as Stephen Gosson depict. Indeed, in Gosson’s work, the “common people” bear as much abuse as the players themselves: at turns portrayed as naive, misled, or lascivious, the theater attendants who bear the brunt of his denunciations are depicted as incapable of discerning good from bad. The spectators in Foxe’s cosmic “drama,” on the other hand, confirm the community of the godly through their actions and reactions. Often captured with expressions of horror and sympathy, the spectators who are depicted in narrative and visual form provide, like the martyrs themselves, an accessible model for imitation. In this way, Foxe accomplishes his didactic mission of evangelism, which does not stop at just distinguishing between the true believer and the heretic, but demonstrates the proper response for the Protestant community.

While critics such as James Truman has described the nature of the exchange occurring at the execution sites as essentially violent and that “the theatricality of
martyrological narrative mimics the violence exercised by the tormentors themselves… [and] the horrifying spectacle of the martyrs' torment ravish the audience,” I propose that Foxe also portrays them as more than passive and moldable spectators that are objects of “ravishment” (58). It is true that the spectators are portrayed as exhibiting horror at what occurred before their eyes, but Foxe also includes details about their behavior that indicate their participation rather than passivity. It is our modern sensibilities that cringe before the visceral descriptions of pain; rather than being “ravished” by these scenes, Foxe’s spectators are held ethically responsible for what they witness. Indeed, the spectators not only demonstrate pity and reverence at the execution sites, but also model resistance to Catholic authorities through their actions. They are affected, but it is a positive exchange that stirs people to piety rather than paralysis; it is, moreover, an exchange that is theatrical in nature. The people surrounding the Marian martyr John Hullier, for example, are admonished by the Catholic authorities not to pray for him, since as “being but a damned man, it could profit him nothing” (8.380). However, as Foxe relates, “Nevertheless they continued praying.” In this way, Foxe not only sets up a pattern of piety not just in the martyrs, but also in the spectators who are described and depicted in his work.

The genre of the martyrology and its agenda of transmission made the spectator an especially important figure. What is striking about Foxe’s work is that not only is Foxe aware of the audience in addressing the reader from time to time, but the martyrs and persecutors themselves seem to be conscious of the spectator’s gaze. As Hugh Latimer is reported to state to his fellow martyr, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grade, in England, as I
trust shall never be put out.” This statement, one of the most frequently quoted out of The Book of Martyrs, underscores how Latimer understood his death to have future consequences and the fact that he was creating history through his martyrdom. Not unaware of the persuasive power of the burning heretics, Catholic officials attempted to control the publicity of the burnings, especially when the burnings involved high profile Protestant figures.

The case of John Bradford makes this notion clear. As a prominent Protestant preacher who played an important role in articulating the Protestant position, Bradford was a well-known figure to the public. Foxe reports in the account of Bradford’s life and execution that the preacher was scheduled to be executed at the early hour of four in the morning, specifically in order to prevent a crowd from gathering. He goes on to describe how a great multitude nevertheless gathered to witness the event. Foxe reports this incident itself as a kind of miracle: “For the next day, at the said hour of four a clock in the morning, there was in Smithfield such a multitude of men and women, that many being in admiration thereof, thought it was not possible that they could have warning of his death, being so great a number in so short a time, unless it were by the singular providence of Almighty God” (7.148). As an occasion to be censored (or celebrated), Bradford’s case underscores the importance with which both sides of the Reformation viewed the physically present crowd. One tried to suppress the witnessing of Bradford’s death and the other applauded the miraculous gathering of the crowd.

A fellow martyr and Bradford’s mate in prison, the story of Rowland Taylor provides a dramatic account that foregrounds the role of the sympathetic spectators. In
order to analyze the role of the people, I quote extensively from the account of his martyrdom:

When they were now come to Hadley, and came riding over the bridge, at the bridge-foot waited a poor man with five small children; who, when he saw Dr. Taylor, he and his children fell down upon their knees, and help up their hands, and cried with a loud voice, and said, “O dear father and good shepherd, Dr. Taylor! God help and succour thee, as thou hast many a time succoured me and my poor children.” Such witness had the servant of God, of his virtuous and charitable alms given in his lifetime: for God would now the poor testify of his good deeds, to his singular comfort, to the example of others, and confusion of his persecutors and tyrannous adversaries. For the sheriff and others that led him to death, were wonderfully astonied at this: and the sheriff sore rebuked the poor man for so crying. The streets of Hadley were beset on both sides with men and women of the town and country, who waited to see him; whom when they beheld so led to death, with weeping eyes and lamentable voices they cried, saying one to another, “Ah good Lord! There goeth our good shepherd from us, and so godly hath goverened us. O merciful God! What shall we poor scattered lambs do? What shall come of this most wicked world? Good Lord strengthen him, and comfort him:” with such other most lamentable and piteous voices. Wherefore the people were sore rebuked by the sheriff and the catchpoles his men, that led him. And Dr. Taylor evermore said to the people, “I have preached to you God’s word and truth, and am come this day to seal it with my blood.” (6.697)
As Taylor is led to the place of his execution and passes through the town of Hadley, his former parish, various people come out to meet him. Although rebuffed by the sheriff under whose guard Taylor travels, the people nonetheless insist on speaking to him. Even before they arrive at the site of the execution, the martyr, his executors, and the people form a dramatic ensemble, in which the hero and villain are clearly demarcated. The people’s remarks and reactions to the martyr guide the interpretation of the scene at hand, such that Foxe needs only to state simply, “Such witness had the servant of God.”

Taylor’s account also reveals the conscious overtures the papists take in order to silence the martyr, and the importance they attached to the power of the people. Once Taylor arrives at the site of his burning, Aldham-common, he is greeted by the sight of “a great multitude of people gathered thither” (6.698). The guards take great care to maintain a distance between the would-be-martyr and the people, and Foxe highlights the silence enforced upon Taylor, and alludes to a promise of silence he was forced to take: “What this promise was, it is unknown: but the common fame was, that after he and others were condemned, the council sent for them, and threatened them they would cut their tongues out of their heads, except they would promise, that at their deaths they would keep silence, and not speak to the people” (6.698). Foxe depicts the council as having the power to condemn, but fearful of the persuasive power of the martyr’s tongue—so much so that their tongues were literally threatened. Foxe relates the reasons in this way, “For the papists feared much, lest this mutation of religion, from truth to lies, from Christ’s ordinances to the popish traditions, should not so quietly have been received as it was,” and cites the authorities’ fear of popular unrest as a result of witnessing the preacher’s burning (6.698).
Taylor’s last act before being bound is to kneel and to pray—a familiar gesture of devotion, since he could not speak to the people—and Foxe reports how someone from the crowd steps forward in order to pray with him: “…and a poor woman that was among the people, stepped in and prayed with him: but her they thrust away, and threatened to tread her down with horses: notwithstanding she would not remove, but abode and prayed with him” (6.699). Here, we witness the continuity of the persecution narrative that Foxe desired to impart to his readers when compiling his martyr narratives: as the martyr kneels down to pray, he is literally imitated by the poor woman who, despite the threats from authorities, also kneels down to pray next to him. She enacts active resistance to the Catholic authorities, and offers her actions as a gesture of sympathy and solidarity. It is a response that is triggered by witnessing Taylor’s actions, but at the same time, seems to impart strength to the would-be-martyr. The fact that this figure is a “poor woman,” who is doubly marginalized through her gender and economic status, allows this unnamed woman to be imitable. Foxe implicitly suggests that anyone can play the role of the martyr.

IDOLATROUS IMAGES

Critics have had difficulty reconciling Foxe’s Protestantism and his use of visual images, and the use of visual representations in The Book of Martyrs has been variously interpreted. Whereas Catherine Coats places Foxe as a compromising figure who “would prefer to eliminate imagery, but fears an inability to fully communicate with it,” Huston Diehl asserts that Foxe deliberately uses illustrations in order to draw attention to idolatrous aspects of images and subvert traditional medieval reaction. These critics attend to the dominant Protestant aesthetic policy of iconoclasm, which rejects the use of
images as an idolatrous method of communication. My own view is that Foxe uses images without uneasiness, because the images he points our attention to are the “temples of God.” Although Protestant distrust of images has been a well-documented phenomenon, the martyred bodies are deemed “safe” images that possess powers of persuasion in Foxe’s work.

As the martyrologist’s embodied strategy makes clear, lingering over the details of the martyr’s suffering body is not, like the images of saints, an occasion for idolatry. Indeed, the usual condemnation with which the Protestants react to Catholic worship of relics is significantly absent in Foxe’s description of what happened to one martyr’s remains:

His flesh being consumed, his bones stood upright even as if they had been alive. Of the people, some took what they could get of him, as pieces of bones. One had his heart, the which was distributed so far as it would go; one took the scalp, and looked for the tongue, but it was consumed except the very root. One rounded him in the ear, and desired him to be constant to the end; at which he spake nothing, but showed a joyful countenance, and so continued both constant and joyful to the end. (8.380)

This account of John Hullier burnt at Cambridge is striking in that the people around him literally treat his remains as a relic. Yet, even when the martyr’s body seems to elicit dangerous practices of idolatry from the crowd, Foxe does not step into the narrative in order to denounce the crowd’s actions.

I suggest that Foxe gives free reign to the spectators because he assumes a homogeneous emotional makeup to the people witnessing the martyrdoms. That is, the
power of witnessing martyrdoms is such that it moves the people to an inexorable end, and the spectators themselves often provide models for imitation. In this way, Foxe’s portrayal of the spectator seems to be tied to his surprisingly positive stance towards images, because they too become part of the stirring imagery that make up the scenes of martyrdom. The reporting of the crowd’s reaction to the burnings of Ridley and Latimer makes this idea clear. After describing the excruciating difficulty that Ridley had in dying—alternately crying, “Lord have mercy upon me,” and “Let the fire come unto me, I cannot burn”—the people are described in this way:

However it was, surely it moved hundreds to tears, in beholding the horrible sight; for I think there was no one person, who was not completely devoid of all humanity and mercy, who would not have lamented to behold the fury of the fire had it raged upon their bodies. Signs of sorrow were everywhere. Some grieved to see their deaths, whose lives they held most dear. Some simply pitied them as persons, for they thought their souls had no need of their pity. Ridley’s brother touched the hearts of many men, as they saw him in his misery compelled to such infelicity that he thought to do Ridley a good turn in hastening his death. Some cried out (who most dearly loved him, and sought his release) because of his misfortune, seeing his endeavors turned to his greater vexation and increase of pain. But those who revered their past advancements in office, the places of honor that they occupied for a time in this commonwealth, the favor they had with their princes, and the opinion of learning they had in the university where they studied, could not help but shed tears of sorrow, seeing a man of so great dignity, honor, esteem, and so many godly virtues, with many years of study, of such excellent
learning, to be put into the fire and consumed in one moment. Well! Dead they are, and the reward of this world they have already. What reward remaineth for them in heaven, the day of the Lord’s glory, when he cometh with his saints, shall shortly, I trust, declare.

What is noticeable about this lengthy description of the surrounding spectators is not only their uniform reaction, but how it is a reaction that they cannot help having: “They could not help but shed tears of sorrow.” The execution elicits emotions that are different from the violent ravishment of senses, and operate as signs of their “humanity and mercy.” Foxe is not guarded about detailing the suffering bodies of the martyrs because “there was no one person, who was not completely devoid of all humanity and mercy, who would not have lamented to behold the fury of the fire had it raged upon their bodies.”

Because the martyrs’ bodies are indisputable signs of *imitatio Christi* for Foxe, they are images that are devoid of idolatry and elicit right emotions. In this way, the traditional competition between image and word—ritual and sermon—becomes defused of danger. As I argue later, this middle ground afforded by the “lively” images of the human body becomes significant when considering the mimetic power of the stage—much of which was described in terms of idolatry by antitheatricalists. The *pathos* and *ethos* of Foxean martyrs become significant when considering the anxieties attributed to the stage, and the signifying bodies of players. The powerful performances of the martyrs are compelling without the danger of slipping into possible idolatry. Foxe describes John Bradford, for example, in this way: “He made such a prayer of the wedding-garment, that some of those that were present were in such great admiration, that their eyes were as thoroughly occupied in looking on him, as their ears gave place to
hear his prayer (7.147). The kind of visual exchange—in the performing bodies of the martyrs and the eyes of the spectators—is portrayed without the stigma of idolatry in Foxe’s work. Unlike the perceived false religious signs such as the Catholic mass, the sacrifice of the martyrs is seen as authentic and thus appropriate images to which God’s people can view and respond.

**CONCLUSION**

Even as the martyred bodies legitimize the validity of the Reformed faith Foxe’s work, they also underscore the tricky matter of persecution. Since both the heretical and the orthodox share the same strategy of legitimization, truth becomes problematic if persecution and embodied suffering become trustworthy signs by which one can recognize the members of the true church. As the later persecutions of the Jesuits in England would attest, the body’s resistance to pain held an emotional appeal to the spectators that would vex the Protestant establishment. The execution of Edmund Campion in 1581 on charges of high treason, for example, provides an apt demonstration of this principle. Like a martyr out of the pages of Foxe’s work, Campion’s display of fortitude wins many of the spectators’ sympathy and admiration—a fact that disturbs Protestant writers such as Anthony Munday. Accusing Campion of sophistry and hypocrisy, Munday laments the effects of Campion’s deception “whereby he peruerted many, deceyued more, and was thought suche a Champion, as the Pope neuer had the like.” Because Campion’s heresy proved too much to be like heroism, Munday endeavored to make clear that what really lay at the center of the Jesuit’s performance was not truth, but hypocrisy.
Munday employs a similar rhetoric of wrath when writing about another type of hypocrites in the 1580s and beyond: the professional players. The spectacle of the body, as well as the emphasis on audience reception in *Acts and Monuments*, all provide a bridge into the realm of drama in the period. Although Patrick Collinson writes in *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* that the Reformation essentially emancipated the English theater by completing its secularization in the 1580s, and finds an “absolute and irretrievable divorce” between Protestantism and the stage, a closer examination reveals a more complicated, interdependent relationship between the stage and the Reformation (112). Indeed, the suffering body, anxieties about knowable interiority, the mimetic element of *imitatio*—these factors all evoke the space and atmosphere of the public theaters. The *pathos* and *ethos* of Foxean martyrs become significant when considering the anxieties attributed to the stage, and the signifying bodies of players. The next two chapters move into the realm of the popular stage, a place where the power of the theatrical exchange was defined by its ability to wield an imitative power. Whereas Foxe would trust his audience to be moved to positive emulative imitation, the theater attendants were not so trusted, because the unsettling effects of the theatrical spectacle were perceived to affect the *whole* person.
This chapter once more turns the polysemous term *imitate* in order to inspect the ramifications of its less positive aspects—to counterfeit, to mimic—in relationship to the well-established early modern sentiment labeled “antitheatricalism.” At a fundamental level, imitation lies at the heart of the critique against the popular stage. In his transhistorical survey of antitheatrical prejudice in Western history and culture, for example, Jonas Barish articulates the particular enmity against the theater during the sixteenth century in this way:

The true meaning of the prejudice is elusive, but it would seem to have to do with the lifelike immediacy of the theater, which puts it in unwelcome competition with the everyday realm and with the doctrines espoused in schools and churches... By the closeness of the imitative process, in which it mimes the actual unfolding of events in time, it has an unsettling way of being received by its audiences, at least for the moment and with whatever necessary mental reserves, as reality pure and simple. (79)

The proximity between theatrical imitation and real life was felt to be too dangerous for the average spectator to handle, a volatile counterfeit of reality that affected the viewer in an ethically harmful manner.

I begin this chapter by examining “the true meaning of the prejudice” more closely, and use my findings in order to position myself for a reading of Shakespeare’s
Hamlet. Whichever way the theater was perceived, its particular power to engage and move the audience was firmly entrenched in the minds of its detractors and endorsers. Arguing that the prejudice ultimately arises from a suspicion against the theater’s ability to enact transformative imitation, this chapter examines how the power of the stage was understood as affecting the whole person during the early modern period. The holistic effect of the stage—indeed, to strike at the core of a being in which only the church was believed to be able to do, and move people’s affections—gained greater potency during a period in which the mind and body had not yet been divorced, and helps to explain the threat of the theatrical exchange. Yet, as various religious writers make clear, what is deemed suspicious is desirable in the devotional realm, and articulates a fundamental Reformist desire: that the individual subject should not only be affected, but also be galvanized into devotional imitation.

A lingering incarnational aesthetic, the embodiment of emotions—all of these elements suggest a greater complexity toward how images, especially figures of devotion, were considered. Examining such complex attitude towards images helps us to better understand the matter of Hamlet's subjectivity. Hamlet’s earlier iconoclastic outlook that denies any legitimacy to shapes and forms undergoes a significant shift; from the prince’s decision to use performance as a way to “catch the conscience of the king” and to his own resolution to become “Hamlet the Dane,” the play complicates Hamlet’s initial disdain for “playing,” and points towards an understanding of performance as authentic activity. Although antitheatricalists decried the stage as a place of hypocrisy and lewdness, I see performance and piety intersect in meaningful ways in Hamlet. Indeed, the (devotional) fantasy of perfect correlation between intention and action, without any
“shuffling” of hypocrisy, become captured in an explicit moment of theatrical direction in
the play: “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action” (3.2.18). 1 Concepts of
“lively” images, habits of devotion, and holistic worship are relevant not just in
contemporary devotional literature that interrogated the nature of “true” worship, but also
in the court of Elsinore. If the threat of the stage is its transformative imitation, it also
carries with it a promising possibility of performance as reality, particularly through the
bodying forth of “lively” images. Contemporary devotional literature’s concerns with
distinguishing between dead and lively faith resonate with crucial scenes of repentance
and recognition in the play, and provide insight into how the external habits of the body
can trigger and enact authentic devotion. Hamlet’s initial iconoclastic denial of the body
destabilizes, and I argue that tracing such a change in attitude yields one way to
understand how Hamlet becomes “Hamlet the Dane.”

RELIGION AND THEATER

Although Barish voices the traditional view that the stage and religion in the late
sixteenth century were at irreparable odds with one another, critics have questioned this
outlook on literary history. New Historicist critics in particular have initiated a
productive critique of the separation between religion and the stage; Louis Montrose and
Stephen Greenblatt connect the power of the stage, for example, to anxieties and desires
of a population that is still profoundly affected by the lost tradition of Catholicism. 2 In
his recent work, Hamlet in Purgatory, Greenblatt provides a provocative reading of the
tragedy as a play that makes use of energies that had been gathering in strength for
several decades of the Reformation, and asserts that Shakespeare’s genius lies in his
ability to cannibalize upon existent discourses and anxieties regarding the place of
purgatory in the early modern imagination. Other critics sidestep the appropriation theory and inquire into a more deliberate connection between the stage and religion. Jeffrey Knapp, for example, asks whether the players themselves had been aware of the substitutive potential of the stage for the pulpit, and proposes that they consciously fashioned their works as “godly enterprises.”

While New Historicist scholars have revived interest in religion as a dominant cultural matrix against which the energies of early modern culture must be understood, the fruitful connections that they make between religion and the stage ultimately empties religion of any inherent energy of its own, since it is just another a duplication of the state’s power. Like Knapp, my analysis assumes that religion held a cultural attraction in its own right, and that the concerns which preoccupied “professional” divines—hypocrisy, authentic faith, prayer—were also issues that helped shape matters onstage. In this way, my view of performance in the period moves beyond the paradigm of deceptive imitation, and sees overlaps between the stage and the pulpit resulting in more than an “emptying out” of religion’s power. Contemporary concerns with idolatry and figures inciting idolatry filtered into antitheatricalist discourse; however, through scenes such as Claudius struggling to pray and a “senseless” Gertrude, Hamlet explores how the gap between intention and action may be mitigated through the figure of the imitating body.

The difficulty of tracing “the Reformation” in England further contributes to how I see the stage and religion relating to one another. Indeed, as Paul Whitfield White asserts in his work on theater and the Reformation, the conventional outlining of the relationship between the theater and Protestantism does not adequately acknowledge the fact the “the Reformation” itself was not such a straightforward affair in England. He
writes of the changing attitude that Protestants held towards the theater, which did not view the stage with enmity until the 1570s. Like revisionist historians such as Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy, White rightly questions the neatness of the “break” from the medieval past. Since the degree to how eagerly people embraced the new reformist culture is uncertain, it is difficult to assign a linear movement to the history of the Reformation in England.  

Such blurred boundaries become important in my discussion of the lingering effects of late medieval “incarnational” theater. Indeed, the rich background of mystery and miracle plays from the prior century shows that the discomfort with which antitheatricalists regarded the powerful influence of the stage did not always exist. While the partnership between the theater and the church is a well-known phenomenon in the medieval period, I draw attention to it because of the affective paradigm in which audience reception operated—a tactic employed by the Church in order to move the spectator to devotion and to arouse piety.  

In medieval theater, a stirring of affections was accomplished primarily through the image of Christ’s body. Originating with the Franciscans and their desire to “keep always before their eyes an image of the crucified Christ in vivid versimilitude,” the incarnational aesthetic involved the central organizing metaphor in the period: Christ’s body. Critics of the late medieval period usefully capture the paradigmatic role of Christ’s body; Sara Beckwith notes regarding the organizing metaphor of Christ’s body in late medieval writings, for example, that it was impossible to imagine the self without incorporating the body of Christ. The body of Christ was “both exclusive—in Bakhtin’s terms a classical body—closed, hermetic, monumental, static, elevated, awesome, homogeneous, and simultaneously inclusive,
warm, material, welcoming, heterogeneous, the very existential stuff of birth and death, the very stuff too of mortality and bodily change, open to the world through its welcoming wounds” (44).

Most significantly, the body of Christ was important because it emphasized Christ’s humanity and historicity. The vulnerability of his body provided such rich material for meditation in mystic experiences, for example, because his incarnation provided an accessible bridge between the divine and the human.10 As Gail McMurray Gibson notes in her work on medieval theater: “In fifteenth century devotion, in the visual arts, in the religious drama, it is the Incarnate Son rather than the Godhead who is ever fixed before the eyes of the beholder. Instead of God the Pantocrator with his book of mysteries, the relevant central image for the late Middle Ages is a suffering human body racked on a cross” (6). Functioning as a sanctioned *biblia pauperum*, the body of Christ served a central role in connecting the individual to the collective “body” of the Church. While the concept of *imitatio Christi* is not one that claimed equal emulation of Christ, it nonetheless stressed the attainability of piety.

In his work on iconoclasm and theater, Michael O’Connell explains the shutting down of the medieval play cycles (not occurring until the 1570s in England) as directly related to an aversion towards this late medieval incarnational aesthetic: “The seemingly disparate Reformation challenges … are themselves interconnected by their underlying target, the incarnational structure of late-medieval religion” (50). Arguing that a fundamental cognitive shift occurred through Humanist endorsement of a logocentrism that could not accommodate the incarnational underpinnings of late-medieval religion and theater, O’Connell asserts that the rejection of images was the result of “a clash
between religious systems, one based on an incarnational structure… and the other… on the logocentric assumptions of Renaissance humanism empowered by print culture” (58). In tracing this shift, O’Connell points to how the body of Christ itself became gradually textualized during the sixteenth century, and that such textualization offers further evidence for Protestant iconoclasm.

If, as O’Connell suggests, Christ’s body became textualized in order to place greater emphasis on the Word, I see the opposite occurring with the bodies of the individual believer in devotional and dramatic contexts. That is, the individual in Protestant devotional texts was made more “incarnational” (for search of a better term) in an effort to respond to the epistemological anxieties brought on by the questioning of signs in the Reformation. How could one exhibit signs of “true” faith, when traditional signs were under intense scrutiny? It is here that the individual’s body becomes both representative (body as vehicle) and experiential (body as agent). Such notions of the body become especially important when considering the all-important act of prayer—a subject of much discussion in contemporary tracts, and performed directly in Hamlet by Claudius. The Anglican Bishop Lancelot Andrewes’ writings on this matter are instructive; he writes in his directions for prayer, “We are to use an outward gesture, answerable to our inward devotion: We must manifest our Humility by a reverend posture of the body too. God is as well Creator of the body (which is the souls temple) as of the soul: and therefore expecteth to be honoured by both.”

Like Calvin, Andrewes uses the sign of the body to accommodate the fact that though true worship is not tied to outward ceremonies, we are (to quote Calvin) “creatures of sense.” The traditional understanding of man as composed of both body
and spirit, along with the New Covenant notion of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, allowed the body to be an important part of devotion rather than an obstacle to it. Andrewes writes of the valuable effects of the gestures of worship in the following way:

Not that God’s worship is absolutely or universally tyed to these outward Ceremonies, but that they serve to stir up the inward intentions and affections, for while we kneel, and lift up our eyes and hands to Heaven, we shew our humility, and declare our ardent desire and confidence, that all our aid and help we expect from God, and none else. Therefore, the acts of humiliation, of casting dust on their heads, putting on sack-cloth, rending of garments, mentioned in holy Writ, are there set down to no other purpose, but to make their Humility that used them appear, and to be a pattern for us in after times.

Here, Andrewes proposes a counter-intuitive relationship between imitation and purpose—namely, that through imitating actions, “they serve to stir up the inward intentions and affections.” Rather than a rejection of the body, its ability to show patterns from “holy Writ” is prized in displaying (and stirring up) piety. Such an understanding of the postures and gestures of devotion has interesting implications for someone like Hamlet. If the central dilemma of the play (Hamlet’s inability to take action) is considered against a common religious dilemma (how one stirs oneself towards genuine worship) the solutions as well as the problems overlap. In all of its gross corporeality and rankness, the human body is something that Hamlet at first adamantly rejects. Yet in his struggle to respond to the Ghost’s commands, a significant shift in attitude occurs towards assuming a role that changes his initial contempt for the body.
TRANSFORMATIVE IMITATION AND EMBODIED SELFHOOD

The early modern concept of the body mirrors the interdependent relationship outlined in certain devotional works, and I pause here in order to examine the implications of a worldview that had not yet subscribed to Cartesian dualism. Implicit to the attacks against the stage is an understanding of interiority that does not draw upon a division between “inner” and “outer” realms of the individual. This becomes apparent in the privileging of emotions; that is, alongside the eye and the ear, what also mattered deeply were the other faculties attributed to the individual subject—what early modern writers term the senses, affections, and passions.12 Although the images performed on stage were persecuted because of their invasion through the eye, performing bodies were also demonized because such lascivious images stirred up the affections of the vulnerable spectator. The players in particular were attacked as performers of hypocritical actions, and were seen as becoming sinners as they depicted and mimicked sins (a counterintuitive procedure from “outward” to “inward” that is also evident in devotional texts). As Anthony Munday asks, “As for those stagers, are they not commonlie such kind of men in their conversation, as they are in profession? Are they not variable in hart, as they are in their parte?”13 In the minds of antitheatricalists, what the performers engage in is a powerful mode of transformative imitation that possesses dangerous implications, and ultimately imperils the integrity of the performer.

The perils posed to the performer become magnified when applied to the susceptible theater attendants. Unlike the spectators in Acts and Monuments who were moved to piety through their witnessing of the martyrdoms, these theater attendants could only be envisioned as vulnerable to the assault on their senses. Their capacity to imitate
behavior that they see on stage is typically depicted as limitless, and since the
performances were so powerful, of a kind that they could not control. As Philip Stubbes
admits in his preface to *The Anatomie of Abuses*, “Such is our gross and dull nature that
what thing we see opposite before our eyes do pierce further and print deeper in our
hearts and minds than that thing which is heard only with the ears.”14 The particular
dangers of attending a performance were connected to the potency of visual gestures, and
the idolatry of the stage to its visual medium. If the pulpit and the stage were indeed
rivals, the latter held a significant edge over the former in its use of gestures and other
visible forms; to borrow Claudius’ words, the audience is “the distracted multitude, / 
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes” (4.3.4-5).

What concerned the antitheatricalists was what they imagined happening after the
stage imagery entered through the spectators’ eyes—a corruption that seemed to have no
limits and affected the whole person. Indeed, this may be the reason behind the
antitheatricalists’ vehement cry against the public theaters. The anxiety that William
Prynne displays when he write that the theater would “devirginate” women and make
men “degenerate” into women attests to a notion of the theater’s effects that penetrated
beyond the surface.15 Such notions of subjectivity arise from a pre-Cartesian, embodied
understanding of selfhood, which did not divorce the mind from the body. In the early
modern period in which the relationship between the body and mind was perceived to be
sliding rather than stable, the effects of theater were not limited to the cognitive level, but
affected the entire being of the spectator. As Cynthia Marshall notes in her essay,
“Bodies in the Audience”:
In the early modern era, when intellect and will were seen as subject to the dangerously unraveling effects of emotion (or, as they were called, the passions), and when humoral psychology defined the passions themselves as physical, the excitement of theatergoing were not limited to the cognitive level. With psychology and physiology compounded within the humoral regime, theater’s emotional effects were felt by bodies in the audience—metonymically, not metaphorically. (52)

In a period in which “the excitement of theatergoing were not limited to the cognitive level,” the transformative effects of theater were perceived to affect the whole person—a kind of fundamental change that seemed both threatening and promising.

**Positive Imitation**

Although the theater’s ability to “body forth” its fiction is a source of worry for antitheatricalists, proponents of the stage saw it as a way to defend the theater as well. Despite the fact that Renaissance antitheatrical writings decried the stage as a place where hypocrisy abounded, the theater was also a potential place where performance and ethics could intersect, and where a stirring performance could literally induce positive imitation. Thus argues Thomas Heywood in *An Apology for Actors* (1612). Although Heywood’s argument is not new to the existent “apology for the arts” discourse in the period, his defense makes clear the high stakes involved in attending a show: it literally has the power to reform the spectator. According to Heywood, performance is unique in the arts in that it surpasses all other mediums in its ability to deliver an immediate, inspiring image:
Why should not the lives of these worthies, presented in these our days, effect the like wonders in the Princes of our times, which can no way bee so exquisitely demonstrated, nor so liuely portrayed as by action: Oratory is a kind of a speaking picture, therefore may some say, is it not sufficient to discourse to the eares of princes the fame of these conquerors: Painting likewise, is a dumbe oratory, therefore may we not as well by some curious Pigmalion, drawe their conquests to worke the like loue in Princes towards these Worthyes by shewing them their pictures drawne to the life, as it wrought on the poore painter to bee inamored of his owne shadow.16

Performance trumps the inefficacy of aural and visual mediums (oratory and painting). Heywood praises the art of theater because it enacts the history of past heroic glory and inspires the present heroes to become present “Alexanders.” He states that “so bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action, that it hath the power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt.” Hamlet’s confidence in the player’s performance to “catch the conscience of the king” is grounded in such optimism about the effects of playing (2.2.634).

It is significant that Heywood uses the term “lively” to describe the power of performance in his Apology for Actors, and I pause on this word to argue that like the notion of holistic effect, the term “lively” captures the particular power (and worry) connected to the stage. In this way, the word also illustrates the common denominator existing between the seemingly disparate realms of the stage and the pulpit. For example, whereas William Prynne denounces the stage for its “lively pictures” of vice in his massive “scourge” against players, Histrio-mastix (1633), William Perkins uses the same
term to describe the desired conditions of faith and knowledge in his Commentary on Galatians (1604). The overlapping term “lively” is interesting because, while it is a commonly used adjective in the period, it nonetheless points to the particular concern for the immanent and incarnational aspects contained in the word. Antitheatricalists persecute the stage performances because they are too lively—life-like without sincerity, and a model for hypocrisy. Religious writers, on the other hand, admonish the believers because their faith is not lively enough. As Perkins explains regarding how the scriptural word should be received, “it must be powerfull and liuely in operation, and as it were crucifying Christ within vs, and causing vs to feele the vertue of his passion. The word preached must pearce into the heart, like a two-edged sword.” The term also serves as distinguishing characteristic for preachers such as Edmund Bunny. He writes regarding how to distinguish between true and dead faiths: “There are two kinds of faith recounted in scripture (the one a dead faith without good works, that is which, beleeveth al you say of Christ, but yet observeth not his commandements; the other, a lively, a justifieng faith, which beleeveth not only, but also worketh by charitie, as Saint Pauls words are.”

In his work on the “reformation of worship” that occurred in the sixteenth century, Carlos Eire summarizes the difference between Catholic and Reformed faiths as essentially the difference between a religion of immanence and a religion of transcendence: one operates by the material and visual, and the other abides solely in rejecting the grossness of materiality. Yet, as demonstrated through the word “lively,” it is clear that the attitude towards images was tempered by the recognition of its potency, especially when the image was the believer’s body. If the body of Christ has become textualized, works by writers such as Perkins and Bunny make clear that the body of the
believer is *de*-textualized in order to emphasize the authentic work of salvation. The “lively” working of God’s Word and faith are reflected in the bodies of charitable believers and, in this way, the performing body becomes a positive and “real” sign in Protestant discourses.\textsuperscript{20}

**The Problem of Words**

More than any of Shakespeare’s other plays, *Hamlet* struggles with the problem of manifesting interiority—a predicament that resonates with the dilemma of showing’s one’s “true” devotion during a religiously turbulent age.\textsuperscript{21} Although most critics agree that Hamlet exhibits an interiority that seems “modern,” the validity of Hamlet’s inwardness has been challenged as anachronistic to the Renaissance or a product of wishful thinking on the reader’s part.\textsuperscript{22} As Katherine Maus asserts, however, inwardness is neither an anachronism nor an illusion in the Renaissance, since it had already been articulated through a long history of Western philosophy.\textsuperscript{23} Like Maus, I do not question whether inwardness existed or not in the period, but seek to locate the *why* behind its insistent presence—an answer that seems tied to the play’s preoccupation with the body.

Critics have recently focused on the material body as a way to understand Hamlet’s subjectivity, and complicate Hamlet’s relationship to the body in order to do so. Citing how the notion that important truths lie hidden within the body were reasonable in the early modern period, David Hillman writes, “What had begun, for Hamlet, as an insistence on the insufficiency of the external, has turned by the end of the play into an understanding of the insufficiency of the internal. What is inside is neither more nor less revealing than what lies on the surface” (93). John Hunt identifies a similar struggle with the body in *Hamlet*: “Fearing that physical actions may never adequately embody
virtuous intentions, he makes the doubt self-fulfilling by shielding his high sense of himself within an overwhelming contempt for the body—a contempt that sabotages meaningful action” (34). Like these critics, I examine Hamlet’s initial sense of anathema towards the body, but situate my reading in the context of contemporary devotional literature which worries over the inadequacies in worship that lead to hypocrisy.

In the beginning scenes at Elsinore, Hamlet appears first as a determined iconoclast in his rejection of visible signs. His attitude becomes clear in his first extended speech:

“Seems,” madam? Nay, it is. I know not “seems.”

‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed “seem,”
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (1.2.79-89)

By articulating a gap between what seems and what is, Hamlet’s semiotics point to a severance between sign and reality, between outward action and inward “truth”. Indeed, though his funeral attire is strikingly somber amidst the gay colors of the rest of the court, Hamlet denies any reliability in “forms, moods, shapes of grief.” This unreliability takes
the particular form of bodily functions and performance; the “forced breath” of grief and
the “fruitful river in the eye” of tears are purposefully painted as seeming “actions that a
man might play.” In this way, Hamlet’s disdain for hypocrisy anchors itself on the
visible performative functions of the body, making the site of the body a focus of his
frustrations about the inadequacies of representation.

Yet, if Hamlet distrusts images, it is paired with his distrust of words as well.
Indeed, part of the problem in the play seems to be one of reliable signs: there is no
satisfactory sign available to the brooding prince. Although Hamlet takes advantage of
the semantic richness of words, he also associates them with a kind of prostitution and
wastefulness of nobler intentions: “This is most brave, / That I... Must like a whore
unpack my heart with words, / And fall a-cursing like a very drab” (2.2.539-44). Rather
than acting as a reliable conduit of one’s inmost desires (revenge, in Hamlet’s case),
words create a frustrating paralysis for Hamlet. The unreliability of vows, which
Hamlet attributes to others, also rebound upon himself, since others around him
characterize him as a speaker of untrustworthy words. Although he condemns the queen
harshly for her wavering faithfulness, Hamlet is likened to his mother in that his words
and promises are perceived as temporary and fickle. As Laertes warns Ophelia regarding
the prince, “Then, if he says he loves you, / It fits your wisdom so far to believe it / As he
in his particular act and place / May give his saying deed, which is no further / Than the
main voice of Denmark goes withal” (1.3.27-32). While it must be acknowledged that
Laertes fulfills a conventional role of the protective older brother to younger sister at this
moment, his advice to Ophelia nonetheless points to a truth about Hamlet’s situation: the
efficacy of his word is limited by the political position he occupies in the state of
Denmark. Laertes reasons that Hamlet’s agency is hampered by the voice of the state and, as a result, his promises of love toward Ophelia cannot be taken seriously. Likewise, Polonius also severs Hamlet’s word from his deeds as he tells his daughter: “Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers, / Not of that dye which their investments show, / But mere imploasers of unholy suits, / Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds / The better to beguile” (1.3.136-40). By mixing the language of economy with sincerity, Polonius underscores what he deems to be the prince’s “unholy” suit. In the process, Hamlet’s vows are “brokers” that breach rather than ratify their promises, and are colored with the language of religious hypocrisy.

Interestingly, though there are diverse accusations of verbal hypocrisy in the play, they revolve principally around Claudius and Hamlet. In his first aside in the play, Claudius himself admits to the particularly verbal nature of his villainy. Claudius’ aside is triggered by Polonius’ advice to Ophelia to pretend to “read on this book” since “with devotion’s visage / And pious action we do sugar o’er / the devil himself” (3.1.52). Upon hearing Polonius, the king cries:

O’ tis too true!

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience.

The harlot’s cheek beautied with plast’ring art

Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it

Than is my deed to my most painted word.

O heavy burden! (3.1.54-59)

It is interesting to note that before Hamlet can sound out the conscience of the king, any doubt about Claudius’ guilt is removed for the audience through this impassioned aside.
Again, this moment not only makes a connection between wantonness and words, but also evokes the idea of religious hypocrisy through the phrase “painted word.” Placed close to common terms by which the Catholic Church was denounced (“harlot’s cheek and “plast’ring art”), the phrase “painted word” merges a popular adjective with which to defame Catholicism with the central object of Reformist worship, the word. The idea that words can become painted like idols brings about disturbing notions about how reliable (or vulnerable) words are as stable signifiers of truth—a theme that continues to haunt Hamlet throughout the play. As the player king states to the player queen, “I do believe you think what now you speak, / But what we do determine oft we break. / Purpose is but the slave to memory.” (3.2.211-13)

If words are polluted vows that promise much but are ultimately false in the play, one has to question what sort of a narrative becomes believable for Hamlet. That is, how does he take anyone at his word? Such practices seem to be a part of the nostalgic past in Elsinore, when King Hamlet had been alive. I suggest that Hamlet does eventually learn to break out of his semiotic impasse, and that he is enabled partly through “lively” images of performance. Accomplished through explicitly theatrical terms, these images complicate Hamlet’s initial iconoclasm and, specifically, his rejection of “playing” and its disconnection to an authentic self. Emerging first in the form of his father’s ghost, and then through the pivotal moment with the players, a series of performative moments in the play portray the limits of language and an embodiment of interiority that sets up the body as a reliable image and trigger for action. Although Hamlet begins by subscribing to a theory of playing that sees it as duplicitous, the play itself sets up moving performances that point to the efficacy of playing.
LIVELY PORTRAITS

The erosion of Hamlet’s subscription to iconoclasm begins with his encounter with the Ghost in Act I. As the “apparition” and “thing” that appears with terrifying solemnity, the Ghost occupies a threshold space between heaven and hell. He seems to be his father, but, as Hamlet notes later on, the Ghost may also be a devil in disguise. The “questionable shape” of the Ghost has served as an entry point through which the play can be understood. I examine the ramifications of the curious fact that while the Ghost is a thing of performance, it is a strangely self-corporealized image as well. This become apparent through the narrative he provides of what truly happened:

... Sleeping within my orchard,

My custom always of the afternoon,

Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,

With juice of curséd hebona in a vial,

And in the porches of my ears did pour

The leprous 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 vigor it doth posset

And curd, like eager droppings into milk,

The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine.

And a most instant tetter barked about,

Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
All my smooth body. (1.5.66-80)

The lengthy, detailed description of what happens once the poison enters the “porches” of the king’s body belies the image of the poison being “swift as quicksilver.” Indeed, the slow-motion effect of the description underscores the “wholesome” and “smooth” body of the king, which is besieged and visibly affected by the leprous effects of the poison.

It is interesting that in both memory and in its present state, the Ghost should insist on his materiality. Although the Ghost is now theoretically bodiless, the quality of its memory is not, and such details of the poison’s effects on his body help Hamlet to believe in the Ghost’s alternate narrative of what really happened to his father. In this way, remembering becomes a re-membering of the king’s body. The poison that courses through the king’s body provides a map of the king’s bodily interiority; the terms “porches, gates, and alleys” evoke an image of the body that is full of barriers, yet whose fences allow for mixing and commingling as well. In comparison to the lingering details with which he describes his poisoned body, the Ghost’s much shorter description of what happened to his soul—“dispatched... even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled”—is jarringly curt. By literally giving more space to the physiological effects of the poison, the mystery of death takes on a material dimension in the Ghost’s narration, and Hamlet believes in the narrative that makes use of corporeal reality. The Ghost legitimizes his story through his description grounded in the body, and he is the first of “lively” portraits that come to disturb Hamlet’s epistemological prejudices.

Perhaps appropriately, Hamlet’s reaction to the Ghost’s narrative is physical as well: “Hold, hold, my heart, / And you, my sinews, grow not instant old, / But bear me
stiffly up” (1.5.100-102). Like the theater attendants accused of “ravishment,” we find Hamlet reacting with his body to the Ghost’s performance. His exhortation to himself is a call for a hardening of his body, whose limp reaction to the Ghost’s story is a sign of cowardice that must be remedied. In addition, vow-taking takes on an embodied aspect in this scene and again points to the inadequacy of logos alone. Since it is an unverifiable act, the command to “Remember me” is, in fact, as or more difficult to fulfill than the command to “Revenge me.” As if to remind us of this reality, this inward action takes on an embodied aspect through the exchange between Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus. Not satisfied with their words alone, Hamlet makes them swear once more on his sword that they will not tell of what they have seen. In this way, Hamlet’s vow that “thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain, / Unmixed with baser matter” becomes obliquely insufficient, because it is based on words alone (1.5.110). He in effect needs the “baser matter” that he had rejected in his first soliloquy, or else this commandment will forever reside isolated and un-acted upon in his brain. The important link between remembrance and action cannot merely be forged through words, but requires a kind of embodied remembrance.

Although the Ghost succeeds in moving Hamlet to conviction, Hamlet is soon beset with the question that the ghost may instead be a devil that leads him to murder, and consequently seeks to have “grounds / More relative than this.” The arrival of the players in Elsinore provides a pivotal piece to solving this problem for the prince. In a place where decay and corruption seem to dominate, the players awaken an untainted piece of a pastoral past, which juxtaposes with the childhood but false friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Moreover, the players stirring performance begins to an important shift in
paradigm for Hamlet, where *seeming* can lead to *being*, and where outward signs become more than mere trappings. Left alone after the players and others exit, Hamlet launches into a lengthy soliloquy that reveals much about his changing semiotics. Interestingly, it begins as a direct response to the Player’s performance:

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his whole conceit
That from her working all his visage waned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in’s aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suit ing
With forms to his conceit? (2.2.506-13)

As a son that must enact revenge for his murdered father, the requested performance of Pyrrhus’s murder of Priam is a reminder of Hamlet’s similar designs upon his uncle, and as such, the first line of self-loathing makes sense. Things begin to make less sense, however, with the ensuing lines. Whereas it would seem logical for Hamlet to envy the decisive action of Pyrrhus, it is the *player* and not the Trojan warrior that Hamlet desires to imitate: “Is it not monstrous that this player here, / But in a fiction, in a dream of passion, / Could force his soul so to his own conceit?” The player’s ability to “force his soul so to his own conceit” demonstrates a capacity to align one’s intentions and actions, and it is this clarity in signs that Hamlet envies. Although the player is explicitly performing, it is a performance that Hamlet does not designate as hypocrisy, and thus does not worry about the gap between “seems” and “is.” Significantly, the breaching of
the gap seems to occur not through the medium of words, but through the outward visage of the Player—“tears in his eyes, distraction in’s aspect, / A broken voice” (2.2.583-4). Curiously, Hamlet’s earlier semiotics where he vows his distrust of appearances is not at work here, and he attributes greater substance to the player’s “fiction” and “dream of passion.”

Despite his declaration of disdain for outward signs, then, Hamlet exhibits an acceptance of performative, “lively portraits”—an acceptance that becomes explicitly manifest in his decision to make use of performance to “catch the conscience of the king.” Again, this realization is paired with a recognition of the futility of words. Although Hamlet attempts to verbally work himself up through a string of reproaches against Claudius—“Bloody, bawdy villain! / Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless / villain!” (2.2.607-09)—the emptiness of his ranting causes him to pause for the second time in his soliloquy:

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion! Fie upon’t! foh!
About, my brains. Hum—I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions.
The turn towards action only comes when Hamlet finally ceases to unpack his heart with words, as he breaks mid-line to recall the effects of performance upon “guilty creatures.” Perhaps appropriately, this picture of persons being “struck so to the soul” reflects Hamlet’s own position at this moment, since he is obviously moved by the player’s performance; indeed, by occupying the position of a spectator for even this brief span of time, Hamlet experiences the kind of transformative effects of theater, and is moved to take action.

PERFORMANCE AND PRAYER

Despite Hamlet’s confidence in the efficacy of performance to “catch the conscience” of Claudius, the neatness of this theory soon becomes complicated by the ensuing scenes. The problem lies in the fact that though in Hamlet’s mind, “The Mousetrap” has the desired effects upon Claudius, the “proof” is limited to himself and Horatio. As Roland Frye notes, the play-within-the-play does not so much implicate Claudius as it does Hamlet as a potential villain in the minds of Elsinoreans. The prayer scene that follows the play-within-the-play reflects the dubious success of “The Mousetrap” in that the effects of the devotional moment are also left unclear. Should it be counted as successful since it convinces Hamlet of his uncle’s authentic prayer? Or should it be counted as a failure since Claudius concludes, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go”?

Examining this rarely dwelt-upon scene allows us to better understand the central issue of being moved; this time, it is in a specifically devotional context. When Claudius declares, “Pray can I not, / Though inclination be as sharp as will,” he echoes a common
dilemma found in early modern prayer manuals: the believer’s inability to move oneself to genuine prayer. These manuals acknowledge that a believer is not always inclined to pray, and point to the danger of false prayer, which is characterized by “mere” speech that lacks efficacy. In his tract on practical prayer, for example, George Downname states, “As for that prayer which is onely the outward speech of the mouth without the inward of the heart, it is not a prayer in truth, but a meer lip-labour.” Although Claudius unwittingly convinces Hamlet that he is, in fact, praying, the king acknowledges that what he is doing is “meer lip-labour” since his “words without thoughts never to heaven go” (3.3.98). Like Hamlet, he cannot execute his intention: “like a man to double business bound, / I stand in pause where I shall first begin, / And both neglect” (3.3.41-43).

Hamlet’s credulity complicates the “failure” of this devotional moment, however, since his raised sword never alls upon the kneeling king. Why does Hamlet believe in the king’s devotional sincerity at this moment? Why doesn’t he chalk it up to the hypocrisy of one who “may smile and smile and be a villain” (1.5.115)? In her essay on performance and prayer, Ramie Targoff points to the prevalent logic of habit used in devotional circles in order to answer the question of Hamlet’s credulity; that is, one’s participation in piety leads to the creation of a pious self. Targoff reads Claudius’ prayer as a result of “a combination of theatrical spectatorship and devotional practice” that allowed the body and its language to be “unmanipulable signifiers of the worshiper’s internal state” (62, 58). Although I agree with the general tenor of Targoff’s argument, I also suggest that it is because Hamlet sees rather than hears Claudius at prayer that allows this moment to be believable for the prince. The image of his uncle makes a
strong impression upon Hamlet, and he is led to trust in this “lively portrait” as an
uninterrupted reflection of his genuine piety. Hamlet is moved through a series of lively
images—and at this moment, when he only sees rather than hears his uncle at prayer, the
image of Claudius’ bent form is a sign of devotional sincerity that Hamlet is able to trust.

Since we never hear the actual words of Claudius’ prayer, it is important to note
that what is often referred to as the prayer scene is actually a “preparation to pray” scene.
The manner in which Claudius prepares to pray deserves scrutiny, especially in light of
the fact that as a figure of “words, words, words” in the play, Claudius is a character who
seems most likely to slip into false prayer. Since Claudius appears to genuinely struggle
with feelings of guilt in his moment of solitude, the king’s soliloquy seems to confirm the
effectiveness of Hamlet’s plan to “catch the conscience of the king”:

O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon’t,
A brother’s murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will.
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I first begin,
And both neglect. (3.3.36-43)

Aligning himself with the biblical character Cain, Claudius again exhibits his role as a
“double” for Hamlet in that he confesses his inability to move himself to action—namely,
the action of prayer. The fact that Claudius distinguishes between false and true prayer in
this soliloquy indicates that he understands the complex nature of the activity: “But, O,
what form of prayer / Can serve my turn?” Recognizing that he cannot simply ask for forgiveness when he still possesses the effects of murder—“My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen”—Claudius ruminates upon the difficulty of his situation.

Because Claudius acknowledges the difficulty of engaging in genuine prayer, it is in some ways, difficult to label this moment with the stamp of hypocrisy; it is nonetheless a moment of devotional failure. I propose that though Claudius struggles to pray in this moment, he does not succeed because he fails in the important department of the passions—that is, he fails to stir up the proper passions necessary for genuine prayer.

Numerous devotional tracts emphasize the importance of the affections and passions as necessary elements for prayer. As Lancelot Andrewes states in *Institutiones Piae*, “…it is not a chill and cold Perseverance, or expectation, that will serve our turnes, to prevaile with God, but a fervent Spirit to pursue the same... it is the affection, and zealous desires of the devout, mixed with sighes, teares, and grones, not to be uttered, which moove, and prevaile with him.” Protestant divines pointed to one’s *emotions* as an acceptable gauge for one’s knowledge of God, which in turn are closely aligned to the body. Although he tries to move himself to genuine prayer by taking a penitent posture, Claudius fails to rally the interdependent element crucial to true devotion: passion.

The lack of passion in Claudius is most clearly evident in his use of language, which, from the beginning of the play, is measured “in equal scale.” As Inga-Stina Ewbank notes in her assessment of the power of words in *Hamlet*, Claudius’ range of language is limited to his public voice. Referencing this scene as an example, Ewbank remarks how even his private speech sounds like his public voice: “The most trenchant self-analysis is as cleverly antithetical as anything he has to say before the assembled
court in I, ii” (67). The measured nature of Claudius’ words attests to his calculating nature, which will not let him be moved. Moreover, the solipsistic characteristic of soliloquy seems particularly out of place in a speech that is supposed to be in conversation with God. There is no acknowledgment of the divine other as Claudius talks to himself. Although he labors to pray and, in this way lends authenticity to the activity of prayer, the activity fails because his emotions remains unstirred.

**Gertrude’s Senses**

The encounter with the Ghost, the player, and Claudius at prayer all work to disturb Hamlet’s initial rejection of the body. Specifically, the lively image and language of the body—corporeal and physiological—becomes more substantial than mere words with the progression of the play. In his essay on Shakespeare and knowledge, David Hillman has observed that there is frequent conflation between visceral and interior knowledge in the bard’s works:

> Several of Shakespeare’s characters seem to imagine that penetrating the other’s body would somehow solve the riddle of knowing the other; several of Shakespeare’s plays question and problematize this notion, while at the same time allocating to the body’s interior a decisive place in the comprehension of subjectivity. (82)

Such conflation between the body and interiority seems to be at work in the scene between Hamlet and Gertrude, especially when talking of penetrable selves and “inmost parts.” Since the allegorical mirror of reality offered through “The Mousetrap” had no effect on the queen, Hamlet offers another kind of a mirror to his mother when he meets her in her chamber: “Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge. / You go not
till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you” (3.4.23-25).

Gertrude’s frightened response to her son’s promise is a fascinating moment of interpretative confusion; her understanding of how her son will devise for her to see “the inmost part” of her is strangely corporeal, for she asks Hamlet with real terror: “Thou wilt not murder me?” (3.4.20) The metaphorical mirror that Hamlet offers to set up before his mother is understood in a visceral, anatomical manner, and echoes the kind of inwardness referenced in Hamlet’s earlier promise to “tent” his uncle. The conflation between figurative and literal “inmost part” also resonates in intriguing ways with contemporary Eucharistic controversy, for in her terror, Gertrude commits the same kind of interpretative error for which Protestants blame Catholics: mistaking the figurative for the literal, the metaphor for the flesh.

Hamlet’s primary concern in this hectic scene, at least in regards to his mother, seems related to a similar impulse; that is, he also grants a sliding meaning between Gertrude’s visceral and figurative “self,” specifically through his use of the word “sense.” It begins with Hamlet’s promise that he will “wring” Gertrude’s heart “if it be made of penetrable stuff, / If damned custom have not brazed it so / That it be proof and bulwark against sense” (3.4.36-9). Used four times in the next speech by Hamlet, Gertrude’s “sense” (or lack thereof) forms the nexus around which Hamlet builds his case against his mother. Linked in the early sixteenth century to the sensorial organs but used in a divergence of meanings by Shakespeare’s time, the earliest use of the word correlates to the traditional five senses of the body. Although Hamlet makes use of a corporeal sense and an intuitive sense—definitions which co-existed in Shakespeare’s time—to make his attack against Gertrude, the sliding registers between the “lower” and “higher” senses
ultimately come to rest upon corporeal sense of the word. He achieves this through his insistence on his mother’s physical degeneracy. Hamlet’s emphasis on Gertrude’s senses draws attention to a counterintuitive movement from “inward” to “outer” senses; that is, the corruption of Gertrude’s physical senses lead to an inward corruption of the higher senses.

As he stands before two portraits of his father and uncle in Gertrude’s closet, Hamlet seems determined to “show” the queen her mistakes and to probe her inmost part by highlighting the differences between her first and second husbands. He points to the stark contrast between them, and focuses especially on her bodily senses in order to articulate his critique. Beginning with her eyes, Hamlet asks sarcastically: “Have you eyes? / Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, / And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?” He goes on to place Gertrude’s humanity/sanity into question, since her judgment is so skewed:

… Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion, but sure that sense
Is apoplexed, for madness would not err
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne’er so thrilled
But it reserved some quantity of choice
To serve in such a difference. (3.4.72-77)

Hamlet draws upon multiple definitions of “sense” in order to make his attack work. He is sure that Gertrude has some bodily sense, “else could [she] not have motion,” but he is certain that her reasoning sense is misaligned since she has chosen to be with Claudius. Such harping upon Gertrude’s senses leads to further ridicule:
… What devil was’t
That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope. (3.4.77-82)

With his language of disconnected body parts, Hamlet seems to indeed speak “daggers” to Gertrude as he creates an anti-blazon of his mother.

The mismatch of body parts to corresponding senses—“eyes without feeling”—is listed as proof of Gertrude’s perverted senses. Interestingly, this moment resonates with biblical language that condemns idolatry, and frames Hamlet’s anger within a rich matrix of ideas associated with idolatry. The prophet Isaiah describes the Israelites’ idolatry as a blindness and malfunctioning of their proper senses: “They that make a grauen image are all of them vanitie, and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses, they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed” (Isaiah 44:9, KJV). The prophet Isaiah attributes blindness to those who practice idolatry, and mocks the absurdity involved in idol worship, since one takes a part of a tree to make a fire, and takes another part in order to make a graven image. Idolatry, in short, is depicted as a failure of one’s senses:

They haue not knowen, nor vnderstood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot vnderstand. And none considerth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor vnderstanding to say; I haue burnt part of it in the fire, yea also I haue baked bread vpon the coales thereof: I haue rosted
flesh and eaten it; and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall
downe to the stocke of a tree? (Isaiah 44:8-9, KJV)

The sin of idolatry is linked directly to a failure in common sense and reasoning: Shall I
worship the very thing that I cut down and part of which I used for fuel? Yet because this
is precisely what is committed, the idolatrous Israelites are, like Gertrude, portrayed as
people whose eyes are blind and whose senses are shut to obvious discrepancies in
“sensible” logic.

Considered in this way, Gertrude unnamable act becomes not only one of
degenerate sexuality, but also a perversion of senses that results in idolatry. This notion
becomes especially poignant in light of the fact that mother and son are staged to stand
before two “counterfeit presentment of two brothers” (3.4.55). Although both images are
similar in that they are portraits, one is far superior to the other. The scriptural language
that compares the “dead” wooden idols to “the living God” matches the wrath behind
Hamlet’s words, and anticipates his later declaration that he “must be their scourge and
minister” (3.4.179). The fact that Gertrude should prefer Claudius to old Hamlet enrages
Hamlet with the kind of scorn that matches that of the Old Testament prophets, and his
speech attains a violence that leaves Gertrude begging him to stop.

In light of the way in which this scene resonates with the scriptural condemnation
of “dead” images that have no life, the entrance of the Ghost becomes even more striking.
The Ghost is a literally “live” image that counters the dead image of Claudius in the
room, and moves Hamlet to take action. With the Ghost’s entrance, the target of
interrogation shifts from Gertrude to Hamlet. Indeed, though Hamlet sets up the scene as
one of censure in which Gertrude’s perverted senses would re-form, the Ghost of his
father complicates this setup. Any conversion that occurs in this scene seems to happen with Hamlet, as he cries:

… Look you how pale he glares.

His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,

Would make them capable.—Do not look upon me,

Lest with this piteous action you convert

My stern effects. Then what I have to do

Will want true color—tears perchance for blood. (3.4.126-132)

The appearance of the Ghost and Hamlet’s description of him—“His form and cause conjoined”—echoes the earlier statement regarding the player’s ability to “force his soul so to his own conceit.” Appearing for the second and last time in the play, the Ghost continues to operate as a “lively image” that once more moves Hamlet to action. Hamlet deems his image to be so effective that he uses hyperbolic language of stones being moved, and characterizes the Ghost’s personal threat as one of converting his “stern effects.”

Although Hamlet resists the converting effects of the Ghost, he is nonetheless moved to action—specifically, ethical action. The cryptic statement—“Then what I have to do / Will want true color—tears perchance for blood”—begins to make sense when considering Hamlet’s changed attitude towards his mother, which switches from speaking “daggers” to something more gracious in this scene. His tone softens to take on the voice of a minister, and he advises his mother:

O, throw away the worser part of it,

And live the purer with the other half.
Good night—but go not to my uncle’s bed.
Assume a virtue if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence, the next more easy (3.4.181-89)

Echoing the biblical logic of “cutting off” the sinning member, Hamlet tells Gertrude to “throw away the worser part” of her heart. Whereas the traditional symbol of interiority is the focus of attention at the beginning of his response, Hamlet abruptly changes the focus of his attention after having seemed to end his conversation with his mother. Indeed, the commands that follow the parting word, “Goodnight” are fascinating, because they move the focus of change from the heart to the body: “Assume a virtue if you have it not.”

This change in focus, though subtle, seems crucial. Here, Hamlet endows the verb “assume” with the meaning “to put on.” And though the subsequent lines citing frock or livery infuse the verb with the meaning of putting on vestments (which recalls his earlier line “customary suits of solemn black”), there is no anxiety about potential hypocrisy. Indeed, we see the prince abandon his language of interiority in order to focus on the doings of the body. The solution “assume a virtue” contrasts sharply with Hamlet’s prior attitude to habits, and points to another way in which the prince’s earlier
iconoclastic semiotics no longer function. Earlier on in the play, Hamlet had exhibited a disdain towards “damnéd custom” and habit. He feared the corrosive nature of “some habit that too much o’erleavens / The form of plausive manners,” which, as he had explained regarding the custom of the Danish king’s drinking to Horatio, “is a custom / More honored in the breach than the observance.” According to Hamlet, a single bad habit can potentially pollute the virtues of the rest of a man (or a nation).

Ranging from Augustinian to Aristotelian, critics have connected Hamlet’s preoccupation with habit to a variety of traditions. What is notable about Hamlet’s understanding of habit in the private scenes with Claudius and Gertrude in Act III, however, is the reliance on “outward” form to mold inward inclinations: “For use almost can change the stamp of nature, / And either curb the devil, or throw him out / With wondrous potency” (3.4.172-4). Like the devotional gestures that stir one’s affections, the habit of assuming a virtue can lead to change—in short, a transformation through imitation. In this way, the danger of hypocrisy inherent in words such as assume, imitate, play becomes defused.

**HAMLET THE DANE**

Hamlet’s changing semiotics has fascinating implications for how performance can be understood in the play as a whole. In her article, “What was Performance?” Crane examines the early modern understanding of performance and argues that in contrast to the assumptions behind the subversion/containment debate, definitions of early modern performance “embraced a wider range of possibilities than we usually now associate with the term and that some of those possibilities involve a different kind of relationship between the performed and the real than the paradoxical one assumed by many critics
today” (172). Crane usefully suggests an understanding of performance (itself an anachronistic term in the period) as an act that emphasizes action rather than deception. Such an understanding of performance seems to be at work in this crucial moment in *Hamlet*, a kind of reiteration and repetitions of words and gestures that can lead to a shaping of reality and true transformation. It is, as aforementioned, a kind of logic that appears in devotional manuals, and explains the positive space given to the performing body in stirring up devotion. Although the word “assume” brings us back to the unsettling imitative effects of deceptive playing, the disdain behind Hamlet’s earlier statement—“These indeed seem, / For they are actions that a man might play”—alters to become something quite different: a viable solution for transformation. The theater’s ability to effect transformative imitation is offered as a possible means for not only Gertrude’s “redemption,” but also as a means for Hamlet to “assume” the identity of “Hamlet the Dane.”

The rest of this chapter focuses on Hamlet’s determination to “assume” the role of the revenging son, a change in attitude that ultimately notes an important shift in his attitude towards playing. Rather than an act that is always already devoid of genuine feeling, Hamlet’s understanding of performance is one that goes beyond the paradigm of deception. Triggered by examples “gross as earth” and culminating in his encounter with Laertes, Hamlet’s actions seem indicative of a new attitude towards the efficacy of performance—that is, he is not loath to play the part, but accepts his role as an avenging son. In her cognitive analysis of the play, Crane has pointed to Hamlet’s self in this way: “Although he is preoccupied with locating [an inner] self for most of the play, in the end he comes to accept his own implication in the plot and to act in accordance with his
existence as a relatively conventional dramatic character shaped performatively through his words and actions.33 Although I draw upon a different framework for this notion, I see in Hamlet’s reliance upon the body as an important turning point in his changing attitude to playing. In ways that echo the logic behind his advice of “assume a virtue if you have it not,” Hamlet changes through assuming and imitating action from a series of characters with whom he identifies.

Although we never see Hamlet and Fortinbras meet face-to-face, the “strong arm” of Norway serves as one of the many “doubles” for Hamlet in the play. After hearing about the plans of Fortinbras’ army, Hamlet enters into his last soliloquy in Act IV. It is a speech that echoes many of his earlier thoughts about the nature of man and contains familiar elements of self-loathing:

… Now, whether it be

Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on th’ event—

A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom

And ever three parts coward—I do not know

Why yet I live to say ‘This thing’s to do’,

Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means,

To do’t. (4.4.39-46)

The problem of inaction becomes explicitly expressed here, and it is in terms of overthinking: “Of thinking too precisely on th’ event.” Hamlet self-defines his problem as one of mere mental knowledge rather than one of experience. His envy of Fortinbras echoes his earlier envy of the player, and it is again, an envy that centers upon action:
“How stand I then, / That have a father killed, a mother stained, / Excitements of my reason and my blood, / And let all sleep” (4.4.56-59). Citing “examples gross as earth” as exhorting him to take action, Hamlet is determined to not let his purpose be blunted: “O, from this time forth, / My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!” (4.4.65-66)

Despite his rallying cry, Hamlet’s last soliloquy leaves room for doubt because his focus is still on thoughts rather than actions. It is as if merely hearing about Fortinbras’ feats and not witnessing them himself fails to trigger the necessary passions in Hamlet. Perhaps appropriately, it is not until he sees Laertes and reacts to his moving example that Hamlet is enabled to become “Hamlet the Dane” later in the play. Coming out of his hiding at Ophelia’s burial site, Hamlet declares himself: “This is I, / Hamlet the Dane” (5.1.226-7). The moment of self-declaration comes, as he later confesses to Horatio, because he sees the correlation between himself and Laertes: “For by the image of my cause I see / The portraiture of his. I’ll court his favors. / But sure the bravery of his grief did put me / Into a tow’ring passion” (5.2.77-79). Stirred emotionally by the lively image of Laertes’ example, Hamlet leaves his place of hiding and finally seems to show himself “in deed” his father’s son “more than words” (4.7.124-5). His earlier sense that he was a “tardy” son “that lapsed in time and passion lets go by / Th’ important acting” seems to no longer be operative here.

The fast pace of events from Hamlet’s last soliloquy and the death-filled ending move Hamlet inexorably to his role of the revenging son. There are no more soliloquies through which Hamlet unpacks his heart with words. The closest Hamlet comes to confession is when he tells Horatio, “But thou wouldst not think how ill all’s here about my heart. But it is no matter” (5.2.187-8). In a way, we see Hamlet becoming what
Laertes had warned Ophelia about earlier: more than his particular emotions, Hamlet’s identity is one formed through his role within the state of Denmark. As Hamlet dismisses the importance of his feelings, the impossibility of the Ghost’s initial command—“But howsoever thou pursues this act, / Taint not thy mind”—seems to be proven here (1.5.84-5). The cost of taking action, of suiting action to the word, becomes one of subsuming the individual emotions towards a greater end. Perhaps appropriately, Hamlet’s last words are directed at the audience and combines explicit references to the theater and his submission to a greater story: “You that look pale and tremble at this chance, / That are but mutes or audience to this act, / Had I but time, as this fell sergeant Death / Is strict in his arrest, O, I could tell you— / But let it be” (5.2.313-17). Here, in this final moment of sudden death and last words, Hamlet declines to insist upon his interiority—“O, I could tell you— / But let it be.”

**CONCLUSION**

Although *Hamlet* is not a devotional work, its preoccupations with authentic prayer and memory, and how people are *moved* to take action, all point to the relevance of religious texts and controversies when reading the play. My next chapter continues to think about lively figures that stir the audience by turning to Shakespeare’s late romance, *The Winter’s Tale*. My decision to move from Shakespearean tragedy to romance is motivated not only by the prominence of lively figures, but the ways in which Catholic and Protestant belief systems seem to be so complexly interrelated in both of these works. Antitheatricalists’ denouncement of the stage as a breeding ground for idolatry seem to gain particular force in a play that concludes with a figure (the statue of Hermione) that invokes worship. Like other works examined in this dissertation, *The Winter’s Tale*
struggles with epistemological uncertainties; arguing that they resonate with contemporary religious discourse surrounding the complex nature of idolatry, I explore the construction of “lawful” imitations in Shakespeare’s work.
CHAPTER FOUR: IDOLATRY AND LAWFULNESS IN  
THE WINTER’S TALE

INTRODUCTION

This fourth and final chapter in this study centers upon Shakespeare’s late romance, *The Winter’s Tale*. While the play evokes some recurrent ideas from this dissertation, *The Winter’s Tale* points to new direction within this study’s treatment of *imitatio*. Through explicit references to art and religion, the celebrated ending blends artistic and devotional modes of *imitatio* in the “raising” of the dead queen. The centerpiece of the scene—Hermione’s body—also points to an embodiment of redemption that brings my prior discussions of penitent and suffering bodies together. The seemingly endless nature of Leontes’ repentance is resolved in this stone-to-flesh moment, as the oft-invoked dead queen is re-membered before his (and the audience’s) eyes. Pleading with Paulina not to draw the curtain upon the image of his wife, Leontes’ reaction to Hermione’s statue emphasizes a conscious conflation between art and life: “What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath?” As Leontes’ wonder-filled comments attest, he is visibly moved and stirred by the “lively” image before him, and embraces the possibility of being “mocked with art.” The hyper-aestheticized image is nonetheless *real*, however, and perhaps the ending of the play is so remarkable because it is a mimesis that not just imitates reality, but *is* reality. In this way, the unnamed lords’ comment in Act V that the work (Hermione’s statue) is “newly performed” seems particularly appropriate, for the word “perform” holds a sense of performance enacting reality.
As aforementioned in the previous chapter, the dangerous imitation of reality and its stirring impact upon the hapless viewer were common reasons for denouncing the public stage, and this chapter continues to consider the imitative link between idolatry and iconoclasm. The three-dimensionality of actors’ bodies made the theater a place where reality was mimicked (and idolatry hazarded), and the connection between idolatry and the stage fueled the vociferous attacks against the theater. Through the statue scene of *The Winter’s Tale*, Shakespeare defuses the danger attributed to the stage by animating a potentially idolatrous image with life; in ways that were only hinted at in *Hamlet*, *The Winter’s Tale* makes use of the lively bodies onstage to suggest that the presumed connection between idolatry and the imitative stage is an unwarranted one, and “to see… life as lively mocked” can help to perform redemption (5.3.19). The breathing warmth of Hermione’s presence is key to understanding the methodology of redemption in the play, particularly in light of how in devotional works idols were condemned as false images of “dead stocks and stones”. Her lively, flesh-and-blood presence abolishes any connections to “dead” images of idols, and instead, becomes an embodiment of “lawful” divine grace.

Although deconstructionist readings of the play foreground the struggle for meaning and recognition, the play’s concern with epistemological uncertainties finds greater resonance with early modern discourse surrounding idolatry. Divergent attitudes towards images provide insight into the redemptive nature of the statue scene. In her work, *England’s Iconoclasts*, Margaret Aston presents a thorough catalogue of the complex nuances with which the problem of images was treated in early modern England. Noting that the Reformists’ iconoclastic tendencies were motivated by a
recognition of “the possibilities of controlling minds through imagery or the destruction of imagery, loading or unloading mental processes with visual effects,” she aligns the Reformists’ iconoclastic zeal to a kind of “revolution” (5). This helps to enhance our understanding of how, in The Winter’s Tale, the question of images becomes an “aesthetic inquiry.” Aston proposes, for instance, that in Declaration of the ten holy commandments (1548), John Hooper takes a “critical step forward” in the investigation into the origins of idolatry when he asks whether idolatry begins with the image or the mind of the beholder (436). For Hooper and subsequent reformers after him, the danger of idolatry lay within the operations of the sinful mind:

The mind of man, when it is not illuminated with the Spirit of God, nor governed by the scripture, it imagineth and feigneth God to be like unto the imagination and conceit of his mind, and not as the scripture teacheth. When this vanity or fond imagination is conceived in the mind, there followeth a further success of the ill. He purposeth to express by some figure of image God in the same form and similitude that his imagination hath first printed in his mind; so that the mind conceiveth the idol, and afterward the hand worketh and representeth the same unto the senses. (Qtd Aston 436-7)

Leontes’ jealousy would seem to be idolatrous then because it involves the error described in Hooper’s Declaration: it privileges the imagination rather than the (scriptural) truth. As Calvin writes in the Institution of Christian Religion, idolatry is so dangerous because it does not originate with God, but is born from the sinful human mind: “Thus the minde begetteth the idol, & the hand bringeth it foorth” (21).
In a play fixated on matters of birth and issue, it is important to consider how the conception of idols begins to “birth” itself in Leontes’ mind, and notions about how idols are conceived provide an important context for such an investigation. Indeed, Leontes’ faith in what his “minde begetteth” rather than his faith in the lively image of his wife helps to explain the nature of his jealousy. Reminiscent of a “senseless” Gertrude who cannot distinguish between an idol and a lively image, Leontes’ jealousy is guided by an inability to distinguish between groundless fantasy and Hermione’s real self. His idolatry is evident in the fact that he cannot exercise common sense but, instead, clings to a viewpoint guided by his subjective affections. The living body in this last scene is so crucial to Leontes’ redemption, then, because the nature of Leontes’ jealousy is one that requires an incarnational type of redemption that has the power to expel his nightmarish fantasies. The faith that is awakened in the final scene is ultimately “lawful” because it is based on a material, embodied reality (“O, she’s warm!”) rather than on one’s vain imaginings (“Too hot, too hot!”). Perhaps it is only fitting that Paulina deems it “physic” for the king to look upon the lively image of his newborn daughter, since she is the imitative “copy of the father” (2.3.99). Leontes’ refusal to recognize the similarities between the newborn Perdita and himself is yet another manifestation of his idolatrous and twisted vision; in choosing to believe in the fruit of his imagination, he literally cannot see the flesh-and-blood truth set before his eyes. The disconnection of the sanctioned imitative link between parent and child—a connection that seems to barely survive inspection in Mamillius’s case—becomes yet another sign of Leotes’s twisted outlook in the stony world of the first three acts.
Liveliness as the trademark of real faith is, as I’ve already shown, an important distinction that made the believer’s body exempt from the Protestant rejection of idolatrous images. The fact that Paulina’s character seems to be an explicit nod towards the New Testament apostle further supports the notion that an embodied aesthetic plays an important role in the realization of redemption in the play. Although Paulina’s role in Shakespeare’s romance has been examined in light of the doctrine of works and justification, there has been little interest in the dominant image in Pauline thought: the body. Yet the human body plays a central role in Pauline doctrine; it supplies the language of metaphor (the Church as the body) while simultaneously signifying the individual’s physical connection to the incarnate God. For Paul, the suffering body (his and that of other believers) forms a crucial imitative connection between Christ and his followers. The marks of faith borne on the members of Foxe’s martyrs gain authority through verses such as Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (KJV). In this way, the denigration of the flesh and the important role the body plays in the performance of devotion are not conflicting models, if the body (as subordinate to Christ) can help achieve perfection.6

Whereas Pauline theology privileges the body as a “temple” of God even as it rejects the carnality of the flesh, Leontes refuses to see his wife objectively—that is, her identity becomes merely one of flesh. Threatened by his wife’s fertile body, Leontes can see her (and, by extension, the entire female sex) only as diseased: “No barricado for a belly” (1.2.202). This practice becomes especially evident in his preoccupation with the female body—a “playing” body that, in turn, resonates interestingly with contemporary
antitheatrical sentiments and accusations of idolatry. The sanctity of Hermione’s body becomes evident, however, through the fact that her selfhood is marked by suffering rather than sexuality. Moreover, the close connection shared between mother and a son who “physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh” further establishes a way to sanctify the female body in the play. Although I am not suggesting that Hermione is a Christ-figure, it is interesting that the only safe site in Sicilia seems to be Hermione’s womb. Hermione’s redemptive body also provides a new way to think about the carry-over of a medieval incarnational aesthetic. As Caroline Walker Bynum has shown, while concepts of the female body were indisputably negative and deemed dangerous, there was also a medieval tradition of aligning the female body with Christ’s humanity. Such tactile connections to the divine also make Hermione a fitting emissary of grace in the play.

Whereas idolatry provides an especially helpful category for understanding the workings of Leontes’ jealousy in Acts I-III, the movement away from tragedy into comedy is better understood by way of a complementary category. Iconoclasm, the obverse of idolatry, provides important ways to think about Paulina’s “poor image” in her chapel (5.3.58). If English reformers operated by the principle, “the greater the realism the greater the hazard of idolatry,” then is this masterful work of Giulio Romano who “would beguile nature of her custom” (and whose name bears the mark of Rome) a type of an idol in its imitative excellence? To explore this possibility, we need to take into account pertinent early modern thinking about iconoclasm and, in addition, we need to reckon with the difficulty with which transgressive images were identified in Reformation England. Because of the importance of sculpture in The Winter’s Tale, contemporary anxieties about how to distinguish between an idolatrous image and an
acceptable image are pertinent to not just the general antitheatrical debates, but to the central workings of this play. In his essay on “living sculptures,” Leonard Barkan contends that sculpture is key to understanding a hierarchy of the arts implicit in this ending scene of *The Winter’s Tale*, since sculpture (and, by extension, drama) was considered to be superior to the other arts: “So the name of Giulio Romano means, I think, the multiplicity of the arts, the rivalry among them, and the *paragone* of art and nature” (657). Although my reading is different from Barkan’s in that I focus on the scriptural more than the classical traditions, I also see the sculptural component being important to realizing the power of the artistic image. Understandably, the Elizabethan iconoclasts privileged the human statue more than any other art form by fretting over it the most, and attributing the greatest danger to it. The fact that Hermione is a hyper-aestheticized sculpture *and* a living being, however, makes this imitative moment complicated; because the awakening of faith requires a kind of repenting and remembering that centers upon a three-dimensional body, whose *art* is closer to the brazen reality than a poetic “golden” in its wrinkled status, the redemption that occurs is ultimately grounded in the “real presence” of Hermione’s lively body.

**IDOLATROUS VISION IN SICILIA**

While psychoanalytic readings of Leontes as a man who fears the maternal body have yielded valuable perspectives from which to understand the sudden onset of his jealousy, it is helpful to attend to some ways in which Shakespeare’s dramatic representation of the dynamics of jealousy engages with discourses contemporary with his play, in particular, the language of introspection. Julia Reinhard Lupton notes in her chapter on *The Winter’s Tale* that the Decalogue provides a powerful “matrix of
transgressions” for the production of Leontes’ jealous fantasy through its laws against idolatry, adultery, and covetousness (186). The prohibition against graven images follows immediately after God’s declaration about himself: “I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” (Exodus 20:2-3). Idolatry is defined as worshiping something false as something real, mistaking the counterfeit imitation (idol) for reality (Jehovah). In a fundamental sense, the sin that Leontes thinks his wife commits is closely related to such idolatrous impulses. In his first face-to-face confrontation with Hermione in Act II, for example, Leontes’ charge to her is one of failing to distinguish between two men: “You have mistook, my lady, / Polixenes for Leontes” (2.1.82-3). What he observes between Hermione and Polixenes is a type of misdirected tribute that he rightly deserves from her: “How she holds up the neb, the bill to him! / And arms her with the boldness of a wife / To her allowing husband” (1.2.181-183).

Not only does the play’s general concern with likenesses resonate with the sin of idolatry, but the network of ideas associated with idolatry forms an intriguing starting point for a discussion of Leontes’ seemingly senseless jealousy. In particular, the origins of idolatry—whether it is from within or without—seem to provide a relevant context for discussing a text saturated with the language of “diseased opinion,” for the question on everyone’s minds is captured in an exchange between Polixenes and Camillo: “How should this grow?” (1.2.426). Although Camillo answers Polixenes that “‘tis safer to / Avoid what’s grown than question how ‘tis born,” early modern contemplators of the meaning of idolatry did not stop there. From whence does idolatry, the first and principle sin, arise? In particular, is it triggered by what one sees or what one imagines? In his A
Warning Against Idolatry (1616), William Perkins considers “all manner of idols” and the various ways in which idolatry can be manifest in one’s life. Perkins’ tract is interesting because he writes not just of the visible forms of idols, but of a “most secret and spiritual idolatry.” Elucidating upon kinds of idols that can be erected in men’s minds, Perkins states:

Yea the multitude in all places set up unto themselves, a god that is all mercy, and no justice: because they content themselves with the light of blind nature, and frame God according to their own desires and affections. And by this means they erect unto themselves idols within their own hearts, and commit a most secret and spiritual Idolatry, which the world cannot discern.

Here again, the perennial issue of self-deception that can hide itself in worship arises, for any false understanding of God becomes a form of idolatry; indeed, one’s misinterpretation of God becomes an act of idolatry. Concluding that “A false opinion, is an idol of falsehood,” Perkins warns his readers of the idols conceived by man’s mind: “God is to be conceived as he reveals himself unto us, and no otherwise: if otherwise, God is not conceived, but a fiction or idol of the brain” (674).

Perkins’ concern with “a fiction or idol of the brain” seems relevant when considering Leontes’ jealousy, especially since the baseless quality of the king’s jealousy is evident both to the people around him and to the watching spectators. Going back to the question of “How should this grow,” then, I want to keep this notion of an “idol in the brain” and examine some key moments that lead up to and exemplify Leontes’ jealousy. Polixenes’ idyllic description of his and Leontes’ childhoods provides a good starting
point for such an investigation. Responding to Hermione’s teasing question about his and Leontes’ childhoods together, Polixenes states:

We were as twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' the sun,
And bleat the one at the other: what we changed
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dream'd
That any did. Had we pursued that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher rear'd
With stronger blood, we should have answer'd heaven
Boldly 'not guilty,' the imposition clear'd
Hereditary ours…

Temptations have since then been born to’s, for
In those unfledged days was my wife a girl;
Your precious self had then not crossed the eyes
Of my young playfellow. (1.2.66-78)

This moment of explicit mirroring in the language of this speech has elicited much psychoanalytic explanation. While there is much about this speech that is fascinating, I want to focus on what is unspoken. That is, the Bohemian king’s depiction of their childhood is interesting not so much for what it says, but what he so insistently avows as absence: “the doctrine of ill-doing.” Not only is it not a possibility in their horizon of knowledge, such a doctrine lies beyond their ability to even “dream” up.

If we take Polixenes’ description as a window into Leontes’ mind as well, then this short exchange about childhood, ill-doing, and who comes to sabotage paradise
yields interesting results for how to understand the king’s jealousy. According to
Polixenes’ idyllic description, what was missing from their idyllic experience together in
youth was any consciousness of sin. He expresses this in terms that suggest the
impossibility of an inner idolatry, that is, one that is formed within. As Polixenes’
answer attests, the deep innocence of the boys who could not even “dream” that there
could be ill-doing was forever changed by what “crossed the eyes / Of [his] young
playfellow.” It is a fall that begins with the eye and then develops through the workings
of imaginings within. Demonic agency is projected upon the seductive figure, whose
presence is assigned responsibility for infecting and corrupting the innocent (if hapless)
viewer. Indeed, Hermione’s playful response to Polixenes’ description—“Of this make
no conclusion, lest you say / Your queen and I are devils” (1.2.80-1)—takes on ominous
reality through Leontes’ later accusations. Likewise, the playful disavowal of any
knowledge of a “doctrine of ill-doing” enables Leontes’ later burst of jealousy by
attributing all causation to the (adulterous) image before his eyes. Whereas others would
counsel the king that what he sees is nothing, Leontes insists that there is indeed
something. As he tells a disbelieving Camillo, if there is “nothing” between his wife and
Polixenes, “Why then the world and all that’s in’t is nothing, / The covering sky is
nothing, Bohemia nothing, / My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings / If this
be nothing” (1.2.289-93).

The remarkable sort of faith that Leontes has in his perceptions and affections—a
kind of faith that “make possible things not so held” (1.2.138)—becomes possible in a
person who sees “ill-doing” as motivated by externals rather than an “inner idolatry” that
Reformists fretted over. Indeed, although there existed plenty of advice against avoiding
what would cause one to “trip,” contemporary devotional texts also frequently placed the burden of idolatry on one’s inner eye—a practice that echoed biblical injunctions towards self-knowledge. Without such an understanding of inner idolatry, the “doctrine of ill-doing” and utter depravity could not make sense. The emphasis on inward depravity built upon Christ’s definitive policy on such matters: “For from within, even out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, reproaches, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile a man” (Mark 7:21-23 Geneva). In light of Christ’s logic about what truly defiles a man, Leontes’ frenzied expression of revulsion gains a kind of heightened irony, since his accusations point to his own depraved mind than any kind of reality. It is, in Perkins’ words, a “most secret and spiritual idolatry” that engages in self-deception. Such definitions of idolatry question any easy correlations between outside and inside; if idolatry is an issue of things internal (the mind and the heart), Polixenes’s depiction of man’s fall from innocence is ultimately an inaccurate one, since the blame lies so squarely on the intruder.

Such belief in the boys’ innocent passivity before their eyes have been “crossed” has interesting ramifications for how The Winter’s Tale counters antitheatrical sentiments. The theater had become conflated with idolatry because its detractors deemed the stage’s imitation of reality to be morally dangerous. The reasoning behind this necessitated that the viewer be constructed in a certain way—that is, as a defenseless recipient of sensorial attacks that pollute the mind. For example, Gosson asks in his second attack against the stage: “If we be careful that no pollution of idoles enter by the mouth into our bodies, how diligent, how circumspect, how wary ought we to be, that no
corruption of idols, enter by the passage of our eyes & eares into the soule?” (Qtd O’Connell 14). Avoidance of idolatry through the stage became a regulation of the self that must monitor and censor what comes into the eyes and ears, and it was frequently described in the language of pollution and infection. Although Leontes is, in many ways, an iconoclastic character, his embracing of outward infection aligns him with antitheatrical portrayals of the hapless viewer as well. The question of “how should this grow” is answered by placing the blame on the demonic idol—in his case, his wife. The king’s wounded sense of victimization smacks of the antitheatricalists’ construction of the audience member, whose senses are assaulted by what they see on the idolatrous stage. It perhaps makes sense, then, that the play’s meta-theatrical moments, which are so wondrously displayed in the last redemptive scene, are sources of dark speculation and imaginings in the stony world of the first acts: “Go play, boy, play—thy mother plays, / and I / Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave” (1.2.184-86). While I will expand on the antitheatrical strain later on in this chapter, it is interesting to note here how often derivations of the word perform occur in the play (eleven times), and that the word is frequently used to describe Leontes’ will: “The king’s will be performed!” (2.1.114). The fact, then, that the living body of Hermione breaks the nightmare and endless cycle of Leontes’ inefficacious repentance is significant; only in his wife’s presence does the king fully perform a redemptive repentance. By doing so, the final scene points to how performance itself undergoes redemption from the beginning to the end of the play.

Leontes’ idolatrous vision serves to explain the objectifying language that flows with astonishing variety from his lips. Hermione is by turns a thing, a hobby-horse, a
bed-swerver, because Leontes subscribes to his own private perspective which cannot even “dream” that it might be faulty. As a result, Hermione must remain objectified so that she can serve as a creation of his imagination, and such beliefs seem to drive a refusal to recognize Hermione as an individual (if she is false, all women are false). Leontes’ objectification of his wife also becomes evident through the distancing language with which he describes Hermione. After charging into the female space of the nursery, for example, Leontes declares to his lords:

Look on her, mark her well; be but about
To say that she is a goodly lady, and
The justice of your hearts will thereto add
‘Tis pity she’s not honest. Honourable;
Praise her but for this her without-door form,
Which on my faith deserves high speech, and straight
The shrug, the hum or ha, these petty brands
That calumny doth use—O, I am out!
That mercy does, for calumny will sear
Virtue itself; these shrugs, these hums and has,
When you have said she’s goodly, come between,
Ere you can say she’s honest. But be’t known,
From him that has most cause to grieve it should be,
She’s an adulteress! (2.1.63-78)

Commanding his lords to “look on her,” Leontes relates to his wife as a critic who sees beyond the surface of the aesthetic object: she may seem “honourable” in her “without-
door form,” but he knows better. Yet, as this scene and others make clear, in order for his vision to “work,” Leontes cannot see Hermione as she is; the image/idol of the mind becomes more real than the breathing form before him. Again and again, then, Leontes distances himself from the reality of his wife by insisting on her deviant sexuality. Even as he accuses Hermione of failing to distinguish between her true husband and a false one, Leontes’ vision is one that can see his wife only as flesh and the rest of the world as “a bawdy planet” (1.2.199). In a perverse way, Leontes’ certain knowledge of Hermione’s true status as an adulteress seems to replace a husband’s “knowledge” of his wife.

Perhaps the greatest indication of Leontes’ inner idolatry is his reliance upon a key term in the play: affection. Even before the infamous “Affection! Thy intention stabs the centre” speech, affection provides the groundwork for Leontes’ identity. The opening scene’s conversation between Camillo and Archidamus makes clear the fact that affection is the bond between Polonius and Leontes. Camillo assures Archidamus that “…there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now” (1.1.22-23). Affection, of course, also means more than kindly feelings; the dominant early modern sense of the word was grounded in the body as we have noted, and it was closely aligned to the term “senses.” David Ward’s investigation into contemporary meaning of the word offers insight into the usages of the word, and his emphasis on the fact that affection can play “a dominant and coercive role in the non-physical world” seems accurate. However, whereas Ward emphasizes the medical and psychological senses behind the term “affection,” I look to the coercive role given to affections in religious discourse. One’s affections provided the counterpart to reason, and often served

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a synonymous function for the heart and the imagination. Although one’s affections needed to be stirred up in order to engage in authentic devotion, they could also become a source of idolatry because they composed such an integral part of how one understood selfhood. Moreover, since self-originating images were considered idolatrous, affections also played an important role in defining idolatry by *becoming* an idol itself. Thus, affection provides the means for what Perkins labels “secret” idolatry: when men “frame God according to their own desires and affections.”

Such subtleties involved in idolatry were concerns in devotional tracts. John Bradford, for example, notes the correlation between worshipping an outward idol and an inward image when he writes, “For as in times past, when I did not know this [second] commandment, I was an image-worshipper of stocks, stones &c, yea, bread and wine; so now I am a worshipper of mine affections, offering to them the service due unto thee” (Qtd Aston 459). Bradford realizes that the privileged status given to “mine affections” is as much an act of idolatry as the externalized idolatry practiced in “times past.”

Lancelot Andrewes pairs an unhealthy devotion to one’s affections with “prophaness,” and writes: “When a man will be carried by his affections in every thing, and do that which seemeth good in his own eyes, when he will be under no yoke or bands but breake them, giving credit to nothing but what his own God (corrupt reason) him to, doing nothing but by his own direction and what his own will stands affected to.”¹³ The idolatry of one’s affections leads one to a kind of solipsistic circle in which no other perspective exists except “that which seemeth good in his own eyes.”

In light of how affections themselves can become a kind of idol, Leontes’ bizarre paean to “Affection” in Act I becomes less illegible. Critics have dealt with this
confusing monologue in various ways. Stephen Orgel notes that the speech is a testament to the “linguistic opacity” that is built into the play; David Ward reads it as an effort on Leontes’ part to make a self-diagnosis of his madness.\textsuperscript{14} Beginning with an address to Mamillius but ending in an apostrophe to “affection,” these lines serve as a crucial (and confusing) moment in the first act:

---. Come, sir page,
Look on me with your welkin eye. Sweet villain,
Most dear’st, my collop—can thy dam, may’t be
Affection!—thy intention stabs the centre.
Thou dost make possible things not so held,
Communicat’st with dreams—how can this be?
With what’s unreal thou coactive art,
And fellow’st nothing. Then ‘tis very credent
Thou mayst co-join with something, and thou dost,
And that beyond commission, and I find it,
And that to the infection of my brains
And hard’ning of my brows. (1.2.136-44)

By using key terms within the play such as “dreams” and “nothing,” these lines teasingly point to the importance of affections. Without trying to flatten out the richness of these verses, I suggest that one way to understand these lines is by reading the term \textit{affections} as a sign of reliance upon one’s internal eye. For Leontes, affections are so powerful because “Thou dost make possible things not so held, / Communicat’st with dreams”—a strange perversion of the definition of faith.
The king’s insistence on the rightness of his perceptions can be seen, in effect, as an insistence on the rightness (and superiority) of his affection and senses. Leontes’ confidence in his affections comes out clearly when he chides his officials with the rebuke, “You smell this business with a sense as cold / As is a dead man’s nose; but I do see’t and feel’t / As you feel doing thus” (2.1.151-3). Unlike the lords whose senses are deadened, he is not fooled by Hermione’s falsely innocent image, because in his mind, his senses and affections are vibrantly alive. Similarly, Leontes engages in self-congratulation (albeit bitter) when he cries, “How blest am I / In my just censure, in my true opinion!” after finding out that Camillo had absconded with Polixenes. The moment in which he chastises the lords is interesting because it seems emblematic of the kind of interpretative “infection” from which Leontes suffers: he cannot subscribe to the reality of things around him. The epistemology that drives Leontes assumptions about reality is made visible in this moment of comparison between affection (see’t and feel’t) and the reality of “thus.” Indeed, the last line “thus,” which calls for some kind of stage business to follow, is subordinate to Leontes’ subjective reality of seeing and feeling. That is, his comparison between a concrete “thus” and his ability to “see’t and feel’t” is one that overrides the authenticity offered through the tangible, embodied reality of touch.

Leontes’ commitment to his own senses reaches tragic heights during the trial scene. As many critics have noted, the message from Apollo is unusually clear in its staccato declaration of facts: “Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless, Camillo a true subject, Leontes a jealous tyrant, his innocent babe truly forgotten, and the King shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found.” Despite the clarity of the message, however, the king dismisses the pronouncement in favor of his own opinion. It is only
through a second message—the death of his son—that Leontes surrenders his adherence to what he can construct in his mind’s eye. The fact that Leontes is brought to his right senses through Mamillius’ death seems to resonate with the competition between subjective “see’t and feel’t” and the real matter of “thus”; that is, the fallen body of a son finally awakens the father from his dreams. Recognition comes too late, however, and part of the redemption that occurs in the final scene of the play, then, is the reversal and restoration of Leontes’ senses.

The confidence that Leontes places upon his affections contrasts sharply with the common antitheatrical rhetoric that also emphasized affections. Performing bodies were demonized because they were judged to be idolatrous images that stirred up the affections of the vulnerable spectator, whose humoral psychology made them especially susceptible to the emotional effects of the theater. While my previous chapter on Hamlet emphasized the role of affections in eliciting positive imitation, The Winter’s Tale provides a more complex portrayal of how affections operate in relationship to the stage. Although lines such as “Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays” assigns Hermione as a lascivious playing body, Leontes’ reliance upon his affections show him to be stirred by his imagination rather than the lively image of his wife.

In light of how committed Leontes is to his blind vision, it is perhaps appropriate that Paulina assumes the roles of both physician and director in the play. The roles are more deeply connected than one initially thinks, because of the nature of Leontes’ disease: his failure in vision. In this way, like and unlike Cavell, I also understand the last crucial scene as a moment of recognition.15 The tragedy of the first three acts—the failure to see Hermione as she really is—becomes recovered in the explicitly meta-
thetarical moments of the statue scene. There, the spell of Leontes’ idolatrous vision can be finally broken in a moment that depicts stone turning into flesh.

Leontes’ problematic vision also serves to explain the failure of Paulina’s method of “physic” in the first three acts. Although Paulina draws attention to the lively image of his newborn babe by pointing out the visible match between father and daughter, it also becomes clear that Leontes’ role as a parent as well as a husband has been compromised by his idolatrous vision. As critics have pointed out, Leontes’ sudden descent into jealousy seems connected to an anxiety about his true connection to his son. Leontes ends the “Too hot, too hot!” speech with a sudden turn to Mamillius and asks, “Art thou my boy?” (1.2.118) The question of Hermione’s fidelity places his firstborn into a questionable state as well, yet Mamillius is able to “pass” the test because he, in effect, can offer ocular proof of his sonship. As Leontes himself states, “Yet they say we are / Almost as like as eggs” (1.2.128-9); the son looks exactly like the father, and thus escapes the wrath of Leontes’ jealousy. Paulina seems to depend on a similar logic of visible proof to work in her favor when she decides to “physic” the king by showing him his newborn babe; however, her tactic fails to bring about the desired result, and Perdita is condemned to be abandoned in the wilderness.

Reasoning that “We do not know / How he may soften at the sight o’th’ child” (2.2.41), Paulina presents Perdita before Leontes and his lords:

---. Behold, my lords,

Although the print be little, the whole matter
And copy of the father—eye, nose, lip,
The trick of’s frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles,
The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger. (2.3.97-102)

In a moment reminiscent of Leontes’ earlier speech to the lords to “look upon” Hermione, Paulina commands the all to look upon the babe. Unlike Leontes, however, what Paulina draws attention to is not her conjectures about the babe, but the lively image of Perdita and what is plain to the sight of all who are there: the babe is the “copy of the father” and thus his legitimate issue. Here, the threatening notion of counterfeits, false likenesses, and bastards seem to be defused through the clarity drawn from common sense: the imitative resemblance between father and daughter. By drawing attention to the physical attributes of the babe, Paulina’s solution is one that would “physic” the king with flesh-and-blood evidence. So why does Leontes reject this evidence of exact copy, if he accepted the visible link with his son?

In order to answer this question, it is helpful to turn our attention to a speech uttered by an earlier Leontes. Attributing his distraction to his thoughts about Mamillius, Leontes answers a questioning Hermione with this explanation:

…Looking on the lines
Of my boy’s face, methoughts I did recoil
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,
As ornaments oft do’s, too dangerous.
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,
Will you take eggs for money? (1.2.152-9)

The lineaments of his boy’s face transport Leontes to an earlier time of “unbreeched,” androgynous childhood. It is evident from his words that Leontes’ method of gazing remains idolatrous, however: he sees yet does not see Mamillius; his boy actually serves as a mirror for the father. This insistent demand on self is also a form of idolatry (remember Luther’s succinct definition of the carnal self, curvatus in se). When Leontes is asked to look upon his identical issue in Perdita, then, he cannot find a similar mirror unto himself—most prominently, I suggest, in the fact that there is no phallic sign of the “dagger muzzled.” Indeed, Paulina’s commentary on the visible connections between father and daughter are unwelcomingly female, especially in context of Leontes’ misogynous language against Paulina. The feminine traits of the daughter also threaten the masculinity of the father, for among the matter that proves the babe to be the “copy of the father” are: “The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles / The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger” (2.3.101-2). Paulina’s strategy of offering visible proof fails because, amongst other things, Leontes’ self-centered gaze cannot accommodate the sexual difference (or similarities) that exists between himself and his daughter.

**Hermione’s Suffering Body**

The competition between a vision of inner idolatry and real presence finds its focal point through the figure of Hermione. Although Leontes insists upon representing her as an adulteress, Hermione resists such villifying gestures. Indeed, though she is a figure of courtly social grace and verbal wit, Hermione shows herself to be a character predominantly aligned with suffering—a fact that is made clear through Antigonus’ recitation of his dream encounter with her in Act III. He states, “To me comes a creature,
Sometimes her head on one side, some another; / I never saw a vessel of like sorrow /
So filled, and so becoming” (3.3.18-21). Here, the sexual incontinence of which Leontes accuses her (and, by connection, all womankind) becomes one of watery sorrow: “her eyes / Became two spouts.” Like the Ghost in Hamlet, Hermione is a lively image with much power. Although recent criticism has employed feminist perspectives to treat Hermione as a character, a perspective that considers the qualities of her martyrdom better enables us to explore the key term grace and to put Hermione’s character into focus. Rather than sexual transgressions, Hermione’s body bears the marks of a martyr and is ultimately a suffering body rather than a “slippery” one.

The trial scene in Act III not only highlights Hermione’s verbal eloquence, but the real presence of her body and its present state. Hermione’s language of corporeality—specifically, her suffering body—effectively dispels the dreams and threats of her husband. She states:

Sir, spare your threats.
The bug which you would fright me with I seek.
To me can life be no commodity;
The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
I do give lost, for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went. My second joy,
And first fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barred like one infectious. My third comfort,
Starred most unluckily, is from my breast,
The innocent milk in its most innocent mouth,
Haled out to murder; myself on every post
Proclaimed a strumpet; with immodest hatred
The childbed privilege denied, which ‘longs
To women of all fashion; lastly, hurried
Here, to this place, i’th’ open air, before
I have got strength of limit. (3.2.89-104)

Hermione dismisses the “bug” with which he threatens her, and turns his (and our) attention to her present condition. She does not fear the punishment of death, since all of her joys have been taken from her. The performative elements of this scene focus upon the visible proof of her losses: her now unpregnant body. Hermione’s speech is visibly underscored by her literally deflated figure, which serves as a startling contrast to her fertile form in the last act. Her diction, too, is full of female body parts (body, breast, milk), and she seems to purposely point out her frail body which has been “hurried / Here, to this place, i’th’ open air.” As Gail Kern Paster points out, Hermione’s trial “displaces the churching ceremony, which even for queens, was the proper form of public reincorporation into the social body because it represented an affirmation of the bodily recovery and purgation that traversed all gradients of rank” (272). Her suffering is compounded by the fact that she has been denied the privilege of bedrest “which ‘longs / To women of all fashion.” By fleshing out her experiences and identifying herself as a suffering body, Hermione resists the label of adulterous flesh that Leontes would foist upon her.

While critics such as Patricia Gourlay have noted that Shakespeare “already used ‘femaleness’ to imply the limitations of a masculine world” by the time he writes The
Winter’s Tale, he writes for Hermione a self-defense which draws upon a tradition of female suffering that circulated with the depictions of martyrs. Indeed, the circumstances of her imprisonment and, in particular, the fact that she gives birth to Perdita while imprisoned resonate interestingly with examples of female martyrs found in works like Foxe’s Acts and Monuments. As my work on Foxe points out, the suffering body radically reduces the potential for counterfeit performance and shrinks the space between sign and thing. When Hermione invokes her father, the Emperor of Russia, and wishes that “he were alive, and here beholding / His daughter’s trial!” she seems to invoke the watching eyes of the spectators as well, and guaranteeing that they see “with eyes / Of pity” (3.2.118-121).

Hermione emphasizes her weak and vulnerable state by drawing attention to her bereft status. The bodying forth of her sufferings resonates with the late medieval tradition of aligning the female with the humanity of Christ. As Bynum notes, “The symbolic association of humanity with the female thus derived strength both from the association of humanity with physicality (and woman was the symbol of flesh) and from the association of Christ’s humanity with his mother” (269). Hermione’s suffering body reinterprets the carnal transgressions with which Leontes accuses her; in this way, though the nightmarish interpretation of Leontes’ vision insists on asserting itself, it is encouraged to change from imagination to reality.

PROBLEMS AND PROMISES OF REDEMPTION IN BOHEMIA

The structure of The Winter’s Tale as a tragidomedy becomes evident in Act IV, and I want to examine how the pastoral interlude in Bohemia prepares us for the final statue scene. Overflowing with symbolic elements of spring and new life, the new
generation signified through Perdita and Florizel promises to overcome the mistakes of the former generation. Even as the elements of the first three acts’ elite tragedy seem to be recast, however, the shadow of Leontes’ warped vision also threatens the bond between Perdita and Florizel. The promises of redemption in Bohemia seem to be beset by potential problems and dangers; specifically, the devotion that Perdita naturally inspires from the men around her threatens to make her into an object of idolatry, and Florizel’s reliance upon his affections resonate dangerously with Leontes’ earlier idolatrous gaze. Moreover, the protean figure of Autolycus, through his enervating effects upon his “spectators,” underscores the antitheatricalists’ worst fears about theater.

Assessing the problems and promises for redemption in Act IV allows us to be in a better position to examine the performance of redemption in the last act.

Various critics have pointed out how the pastoral interlude is not free from the earlier theme of misogyny: it is apparent through Polixenes’ harsh language against Perdita. Rather than misogyny, I examine the traces of idolatry that are apparent in this act, and the ways in which Perdita becomes a problematic object of idolatry who must negotiate its dangers. The idyllic rural scene is one in which, we’re told again and again, Perdita is a “queen.” The lavish compliments that her lover piles upon her are met with uneasy self-deprecation by the lowly shepherdess, however, who spurns being “pranked up” like a goddess. The prestige of being “goddess-like” is a false kind of imitation that worries Perdita, and there is an iconoclastic tendency about her uneasiness that comes out in her rejection of any false images and falsifying exteriors. Perdita herself is featured pictorially by the men around her, however, and such language of representation makes clear the fact that there is a persistent desire to view her as an
aesthetic object. It is Camillo rather than her suitor who most clearly articulates this idolatrous urge, however, when he tells Perdita, “I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, / And only live by gazing” (4.4.109-110). The perpetual quality implicit in this remark threatens to freeze Perdita into a kind of goddess-statue, or an idol.

The threatening stilling implicit in Camillo’s compliment to Perdita is a noticeable theme in Florizel’s praise of his beloved as well. Indeed, his loving desire for her to keep on doing what she does holds troubling implications. Responding to Perdita’s self-critiquing statement that she “plays” as those who play in “Whisun pastorals” and that her disposition is changing through her changed weeds, Florizel states:

What you do
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet.
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
Pray so; and, for the ordering your affairs,
To sing them too: when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that; move still, still so,
And own no other function: each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
That all your acts are queens.

The adoring words of a lover to his beloved betray a desire for stillness, and a perpetuity that allows for masculine control over the female subject. While Florizel points out the
redemptive “bettering” that all of Perdita’s actions bring, his praise is also a command for her to be frozen in what she does: “I’d have you do it ever.” The desire that she should “ever do / Nothing but that” is dangerously close to a desire that she stop doing anything altogether. The speech’s conflicted urgings for both action and stillness become evident in lines such as “move still, still so, / And own no other function.” At the end of his adoring speech, Florizel’s devotion threatens to become a deadening one, in which Perdita’s liveliness threatens to transform into the “dead stocks and stones” of idols.

Part of what Perdita must negotiate, then, are the ways in which the men around her try to represent her. She proves to be more than a match for anyone who would turn her into a senseless idol; indeed, her response to Camillo’s remark that he should “only live by gazing” is reminiscent of her mother’s playful wit: “Out, alas! / You’d be so lean, that blasts of January / Would blow you through and through.” Perdita is also quick to deflect attention from herself and directs Camillo’s (and our) gaze to the lively figures surrounding her. Turning to Florizel and then to the Shepherdesses, and invoking the sexual fertility of those “That wear upon your virgin branches yet / Your maidenheads growing,” she shatters Camillo’s deadening idolatry that would “only live by gazing” by turning our attention to these figures of springtime and fertility. Perdita is equally self-deprecating in response to Florizel’s “too large” praise in the same scene, yet less playful. Instead of employing witty playfulness when referring to Florizel’s hyperbolic (and potentially false) praise, she is all seriousness as she evaluates the verity of her lover’s purpose towards her. Interestingly, Perdita sheds any possibility for suspicious thoughts by turning to a questionable proof of the prince’s virtue: his blood. She states, “But that your youth / And the true blood which peeps fairly through’t / Do plainly give you out an
unstained shepherd, / With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles, / You wooed me the false way” (4.4.147-51).

In a play that has much to do with verification, Perdita’s invocation of and reliance upon “true blood” is intriguing. The reference to blood holds multiple senses; it not only points to the fact of Florizel’s noble heritage, but also to a fundamental humoral disposition on his part, which Perdita trusts is virtuous and makes him “an unstain’d shepherd.” Although in obvious disguise, his playing remains unquestioned due to his true blood. Like the dangerous motif of stoniness, however, the reference to one’s humoral workings resonates threateningly with the wintry world of the first three tragic acts: Leontes’ tyrannical passion. Indeed, as Paulina’s description of what ails the king in Act III shows, Leontes’ problem is one of unbalanced humors, which she tries to cure through her words: “I / Do come with words as medicinal as true, / Honest as either, to purge him of that humour / That presses him from sleep.” In this way, Perdita’s reliance upon Florizel’s “true blood” is ambiguously coded in the play: on one hand, it could indicate a virtuous nature that will remain unchanged; on the other hand, it could signify a disturbing resemblance to Leontes that would perpetuate the sins of the prior generation.

Perdita’s reliance upon Florizel’s “true blood” becomes potentially more problematic when looking at Florizel’s own allegiance to his passions and humors. After all the disguises are off and the young lovers find themselves facing separation, Florizel declares to a distraught Perdita:

It cannot fail but by

The violation of my faith; and then
Let nature crush the sides o’the earth together
And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks:
From my succession wipe me, father; I

*Am heir to my affection.* (Italics mine)

Declaring fealty to his affections rather than to his father, the young prince names himself as “heir to [his] affection.” In light of Leontes’ earlier dependence on his affections, however, the term does not operate innocently at this point in the play. Is the prince declaring fealty to his passions or to his own perspective? And how trustworthy is his gaze that would have Perdita froze in perpetual action “still”?

Despite the comic elements in this act, some of the shadows from the stony world of Sicilia hang over the festivity in Bohemia. The wonder and devotion that Perdita’s beauty elicits in those around her mark her as a potential figure of idolatry, and her self-effacement seems undergirded by a subconscious understanding of this dangerous potential even as she attempts to dispel it. Her lover’s subscription to reality seems to be compromised by his allegiance to affections as well as a desire for her to be still. Perhaps appropriately, then, Polixenes’ threat that he would “have thy beauty scratched with briers and made / More homely than thy state” resembles the iconoclastic zeal that fueled defacement of church images, since Perdita is a figure that invites devotion. Perdita’s iconoclastic tendencies seem to motivate her rejection of gillyvores as well, which she refers to as “nature’s bastards” later on in the scene. She fears that theirs is an idolatrous counterfeiting of nature: “For I have heard it said / There is an art which in their piedness shares / With great creating nature.” Polixenes is quick to correct her rigid stance, and suggests that nature and art do not have to be at odds: “This is an art / Which does mend
nature—change it rather—but / The art itself is nature.” Polixenes’ description of such an art has been interpreted as a gesture towards the art of theater. While the general tenor of this interpretation is right-headed, it is important to note that the potential promise of theater is deliberately sabotaged in this fourth act. Even as it gestures towards an ideal fusion between art and nature, the pastoral interlude merely promises rather than delivers redemption—something that becomes evident through the wily figure of theater in the play, Autolycus.

After all the disguises come off and Polixenes has stormed off in anger, the play offers a series of meta-theatrical allusions. Camillo’s solution for the young lovers have him take on the role of a playwright, as he assures Florizel that he does not need to fear any lack in financial resources: “It shall be so my care / To have you royally appointed, as if / The scene you play were mine” (4.4.588-90). Florizel and Perdita become actors and Camillo’s care for them that of a playwright for his characters. The notion of playing and staging is immediately picked up by the entrance of Autolycus, who comes on to the scene cackling with glee over how he has been able to con the gullible attendants of the sheepshearing. Autolycus’ entrance is interesting because he not only continues the meta-theatrical elements initiated by Camillo, but also points to the incompleteness of performative redemption in Bohemia. Indeed, though Autolycus is a figure of art and theater, he is also a figure who, in his trickeries, fulfills the antitheatricalists’ worst nightmare. This becomes apparent in the description of those who come to buy from Autolycus. So enthralled are they by the love songs he peddles, the purchasers are described as “senseless.” Autolycus boasts, “No hearing, no feeling, but my sir’s song, and admiring the nothing of it. So that in this time of lethargy I picked and cut most of
their festival purses” (4.4.608-611). It is picked up again by Autolycus’ later description of the way in which the shepherds eagerly come in order to buy his merchandise: “They throng who should buy first, as if my trinkets had been hallowed and brought a benediction to the buyer.” The description of Autolycus’ customers matches the ways in which antitheatricalists depict the vulnerable spectator, whose senses are assaulted and debilitated by the images on the stage, and who are greedy for hollow scenes of gratuity. This description also resonates with the kind of senselessness attributed to Gertrude in the closet scene as well, and seems to point to a correlation between the participants and objects of idolatry: “no hearing, no feeling.” Such lethargic effects upon the audience are in sharp contrast to the descriptions of marvel and wonder that are so prominent in the statue scenes.

The inadequacy of Autolycus’ theater is apparent not only by the enervating effects his products have on his audience, but in the description of the things he peddles. Again, though the figure and circumstances of Autolycus are clearly marked by humor and comedy, it is interesting to note how a tinge of religious language undergirds the description of the trickster’s trinkets and ribbons. Autolycus’ entrance into the festival is announced by a servant in this way: “He hath ribbons of all the colours I’th’rainbow; points, more than all the lawyers in Bohemia can learnedly handle… inkles, caddisses, cambrics, lawns—why, he sings ‘em over as they were gods or goddesses. You would think a smock were a she-angel, he so chants to the sleeve-hand and the work about the square on’t” (4.4.202-207). While the wry tone of the servant’s description of Autolycus’ enthusiasm for his wares allows him to be a figure of comic relief, the description also overlaps with the language of relic worship and iconophilia. While I do not read this
moment as one in which Shakespeare secretly flexes his polemical muscles, I do see Autolycus as a figure through whom antitheatrical sentiments can be performed and critiqued. Along with the development in plot and the promise of reunion anticipated in the last act, the Bohemian interlude also sets up an anticipation of theatrical wonder through a negative enactment of it. While several elements in the act gesture toward the redemption of the final scene, Act IV is nonetheless marked by promise rather than fulfillment. Even as the play makes use of “lower” elements to paint another picture of fertility, Act IV also highlights the play’s anxieties about improper mixing and presents the stage as a problematic site for such mingling. Indeed, it is worthwhile to note that figures of “low” theater are missing from the final redemption scene, and there seems to be a distinction between types of theater that present counterfeit marvel and real wonder. Perhaps appropriately, then, Florizel’s response to Camillo’s plan to help him is a qualified one: “How, Camillo, / May this, almost a miracle, be done?” (4.4.530-1, italics mine). It is not until the wonder of the final statue scene that the past is completely redeemed.

Statue Scene

Marked by a husband’s repentance that seems to have no end in sight, and a kingdom without a viable heir to the throne, Act V opens upon a bleak note. In lines such as those uttered by Cleomenes, the language of religious works and justification pervades the scene, and becomes strangely conflated with theater and imitation: “Sir, you have done enough, and have performed / A saint-like sorrow. No fault could you make / Which you have not redeemed; indeed, paid down / More penitence than done trespass” (5.1.4). The problem seems to lie in the notion of inadequate imitation, which is captured
in the phrase “saint-like.” Though Cleomenes would comfort Leontes with the assurance that his performance of sorrow is sufficient, the king’s restlessness speaks otherwise. The impasse implicit in penitence—the question of when one’s sorrows can be considered enough—hangs heavily upon the scene, in which the theological meaning of grace (so frequently invoked in the play) is still missing. The same idea of inadequacy pervades the conversation that follows, in which Paulina denies the possibility of replacing Hermione with another wife for the king. Sicilia’s dynastic troubles do not compare to the fact that there is none who can parallel the original virtues of the dead queen; moreover, the Oracle’s pronunciation must be met in that Leontes cannot have an heir until what is lost is found. This notion fuels Paulina’s brokering of promises from Leontes, for she demands the following requirement for the replacement of the dead queen: “Unless another / As like Hermione as is her picture / Affront his eye” (5.1.74-5). If there is to be a replacement queen, she must be a perfect imitation and copy of the old one.

The last scene that takes place in Paulina’s chapel sets up explicit references to theater and imitation, and fulfills Paulina’s requirement that one “as like Hermione as is her picture” replace the queen. Of course, what ultimately occurs is that no such replacement occurs, since Hermione never died, and she poses as a statue with her living body. Frequently (if not quite accurately) dubbed as the “statue scene,” this last scene has been the subject of much critical interpretation that focuses on the nature of the wonder at work. Drawing upon Levinasian ethics, James A. Knapp interprets the scene as a commentary on faith by “prioritizing of the ethical over the visual” and states that “the statue scene emphasizes the overcoming of both language and vision in favor of an
‘otherwise’—something beyond both the stasis of the visual image and the self-affirming word” (276). That “something beyond” the image and the word resonates squarely with contemporary religious debates—specifically, with questions about how one’s idolatrous vision can be remedied.

Critics such as Julia Reinhard Lupton, Michael O’Connell, and Huston Diehl have connected this scene to sectarian aesthetics. With Diehl, we can see the final scene as recuperating the stage from charges of idolatry. Yet, given the perspective that we have been developing here, it would seem that the redemptive process lies in the lively figure of Hermione, who acts as the agent redemption, rather in than Paulina’s rebuking qualities. Although Paulina’s rebuke is a necessary antecedent to the success of the last scene, there is a decisive break rather than a continuity between her earlier role as rebuking physician and her later role as an extension of theater. Diehl rightly notes that the play acknowledges “the essential impurity of the stage” and sees in the figure of apostle Paul an appropriate figure of hybridity; the stage is recuperated, however, through a different, but no less important, Pauline notion: the body as a legitimate vehicle for devotion. The “physic” that Paulina was unable to perform in the earlier acts, she can now enact in her role as director and magician. In doing so, she points out the “lawful” nature of what she does by directing the focus of the audience upon the lively image of Hermione’s body. More than the aural components of the scene, it is Hermione’s flesh and blood presence that dispels anxieties about unlawful magic. Despite the call to awaken our faith, the fact is that the statue has been the real Hermione all along. Rather than offering tribute to an inanimate imitation, the characters (and we) find out to our
delight that Hermione is alive; rather than being an aesthetically distant object, Hermione is immanent and human in her wrinkled state.

This scene engages with antitheatrical rhetoric in complex ways. It has been commonly noted that the scene is rife with the conventional accoutrements of “popish idolatry”: an idol and people who feel compelled to kneel before and ask blessings of a stone statue. It is important to note another way, however, in which the statue scene connects to the dangers of the stage: its competition with the pulpit. As the most effective “physic” that Paulina has in her arsenal, and in its effectiveness in eliciting repentance and self-knowledge from Leontes, the statue plays a role conventionally attributed to sermons. The fact that this figure of potential idolatry is staged as worthy “physic,” then, has interesting ramifications for how the scene may be engaging in dialogue with antitheatrical diatribes. Leontes’ response to the statue is especially notable:

As now she might have done,
So much to my good comfort as it is
Now piercing to my soul. O, thus she stood,
Even with such life of majesty—warm life
As now it coldly stands—when first I wooed her.
I am ashamed. Does not the stone rebuke me
For being more stone than it? O royal piece!
There’s magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjured to remembrance, and
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee. (5.3.33-42)

The “piercing” effects of the statue resemble the attributes usually allocated to logocentric means: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, KJV). In possessing such piercing powers, Paulina’s statue enacts the “physic” traditionally ascribed to effective sermons. In this way, the fear that theater could potentially replace sermons—that they be “as good as sermons”—seems to be reflected and simultaneously deflected in this moment. Indeed, the reference to his stoniness is interesting in light of Gosson’s antitheatrical comment about what happens to spectators: they “so looke, so gaze, so gape upon plaies, that as men that stare on the head of Maedusa and are turned to stone, wee freze unto ease in our own follies.” The potentially idolatrous image, in a sense, has a Medusa-like effect in that it reminds Leontes of his shame and rebukes him. The crucial difference is, however, the fact that Leontes is able to acknowledge his stoniness and, paradoxically, embark upon the process of his softening.

Why is this last scene so insistently visual and why does it venture so boldly into the dangerous realm of idolatry? What does it mean for Paulina’s role to change from a verbal advocate to a stage director? If we consider the precise nature of Leontes’ illness—his diseased affection and vision—then the elaborate operation of Paulina’s last and most effective “physic” begins to make sense. Part of the lesson that Leontes must learn in this final chapel scene has much to do with doctrine of ill-doing, to which he had owned up before and yet could not break out of. I argue that Leontes learns to accept
grace here by surrendering his epistemological certainty—that is, his earlier confidence in his senses and affections. The king’s willingness to do away with his autonomous senses become most apparent in his pleading response to Paulina:

O sweet Paulina,

Make me think so twenty years together!

No settled senses of the world can match

The pleasure of that madness. Let’s alone. (5.3.70-74)

Recalling his previous attachment to affections, we now see Leontes preferring the “madness” of fantasy to an state of reasonable and settled senses. Rather than privileging his idolatrous inner eye, however, Leontes now asks for Paulina’s “physic” that will reform his senses. By using the term “madness,” Leontes evokes the destructive nature of his earlier jealous delusions; however, it is now a tamed desire to live in the fantasy of wistful make-believe—a fantasy that wondrously comes to life before his (and the audience’s) eyes in the next few moments. Interestingly, Leontes’ words also recall almost verbatim Florizel’s earlier words regarding his reckless action in Bohemia: “If not, my senses, better pleased with madness, / Do bid it welcome” (4.4.463-64). The promise of comedic transaction seems to lie in these words as well as anywhere else, since they point to Leontes’ loosening grip on his idolatrous senses. Because the statue in its marvelous mimetic qualities has the promises of transporting Leontes beyond what his reasoning leads him to believe, the king willingly surrenders his affections.

In this way, the common complaint about the stage—its assault upon one’s senses—becomes redeemed as a piercing assault that performs “physic.” Unlike the kind of theater that Autolycus practices, Paulina’s theater is one that galvanizes the audience
members toward remembrance and repentance. As Leontes assures Paulina, “this affliction has a taste as sweet / As any cordial comfort” (5.3.76-77). If one of antitheatricalists’ common fears was the theater’s ability to transform the spectator, then the fact that Leontes is so visibly moved has interesting countering effects to this charge. Paulina states, “I’ll draw the curtain. / My lord’s so far transported that / He’ll think anon it lives” (5.3.66-69). Instead of being transported by his jealous rage, he is now transported by the image before him. A key component of Leontes’ redemption seems to involve being too stirred, and the open state of his senses allows him to see with clear eyes. And what is it that he sees? This is a nagging question that underlies the first three acts, for though Leontes insists that he has seen the “spider” in his cup, it is also clear that his senses cannot be trusted. It is perhaps appropriate, then, that this last scene is such a visually rich one, and that this visual quality is built through careful description of the figure standing before them. The description of the statue belies any connection to the erotic language of the adoring blazon. Although the statue strikes all with marvel and awe, it is a kind of awe that nonetheless notes the defects as well as the perfections: “But yet, Paulina, / Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems” (5.3.27-29). The details that the men notice about the statue are clinically detached rather than aesthetically imaginative: “See, my lord, / Would you not deem it breathed, and that those veins / Did verily bear blood?” (5.3.63-64)

It is clear now that what Leontes sees is objectively real, and is a vision directed away from idolatrous impulses that only look for oneself. Instead of placing confidence in his affections and senses, Leontes now sees Hermione as she is. This is perhaps why there is very little trace of Hermione as a sexual being here, since Leontes’ earlier
idolatrous vision insisted upon seeing his wife as just flesh.\textsuperscript{19} The “Too hot, too hot!” response to the clasping of hands between Hermione and Polixenes in the beginning acts of the play is now transformed into an “O, she’s warm!” The faith that is awakened in this final scene is ultimately lawful because it is \textit{not} the kind that is “coactive” with “what’s unreal.” The king’s perverted faith in his affections and senses—a sign of one’s reliance upon one’s imagination rather than what’s real—is dispelled through the potentially idolatrous image of Hermione’s statue. Although the sculpture, an art form close to drama, was closely linked to “graven images” forbidden in injunctions about idolatry, the promise of an art which “itself is nature” finds fulfillment through this potentially idolatrous figure.

As Diehl notes, Paulina’s command for an awakening of faith recalls the very words used to mock idols. For example, John Vernon writes: “Wo unto hym, that sayeth unto the woode, awake; and unto the dumme stone: ryse uppe. Shoulde the same teach: Beeholde, it is layed over with golde and silver, and there is no breathe in it” (Qtd Diehl, 78). The idols that were so gleefully ridiculed, however, were easy targets precisely because they were “dumme stone” without any breath. Hermione’s breathing warmth and the lively presence of her body engage the senses rather than dispose of them; that is, the “senselessness” attributed to both the “dumme stone” and the idolater are effectively dispelled through the liveliness of the transporting image. The faith that Paulina commands the spectators to awaken, then, is not a quenching of one’s senses, but a faith that depends on \textit{true} senses. And Shakespeare seems to suggest that the public stage, when carefully managed, is a salutary place for the training of the audience’s senses.
CONCLUSION

In certain ways, this study has investigated the kind of epistemology uttered by Milton’s blind hero when he states, “The way to know were but to see and taste.” Although Reformation anxieties regarding reliable signs made the concept of “real presence” problematic, religious texts also privileged the stamp of authenticity by a fierce rejection of hypocrisy—a hypocrisy made up of a compartmentalized knowledge of the divine. Within the domain of religion, the instability of language implicit in humanist hermeneutics made right imitatio one that privileged the signs of the body; “the way to know” elicited an embodied response that encompassed one’s affections and bodily members as well as the mind. This study argues that such discourses surrounding “true” devotion allow for a greater understanding of how epistemological complexities operate in early modern texts.

The painstaking way in which idolatrous images are jettisoned out of the Reformed church does not touch a fundamental Reformist desire for the tangibility of faith, a materialistic devotion that utilizes the human body as a reliable sign of authenticity. The anxieties of textual imitatio instigated a deep distrust of language itself; the fierce onset of iconoclasm made certain that traditional religious images were destroyed. Such anxieties play themselves out in the proliferation of emblematic works which, like Egyptian hieroglyphs, provide language without the fallen mediation of words in the seventeenth century. Although due to limitations of space and time, I have not ventured into seventeenth century religious lyric poetry, I see the kind of embodied aesthetic take place in works of poetry that explore the inadequacy of language even as
they acknowledge its beauty. Indeed, the “something understood” of George Herbert’s poem on prayer is a communication that is perfectly understood and yet surpasses description.
NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1 For a seminal study of Renaissance imitatio, see Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).


George Downame, *The doctrine of practicall praying together with a learned exposition on the Lords prayer* (1656), Early English Books Online.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


4. See, for example, Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Alistair Fox, *The English

5 Translation taken from Robert Durling’s translation. All longer translations will hitherto be taken from Durling.


9 See introduction, Muir and Thompson, Collected Poems.

10 For a full list of Wyatt’s sources, see Muir and Thompson, 356-358. See also Mason’s additions and disputations to Muir and Thompson’s edition in H. A. Mason, Editing Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge Quarterly, 1972), 178-193.


12 Mason 179.

13 Calvin, The Psalms of David and others (1571), Early English Books Online.

14 Quoted from the translation of Miles Coverdale for the Great Bible (1539). Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent quotations from Scripture will be from this version in this chapter.

15 For comprehensive studies of the influences of the psalms in early modern England, see Lewalski; Zim; Hannibal Hamlin, Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).


17 See Louis Martz’s chapter on “The Method of Meditation” in The Poetry of Meditation for a thorough description of this prelude to spiritual exercises.

18 Of course, the critical debate between Martz’s Catholic poetics and Lewalski’s Protestant poetics must be acknowledged when mentioning both of their names in the same essay, but relegating Wyatt’s work to one tradition over the other is not the primary objective of this study of the psalms.
19 For extraordinary examples of these devotional instances, see Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast.

20 For an interesting work on “praying through the body” in early modern literature, see Richard Rambuss, Closet Devotions (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

21 See the Saul-Paul conversion passage in Acts 9:1-19 for the most well-known New Testament example of this motif.


24 St. Cyprian, A Sermon of S. Cyprian made on the Lordes prayer, (1539), Early English Books Online.

25 For a fuller discussion of this tradition, see Hamlin, 174-177.

26 Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning 105.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO


7 For a good summary of Foxe’s appropriation of history, see Marsha S. Robinson, Writing the Reformation: Actes and Monuments and the Jacobean history play (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002); See also Breitenberg for a discussion of how Foxe employs a cyclical version of history rather than a linear one.


9 See for example, Lancelot Andrewes’ Holy Devotions, with directions to pray (1663); translation of St. Cyprian’s sermon on the Lord’s prayer A sermon of S. Cyprian made on the Lordes prayer that is to wytte, the Paternoster (1539).


11 See Freeman and Wall for an account of the critical prejudices against Bale.

12 All quotations are taken from The Examinations of Anne Askew, ed. Elaine Beilin. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

13 O warder, whose wicked hands are drenched in blood, why
do you vainly stretch her limbs on the rack and violently
tear apart a virtuous girl better far than you? (translation by G.P. Goold)

For her tongue alone could not be moved by any suffering


16 Diehl 185-193.

17 Catherine Coats, (Em)bodying the Word: Textual Resurrections in the Martyrological Narratives of Foxe, Crespin, de Beze, and d’Aubigne (New York: P. Lang, 1992), 51.

18 See Mueller.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


8 Qtd Gibson 8.


10 For a work that connects female devotion and the body of Christ, see Bynum, *Holy Feast*.

11 Lancelot Andrewes, *Holy Devotions* (1663)


13 Qtd White, 170.

14 Qtd Lake, 445.


17 William Perkins, *A Commentarie or exposition, vpon the fiue first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, (1604).


20 For a study that focuses on sacramental and symbolic properties of the human body in early modern drama, see Jennifer Waldron’s unpublished dissertation, *Eloquence of the Body*.

21 While critics like Richard Wilson define this “true” devotion as secret Catholicism on Shakespeare’s part, I refer to a broader definition of this term.


24 For an early work of criticism that offers this analysis, see John Paterson, “The Word in *Hamlet*” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2.1 (1951): 47-55.

25 Of course, I am not suggesting that Claudius correlates his “painted word” to Scripture; however, the passage provides suggestive language that triggers Reformation polemics.

26 See Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*.


28 Downame, *The doctrine of practicall praying*.


30 Lancelot Andrewes. *Institutiones Piae or Directions to Pray*, (1630).


NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1 All quotations from The Winter’s Tale taken from The Winter’s Tale Ed. Susan Snyder and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

2 Homily against the Peril of Idolatry


4 James A. Knapp takes a Levisinian take on “the other” and aesthetic inquiry in “Visual and Ethical Truth in The Winter’s Tale,” Shakespeare Quarterly 55.3. While I also want to focus on ethical dimensions, I ground my reading in contemporary discourse surrounding idolatry and antitheatrical sentiment.

5 It is interesting that without directly touching upon idolatry, critics call Leontes’ jealousy as “image-making.”

6 For a good overview of the changing perspectives on the body from Paul to Augustine, see Suzannah Biernoff, Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave, 2002): 17-41.

7 See Bynum, Holy Feast.


9 For examples of psychoanalytic readings, see Janet Adelman, Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992); Also Cavell.
Julia Reinhard Lupton draws upon this connection in her interpretation of *The Winter’s Tale*. The fact that the sin of idolatry was also closely aligned with the sin of adultery in early modern interpretations of the Ten Commandments offers further evidence for the connection. See Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

See Adelman. Gail Kern Paster offers an analysis based on contemporary practices of wet-nursing to establish a similar relationship of jealousy/desire for the maternal body between the kings. See her chapter on *The Winter’s Tale* in *The Body Embarrased*.


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---. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare.* Chicago: University of Chicago


