

CHURCHYARDS AND CROSSROADS: MONUMENTS, TOMBS,  
AND COMMEMORATION IN ELIZABETHAN  
AND JACOBEAN DRAMA

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## ABSTRACT

This project explores how tombs and monuments erected for the dead function in the early modern playhouse, both when used as stage locations in dramatic scenes and when invoked imaginatively by characters grappling with questions of identity, social position, and legacy. I examine Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, other contemporary writings about tombs, and surviving stone monuments of the period in order to contribute to an understanding of the complex ways early moderns viewed commemoration, memory, and their own mortality.

Tombs of this era served to preserve information about the dead and to offer moral instruction to the living. The combination of text, symbols, and images on tombs conveyed information to both literate and illiterate alike. Audiences' familiarity with a range of tombs, combined with the flexibility of the early modern playhouse, allowed playwrights to utilize the symbolic potential of tombs in a variety of ways. Nonetheless, a majority of these symbolic deployments of tomb imagery gravitate into three broad categories.

First, in the History Plays of the 1580s and 1590s, monuments serve as repositories of the mythic power of the past, helping individuals both remember ancestors and access their influence. This recording potential also allows the living to prepare their own enduring legacy. Second, tombs function on stage as legitimizing agents for fictions. A tomb need not tell a true story, and playwrights of the period frequently have their characters use tombs to support or preserve their own misrepresentative, edited, or fraudulent accounts of events. Finally, plays after 1600 tend to stress the power of tombs to serve as sites of spiritual and moral instruction.

Tombs as illustrative of a complete life story fall out of fashion in the playhouse; instead of presenting a layered narrative, monuments become tools to turn the deceased into an exemplar of a variety of idealized virtues.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Sara and my mother Colleen; their assistance and support have been without measure.

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I am grateful to all who have advised and sustained me throughout this process. It would be impossible to list them all or to enumerate the many contributions of each. Nonetheless, I would like to thank a few by name.

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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. CHAPTER 2: “NOTHING LEFT ME BUT MY BODY’S LENGTH”: USES FOR TOMBS IN SHAKESPEARE’S THREE HENRY THE SIXTH PLAYS.....	34
3. CHAPTER 3: “A ROYAL FELLOWSHIP OF DEATH”: PRESERVING THE PAST AND SHAPING THE FUTURE IN SHAKESPEARE’S SECOND TETRALOGY.....	102
4. CHAPTER 4: “LET MY GRAVESTONE BE YOUR ORACLE”: THE POWER OF TOMBS TO CHANGE THE FUTURE.....	160
5. CHAPTER 5: “DOES NOT THE STONE REBUKE ME / FOR BEING MORE STONE THAN IT?” TOMBS THAT PREACH AND TEACH.....	216
6. CONCLUSION: “TWO DISHES, BUT TO ONE TABLE”.....	256
REFERENCES .....	263

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1. Tombs of Westminster Abbey .....	10
2.1. Tomb of Sir William Pickering the Elder (d. 1542) and Sir William Pickering the Younger (d. 1574) .....	53
2.2. Tomb of Edward, Duke of York (d. 1415) .....	63
2.3. Hanging armor and sword of Edward the Black Prince (d. 1376) .....	77
2.4. Tomb of Anne Seymour, Duchess of Somerset (d. 1588) .....	83
2.5. Tomb of Sir Richard Beauchamp (d. 1439) .....	92
3.1. Sculpture of The Black Prince in niche on the side of Edward III's tomb .....	108
3.2. Tomb of Edward III (d. 1377) with niches containing six of his children as weepers. ....	109
3.3. The double effigies: Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, Sir Gyles Daubeney (1507) and Elizabeth his wife (1500), Henry VII (1509) and Elizabeth of York (1502-3).....	111
3.4. Empty Niches on the side of the tomb of Richard II (d. 1399) and Anne of Bohemia (d. 1394) .....	112
3.5. North Face of Henry 5's Chantry Chapel and Chapel statuary .....	152
5.1. Tomb of Sir Francis Vere (d. 1609).....	225



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In this project, I explore how tombs and monuments erected for the dead function in the early modern playhouse. What do tombs signify when used as stage locations in a dramatic scene or when invoked imaginatively by characters grappling with issues of identity, social position, and legacy? Modern audiences and critics often fail to realize the significance of tombs in plays and so overlook important insights accessible to Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences. By examining these plays in conjunction with other contemporary writings about tombs and monuments as well as the stone artifacts themselves, I hope to contribute to an understanding of the complex ways early moderns viewed commemoration, memory, and their own mortality.

Tombs and monuments appear frequently in early modern plays. Allusions crop up in expected places such as soliloquies meditating on mortality and discussions of what to do with the recently deceased. They also appear in more symbolic deployments: in descriptions of an individual's exemplarity, as the object of solemn vows, as metonymic references to honor, as documents for teaching virtue to the illiterate, and as locations both of horror and of peace. Such frequent references to tombs indicate an easy association with the dead and their monuments quite alien to us today. Fortunately, the early modern interaction with the dead has been a topic popular with sociologists, historians, archeologists, and art critics over the past thirty years, and

from these sources a clear picture emerges of what tombs meant to individuals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Philippe Ariès refers to the time between the fifth and eighteenth centuries in Europe as the period of “the tame death,” where individuals displayed “unconcerned familiarity with [death and] the places and artifacts of burial” (29). He does not mean by “tame death” that death *itself* was not feared, but that the morbidity and taboos we attach to death and the objects associated with burial were absent during this period.<sup>1</sup> Nothing illustrates this difference better than the practice of individuals constructing tombs for themselves before their deaths. As remarkable as this might seem today, “in post-Reformation England ... approximately one third of the funeral monuments erected were intended to commemorate, and thus represent, the living” (Llewellyn *Art* 17).<sup>2</sup> Much like penning one’s own epitaph, constructing one’s own monument ensured the patron that he would be suitably commemorated after his death and allowed him the opportunity to carefully script what information, both general and specific, would be preserved in stone for future generations of family, churchgoers, and visitors.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of scripting is important; early modern individuals designed their monuments to preserve far more than our modern convention of a name, two dates, and perhaps a short platitude. Tomb designers packed monuments with compressed information designed to be

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<sup>1</sup> Ariès does argue that in contrast to our modern tendency to shun discussions and thoughts of death as “morbid,” death itself was in this period better accepted as a normal part of existence.

<sup>2</sup> Llewellyn shares a remarkable story of an individual who survived for twenty-five years after having his own monument built, complete with effigy, in 1643. As a result of this action, in the decades before his death, “his living presence would have been complemented by his representation in stone. As he got older the disjunction between the two images would have slowly become more and more marked until, with his death in 1668, only one public image would have survived, a triumph of art over life. Such an association of images is, in our experience, beyond the bounds of possibility” (*Art* 17).

<sup>3</sup> Such a practice is not entirely unheard of today. For example, individuals frequently preserve a space beside a deceased loved one, with a head stone to be shared by both. Usually, however, the stone is left blank until after the actual interment. An interesting exception is Roland Burriss, former Illinois senator, who constructed his own monument with a list of his accomplishments at the height of his power. It is worth pointing out that this action, commonplace in the Renaissance, is today so out of place that his monument has been pilloried on various humorous outlets like *The Daily Show* as illustrative of his audacious egotism.

accessible to a public adept at decoding iconography. As Clayton MacKenzie points out, “emblematic understanding was . . . an important dimension of sixteenth century social life. The great power of pictures is that you don’t need to be literate to understand them. Shakespeare lived in an age where people had been conditioned to ‘read’ pictures” (*Emblems* 9). This can be seen not only in the importance of the popular emblem books but also in such commonplace objects as tavern signs and advertisements for businesses. Tomb builders particularly embraced the possibilities of iconography. Peter Sherlock writes, “Monuments are not simply art works or grave markers that represent their patrons’ existence, or that act as subconscious reflections of aesthetic and commemorative ideals. For, as the texts inscribed on many tombs propose, monuments are designed to be deliberate messages from the past to posterity” (1).<sup>4</sup> This is true, but tombs had to be able to deliver messages to the illiterate as well, and did so in a variety of ways.<sup>5</sup> Heraldry, iconography, details of the effigies (pose, dress, relational arrangement, and relative size), location, material, color, and any number of other factors were employed to convey meaning and were made even more complex by the influx of new religious and secular symbolism precipitated by the Reformation and Renaissance. Individuals of the period were

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<sup>4</sup> Although this is a very useful starting point for a discussion of the ways monuments are designed to communicate carefully selected pieces of information, Sherlock here conflates the patron and the monumentalized subject in a problematic fashion. I deal with this issue in Chapter Four.

<sup>5</sup> In his book *Memory, Print, and Gender in England, 1653-1759*, Harold Weber discusses the anxiety of early modern authors when their books went to print. Weber identifies the undercurrent of Jonson’s dedication to his *Workes* as a series of questions asked about the identity and fitness of the individual picking up the volume. “‘Are you a *reader*?’ Jonson asks: ‘how can I identify a *reader*? how can I judge the fitness of my *reader*? Who precisely is *reading* my book, and how well are they *reading* it?’” (4). These questions demonstrate “the fundamental indeterminacy that conditioned relations between an early-modern author and the anonymous and private reader who purchased a book” (Weber 4). These questions, true for printed texts, are just as important for monuments. Tombs do not suffer from the proliferation of copies that, according to Weber, so particularly concerned Milton and Pope (although there is at least one example that blends the two media; prints of the tomb of Elizabeth I were distributed all over the country and became loci of veneration of the “Virgin Queen” and sites of dissent against James I) (Woodward 133-134). Tombs do, however, have to be able to “speak” to individuals with different levels of education. While Jonson might have had no control over who picked up his *Workes*, he could at least safely assume that anyone reading his dedication was literate! Tomb patrons could make no such assumption and, much like the designers of stained glass windows or Catholic wall murals, they had to design their art so that it would be understood by all audiences.

adept at interpreting the meaning of every element of these constructions. Thus, before moving on to what tombs and monuments meant on stage, it will be useful to survey what possible meanings they had in church and churchyard and who was in charge of crafting their content.

Tombs had long been recognized as a medium by which the dead were able to communicate to the living. During the medieval period, tomb designers often included on the monument a notice written or requested by the soon-to-be deceased offering the remission of sins to anyone who prayed for the interred dead (Daniell 23; Gittings 86). Such requests can be seen as bribes offered from beyond the grave by individuals concerned about the tortures of purgatory. Designers also often inscribed lessons, usually of the memento mori variety, on the stone at the request of the individual commemorated, setting up what Ariès calls “a two-way communication ... a message to the deceased for the repose of his soul, and from the deceased for the edification of the living” (218).<sup>6</sup>

By the early modern period, however, control over monument design had moved from the subject of the tomb to the executor of the will as, a century and a half later, it would move again, this time to the undertaker. During the Reformation in England, “[t]he rationale for this concern about one’s own funeral was simply swept away ... [and] with it went, for the most part, testators’ interest and control in this area” (Gittings 86). Individual control was replaced with burial by committee. Large numbers of individuals, including “patrons, masons, writers, church authorities and even agents or deputies,” might well be involved in the process of monument construction (Sherlock 11).<sup>7</sup> The first group in the list, the patrons, had the most at stake in this whole process. They were often family and, as they no longer bore the burden of designing a

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<sup>6</sup> See Ariès and Daniell for extensive information about medieval burial. The former offers a general look at all of Europe, while the latter focuses exclusively on England after the Norman Invasion.

<sup>7</sup> Following Stefanie Knöll, Sherlock calls these individuals “senders” in order to “mov[e] away from the concept of a single author or principal actor in the creative process” (11).

monument with the primary purpose of speeding the soul on its way, they were free to concentrate on creating a tomb that served their own interests.<sup>8</sup> Family usually had the most invested in determining what messages the monument would convey to future generations. David Howarth's argument about early modern art – that “the patron mattered rather more than the artist in the complicated process of making statements, claims, justifications or pretensions; that is to say, the various uses to which the rich and the great put art” – applies particularly well to tombs (10).<sup>9</sup>

Tombs were not designed, like monuments today, to be visited by and to speak only to those who knew the individual commemorated. Instead “[t]he person ... addressed by the deceased is literally a passerby, someone who happens to pass by the grave, a stranger who is walking through the cemetery or has come into the church either to say his prayers or because it is on his way, for ... the church and the cemetery were public meeting places” (Ariès 220). Ariès here leaves out the most frequent audience, the familiar congregation at that parish, but his basic point stands: a tomb must be understandable to a widely varied audience, not merely relatives or friends. To this end, the messages conveyed start at the most basic level, the occupation of a specific space. In pre-Reformation England, a strict codification of fees developed in many churches; the better the location selected, the higher the cost to be buried there (Daniell 59). Although Protestants claimed that they had no belief in the special holiness of locations, little changed in actual burial location preferences after the Reformation (Harding

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<sup>8</sup> The Protestant insistence that nothing more could be done for the deceased is best exemplified by the official post-Reformation policy requiring that the priest presiding over the funeral turn his back on the body as it was interred (Woodward 42).

<sup>9</sup> Patron control of tombs can perhaps best be seen in those instances where the executor of the will ignored the wishes of the deceased. Usually this happened when the will requested a modest burial for someone of high status. Contemporaries, such as John Weever, lauded such actions as necessary for the greater good and criticized those who failed in this duty. To Weever, family members who did not construct tombs that sufficiently reflected the dead person's station, “interre both the honour and memory of the defunct, together with his corps: perfidiously forgetting their fidelity to the deceased” (19).

55). Visibility was the primary concern.<sup>10</sup> Nigel Llewellyn gives an example: “Especially desirable was a location within the chancel rail, since it had great liturgical potency and allowed the effigy a permanent direct line of access to the high altar. It was also a theatrical setting, for the chancel held the congregation’s attention throughout much of the service” (*Funeral* 237). In this way, a monument acted much like a modern billboard, advertising the family itself, and was placed in such a way that it would be impossible to ignore.<sup>11</sup>

At least in theory, monuments housed the actual interred body, or at least stood nearby. Historians debate over how often this actually happened. David Cressy argues that, at least ideally, “[o]nce buried, a body could not be exhumed without official permission” (389). Ariès, on the other hand, suggests that, more often than not, the body would be removed to a charnel once it had sufficiently decomposed, usually to make more room (207-208). Whether the actual body remained there or not, however, was not the primary issue: “Monuments, as markers of the place of burial, were permanent manifestations of this investment in space. Their very location was a sign of power” (Llewellyn *Art* 105). In other words, the importance was not that the body still resided there, but rather that it once had. Monuments, be they tombs or cenotaphs, publicly and permanently connect a space to an individual or family.

The creation of an object in a space to preserve an identity leads to the first of three major functions of monuments beyond the rather prosaic ones of cadaver storage and location marking: monuments help people remember by standing in as replacements for the individual. Llewellyn writes that “[a]s the natural body decayed, the ritualized monumental body prevented the social

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<sup>10</sup> There were, of course, other reasons, including the claiming of an area of a church. As Vanessa Harding points out, pew assignment symbolized a family’s position in the social hierarchy. Such assignments could change, however, and so one way of attempting to add permanence was to have a relative buried near, or even under, the pew (Harding 130-131). I take up this use of a burial or monument to claim space in Chapter Two.

<sup>11</sup> They also resemble billboards in that they were often brightly colored in order to draw the eye (see Llewellyn 139). Although most have lost their paint over time, John Gower’s tomb in Southwark Cathedral is preserved in all its garish glory.

body from being overwhelmed by a similar fate. The monumental body was to be set up at the place of burial to mark its site and was designed to stand for ever as a replacement for the social body” (*Art* 101). This “monumental body” or “social body after death” preserves what the patrons wish to preserve and thus “[t]he place an individual occupies in the collective memory ... is partly shaped by the image set by the monumental body” (Llewellyn *Art* 101).<sup>12</sup>

In this role as a preserver of the individual through the “monumental body,” the tomb fights the leveling potential of death. Churchgoers were constantly told from the pulpit that all men would die; art forms such as memento mori and the “dance of death” (a conga line of all classes headed toward the grave, shepherded on their way by Death) taught the same lesson. Death’s potential to erase the carefully constructed hierarchies of society is Michael Neill’s focus in his *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*. According to Neill, death resembles nakedness, creating a shameful, threatening, socially undifferentiated body (8-9). Tombs became a permanent set of clothes, eternally distinguishing the commemorated just as their socially dictated costumes did in life.<sup>13</sup> Monuments helped ameliorate the possible dangers of death’s leveling power on a strictly stratified society.<sup>14</sup>

According to Llewellyn:

It was a comfort to the poor that kings and princes would also suffer.... But this aspect of the Church’s teaching about death was a potential threat to the social fabric, as theology seemed to conflict with the prevailing political ideology.

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<sup>12</sup> It is also quite important to remember that this “monumental body” did not shape memory in quite the same way we moderns might expect. The effigy, for example, was not expected to look like the deceased, and it was frequently the other elements, the heraldry, the inscriptions, the location, the size, the materials and so forth that were more important. This is one of the primary claims and topics of Llewellyn’s remarkable *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England*.

<sup>13</sup> This analogy is not without historical basis. In 1618, the sumptuary laws, designed to restrict what clothes individuals could wear depending on their social class, were extended to cover tombs and monuments to prevent the kind of elaborate monument for the middle classes so decried by Weever. (Llewellyn *Art* 61). I deal with this issue in Chapter Four.

<sup>14</sup> Steven Bassett even goes so far as to argue that, although death did reach everyone, its actual power to erase distinction, even before the erection of the tomb, was quite limited. “Only in theory was death the great leveller. In practice the funeral – in all periods – reflected and reinforced social distinctions” (Bassett 6).

Subtle differentials of the rules of degree were ignored by Death, as was the wealth accumulated in life by the rich and powerful. Death's roughshod ride over the fine distinctions of social difference was as frightening as his challenge to continuity. The monumental body was, therefore, charged with the task of re-establishing social difference. (*Art* 104)

Of course, this restratification only applied to society's elite, a small percentage of the population. Some individuals, particularly prostitutes and excommunicates, were denied burial within the churchyard at all, but even those allowed to rest there often were not commemorated in any material fashion. Neill calls the graveyard "a place of oblivion and a site of memory; a place which annihilates all distinction... and a site of monumental record," and he is in some way correct, although perhaps not in the way he intended (234).<sup>15</sup> Rather than becoming places of paradox, the church and the churchyard acted as places of distinction, preserving the names and status of the members of the upper echelon of society (either by birth or by wealth), while allowing the rest to fade. A majority of the common sort were buried beside the church or in the increasingly numerous ancillary burial grounds, with no markings beyond the freshly turned dirt.<sup>16</sup> According to Cressy, "[i]t was considered noteworthy in 1606 when Humphrey Vincent of Northhold, Middlesex, promised to 'lay a plank upon his father's grave because it was his will upon his deathbed, and he took order with the carpenter to make it convenient'" (470). These ephemeral markers were known by several names; Gittings writes that they were referred to as "bed-heads or leap-boards," but they cannot have been anything but temporary considering the

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<sup>15</sup> Throughout his project, Neill sees death as a force that destroys all distinction. Death, observed in a vacuum, might be seen as such a force, but death does not occur in a vacuum; societal practices of the time all pulled against this leveling. For another approach to this quote from Neill, see MacKenzie, who points out that it is human nature to particularize when we go to a graveyard. We may feel "a sense of annihilation" on the general field of death, but "we also study gravestones. We particularize. We visit the graves of our relatives; we pause to reflect upon the epitaphs of those we never knew but whose lives were singularized by tragedy or longevity or oddity or some other distinguishing feature" (MacKenzie 100). Again, there is a kernel of truth here, but both Neill and MacKenzie show too much of a modern perspective and fail to look deeply enough into both the practices and views of the times. It was not uniqueness that was prized in early modern tomb building, but rather adherence to certain ideals and the preservation of position in the social hierarchy.

<sup>16</sup> See Ariès 207, Bassett 6, Cressy 469-470 and Gittings 143-145.



high traffic in the early modern churchyard (Gittings 144). Thus, the “monumental body” and its attendant opportunity for remembrance was reserved almost exclusively for the wealthy and noble.<sup>17</sup>

While contemporaries might not have used phrases like “monumental body,” they clearly saw tombs as replacements for the deceased and repositories for information about the past. John Stow, in *A Survey of London*, dutifully records the information from tombs as he makes his way through the churches of London. In fact, at times this is *all* he records; Stow devotes far more space to listing and describing those interred in churches than he does describing architectural details. Preservation of information is one of the main concerns cited by Elizabeth I in her “Proclamation against breakinge or defacing of monumentes....” According to this proclamation, because of damage to monuments “the true understanding of diuers families in this Realme... is ... darkened,” leading to the possibility that “the true course of inheritaunce may be hereafter interrupted” (Elizabeth I). Elizabeth feared that well-meaning post-Reformation iconoclasm, responsible for the demolition of many English tomb effigies, had the potential to destroy information vital to the smooth functioning of the system of hereditary nobility.

John Weever, the leading authority on tombs in early modern England, defined a “[m]onument” as “a receptacle or sepulchre, purposely made, erected, or built, to receiue a dead corps, and to preserue the same from violation” (5). It preserved more than the body, however,

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, it was not just the poor who might be forgotten without a monument to keep them fresh in the collective memory. Not constructing a monument for an individual was a good way to, in effect, erase their existence from history. During the religious upheavals of the middle part of the sixteenth century, two of Henry VIII’s children, having the misfortune of being succeeded by an advocate of an opposing faith, found themselves without a monument. Mary I had her brother, Edward VI, buried under the altar in Westminster without any memorial (as she feared his tomb would become a focus of Protestant dissent), while she herself was buried in Westminster with no inscription until one was provided on the side of Elizabeth I’s tomb a half century later. For more information, see Dodson’s *The Royal Tombs of Great Britain* and Christopher Wilson’s article “The functional design of Henry VII’s chapel: a reconstruction” in Tim Tatton-Brown and Richard Mortimer’s *Westminster Abbey: The Lady Chapel of Henry VII*.

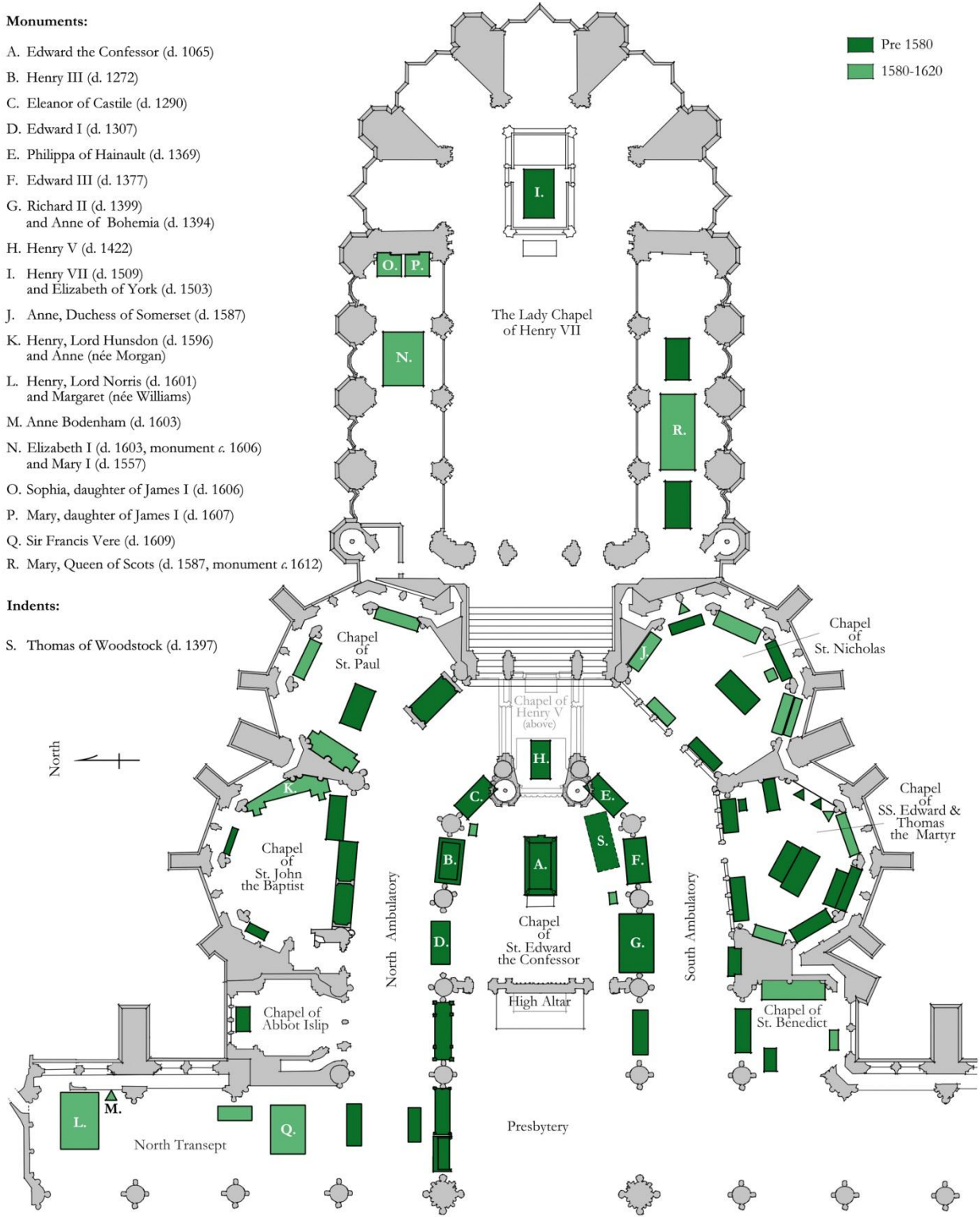


Figure 1.1 – Layout of eastern half of Westminster Abbey with key to important tombs and tombs discussed in this project. Original illustration by Harry K. Whitver (2012).

as monuments were usually “erected with inscriptions engrauen upon them, to continue the remembrance of the parties deceased, to succeeding ages” (8). Weever also well understood that the power to preserve entailed the power to shape. In his description of these epitaphs, Weever points out the elements they would preserve: “the name, the age, the deserts, the dignities, the state, the praises both of body and minde, the good or bad fortunes in the life, and the manner and time of the death of the person therein interred” (8). These features, with the exception of bad fortune, tended to be positive; the unsavory elements of an individual usually could be buried with the corpse, while the positive remained engraved on the surface of the stone above. In this way, tombs often served to polish a posthumous reputation.

Weever expresses concern that this power of tombs to shape memory could be misused by those who constructed monuments more elaborate than expected for their station: “Sepulchres should bee made according to the qualitie and degree of the person deceased, that by the Tombe euery one might bee discerned of what ranke hee was liuing” (10). Although he claims that those who attempt this kind of social climbing into the grave will leave themselves “open to bitter iests,” Weever clearly sees a serious danger in such tombs; if those in the present are improperly commemorated, those in the future might well be deceived (10).

Amusingly, Weever himself seems to have fallen prey to exactly this kind of deception. He laments the passing of a golden age when people were always buried according to their station:

stately monuments were not due, nor allowed, to euery man that was of ability to erect the same; so swelling titles, lofty inscriptions or epitaph, were prohibited to bee inscrib'd, insculpt, or engrauen vpon the sepulchres of men of meane desert: but onely vpon the monuments of such as were of vertue, wisdom, and valour, as martiall men, or persons of eminent place of gouernment in the weale publicke. Which is not obserued altogether in these times: for by some of our epitaphs more honour is attributed to a rich quondam Tradesman, or griping vsurer, then is giuen to the greatest Potentate entombed in Westminster: and their tombes are made so

huge great, that they take up the Church, and hinder the people from diuine Seruice. (Weeuer 10-11)

Some evidence does support Weeuer's claim that elaborate monumentalization of those outside the upper class was indeed on the rise, although we might discount his standard appeal to a lost golden age. Yet, Weeuer does not acknowledge that he might be suffering from exactly the same deception that he fears might befall individuals in the future. He looks to tombs from the past, responds to their splendor, and is convinced of the worthiness of those commemorated in a way far different from his reaction to tombs of the present and the messages they portray about those he knows, personally or by reputation.

Weeuer can be seen as the pre-eminent early modern English theorist on the subject of tombs; that he could simultaneously criticize and be deceived by the fictive power of tombs clearly illustrates their potential. This, then, is the second function of tombs in the period; beyond merely preserving the past, monuments can simultaneously work to rewrite it, constructing a new and enduring reality. Howarth, writing quite poetically on the power of tombs, suggests "[t]he splendour which accompanied men to their graves did not sink with them beneath the earth: it remained on the surface as tribute to the greatness of a house; a permanent recumbent effigy, replacing the temporary one created from the death mask" (155). His assessment reflects, however, more of an ideal than an absolute truth, as Howarth himself admits. In the instance of Mary, Queen of Scots, for example, the face of her effigy that still rests in Westminster Abbey was not taken from her actual face as she had been dead and buried for nearly twenty years by the time it was carved for her; in addition, the splendor of her final resting place bears no resemblance to her status as a countryless captive for the last two decades of her life. Instead her tomb exemplifies James VI/I's effort to repair his mother's reputation, and (far more importantly) to secure his and his descendants' position on the throne of England.

According to Woodward, “Mary’s tomb was to be the first in a series of tombs in the Henry VIII Chapel that would effectively appropriate it as a royal necropolis for the Stuart dynasty” (136).<sup>18</sup> James hoped that these tombs would alter the perception of his family; instead of a pack of interloping Scots descended from a traitor, he wanted to present the Stuarts as rightful heads of state, justly commemorated alongside all the previous, revered English monarchs.

Individuals and families might have many reasons to create a new reality via tombs. As in the case of Mary, Queen of Scots, the tomb could be designed to whitewash a formerly tarnished reputation. The Stuarts also needed to construct the impression of continuity with the past.<sup>19</sup> This could be achieved by constructing new tombs for long dead ancestors (as is the case with James’ construction of Mary’s monument and with Elizabeth’s ordering of new tombs for her Yorkist ancestors at Fotheringhay) and even by using old-fashioned types of tomb construction. According to Llewellyn, “patrons and tomb-makers understood that no type was more redolent of a long ancestry and continuity with the medieval past than the free-standing tomb chest with recumbent figures”; those who needed to construct an altered history used such designs to create a false sense of ancient lineage (*Funeral* 79). Indeed, as Sherlock points out, only about a third of the nobility were “commemorated in material form,” and tomb building was often in these cases a response to “crises in the succession of title and property” (21, 28). In other words, the construction of an ostentatious monument to the deceased and thus the creation of a permanent version of the past (one that was certainly biased and possibly even fraudulent)

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<sup>18</sup> See Woodward, 130-203 for an extensive and fascinating look at the ways the early Stuarts attempted to use Westminster to secure their hold on the throne, starting with the unusual monuments to James’ infant daughters (unusual because of the rarity of any kind of monumentalization for children during the period). The fact that James took this unusual step shows how important it was for him to claim this politically vital space. Howarth also addresses the burials of Mary and others connected to the Stuarts during the reign of James on pages 166-177.

<sup>19</sup> As Llewellyn put it, “the post-Reformation monument was a powerful tool of fiction as well as history” (*Funeral* 118).

effectively helped to negate a threat to the family or individual in the present and to influence the perception of future generations.

The third major function of the tomb was to serve as a site of spiritual and moral instruction. Just as tombs could be used to reinforce a patron's vision of the past or the future, they could also be employed to transform the commemorated into an exemplar of any of a number of idealized types. To an extent, this represented an attempt to respond to the Reformation: "After the 1530s the banning of shrines and pilgrimages greatly reduced church income and created a void in English spiritual life that was slowly filled by monuments to the virtuous" (Llewellyn *Funeral* 340). These tombs replaced the old Catholic shrines and their reliquaries of saints' bones as loci of emulation and respect; in much the same way as those shrines had converted once living individuals into patrons of virtues and values, these tombs turned individuals into exemplar for the community. These tombs connect the memorialized with an emblem of purity in order to create an archetype of virtue. In some ways, this conversion of the individuals into what Llewellyn calls "memoria" dovetails quite well with the earlier two functions (preserving the real events of the past or creating a fictive history) by making the tomb's subject more memorable (*Art* 28). As Sherlock points out, "[i]t is only through the membership of groups that memory is possible at all, as it is society that defines the ideals, values and priorities which order the recollection of the past" (5). Fitting individuals into archetypal groups or demonstrating how their lives fit into an idealized narrative (thus asserting divine providence over the lives of men) enhanced any project of rewriting the past.

As with the other two functions of monuments, this was recognized by contemporaries. To Weever, simple physical contact with antiquity was, in its own right, a powerful experience, as "[t]he seeing of places, wee know to haue beene frequented or inhabited by men, whose

memory is esteemed, or mentioned in stories, doth moue and stirre vs vp as much, or more, then the hearing of their noble deeds, or reading of their compositions” (40). Tombs could magnify the instructive and moving power of antiquity. Weever writes of the “concourse of people [who] come daily, to view the liuely Statues and stately Monuments in Westminster Abbey” witnessing a “sight which brings delight and admiration, and strikes a religious apprehension into the mindes of the beholders” (41). Tombs for the dead could, in some scenarios, preach more effectively than the living.

These, then, are the three major categories of meanings for tombs during this period. Monuments served as repositories of true information about the past, they allowed the living to construct fictive narratives about the past for their own ends, and they served as loci of moral education, similar in many ways to Catholic shrines. Tombs, in other words, acted much like literature as a powerful narrative and inspirational medium. Unfortunately, although significant work has been done recently on tombs in the fields of history, art history, sociology and archaeology, this is not the case in literature. Few have dealt with tombs and their meanings in writings of the period, and no one that I have found has done so with early modern drama.<sup>20</sup> I see several reasons for this neglect. Contemporary critics tend to privilege the written word as the most successful and enduring method of preserving memory. It is an understandable viewpoint; after all, as a profession, we are trained to study these texts and our livelihood depends on them. Such privileging is appropriate, particularly from the seventeenth-century onwards, as literacy became more widespread.<sup>21</sup> Yet text was anything but ubiquitous in its

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<sup>20</sup> Many critics, of course, deal with drama and death, but few with actual commemoration and monumentalization. The closest would be Scott Newstok in his *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs Beyond the Tomb*. His study deals only with the epitaph, however, and is often more concerned with tracking these poems through non-dramatic works such as historic chronicles. Jennifer Woodward’s study deals far more with funerals and funeral effigies than it does with tombs.

<sup>21</sup> Many have tracked this shift from the spoken word to text. M. T. Clanchy writes about the early stages of the move, debunking “the medieval axiom that laymen are illiterate and its converse that clergy are literate” (177).

reach in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, confined to a limited number of hands and, more importantly, eyes. Other methods of preservation and depiction competed for ascendancy, ranging from oral history and crude illustrations of famous figures painted on tavern signs to ballads, pageants at coronations, funeral sermons,<sup>22</sup> funeral effigies and, of course, tombs. Each of these types of representations addressed a slightly different, albeit overlapping, audience, and each could emphasize different and sometimes competing aspects of the object of commemoration.

Literary critics have also failed to examine how tombs have been deployed materially or imaginatively onstage due to a modern revulsion toward the dead. There is not a fear of engaging with *death*. Everyone loves to write about death on stage; after all, death is spectacularly theatrical. Many of the most dramatic moments in plays of almost any period center on the death of a character, usually of a sudden and violent nature, so it is unsurprising that critics gravitate in this direction. This squeamishness also does not extend to ghosts, the spiritual manifestations of the dead, stripped of their corporeal elements. The recalcitrance stems, quite specifically, from an avoidance of dealing with the existence and disposal of physical remains. We live in a sanitized world, protected from dead bodies we encounter only briefly in antiseptic coffins and in their final resting places on the outskirts of suburbia. Thus, modern critics find it difficult to grasp the significance of the dead and their monuments to early moderns who encountered their dead *far* more often and more viscerally, both unburied because

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David Cressy's *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* tracks the process through the period of my study. Of particular interest is his first chapter detailing how the two methods of presenting information coexisted. Harold Weber follows this process from that point in his exploration of "England's long and gradual transformation from a primarily oral to a primarily written culture" in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (11).

<sup>22</sup> Sometimes these were just delivered once while sometimes they would be printed for distribution and preservation. In this way, funeral sermons can straddle the line between oral and written monument.



of high mortality rates, and entombed in monuments and graves occupying every corner of their church and its surrounding sacred ground.

Stephen Greenblatt can be seen as emblematic of this avoidance with the material trappings of death. In *Hamlet in Purgatory*, he uses Jean-Claude Schmitt's phrase "cold memory" to refer to what is preserved by the "names of strangers inscribed on tombstones and effigies" (143). He contrasts this with what he calls, following Hamlet's phrasing, the "'green' memory" brought about by spectral visitation from a recently deceased loved one (Greenblatt *Hamlet* 143). His chosen terminology clearly signals which form of memory he values as powerful and transformative. Ghosts can certainly be quite moving on stage; however, Greenblatt's dismissive phrase "cold memory" occludes the importance of the physical tomb in favor of the ghostly visitor. In fact, Hamlet's first direct questions to the apparition of his father center on a vivid imagining of the material realities of Old Hamlet's tomb; he asks why his father's "canonized bones, hearsèd in death" have "burst their cerements," emerging from the "ponderous and marble jaws" of their "sepulchre" where they had so recently been "quietly enurned" (*Norton* 1.4.28-31).<sup>23</sup> While the ghost may be standing on stage, a physical manifestation of a spiritual existence, in this scene Shakespeare draws on the audience's familiarity with monuments of the wealthy and important. In just this short passage, Shakespeare illustrates Hamlet's view of his father as a paragon (comparing him with a saint); the wealth and splendor of the monument to the former king; the peacefulness of the transition of power;<sup>24</sup> and the memento mori tradition's emphasis on the transience of human life and the reduction of all humans to nothing but a pile of bones, a theme that will memorably return in 5.1.

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<sup>23</sup> All quotes from Shakespeare are drawn from *The Norton Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt et. al.

<sup>24</sup> This transfer of power is represented by the proper ceremony Hamlet discusses, a ceremony in stark contrast with the hasty and mangled ceremonies performed for Polonius and Ophelia, gross omissions indicative of the "rotten[ness] in the state of Denmark" (1.4.67)

It is exactly *because* tombs and monuments were so familiar to his audience that Shakespeare needs to expend only five lines to make all these points. Unfortunately, our avoidance of the corporeal elements of death make such descriptions of the monument and its encased cadaver vanish behind the more striking and, to our modern mind, more palatable representation of death: the bloodless ghost. Greenblatt does not spend time on the tomb because his study focuses on ghosts and not their abandoned graves; nonetheless, his dismissive phrase “cold memory” represents a larger critical indifference towards tombs in literary studies, even in the face of the multitude of recent works on the subject in other disciplines.

One clear indication of the importance of tombs in early modern drama can be found by merely noting the sheer quantity of references to monuments and graves in plays of the period.<sup>25</sup> *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Titus Andronicus* might be the Shakespearean plays containing tomb references that leap most quickly to mind, but allusions to monuments occur frequently in almost all of Shakespeare’s works, including the histories and, perhaps more surprisingly, the romances, problem plays, and comedies.<sup>26</sup> Multiple scenes toward the end of *Much Ado About Nothing* orbit the monument to the supposedly slain Hero, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* contains not only the famous tragicomedy at “Ninny’s tomb,” but also the less remembered (and far more disturbing) acknowledgement by Robin Goodfellow of the walking spirits of suicides buried at crossroads, traditionally with stakes through their hearts (5.1.199, 3.2.383-386). Tombs appear in the works of other playwrights as well, in plays of all genres. For example, Tim, in Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, claims to know the warden of Westminster and plans to borrow Henry V’s sword when he needs a weapon

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<sup>25</sup> According to Scott Newstok, “There are over one hundred early modern plays in which a character reads, encounters, composes, imagines, or otherwise alludes to an epitaph on stage” (149). These references to epitaphs are only a small subset of references to tombs, monuments, stones and other commemorative markers.

<sup>26</sup> It is also worth noting that Henslowe listed two separate tombs in his well-known list of stage properties.

(Bevington et al. 4.4.58-62). This claim, played for comic effect, illustrates Londoners' familiarity with famous monuments (the joke suffers without a mental image of Henry's tomb), something reinforced by the fact that in 1593, "[t]he first Keeper of the Monuments was appointed," demonstrating that "royal monuments there had already become a tourist attraction" by the last decade of Elizabeth's reign (Woodward 130).<sup>27</sup>

Of course, numbers tell only a small part of the story, and frequency does not necessarily translate into importance. A better way of addressing the question is to look at the cultural work these references perform onstage and what symbolic space they fill. As one of many media for commemorating individuals available during the period, tombs and monuments, in their material splendor and geographic privilege, were particularly adept at preserving selected aspects of an individual's history, status, and achievements. Naturally, playwrights frequently mined this vein for its symbolic potential as part of their active search for vivid ways to portray and preserve their characters.

In his article, "Priamus is dead: memorial repetition in Marlowe and Shakespeare," Anthony B. Dawson writes of "theatrical poverty – the problem of representing on stage the grand images of past heroism and defeat" (Holland 65). This article focuses on the history plays, but the same problem faced playwrights in all genres during the early modern period: how to convey a sense of something more substantial than just a handful of individuals reciting lines on a small wooden stage. One effective strategy is to refer to familiar sites and objects outside of the theater. Such references can serve two purposes, as outlined by Darryll Grantley. He writes

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<sup>27</sup> "There is considerable additional contemporary evidence for such tourism: Camden's text on Westminster Abbey had already run to a third edition by 1606; Henry Holland's list of those in St. Paul's first published in 1614, was much expanded and revised for its 1633 second edition, and Valentinus Arithmaeus's account of Westminster Abbey's monuments was published in Frankfurt in 1618" (Lindley 99).

here on the focus of his study, references to specific London locations in early modern drama, but the point applies as well to tombs familiar to Londoners:

Dramatic narratives take place in physical space, and when that stage space reconstitutes urban localities familiar to the audience through experience, the constraints of realism obviously come into force, the spaces represented on stage possessing a reality that would inevitably interfere with any more imaginative project associated with them. On the other hand, the fact that plays are forced to condense narratives and be selective about detail conduces to the exploitation of popular conceptions (which can be fanciful) attaching to particular places to provide a useful shorthand means of creating narrative meaning. In these cases, it is not simply material recognition that is at issue, but understanding of what social and cultural meanings are inscribed in them. (21)

The second of these effects, what Grantley calls theatrical “shorthand,” can be quite useful in constructing meaning for audiences familiar with the conventions invoked. In addition, in the history plays, the “constraints of realism” that Grantley seems to see as problematic (mostly because his study deals extensively with the city comedies) can actually be beneficial in constructing an immersive experience for the audience.<sup>28</sup>

Passages in plays dealing with tombs for the uncommemorated or the fictional also powerfully combat “theatrical poverty.” Londoners frequently encountered tombs in their daily lives, and these monuments held a variety of meanings reflected in the plays they attended. Tombs had significant theatrical power and potential even in the most general sense, as when characters bemoan the loneliness, the peace, or the sorrow of the tomb. Of far more interest are the ways playwrights tapped into the more complex meanings of tombs outlined earlier. Unpacking the wealth of associations and meanings found in passages dealing with tombs not only reveals a richness largely missed by modern critics so distant from early modern ways of

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<sup>28</sup> If Grantley is correct and a playwright attempting to create a fantastical world onstage might be hampered by the intrusion of the real, the same intrusion would help his writing of a history, a retelling or restaging of real past events, because it would make his play seem even more concrete and grounded in the material world outside the “wooden O.”

seeing the dead, but also adds to our understanding of how those in early modern London, playwrights and audiences alike, thought about their ancestors and their own fleeting mortality.

To this end, I begin this study with two chapters examining Shakespeare's history plays. Most of the characters in these plays were real people; they lived and fought and, most importantly for this project, died and were buried. Some of their tombs were well-known and close to the theaters; Richard II and Henry V, among others, rested beneath splendid tombs and commemorative apparatus across the river in Westminster Abbey. Some were farther away, such as the Black Prince in Canterbury and Henry VI in Windsor. Some had no tombs, their bodies left unburied or lost entirely, including the princes in the Tower and the individual responsible for their disappearance, Richard III.<sup>29</sup> Because of this variation in the proximity and familiarity of their tombs to London audiences, when these characters speak of tombs on stage, their words have the potential for different types of resonance. Ad hoc burial is central to *Richard III*, with characters chucked in holes, stuffed in butts of wine, and secretly buried in the Tower. In contrast, in both *Richard II* and *Henry V* the main characters consistently meditate on the proper burial and monumentalization of themselves and others, alluding frequently to their own nearby and familiar places of commemoration. The history plays offer an opportunity to explore how real world burials and monuments influence and interact with their dramatic counterparts.

The history plays also allow an opportunity to see playwrights in competition with fellow authors and other artists over the creation of "persona." I borrow this term from Llewellyn: "In skillful enough hands and given sufficient ambition on the part of the patron, the monumental body could invent for posterity a completely new *persona*" (*Art* 102). Tomb patrons, and the

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<sup>29</sup> According to Dodson, Richard's tomb was destroyed during the Dissolution. A legend likely current in Shakespeare's time has it that "his bones were thrown in the River Soar," but Dodson finds this unlikely since this story "post-dates the alleged events by some 70 years" (85).

artists they hired, designed and erected monuments for the deceased that preserved the positive, elided the negative, and presented the “proper” moral and instructional message. In so doing, they created an alternative version of the individual, one they hoped would be remembered and transmitted to posterity. In history plays, playwrights endeavor to do much the same thing, to transform a historical person into a memorable dramatic character. Both of these presentations of the individual (in stone and on stage) compete with other representations found in sources as varied as historical chronicles, ballads, popular legends, and even tavern signs. All of these depictions in their own way preserved an individual, turning him or her into a remembered persona, which could, but need not, resemble the original living human. Different persona could be dissimilar from each other and could overlap or even conflict. Many critics, for example, have analyzed the ways in which Shakespeare’s kings differed from their portrayals in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* and other contemporary works of history. I look at what happens when “historical” characters reference tombs on stage in order to see what work the playwright is doing with each reference. Why do some characters repeatedly talk about tombs while others do not? What does the language or the symbolism or the imagery associated with these invocations of tombs mean? What do these invocations say about the persona, both those represented by the offstage tombs and those the playwright is trying to create?

That all these versions of the persona (stage, chronicle, tomb, ballad, tavern sign) were seen as connected and interchangeable during the period can be seen in Thomas Nashe’s comments about *1 Henry VI* in his *Pierce Penniless*. According to Nashe, the playhouses have an instructive function when they present histories, for they are “for the most part borrowed out of our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers’ valiant acts, that have lain long buried in rusty brass and worm-eaten books, are revived, and they themselves raised from the grave of

oblivion, and brought to plead their aged honours in open presence” (Nashe 112-113). Nashe here contrasts tombs, books, and plays as methods of preserving the individual in the collective memory. While he claims that monuments and texts are insufficient to achieve this end, he and Shakespeare proceed to employ the language of monuments and tombs in their (possibly) collaborative play as representational of memory and fame. In fact, in the next paragraph, Nashe seems to forget the contrast he was attempting to draw and metaphorically conflates the theater and tomb, asking rhetorically about how it “would have joyed brave Talbot... to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least” (Nashe 113). Talbot will “triumph” again on stage, but it will be his “bones” that will be commemorated and “new embalmed” in the playhouse.

It is here, in the first tetralogy, that I start my study; Chapter Two explores the many and varied references to tombs in the three *Henry VI* plays. I argue that these plays demonstrate a grab-bag of scattered, experimental symbolic meanings for tombs. In *1 Henry VI*, the French use monuments in an attempt to come to grips with the unique and patriarchy-threatening identity of Joan, while Talbot uses the tomb of the fallen Salisbury like a flag to claim the “chieftest temple” of his enemy” (2.2.12). *2 Henry VI* opens with the nobility squabbling over the possible loss of France in language using the language of monuments, while the main action of the play, the peasant rebellion, closes with Iden declaring that the sword he used to kill the rebel Cade will be an icon of his family that will “hang the o’er my tomb when I am dead” (4.9.65). Elsewhere in the play, the grieving Queen draws a comparison between a monument and an alehouse sign in ways that point toward contemporary views of competing constructions of persona. Finally, in *3 Henry VI*, soldiers actually become tombs, the Yorkist faction displays an unusual view of

monuments that allows their project to fail and yet be forever remembered, and the dying Warwick the Kingmaker delivers a moving soliloquy on death suggesting that the transitory nature of worldly power has left him ownership of nothing but his “body’s length” of seemingly unmarked earth (5.2.26).

If this brief overview seems scattered, it is a fair reflection of the plays’ approach to tombs and monuments. These plays demonstrate Shakespeare’s early experiments with deploying tombs and tomb language on stage. Some symbolic uses never appear again; for example, the reductive use of tomb symbolism directed toward a living individual, seen in the treatment of Joan, appears nowhere else in Shakespeare’s works. However, other symbolic meanings for tombs foreshadowed in these plays are developed in later works by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. These symbolic uses parallel the three major meanings for tombs I outlined earlier; in these three plays, Shakespeare uses tombs as links to the past and to historical record (Chapter Three), as devices for rewriting the past and ensuring a chosen narrative is transmitted to the future (Chapter Four), and as objects for remembering individuals as exemplars (Chapter Five).<sup>30</sup>

In Chapter Three, I look at the use of tombs as material guardians of the past and thus emblems of a continuity in which the individual is a part.<sup>31</sup> A character who understands tombs in this way can look to his monumentalized ancestors but can also envision a future where he and his progeny will also be so memorialized. I delve into this deployment of monumental language through Shakespeare’s second tetralogy, primarily through the characters of Richard II and

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<sup>30</sup> Just as with the meanings of tombs offstage, these onstage uses overlap and blend together. Nonetheless, these categories can provide a framework for a more nuanced exploration of the function of tombs and monuments onstage.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, as I mentioned earlier, often this continuity is a construct, based not on reality but designed for political and social ends (for example, the Tudor myth or the reburial of Mary, Queen of Scots in Westminster). The fictionality of these narratives will be dealt with in Chapter Four.



Henry V, two monarchs who frequently discuss their own tombs and the tombs of others in ways quite different from each other.

For Richard, his own burial becomes a subject of intense anxiety. He fears being forgotten and driven to “an earthy pit” while the usurper Bolingbroke reigns from “Richard’s seat” (4.1.209, 208). Every time he thinks about his current misfortune, his thoughts run to uncertainties about his future burial and remembrance. In his particular way of dealing with tombs and identity, Richard displays two limitations that undermine his position as monarch. First, he seems concerned only with his own commemoration rather than any wider connections to the past. In *Richard II*, Northumberland alone highlights continuity with the past by swearing on the tombs of his and Richard’s common ancestors. Richard also seems unable to comprehend how his body will be used after his death. Instead of understanding himself within a continuum of English kings, his myopic insistence on his position as divinely anointed monarch makes it impossible for him to envision the future under Bolingbrooke. His narcissism, demonstrated through his perspective on burial and commemoration, limits his understanding of both the past and the future.

Henry V, in contrast, understands the larger picture. He refers to tombs and monuments more frequently and effectively than any other character in Shakespeare’s history plays; he uses their symbolism not only to engage with his own past and the past of his country but also to envision a future when he endures eternally through his conquests and monument. It is talk of his ancestors in their tombs and the connection to the past that they represent that finally convinces Henry of the justness of the French campaign in 1.2. He atones for the sins of the past by materially commemorating Richard II in penitence for his father’s usurpation. In addition, he alludes to his expectations of commemorative immortality at key moments of the play; for

example, before setting off on his conquests, he declares that, if he fails to conquer France, the English should “lay these bones in an unworthy urn” where they will lie “Not worshipped with a waxen epitaph” (1.2.228, 233). Henry’s enormous commemorative chapel in Westminster, planned by the king before his death, was familiar to London audiences and must have immediately leapt into the audience’s mind at such a statement, reinforcing the fact that, however temporary Henry’s accomplishments, his life had become symbolic of the high point of English military might. I demonstrate that Henry himself self-consciously works to preserve the past in order to construct his legacy throughout the play, and he does so largely through the language of tombs and monumentation.

In Chapter Four, I examine a symbolic meaning first championed by Marlowe: the power of tombs to change the future by rewriting the past. Many playwrights, Shakespeare included, understood that the lack of a tomb could mean historical and social erasure, but it was Marlowe in *Edward II* who first dealt in depth with the power tombs possessed to alter public perception, often by creating and preserving a *fictive* history. In the very first scene, Edward shows his disdain for the natural order of mourning and commemoration when, in order to satisfy his favorite Gaveston, Edward has the Bishop of Coventry seized before he can properly perform the formal funeral rites for Edward’s father. Later in the play, aware that the new King cannot be trusted to uphold the traditional order, the nobles refuse to return the body of Gaveston to the King for fear of the monument he might construct. They are acutely aware that if the King controlled the corpse of his favorite, he would then have the power to rewrite Gaveston’s legacy. Marlowe clearly saw that Gaveston’s dead body, and the monument that could be created to house it, was far more powerful than the man himself.

In this chapter, I examine how characters in other non-history plays employ the power of tombs to control what will be passed down to the future. For example, in Middleton's [?] *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the Duke bemoans that the rape perpetrated by the youngest in his clan will "blot us in our tombs," permanently staining the honor of the whole family, while the victim, killing herself in shame, "Merits a tomb of pearl" (Bevington et al. 1.2.6, 1.4.67). To the Duke, the outcome of the trial could well influence a rewriting of his family's legacy that will be impossible to counteract, inscribed as it will be in stone. A similar concern about how the future will be written occurs in *Hamlet*, where the debate over the proper treatment of Ophelia's body illustrates not only Laertes' obsession with proper commemoration, but also the future status of a family whose patriarch has already been buried with a hurried and "obscure burial—/ No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones" (4.5.208-209). Laertes, whose ambition reaches so high that he challenges Claudius and incites a mob against the King, expresses fury at the systematic erasure of the status of his family via their insulting commemorative arrangements.

In the Fifth Chapter, I consider the third of the major meanings of tombs, their power to transform individuals into exemplars and to thus serve as sites where the dead could symbolically teach lessons to the living. Many current art history texts dealing with tombs focus on this subject, and plenty of material appears in the plays to support this perspective. This period saw the rise of tomb tourism, an activity encouraged not only because of the artistry of the tombs, but also because of their power to edify. Tombs had great potential to teach the living; they could encourage visitors to respect authority, emulate great achievements, or embody traditional Christian values. Playwrights used this potential for tombs as "memoria" (Llewellyn's term for tombs that teach) in diverse ways. In *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina suggests that the excellence of the statue commemorating Hermione must be beyond "what ever yet you

looked upon, / Or hand of man hath done” in order to properly represent the “peerless” life she led (5.3.16-17, 14). In effect, this “statue” acts both to reclaim the reputation of Hermione, damaged so badly by Leontes’ baseless accusations, and to transform her into an exemplar.

However, such memoria could be problematic. When the purpose is to stand as an emblem for the public, competition can arise between rivals, each wishing to disseminate a different message. This occurs at the end of *Romeo and Juliet* where the two families, reconciled on the surface, actually engage in a competition, challenging each other over who will construct the finest monument to the lovers. A similar challenge plays out between Hamlet and Laertes, as each compares his love for Ophelia to idealized and increasingly ostentatious monuments in an effort to outdo each other. In both of these plays, the imaginative construction of memoria provides an opportunity for competition between those with divergent narratives in ways that threaten the potential for edification.

In my project, I draw on a variety of materials, from drama to descriptions of tombs, and from art history to Elizabethan stage history, in order to determine what early modern audiences and playwrights thought about monuments and tombs. In order to pull together these diverse materials, I strive to be open to a variety of critical viewpoints and widely divergent readings of the plays. Almost by necessity with a project of this type, however, I draw most heavily on the tenets of New Historicism, Materialist criticism, and Historical Formalism.

New Historicism serves as my baseline because of its usefulness in engaging with a variety of different sources. Not only does New Historicism encourage critics to move beyond the canonical authors to explore “other texts by ‘minor’ authors,” but its insistence on observation of the wider culture allows the incorporation of non-textual cultural artifacts (Gallagher and Greenblatt 10). I embrace New Historicist principles warily, however. While

New Historicism's pervasive reach means there is little reason to dwell on an extended discussion of what it does well, a weakness can be seen in adherents who privilege the extraordinary and unique over the mundane and ubiquitous.

This has certainly proven true in the New Historicist concern with the double transi tomb.<sup>32</sup> A transi tomb is a monument that, instead of portraying an effigy in peaceful repose, exhibits the deceased as a rotting cadaver, sometimes complete with stone worms. Double transi tombs have two types of effigies, one above the other, the top one carved to resemble the individual in life and the bottom the same corrupted by death.<sup>33</sup> These tombs were “intended to act as potent reminders of the mortality of the onlooker” while keeping the social body intact via the upper effigy (Llewellyn *Art* 46-47). In *Practicing New Historicism*, Greenblatt offers an extended reading of *Hamlet*, building off of the double transi tomb's symbolism. To Greenblatt, the dual image of the slain king dominates the play. On the one hand, Hamlet is literally haunted by the ghostly image of the king as he was in life, an image similar to the upper tomb, while metaphorically “Hamlet's imagination seems continually to force [the lower, grotesque effigy] into his consciousness, compelling him, as his mother complains, to ‘seek for thy noble father in the dust’” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 153). Yet Greenblatt fails to acknowledge that these types of tombs were quite rare in England, common only in continental Europe (Llewellyn *Funeral* 340). The nearest such monument to London was in Canterbury, and Greenblatt offers no evidence that Shakespeare or any but a few of his audience were familiar with this or any other double transi tomb. As a result, the whole reading moves from the realm of the probable (where

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<sup>32</sup> I pointed out earlier that recent critics have largely ignored tombs. This is the single exception; multiple New Historicist critics, most notably Stephen Greenblatt, have dealt with the symbolism of the double transi tomb.

<sup>33</sup> There is no universally accepted name for this type of dual-effigy tomb. The term “double transi” comes from Kathleen Cohen's *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (38). Greenblatt refers to them as two paired figures, the “*representacion au vif*” and the “*representacion de la mort*” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 152).

references to striking examples of tomb building might be shown to have cropped up in a play) to the highly improbable (where the connection is only Greenblatt's, with his modern access to art from around the world). While unique objects and texts have tremendous power to vividly bring scholarly claims to life, they can be quite misleading without an approach more mindful of the burden of proof and the need to demonstrate widespread knowledge and beliefs of the time.

Materialist criticism also has much to offer this project because of its affinity with wordless objects such as epitaphless tombs and its focus on the process of constructing identity through inanimate items. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, for example, have shown that, quite literally, “clothes make the man” (2). In fact, according to their study, the very word “fashion” bears a sense of clothing’s power “to ‘pick up’ subjects, to mold and shape them both physically and socially, to constitute subjects through their power as material memories” (2).<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Patricia Fumerton argues that early moderns constructed “a sense of self ... that was supported and, indeed, constituted by bric-a-brac worlds of decorations, gifts, foodstuffs, small entertainments, and other particles of cultural wealth and show,” what she frequently refers to as the “trivial” (1). Taken in this context, tombs can be seen as a permanent costume, erected to create a lasting persona for the dead.<sup>35</sup>

A useful addition, and even corrective, to New Historicism and Materialism is a fairly new critical standpoint, Historical Formalism, a critical strategy that attempts to “engag[e] with

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<sup>34</sup> The reverse of this argument is of course the anonymity created by nakedness (or death), as argued by Michael Neill.

<sup>35</sup> There is actually quite a bit of overlap between my study and both of these studies. Tombs from the era appear distractingly cluttered with ornamentation precisely because such items create meaning. In addition, the clothes of effigies are often more important than the face in anchoring identity, particularly in post-Reformation England with its “widespread nervousness about replicas of reality” and its resultant paucity of “effigies [that] were portraits in our modern sense” (Llewellyn, *Funeral* 35). Funeral effigies (as opposed to tomb effigies) were designed to be dressed in the actual clothes of the deceased and thus stand in as the individual (for examples, see Woodward). Jones and Stallybrass argue that paintings of the period were “as much the portraits of clothes and jewels as of people” and we thus search in vain “for a revealing feature or for the identity of the sitter, [while] the pictures themselves give a minutely detailed portrayal of the material constitution of the subject: a subject composed through textiles and jewels, fashioned by clothes” (35). Much the same can be said of tombs, which use clothing and other symbolic accoutrements to eternally encode identity.

the period's formal complexity, and in so doing, to arrest the form-history pendulum by producing a historically and ideologically sensitive formalism, one that neither denies the cultural function of form nor reduces it to a single inherent or inevitable effect, whether conservative or liberatory" (S. Cohen 14). According to Cohen:

If historical formalism illuminates the historicity of literary forms, it also reminds us that the extratextual cultural materials in a literary text upon which those forms work are not themselves formally innocent: the other half of the historical-formalist chiasmus, the forms of history, reframes our approach to the non-literary discourses so important to New Historicism by attending to their formal specificity as well.... Like literary forms, non-literary forms have historical roots and functions; but a methodological insistence upon the discursive specificity of each reminds us that while linked by a common historical situation, they retain a developmental and functional relative autonomy from each other. Rather than assuming a cultural homogeneity, when juxtaposing materials from different discourses a historical formalist reading remains alert to the potential ideological complexity of their formal interactions—perhaps harmonious, perhaps conflicting, and perhaps productive of unanticipated insights and alternatives. (15)

Cohen's point is critical to what I am trying to achieve. Although he writes here exclusively about texts, his argument can encompass other cultural artifacts. Just as a critic would be remiss if he or she read a medical text in the same way as a sonnet, it would be foolish to treat tombs like plays. Throughout this project, I grapple with both on their own terms, and in particular, I investigate how playwrights, notorious for borrowing anything that could be invoked to provide theatrical power on the stage, tapped into the tremendous potential inherent in these monumental objects so familiar to society at large.

I strive throughout to engage with my sources, both printed on paper and carved in stone, in a manner that preserves the individuality of their form and also privileges the common and well-known over the rare and unusual. Instead of drawing on unusual tombs from all over Europe, I focus on monuments familiar to Shakespeare and his audience, in particular those in Southwark near the playhouses and those in Westminster Abbey, in what was becoming a

popularly visited national shrine.<sup>36</sup> By keeping the focus narrowly on these familiar objects, I show what Shakespeare and others borrowed whole cloth and what they tailored to suit their theatrical needs.<sup>37</sup>

With this narrow remit comes carefully defined claims. Douglas Bruster addresses a significant problem in literary criticism when he states that, too often, critics couple “a curious constriction of objects of study ... [with] an equally curious expansion of that study’s purported reach” (22). Bruster values studies on narrow topics, but he insists that they remain honest about what exactly can be established instead of using hyperbole in an effort to inflate the importance of the project. My topic of study is tightly focused; I am dealing only with tombs and monuments and what they meant on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. I have no intention to follow in the footsteps of those who take such topics and make vast and unsupportable claims. There is clear evidence, however, of the importance of monuments to the early modern English. Renaissance scholars, for instance, cited impressive tombs as evidence that nations were civilized. They were objects of tremendous expense, often constructed even when families were in dire financial straits. Assaults on tombs were seen by several early modern commentators as

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<sup>36</sup> I admire Clayton MacKenzie whose excellent *Emblems of Mortality: Iconographic Experiments in Shakespeare’s Theatre* demonstrated how well a project could work within such constraints. As he writes of his project, “In considering Shakespeare’s text, I wanted to work with the kinds of artistic impressions that, in all likelihood, would have formed part of the *direct* experience of those who visited the Globe and Fortune to see Shakespeare’s plays. For example, in selecting illustrations of *memento mori*, I have resisted the temptation to focus on the magnificent fifteenth century dance of death series at the Church of St. Mary, Berlin, or the colorful Death pageant at Beram in Croatia. Instead, I look to the *danse macabre* at Boxgrove Priory, a short journey south from where the Globe Theatre stood; and to the extraordinary skeleton representations at St. Alban’s Cathedral and at St. Andrew’s Church, Oddington, both of which lie on the route from Stratford-on-Avon to London” (7). This kind of discipline allows MacKenzie to avoid the seductive traps that have undermined some critical studies in the New Historicist model. Focusing on London tombs also prevents me from conflating the views of the English as a whole and Londoners as a subset. As Graham Holderness points out, Tudor drama was essentially “metropolitan” and reflective primarily of the denizens of London (*Shakespeare’s History* 153).

<sup>37</sup> It is in these alterations, according to Bruster, that exciting information can be found: “Dramatists of this period routinely looked to printed materials in their search for stories, characters, ideas, situations, words, and phrases. Making recourse to a wide range of source materials, they necessarily changed the contexts of what they borrowed. It is through this change of contexts that such authors made the sources more, rather than less, necessary to our understanding of their texts [...] In changing the contexts of these materials, the playwrights show us paths not taken and more lucidly foreground those ultimately decided on” (176). Although he writes here of written sources, the point Bruster makes can also be applied to other “sources” of a variety of types.



equivalent to assaults on the living individual and the entire social order. In exploring the commemorative economy of Shakespeare's England, I reveal how tombs and monuments shaped the way citizens of the period accessed and envisioned the past and their ancestors, and how they also worked, both imaginatively and in practice, to mold early moderns' understanding of remembrance after death.

## CHAPTER 2

### “NOTHING LEFT ME BUT MY BODY’S LENGTH”: USES FOR TOMBS IN SHAKESPEARE’S THREE *HENRY THE SIXTH* PLAYS

As drama, Shakespeare’s three *Henry VI*<sup>38</sup> plays can be a hard sell, even to those predisposed toward them. A recently published collection of essays on the three works displays this apologetic message on the back cover instead of the typical celebratory prose designed to entice potential readers: “The *Henry VI* plays, written early in Shakespeare’s career and succeeded by other, better plays, quickly receded to the status of minor Shakespeare” (Pendleton Back Cover). Another critic assessing the plays claims “that confusion is their medium,” while yet another argues that they are without any clear meaning in their own right, showing only “an increasingly chaotic and meaningless world and an action that seems devoid of ethical significance or providential purpose until it is explained in retrospect in *Richard III*” (Blanpied 21, Rackin *Stages* 62).<sup>39</sup> With such support, who needs detractors?

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<sup>38</sup> I refer to the last two of these plays as 2 and 3 *Henry VI* rather than the titles used by *The Norton Shakespeare*. Their titles, *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good King Henry the Sixth* respectively, are unwieldy and chosen for flimsy reasons. These titles come from the quarto versions and yet the texts in the *Norton* are constructed with the folio as “primary control text” (*Norton* 237). The two reasons offered for choosing these cumbersome titles are unconvincing. In reference to 2 *Henry VI*, the textual note reads that “[t]he Oxford editors . . . retain the title used for the 1594 Quarto on the grounds that it is more descriptive of the play’s content than the blander *Second Part of Henry VI*, and because it is the title by which the play was probably known during Shakespeare’s own lifetime” (237-8). The latter reason is mere supposition while the former is not used as a criterion for naming any of Shakespeare’s other plays.

<sup>39</sup> Rackin derives this argument from Tillyard, among others. She is notable among recent critics of the plays in her willingness to embrace readings that focus on both “providential and Machiavellian views of historical causation” (*Stages* 45). This allows her to find common ground between the old providentialist readings of Shakespeare’s

“Minor Shakespeare” these plays may be, but perhaps because of their early position, both in terms of Shakespeare’s career and in terms of professional, London-based drama, they also show the vibrancy of exuberant experimentation.<sup>40</sup> Earlier, I quoted Thomas Nashe from *Pierce Penniless* in reference to *1 Henry VI*. It is clear Nashe does not expect the audience to be baffled and left waiting for a series of sequels to explain plot and themes; he assumes they will enjoy the play and be inspired by its drama to feats of heroism. These plays burst with energy. While it may be fair to say that they include elements that do not work well on stage, they also contain an abundance of scenes that do, and it is exactly this method of trial and error that makes them interesting to this study.

History plays, by their very nature, present a particular set of problems. Because the characters represent late members of the English aristocracy, these plays allowed “Elizabethan players ... a two-hour traffic to appropriate, control, and propagate the image of the ruling class” (Canino 2). The upper classes invested tremendous resources maintaining the reputation of their blood lines and titles and did not want them undermined by “a social inferior convincing – even if only for the dramatic moment – an audience of other social inferiors that he was someone’s great-grandfather. It is one thing to read in the chronicles that John Clifford was a bloody villain. It is quite another to physically witness ‘Clifford’ plunging a dagger into a quivering

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history plays and more recent critics who tend to overact to the neat Tillyardian model, throwing out the good ideas with the bad.

<sup>40</sup> A note on authorship: the debate over who wrote these plays, particularly *1 Henry VI*, has been vigorous and extended. For compelling evidence of multiple authorship (primarily by Thomas Nashe), see Gary Taylor’s “Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry the Sixth, Part I*.” For an equally compelling counter that Shakespeare was deeply *influenced* by Nashe but that the Nashean elements in *1 Henry VI* are the result of a pattern of appropriation throughout Shakespeare’s career, see “A Touch of Greene, Much Nashe, and All Shakespeare” by J. J. M. Tobin in Pendleton’s collection. I lean toward Tobin’s case, but there is little point in entering into the debate here; who wrote the plays has little bearing on the experimental nature of the works. I will merely follow Dominique Goy-Blanquet, who playfully asserts in the introduction to her excellent book on the three *Henry VI* plays “that there is a method in this apparent disorder, that it bears the mark of a conscious artist, and that he is the same artist who wrote *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*. For want of a better name, failing all contrary evidence, I will call him Shakespeare” (1).

‘child’ amidst the shouts and boos of an outraged audience of journeymen and tailors” (Canino 15).

To avoid falling out of favor with the ruling class or to thwart potential accusations of subversion, playwrights had to transform the theatrical potential of national history into a stageable product that would not seriously offend those in power. Graham Holderness’s division of “historical drama” into two “distinct type[s],” the “comic history” and the “chronicle play,” can be seen as two strategies playwrights developed for dealing with this problem (*Shakespeare’s History* 32). The first of these sub-genres drew on “materials from a still largely oral popular culture – ballads, romances, songs and stories incorporating legend, folk-tales, fairy-stories, myths” to create “historical medleys such as *James IV* and also *Edward I*, [where] historical characters mingle with citizens and figures of legend such as Robin Hood and Maid Marian” (Holderness *Shakespeare’s History* 33-34). The second type of play, the “chronicle play,” derived its “action and incident ... largely or exclusively from written historiographical materials. However elaborate and innovative the dramatisation and poetic stylising, the events and characters (with a few minor exceptions, such as the gardeners in *Richard II*) follow those authenticated as historically accurate by the chronicles” (Holderness *Shakespeare’s History* 32-33). In other words, the playwrights could deal with the dangerous task of writing about the ancestors of contemporary elites in two ways, by embracing the freedom of fiction and abandoning any pretension to fact, or by basing their drama on the established chronicle accounts and thus deriving protection from their faithfulness to historical record.

These are, of course, two ends of a continuum rather than clearly “distinct” types.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, for most of his history plays, Shakespeare tended to gravitate strongly toward the “chronicle play” sub-genre. The chronicle plays presented their own set of problems, however.

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<sup>41</sup> This is borne out by Shakespeare’s two *Henry IV* plays.

Throughout the period, acting companies were constantly under fire for being disseminators of lies and deception. As a result, the “true” events of history as portrayed in the chronicle play could well be seen as tainted by the reputation of the playhouse. To solve this problem, playwrights had to link the clearly fictive world of the stage to the “real” world of history. Echoing the language of the printed chronicles was one option, but this tactic would only be effective to literate members of the audience. Another approach was to use costume, characterization, and theatrical trickery to appear to simulate and recreate the truth of history. Unfortunately, as the Chorus to *Henry V* repeatedly asserts, there are limitations to such a strategy. Michael Hattaway argues that, “Elizabethan playhouses were not designed for *illusion*: there was no question of constructing scenic likenesses of palace rooms or tavern ‘ordinaries’, formal gardens or fields of battle. When such places were evoked in dialogue, they served as what Mikhail Bakhtin called ‘chronotopes’, ‘time-places’, representations of *social spaces* and not imitations of *particular places*” (12). This limitation extends to the ability of scene and costume to create an immersive and convincing illusion, but in this summary, Hattaway misses an important third method of linking the onstage drama with the offstage historical truth. While playwrights could not hope to *recreate* real world locations on stage, they could *evoke* real offstage locations and objects already familiar to the audience and expect that their audience would fill in the gaps from their own personal experience and memory.

The language of monuments and tombs was particularly important for this strategy of evocation. It is unlikely that many in the London audience would have seen any of the distant places mentioned as locations for scenes (York, Glendŵr’s Castle in Wales) or battles and sieges (Bosworth, Rouen), but many would have seen the London monuments to the numerous kings

and nobles portrayed in the plays.<sup>42</sup> This is exactly the reason why a playwright would reference a specific tomb; there is no need to construct a likeness of a monument onstage if it is known by the audience *off* the stage and can be recalled to mind and memory.

Even in cases where no specific monument is mentioned, tombs still have the symbolic potential to link with the “real” because of their very nature as material markers of the past. In his excellent book on the use of Renaissance epitaphs, Scott Newstok takes the traditional “here lies” and claims that “[t]he word ‘here’ serves as the common, even the *principal* declaration of an epitaph” (1). “Here” evokes a variety of ideas and concepts, addressing “fundamental queries” about diverse subjects:

- *identity*, in that we question who exactly lies “here”
- *corporeality*, in that the body “here” is not precisely the same body it had once been
- *religion*, in that the purpose of meditating “here” is quite contentious
- *memory*, in that the statement “here” yearns to be read and respected in perpetuity
- *property*, in that the very location and endurance of this memorial “here” depends upon some marking out and paying for space
- and the *representative possibilities of language itself*, in that we trust what it means to say “here,” even though this ‘here’ depends radically on its context of utterance. (Newstok 36-37)

I will deal with many of Newstok’s categories later, but the most important of these for my present purposes is the final one. An epitaph, with its stated or assumed “here lies,” deployed in any but its original context “gestures towards a spatial fixity, even when it cannot fulfill it...

The invocation of an epitaph—through a full epitaphic recitation, a reference to the word ‘epitaph’ itself, or an allusion via the phrase ‘here lies’—gains a *rhetorical* weight that becomes applied in circumstances far beyond its place of origin, namely, the grave” (Newstok 29).

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<sup>42</sup> Or, if not theirs, at least those of their ancestors or even the previous holders of the title. Many titles moved from one family line to another, particularly during the upheaval of the Wars of the Roses and the early Tudor years. As Canino points out, “[t]he title is larger than the man. When a man is granted a title, his identity is subsumed into that title” (8). As a result, tombs (or other objects and locations) associated with individuals can have wider associations as well, evoking thoughts of other holders. This will become important later in my discussion of Warwick in section five.

Invocations of tombs make similar “gestures,” but in the case of material monuments more is displaced than merely text. Newstok’s study is largely concerned with the reinscribing of epitaphs in chronicles and other written formats,<sup>43</sup> but monuments, of which epitaphs are but a part, are not only textual but also theatrical, “frozen, eternal dumb-shows... to be looked at, to be read, their epitaphs studied, their meanings – together with the implications of the posture of the effigies, their costumes, and the symbolism of any subsidiary decoration, – pondered” (Wilson *Archaeology* 81-82). The drama of a tomb is created by the fusion of the written epitaph with all the other elements, from its statuary and imagery to the societal meanings of the very materials chosen for construction. This theatrical affinity of monuments allows for a variety of deployments on stage, the most basic of which focus on Newstok’s first point, that of identity. This can be as simple as reciting an epitaph on stage, like the one Lucy performs over the fallen Talbot in *1 Henry VI*, Act 4, Scene 7. Lucy lists Talbot’s titles over the body of the fallen hero in language taken “almost verbatim ... from Talbot’s gravestone in Rouen” (Blanpied 30). As Lucy speaks, he “re-cite[s]” the epitaph, citing something previously cited, and, as Newstok points out, “[b]ehind the authoritative ‘cite’ lingers the shadowy homophone of ‘site’” (5). Talbot’s epitaph is moved from its geographical location in France to the English stage, and what is carried along is exactly what Nigel Llewellyn calls “the social body after death,” the list of titles and achievements that form the official part of Talbot’s identity (*Art* 9). The London audience, of course, would not have directly known this French tomb. Nonetheless, due to the closeness between the wording on the actual tomb and Lucy’s speech, it is clear that Shakespeare saw the inscription printed in some no longer extant chronicle or reference.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> It is, in fact, when he moves to drama that his interpretations are the most suspect.

<sup>44</sup> What source this might have been is a point of some debate. See the footnote on page 252 of the *Arden King Henry VI, Part I*, and footnote 1 on page 233 of Boswell-Stone’s *Shakespeare’s Holinshed*.

A more subtle deployment comes two acts earlier in the play where Talbot, confronting the Countess of Auvergne, who has attempted to entrap him, claims “I am but a shadow of myself . . . were the whole frame here, / It is of such a spacious lofty pitch / Your roof were not sufficient to contain’t” (50-6). The wry humor centers on his diminutive size compared to his “whole frame,” his army waiting outside, but “shadow” is a multivalent word, which can mean both “a type of what is fleeting or ephemeral” and “a portrait as contrasted with the original” (*OED* 4.c, 6.b). Both meanings, when combined with his riddling description of his army, may well have evoked images of any number of extraordinary tombs of the period.<sup>45</sup> Again, Talbot’s identity is invoked on stage, an identity consisting of far more than his physical self. Here, however, he is more than a list of titles which extends beyond him; his true identity is something that can only be expressed in architectural terms.

Tombs serve as a link to the offstage world, the “truth” that lies outside the walls of the theater space. This truth could be accessed and manipulated with endless variety. The three *Henry VI* plays are useful as examples of early experimentation with what plays could do on stage as they demonstrate a grab-bag of disparate strategies.<sup>46</sup> Were this a biographically minded project, I could employ these applications as examples of Shakespeare in his early career fumbling about in multiple directions. However, for the purposes of this project, I am far more interested in using these plays to identify six strategies for deploying tombs and tomb references on stage. Three of these strategies showed enough promise to be employed again in later plays

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<sup>45</sup> Although the monument quoted earlier is in Rouen, Talbot’s heart is buried under the church steps of St. Alkmund’s Church in Whitchurch, Shropshire, eighty or so miles northwest of Stratford-on-Avon.

<sup>46</sup> It is a struggle to designate a collective term for these plays similar to the term *The Henriad* used for *Richard II* – *Henry V*. Calling them (combined with *Richard III*) the First Tetralogy brings up issues of intent. Were they designed to be enjoyed and understood as a unit in the same way that the Second Tetralogy seems clearly to have been? Due to Margaret’s appearance in all four plays, I am tempted to adopt Phyllis Rackin’s clever “Margaretsaga,” but employing such a term unfortunately would distract from the ways that, at least in the history plays, tombs are usually used as devices for dealing with questions of lineage and heritage in a manner that ignores women altogether (Hattaway 76).



by a number of early modern playwrights. I will begin, however, with three unsuccessful strategies that were essentially abandoned as ineffective by Shakespeare and others. Exploring what tomb references failed to do on stage will lead to a clearer picture of what such references *could* do effectively.

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Perhaps the most difficult decision facing anyone wishing to stage, watch, or read *I Henry VI* is how to interpret Joan. As the only legitimate external threat to the English and, in a wider sense, to the patriarchal systems of authority in England, Burgundy, and France, she has alternately been condemned as a supernatural agent bent on destabilization of the status quo and lauded as a progressive figure pioneering female self-empowerment.

Much of Joan's ambiguity stems from her distance from any period frame of reference. Most characters in the histories, disruptive or otherwise, at least adhere to most of the conventions of society, but Joan seems unwilling to live within such constraints. She is the first to respond to Lucy's extemporaneous eulogizing of Talbot and her words are startling in their bluntness: "Here's a silly, stately style indeed... Him that thou magnifi'st with all these titles / Stinking and flyblown lies here at our feet" (4.7.72, 75-6). Her reaction resembles neither the bloodthirsty vengeance of the Bastard of Orléans who, seeing the dead bodies of Talbot and his son, wishes to "Hew them to pieces, hack their bones asunder," nor that of Charles, the Dauphin, who rejects the dishonor of such an act, insisting "that which we have fled / During the life, let us not wrong it dead" (4.7.47, 49-50). Both men place symbolic value on the bodies; no purpose

is served in desecrating or honoring something of no worth. In contrast, Joan's words are coldly dispassionate, implying that Talbot's remains are no different from those of a dead dog. Joan's idea of glory and fame precludes assigning any value to anyone after death. Joan sees Talbot's body as mere filth because, in her view, "Glory is like a circle in the water, / Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself / Till, by broad spreading, it disperse to naught" (1.3.112-114). This claim of Joan's, often cited by critics, does not show her as uniquely perceptive, nor does it reveal her as the agent of the playwright arguing the impossibility of portraying an English hero on stage.<sup>47</sup> Gabriele Bernhard Jackson contends Joan's statement demonstrates she should be viewed in a positive light: "The eloquence of her recognition that all human achievement is writ in water, one of the play's thematic pressure points, sorts ill with a lampooned character" (41). Her point is undermined by its appearance in a history play, a genre in which such "human achievements" are in fact preserved, revived, and even exaggerated for all to see. It is Charles's action, the preservation and honoring of remains, which is valued in both the chronicles and in the play.<sup>48</sup> It certainly was not the case that, in England in the 1590s, Joan's words would have "obvious appeal for an audience" (Rackin *Stages* 153). As I pointed out earlier, Lucy's quotation of Talbot's grave inscription suggests that Shakespeare had access to the epitaph text; Catherine Canino correctly argues, "it is hard to imagine that Shakespeare is mocking an

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<sup>47</sup> The former point is made by Carol Chillington Rutter in Cavanagh et al. 191-92, while the latter is made by Blanpied, p. 30-31.

<sup>48</sup> According to Goy-Blanquet, Shakespeare's inspiration for Charles' respect for Talbot's body was likely a different French King: "[W]here King Lewis XI protected Bedford's monument from desecration by his noblemen in the chronicle, Charles does the same in the play for Talbot's remains" (31). Assuming she is correct in this attribution, it is worth noting that the protection of a monument is turned into the protection of a corpse, evidence that Shakespeare, like Weever, viewed the two types of desecration as similar. See, for example, Weever 42-50 where he lists a number of historical examples of tombs being as revered as the living.

inscription on a grave. It is even more difficult to imagine that an Elizabethan audience would have found a Frenchwoman's derision of the body of an Englishman amusing" (207).<sup>49</sup>

Critics find determining what to think of Joan particularly difficult because the characters onstage often seem equally perplexed. The English view her as an unambiguous witch, but, even though she comes to them as a savior against forces invading from across the Channel, the French obviously view her with acute discomfort. They stand in awe of her bravery and ability, and yet repeatedly remark unkindly about her when she is not present. In some instances, both effects are simultaneous; as Carol Chillington Rutter argues, "the same language that figures la Pucelle a 'wonder' is used to eroticise and degrade her" (Cavanagh, Hampton-Reeves and Longstaffe 190). Her very name, Joan la Pucelle, illustrates the paradox. As Edward Burns points out, the word "Pucelle" in French indicates "both virginity and incipient sexuality"; Joan fares little better with the English translation, as "[I]n English, 'pucelle' means virgin, [while] 'puzel' means whore" (Shakespeare *I Henry VI* 25, 26).

Society has no category to contain this heroine of the French. She is a martial maid, a virgin whore, a saintly witch, and a military hero with no respect for traditional views of glory and honor on or off the battlefield. Nancy Gutierrez correctly calls "Joan... a battleground on which the French and English enact their power struggle," yet the French are so conflicted about this figure they follow that they find it difficult to fight under her leadership (184). No wonder then that after he suffers defeat in a duel at her hand, Charles struggles to generate a suitable

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<sup>49</sup> Although perhaps he carries it a bit far, Berry's formulation of Joan as a kind of anti-Talbot is close to the mark: "Talbot's love for his son is counterbalanced by Joan's repudiation of her father; his loyalty to his peers Salisbury and Bedford, by her last-ditch paternity suit against Charles, Alençon, and Reignier; his reverence to his king by her domination of Charles; his piety by her pact for the devil" (Berry 10). Another possible example of Joan's lack of respect for systems of commemoration is her removal of the sword from the churchyard of St. Katherine's in Touraine (1.3.77-80). The passage is ambiguous and straight out of the chronicles (see Tillyard 171). She says that she retrieves the weapon "Out of a great deal of old iron," but there may be a hint here that Joan removed an item hung above a tomb as a symbol of valor. I will explore the transformation of weapons into monuments in section four of this chapter.

metaphor to describe her. In a six-line passage that drifts somewhere between poetic effusion and stammering confusion, he asks:

Was Mohammed inspirèd with a dove?  
Thou with an eagle art inspirèd then.  
Helen, the mother of great Constantine,  
Nor yet Saint Philip's daughters were like thee.  
Bright star of Venus, fallen down on the earth,  
How may I reverently worship thee enough? (1.3.119-124)

His final question implies that none of his laudatory comparisons suffice. At this point, however, Joan has accomplished nothing on the battlefield, so René, the Duke of Anjou, pragmatically requests, "Woman, do what thou canst to save our honours. / Drive them from Orléans, and be immortalized" (1.3.126-27). He is happy to imagine a time when Joan will be worshiped and remembered as savior to the French, but, understandably, he wants to hold off until after she has earned the honor.

Nonetheless, René's image of her future immortalization is a focal point for the French for the rest of the play. The next time the French leadership stand on stage, Joan has done just what René requested: Orléans has been rescued. Charles continues his wildly effusive praise, calling her "Astraea's daughter" and "glorious prophetess," and offering to "divide my crown with her" while "all the priests and friars in my realm / Shall in procession sing her endless praise" (1.8.4, 8, 6, 18, 19-20). Finally, he settles on an image combining the ideals of saint and king:

A statelier pyramid to her I'll rear  
Than Rhodope's of Memphis ever was.  
In memory of her, when she is dead  
Her ashes, in an urn more precious  
Than the rich-jewelled coffer of Darius,  
Transported shall be at high festivals  
Before the kings and queens of France.  
No longer on Saint Denis will we cry,  
But Joan la Pucelle shall be France's saint. (1.8.21-29)

The description expands René's more general assurance that she will be "immortalized," combining the secular monumental imagery of a pyramid with that of the sacred reliquaries for the bones of saints.<sup>50</sup> This is not an isolated promise. Later in the play, Alençon echoes Charles, telling Joan "We'll set thy statue in some holy place / And have thee revered like a blessed saint" (3.7.14-15). Again, the imagery unites the religious and sacred, and again the past tense, the location of the statue, and the very facts of sainthood indicate that this will be done after she is dead.

What is most astonishing about these passages is not the blend of sacred and secular, but that the French settle on such language as the most appropriate way to celebrate Joan *to her face* while she stands before them, still young, vibrant, and (seemingly) far from death. Occasionally they propose other options, such as later in 3.7 when Alençon suggests that she "doth deserve a coronet of gold," but promises of posthumous monumentation dominate her praise, both in terms of number of lines and in its striking incongruity (89). Unable to recognize such a transgressive and baffling figure through the conventional imagery used to honor the living, the French leaders imaginatively leap forward, to a point after she has finished leading France to glory and has died, a point where they can commemorate her in ways that elide the elements that place her beyond conventional categories. Joan, so dismissive of the transient nature of glory and scornful of superstitions associated with the dead, will have a monument erected to glorify her for all time

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<sup>50</sup> For the secular symbolism of pyramids, see either of Llewellyn's books. A 1601 English example of a pyramid used as an alternative to religious symbolism is in the rebuilding of the Cheapside Cross (a cenotaph / monument erected originally to commemorate a resting place of the dead body of Eleanor, wife of Edward I, in its progress across England) after overeager reformers had damaged it. "George Abbot, the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University... urged caution... There was a danger of mob action, and it was important that the rule of law should prevail. He advised seeking the views of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, but in any case, he recommended that 'the Crucifix should not be erected there'. In its place, to avoid controversy, he suggested 'some *Pyramis* or matter of mere beauty, and not any Angell or such like whatsoever'" as a neutral symbol (Smith 55).

and will have her remains paraded in front of the French armies as an inspiration to emulate her military successes.<sup>51</sup>

This, then, constitutes the first of the uses for tombs on stage; they can be employed as tools to metaphorically simplify a complex individual who violates societal conventions and accepted social categories, transforming the exceptional into the mundane. Since pyramids traditionally mark secular fame and glory, such a monument would mask Joan's humble birth. Sainthood symbolizes purity, piety, and holiness to veil her questionable chastity. Relics are carried before an army to inspire military valor and conquest, effacing her unsuitable gender. By defining her in this way, the French elide all the ambiguous, oxymoronic elements of Joan's character, replacing them with comfortable symbols.<sup>52</sup> They envisage Joan in death as the perfect French hero that she could not be in life.

This is, of course, not the only way the French attempt to grapple with Joan's ambiguous nature; as discussed earlier, the experimental nature of this early play lends itself to a proliferation of strategies directed toward similar ends. To cite one example, Gutierrez argues that the French "define her as a woman to be sexually encountered" as part of a strategy to "ignore her sexual ambiguity" (191). Nonetheless, tombs particularly excel at the type of reduction in complexity that the French desire for their champion. Llewellyn argues modern critics often dismiss tombs as products of inferior artisans because they expect effigies to be lifelike, closely resembling the deceased. Instead, they are portrayals of a different type: "[d]espite being individualized representations, effigies are not sculpted portraiture but rather

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<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that Goy-Blanquet and others argue that this monumental language might result from comments in the Chronicles: "The honours promised to her for her victory may be echoes of her official rehabilitation in 1456, which Holinshed records after the account of her trial and execution in 1431" (26). This may be true, but I am not convinced that it is the reason for including it in the play, especially since, as Goy-Blanquet admits, Joan was not actually sainted until 1920!

<sup>52</sup> As there can be no clean breaks in a study like this that delves into the multiple, overlapping meanings of a set of symbols used onstage, I will return to this idea of simplification in section six of this chapter.

records of particulars” (Llewellyn *Funeral* 37). Of course, these “particulars” are, conveniently for the French nobility, selected not by the individual the monument represents but by those who wish to do the commemorating.<sup>53</sup> Reducing Joan to a sexual object runs the risk of diminishing her efficacy as a heroic figurehead, but by employing the medium of the monument, the French clearly hope they can pick and choose what they wish to preserve and what they wish to obscure.

The suitability of tombs for furthering the French nobility’s goals is extended even further in the play. Tombs have particular potential for neutralizing the dangers posed by powerful women like Joan. One major concern for the French is the threat Joan poses not only to their own legacy but also to the very system on which the power and birthright of the nobility rests: their control over the production and the dissemination of historical record. Joan threatens this control. After describing at length the male-centered world of Shakespeare’s history plays, Phyllis Rackin points out that “The women who do appear are typically defined as opponents and subverters of the historical and historiographic enterprise – in short, as anti-historians. But Shakespeare does give them a voice – a voice that challenges the logocentric, masculine historical record” (“Anti-Historians” 329). These female voices pose tremendous danger, not only to the patriarchal status quo, but also to the very foundations of historical record:

[A]s soon as Shakespeare attempts to incorporate those feminine forces, marrying words and things, spirit and matter, historiography itself becomes problematic, no longer speaking with the clear, univocal voice of unquestioned tradition but represented as a dubious construct, always provisional, always subject to erasure and reconstruction, and never adequate to recover the past in full presence. (Rackin “Anti-Historians” 330)

It is exactly at this point that tombs can function as a conservative force to heal the breach. Monuments not only preserve a record of the individual for the private or local benefit;

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<sup>53</sup> The exception to this rule is the practice during the period of constructing one’s tomb before death. This is, however, not relevant here as the French nobility show no intention of allowing Joan agency in the way she will be commemorated even if she, with her unconventional views on glory and remembrance, would be inclined to do so.

they also act as sites of public record. When Queen Elizabeth published her “Proclamation against Breaking or Defacing of Monumentes of Antiquitie,” (1560) her expressed intent was to prevent the loss of information inscribed on tombs. According to this proclamation, because of damage to monuments “the true understanding of diuers families in this Realme... is ... darkened” leading to the possibility that “the true course of inheritaunce may be hereafter interrupted” (Elizabeth I). She feared that well-meaning post-Reformation iconoclasm, which caused the destruction of many English tomb effigies, had the potential to destroy information vital to the smooth functioning of the system of hereditary nobility. Brasses and other kinds of tombs were often considered equivalent to written histories. The very word “monument” could, in fact, be used to apply to written records, as in Foxe’s *Actes & Monuments* or in the play *Thomas of Woodstock*, where Bushy asks the king to consult “the monument of English Cronicles ... / contayneing acts & memorable deeds / of all yor ffamous predissessor kings” (Frijlinck 683-85).<sup>54</sup> There is even an extraordinary medieval example of a brass being consulted by the “Court of Chivalry” in a dispute over which family had right of inheritance to a given coat of arms (Keen 43).<sup>55</sup>

If Rackin is correct, and Joan’s behavior and influence endangers the very historiographical foundations used by the male ruling class to validate their authority, it is no wonder that they attempt to defuse the threat she presents by forcing her to conform (at least

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<sup>54</sup> See *OED* monument, *n.* def. 3. a & b. The author of *Thomas of Woodstock* (written 1590-1593) is unknown, and the title itself is problematic. As Wilhelmina Frijlinck points out, “The original bears no title, and no wholly satisfactory title has been found for it” (Frijlinck v). It is also sometimes known as *The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second*. Thomas of Woodstock’s beautiful brass, with “the central figure of the duke ... surrounded by smaller figures of his parents and his eleven brothers and sisters, some of them on pedestals” was once in Westminster Abbey but has been lost over time (Saul 115). Of all the non-Shakespearean history plays written at this time, this play has by far the most numerous references to tombs, and it is unlikely that this fact is merely coincidental given the splendid monumetalization of the play’s subject.

<sup>55</sup> The case was “the Grey v. Hastings proceedings. On 3 August 1408 the commissioners, who had been sitting in the great hall of Norwich Priory, adjourned to Elsing, to view the tomb and brass of Hugh Hastings I (d. 1347): the brass, though damaged, still remains” (Keen 52).



imaginatively, through their rhetoric) to their preferred medium of historical record. Her dissident voice, problematic for both its female origin and her particularly subversive bent, would disappear, left unrecorded on such a tomb. Unlike chronicles, which might preserve snippets of dialogue and through this multivocality threaten elites, all that the imagined monument retains is her sainthood, her inspirational power on the battlefield, and her influential power symbolized by the generic marker of earthly fame, the pyramid. The monument silences her actual words as well as her iconoclasm and her sexuality, leaving only Rackin's "univocal voice of unquestioned tradition."

Considering the suitability of tombs for the purpose of combatting multivocality, it is perhaps surprising that, of the six symbolic meanings of tombs I will cover in this chapter, this use of tombs to simplify the living to their face is by far the rarest. Such usage appears nowhere else in Shakespeare, and I have only found one other incident in Tudor drama that seems even similar. In George Peele's *Edward I* (written between 1590 and 1593), King Edward instructs his wife to

Leave these ungentle thoughts, put on a milder mind,  
Sweet lookes, not loftie, civil mood becomes a womans kinde:  
And live as being dead, and buried in the ground,  
Thou maist for affability and honor be renownde. (Peele 1681-84)

As in *I Henry VI*, a king speaks to a woman who has challenged authority and refused to submit to societal expectations; in this case, however, he demands (in a manner that can only be interpreted as extraordinarily insulting) that she needs to mend her ways and comply with his wishes. The implication is that she should be silent, although the proposal that she offer "Sweet

lookes” seems to be undercut by his command that she literally play dead; buried corpses are usually not seen *or* heard.<sup>56</sup>

Why was this deployment of tomb language so rare? The best way to explain the problem is by unpacking an ill-chosen metaphor, one employed not by an early modern playwright but by a modern critic. In his *Time and the Artist in Shakespeare’s Histories*, John Blanpied joins the long list of critics dismissive of “heroic statuary [as] requir[ing] stable ground, discrete space, a context of fixed and unambiguous references” as opposed to theater which “is fluid, active, temporal” (Blanpied 32-33). For Blanpied, *I Henry VI* “does not ‘flow’ at all, but always has the quality of being presented, rather like monumental sculpture” (28). Writing of Talbot’s characterization, he argues, “The trouble with Talbot, frankly, is that he is the kind of hero you can only celebrate *in memoriam*” (Blanpied 29). Perhaps he is correct; in its own way, Lucy’s list of Talbot’s titles differs little from the French aristocracy’s imaginative monumentalization of Joan, with the notable caveat that at least Lucy has the decency to wait until his subject is actually dead. Blanpied’s mistake, however, is his assumption that monuments are *inherently* static. In fact, tombs had been influenced by drama since the Middle Ages and had become progressively more dramatic over time. Jean Wilson even suggests that some monuments might “provide the basis for theoretical reconstruction of the interior of Elizabethan playhouses and of their stage practices” (Wilson *Archaeology* 81). Many tombs of the period “present an array of sculptured representations of the acting-out of various presentations of the deceased – as dynast, as centre of a family, as matriarch, as innocent victim, as devout Christian. These are frozen,

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<sup>56</sup> There are exceptions. A notable one was the body of Catherine of Valois, Henry V’s wife, whose body was on display in Westminster Abbey through Shakespeare’s time. “She had been laid in the Lady Chapel (no room for her beside her husband), disinterred during Henry VII’s rebuilding and never reburied. The curious could pay to see her, and Pepys for one, a man who found the Abbey a good place for assignations, enjoyed here a more macabre flirtation: ‘And here we did see, by particular favour, Queen Katherine of Valois, and had her upper part of her body in my hands. And I did kiss her mouth, reflecting upon it that I did kiss a Queen, and that this was my birthday, 36 year old, that I did first kiss a Queen’” (Jenkyns 65).

eternal dumb-shows, and their settings are often suggestive of what we know of theatre practice of the period” (Wilson *Archaeology* 81). She argues “[i]t would not be going too far to say that monuments at this period formed part of the entertainment industry” (Wilson *Archaeology* 81-82).

It is exactly because tombs could be so theatrical that the use of tomb imagery on stage as a tool to combat threats posed by the living likely was not repeated. To point out the limitations of tomb imagery and its potential to simplify the individual would be to point out exactly the same possibility in theater itself. Throughout her *Notorious Identity*, Linda Charnes spells out this risk, particularly as it applies to subjects as renowned as Joan and Talbot:

Figures such as Aeneas, Ulysses, Augustus Caesar, Caligula, Alexander, and Joan of Arc, to name only a few, functioned as exemplary icons whose names compressed narratives of duty, adventure, empire, perversion, ambition, and religious activity (subversive or patriotic). In other words, these figures’ “stories,” whether fictional or historically “real,” were conveyed by their names alone. (2)

This could be useful to the playwright: as soon as Joan is identified on stage, her very name conjures up rich associations for the audience. The effect also has its dangers. Charnes continues: “Alterity to textual identity is an inevitable condition of dramatic representation. The figures in these plays may be permanently ‘identified,’ insofar as their names encode their legends. But as dramatic figures, they exist as versions of themselves” (9). Having characters invoke tombs and monuments onstage as a method of concealing deviations from social norms limits the playwright’s ability to distinguish between the myth and the character. Evocation of stone monuments on stage as shorthand for simplification did not enhance the illusion of theater but merely pointed to its limitations.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> This limitation only applies to the “living” characters onstage, however. Once the character has died, the language of monumentation no longer combats the character in the same limiting way. Instead, the monumental narrative pulls toward or against what the audience perceives as a “true” representation of the character they have

Just within the old city wall on the north edge of London stands the church of St. Helen's Bishopgate, Shakespeare's parish church from some time before 1596 until after October 1598 (Nicholl 39-40). In this church stands an impressive monument commemorating two William Pickerings, a father and his son (Figure 2.1). As described by the Reverend John Edmund Cox, "[f]or splendour of decoration, no monument in London, out of Westminster Abbey, can compare with it" (67). The tomb consists of a double-arched canopy supported by six columns, above the beautifully carved reclining effigy of Sir William Pickering the Younger in full armor, save for his ruff and exposed head. Several epitaphs decorate the tomb. The first is in English; "To the memory of Sir William, and his father, ----- Pickering" (Cox 67). Two others in Latin read as follows in Cox's translation: "Here lies William Pickering the elder, Knight, Field Marshal, who died the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, in the year of our salvation by Christ 1542" and:

Here also lieth William Pickering the younger; a true soldier, remarkably endowed with good things, versed in literature, and a sincere Christian: he was singularly skilled in languages; and served four sovereigns in the most honourable manner; Henry the VIIIth in his military capacity. Edward VIth in an embassy to France. Queen Mary in a negotiation with Germany; and the most illustrious Princess Elizabeth, by the greatest devotedness to duties of the highest moment. He died in London at Pickering House, January 4. In the year of grace 1574, aged 58. To his memory Thomas Henneagius, soldier and Treasurer of the Royal Household; John Astley, Esq., Master of the Jewels; Drugo Drury, soldier; and Thomas Wotton, Esq., have placed this monument. (Cox 68)

No children are mentioned for the younger Sir Pickering. This is particularly notable in St Helen's, as many of the other monuments in the building point to the fecundity of other former parish residents. William Kerwin, who lies buried there alongside his wife Magdalen, has a tomb that boasts of their "3 sonnes and 2 daughters" (Cox 59). Sir Andrew Judd's verse epitaph

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seen. This is the reason why, as we will see in Chapter Five, monuments *were* frequently used in drama to simplify the ambiguity or combat the threats posed by women who were either dead or well offstage.



Figure 2.1 – Tomb of Sir William Pickering the Elder (d. 1542) and Sir William Pickering the Younger (d. 1574) in St. Helen's Bishopgate. Photograph from Lindley, Phillip. *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England*.

celebrates his six children by three wives,<sup>58</sup> while that of Thon Robinson and his wife insists they “were happy besides other worldly blessings in nyne sonnes and seaven daughters” (Cox 67, 59). No such language appears on the Pickering’s monument; as further evidence that he had no offspring, his tomb was designed and likely funded by fellow soldiers and other members of Elizabeth’s court. There were presumably no surviving family members to take care of commemorating father and son.

Whether or not the Pickering’s tomb caught Shakespeare’s eye,<sup>59</sup> it serves well to introduce the second of the early symbolic uses for tombs on stage: parents metaphorically *becoming* tombs for their dead sons as a way of illustrating the extinction of their line. This construction appears twice in the *Henry VI* plays, both times as the centerpiece of a scene of personal, family tragedy on the battlefield.

The first instance is in *1 Henry VI*. Young John Talbot arrives at his father’s side just as the battle turns against the English, a result due more to the betrayal of those nobles who failed to send reinforcements than to the military prowess of the French. His father regrets having sent for him as he finds himself “come into a feast of death” (4.5.7). When Talbot asks his son to flee the battle, young John refuses, rhetorically asking, “Is my name Talbot, and am I your son, / And shall I fly?” (4.5.12-13). To do so, he exclaims, would be to “Dishonour” his mother’s “honourable name / To make a bastard and a slave of me” (4.5.14.15). Honor, however, is not Talbot’s primary concern, and he voices doubt that it would be the primary consideration for his wife either. The two begin a ten-line set of shared couplets where Talbot pleads with his son to

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<sup>58</sup> The verses about the wives read, “Three wives he had: one was Mary / fower sunes one mayde had he by her / Annys had none by him truly / By Dame Mary he had one dowghtier” (Cox 67). Presumably the word “truly” is included in Annys description to complete the slant rhyme present throughout the epitaph, but it seems an unfortunate choice, implying she had children “by him” not so truly or perhaps that he suspected they were not by him at all!

<sup>59</sup> It seems unlikely Shakespeare was already living in St. Helen’s Bishopsgate by the time he wrote the early history plays, but he was likely nearby in Shoreditch, north of the wall. Due to the size and position (near the choir) of the monument, it would be impossible to enter the church and not be struck by its grandeur.

flee, and the son responds that he will do no such thing. In the first couplet of this set,<sup>60</sup> Talbot asks his son “Shall all thy mother’s hopes lie in one tomb?”; John responds, “Ay, rather than I’ll shame my mother’s womb” (4.5.34-35). The father would rather the son flee and survive while the son fears shaming his mother – and by extension his father through implied cuckolding and himself through implied illegitimacy – far more than he fears death in battle. When the French come upon their bodies in the aftermath of the battle, this metaphorical entombment of the son within the father has actually, almost literally, come to pass. Speaking of Young Talbot’s actions on the battlefield, Burgundy looks upon the corpses of father and son, saying “Doubtless he would have made a noble knight. / See where he lies inhearsèd in the arms / of the most bloody nurser of his harms” (4.7.44-46).<sup>61</sup>

The link between birth and death can be found frequently in elegies, epitaphs, and songs for reasons beyond the mere convenience of the rhyming pair “womb” and “tomb.” The blending of life and death was one of the three common “topoi of mortality” explored by Clayton MacKenzie in his study of English emblem books and their connection to early modern plays (*Emblems* 5). This particular topos often appeared in images of rebirth such “as a plant growing out of a skull or plants seeding bones or infants leaning nonchalantly on death’s heads” (MacKenzie *Emblems* 5). A grotesque version of this relationship occurs in *Richard III*. Queen Elizabeth confronts Richard, railing “thou didst kill my children” (4.4.353). His response is

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<sup>60</sup> There are two other couplets earlier in the scene.

<sup>61</sup> Brian Walsh asserts that, in effect, the Talbots *choose* to die, and in so doing, “privilege their historical legacy over the capacity to ‘be’ and make more history; the future, absent narrative of their deeds takes priority over a continuing living presence” (Walsh 132). In this formulation, the imagined monument suggested by the elder Talbot perhaps symbolizes what he hopes will endure after their deaths. While this is possible, I will argue in a moment that it is hard to envision this being the audience’s primary reaction to the scene or to the symbolism.

disturbingly morbid: “But in your daughter’s womb I bury them, / Where in that nest of spicery, they will breed / Selves of themselves, to your recomfiture.”<sup>62</sup>

What has happened to Talbot and his son, however, is brutally final. Talbot’s line has ended; there can be no rebirth. Goy-Blanquet, in an excellent extended reading of this scene and the play as a whole, interprets the death of Talbot and his son as part of a larger, metaphorical death of the old order.<sup>63</sup> Building upon Talbot’s conversation with the Countess of Auvergne, Goy-Blanquet sees Talbot as the head of a military body: “The ancestral valour comes alive in the tightly knit body of head and limbs, the ‘substance, sinews, arms, and strength’ of soldiers led by a charismatic captain” (47). The system designed to support this body, the English nation and its leadership, has failed in its duty and so this militant body is now mortally ill:

[D]isease in the body politic spreads to the limbs. Its army, though a healthy organism, cannot be regenerated, nor replace its dead leaders. In the natural order, Talbot would have been reborn in his son and buried by him: “Now my old arms are young John Talbot’s grave” not only pinpoints a significant inversion, it stresses the finality of the hero’s death. (Goy-Blanquet 48)

Viewed in this wider context, the scene depicts the death of a great English hero who metaphorically carries with him a grand world order. Although this rings true, echoed in the language of bodily disorder found throughout the play, it is not the only way to read the scene. On its most basic level, the talk of mothers and fathers and intimate family ties makes the scene of death on the battlefield more immediate and personal. In the wider view Talbot may be a

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<sup>62</sup> Richard’s construction of this argument seems to imply that there will be none of *himself* in these children. They will be bred of Anne and become the regenerated corpses of his victims. Perhaps this is the reason why he so swiftly seems to win Elizabeth to his cause. Goy-Blanquet is mistaken when she says his goal is “to kill and re-engage his own flesh in the same brutal conflation of life and death as his own birth” (262). She points toward the line earlier in the play, where Lady Anne declares, “If ever he have child, abortive be it,” but perhaps a more appropriate choice might be his own declaration, “I cannot prove a lover... [so] I am determined to prove a villain” (1.2.21, 1.1.28-30). He himself feels ill-suited for any creation of life. His only active part in his lines to Elizabeth is a promise to bury the bodies he is responsible for killing. He could, I suppose, be pointing toward some kind of morbid sex joke (punning, perhaps, on the Renaissance commonplace of “to die”), but I am not familiar with any other instance of burying bodies being used as a euphemism for the sex act.

<sup>63</sup> See also Alexander Leggatt’s article, “The Death of John Talbot,” in which he argues that Young Talbot’s death blocks the formulation set in the first half of the play that dictates, “when an English hero dies the torch can pass to his comrades” (Leggatt “Death” 36).



revered English military hero, but at that moment he primarily appeals to the audience as a father lying dead on stage, his only heir clasped lovingly in his arms.

The scene is a fiction, or at least the part about John being the only heir. As Stuart Hampton-Reeves points out, as far as the wife and mother is concerned, “all her hopes did not reside in one tomb. The Talbot family were still around when Shakespeare wrote the play and were still the Earls of Shrewsbury. In the twenty-first Century, the Talbots (now the Chetwynd-Talbots) are *still* around and *still* the Earls of Shrewsbury” (Cavanagh, Hampton-Reeves and Longstaffe 7). Obviously, making young John Talbot his father’s only son and heir heightens the pathos of the scene. The same detail, for the same reason, is included in the more overtly fictional deployment of similar tomb imagery in the early histories, the pageant of the two father-son pairs in *3 Henry VI*.

In Act 2, Scene 5 of this play, King Henry sits disconsolate on the battlefield while his army fights without him, having been told by Clifford that he should “depart the field / [since] The Queen hath best success when you are absent” (2.2.73-74). As he sits, bemoaning his state and wishing for an idyllic pastoral life where his hours could be regimented by his shepherding duties until his “white hairs” pass “unto a quiet grave,” his self-pity is interrupted by two parallel scenes of the interfamilial horror brought on by civil war (2.5.40). First, a soldier enters with the body of a battlefield victim. Intending to rob the corpse, he discovers to his dismay that he has killed his own father. As he weeps over this tragic mischance, a second soldier enters from another direction, dragging another body, which he also intends to search for “any gold” his victim might have, gold that he claims he “bought” at the price of “an hundred blows” (2.5.80-81). Pulling off his victim’s helmet, this second soldier exclaims, “it is mine only son” (83).

The parallelism of the scene is unambiguous and has been noted by many critics. Donald G. Watson, for example, summarizes the events: “Son and Father drag their victims onstage, and the first thoughts of both are to plunder the slain... Both searches immediately lead to the tragic recognition, and greed gives way to grief, repentance, calling upon God to pardon and pity these deeds, and remembering the mother and wife who must soon learn of these deaths” (83). All three surviving individuals on stage take their own lesson from this double tragedy emblematic of England’s “domestic” conflict. The first soldier rails against the press gangs that swept both family members into opposing sides, while the second, the father, sees this unlucky event as symptomatic of “this miserable age” where the “deadly quarrel daily doth beget” events “butcherly, / Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural” (88-91). Henry, unseen by both, prays “gentle heaven, pity” and desires swift victory for either side, he cares not which: “Wither one rose, and let the other flourish—/ If you contend, a thousand lives must wither” (96, 101-102). All take turns in a three-part lament until it is time to exit the stage. The son who killed his father goes first, announcing “I’ll bear thee hence where I may weep my fill” and drags his sire offstage. Next comes the father, but his exit speech is less succinct:

These arms of mine shall be thy winding sheet;  
My heart, sweet boy, shall be thy sepulchre,  
For from my heart thine image ne’er shall go.  
My sighing breast shall be thy funeral bell,  
An so obsequious will thy father be,  
E’en for the loss of thee, having no more,  
As Priam was for all his valiant sons. (114-20)

Here the parallelism is broken. While the son who killed his father plans to “weep” his “fill,” with the implication that he will eventually move on, there will be no such closure for the father who killed his son. He reiterates what he said at his first discovery, that this is his only son, and he moves off stage to a perpetual state of mourning. Like Talbot, the father holding his dead son

sees that his line has ended and the natural order of succession has been violated. Although his own death will not be immediate, the result will be the same: the father will wrap up the son in his arms and become his tomb.

Early in Shakespeare's career, at roughly the same time he was writing his first history plays, there can be found one more example, simultaneously more metaphorical and more literal, of a parent becoming a tomb for offspring; in this case, the parent is the mother and more than one son is involved. In *Titus Andronicus*, Titus captures Tamora's children and tells them that he plans to "grind your bones to dust... with your blood... make a paste, / And of the paste a coffin I will rear, / And make two pasties of your shameful heads" (5.2.185-88). In its most literal sense, "coffin" here carries the obsolete meaning "the crust of a pie," and it is these coffins he feeds to their mother (OED 4a). His culinary comeuppance accomplished, Titus gloats that "their mother daintily hath fed, / Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred" (5.3.60-61). Soon after, once Titus lies slain, Lucius eulogizes him, noting that he "fought Rome's quarrel out, / And sent her enemies unto the grave" (5.3.101-02). Taken literally, Tamora will be the exception; she will get no grave, for Lucius declares that she will be disposed of as carrion. "No funeral rite nor man in mourning weed, / No mournful bell shall ring her burial; / But throw her forth to beasts and birds of prey" (5.3.195-97). The sons, however, enemies of the state and of Titus and his family, are already buried, ensconced in their coffins within the sepulcher of their mother.<sup>64</sup>

The macabre grotesqueness of this scene points, perhaps, to the reason this symbolic usage for tombs on stage had such a short period of application; the trope is so limiting that playwrights quickly pushed it as far as it could go. The two instances from the history plays squeeze the maximum possible emotional impact from the image, both by having the fathers

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<sup>64</sup> See Thomas Rist, p 53, for a view of *Titus* as a revenge tragedy.

lament their loss in the midst of battlefield carnage and by emphasizing the fact that both sons are the fathers' only heirs. In addition, both scenes demonstrate, nearly to the point of repetitiveness, the metaphorical implications of this trope. The breaking of individual lines of descent jeopardizes the very order of the state, a recurrent theme in these plays covering the Wars of the Roses. Just as the walking dead in *Julius Caesar* or the horses devouring each other in *Macbeth* symbolize a corruption of the natural order, this death of sons before fathers and the symbolic entombment of the former by the latter show whole family lines lost, destroyed by conflict.

In *Titus*, the image is pushed even further, to its radical conclusion. Peter Sacks misses the point when he describes Tamora's monstrous meal as "a reversal of procedure, according to which offspring mourn by metaphorically ingesting their parents" (Sacks 81). Continuing with the motif he uses twice in the history plays, Shakespeare literally makes Tamora the tomb for her sons. This tomb will not stand forever as a monument, however. Her non-burial may well be an example of the "unsuccessful and inadequate mourning" found throughout the play, but this "rejection of the traditional ceremonies" is not just a "macabre leftover or remainder of 'non-mourning,'" which Sacks sees as "perhaps the essential note of the play" (81-82). It is a strategic effacement of a family from memory. The "coffins" of the sons are encased in the mother and no monument is allowed for either her or the tomb she represents. Lucius makes a point of taking care of the other bodies on stage. The Emperor will also rest with his parent, as Lucius calls for "loving friends" to "convey the Emperor hence, / And give him burial in his father's grave" (5.3.190-91). Lavinia and Titus will be likewise entombed, "closed in our household's monument" (5.3.193). All three will be monumentalized and remembered, part of the collective heritage of their families. The Goths receive no such commemoration. Their line eliminated, the

sons' tomb will literally rot and be forgotten. After such a brutal and literal expression of sons buried in parents, it is difficult to see how this motif could possibly be developed further.

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Although Queen Elizabeth I did not plan an elaborate tomb for herself similar to those planned by her father and grandfather, she did express concern regarding the proper monumentalization of others. Her earlier referenced "Proclamation Against Breaking or Defacing of Monumentes of Antiquitie" (1560) attempted to preserve tombs against iconoclasts. She understood that these monuments preserved the "memory to the posteritie of the persons there buryed" (Elizabeth I). Although her cost-conscious nature kept her from funding many elaborate monuments out of the royal coffers, she was responsible for a few tombs for supporters, as well as the re-commemoration of some of her Yorkist ancestors at Fotheringhay: Edward, Duke of York (d. 1415), and Richard, Duke of York (d. 1460), chief rebel in *3 Henry VI* and father to Edward IV and Richard III (Figure 2.2). Edward was killed "leading of the vanguard at the battle of Agincourt...and was from thence brought to England, and interred in the choir of Fotheringhay church, in Nothamptonshire, under a flat marble, with his image inlaid in brass" (Banks 350). Richard's body took a more circuitous route to the church. In a gruesome desecration of his body later dramatized by Shakespeare, his

head being crowned with a paper diadem, was presented to queen Margaret, who at that ghastly sight made herself merry, under the pleasure of her great success. The head of the earl of Salisbury was likewise taken off, and with duke Richard's, set on the walls of York; but king Edward, his son, took them down after his victory at Towton-field, and caused his father's head to be placed with his trunk, and with the corpse of young Rutland, his brother, to be buried at Pontefract; from

whence, by the said king's commands, their bones were afterwards removed, and with great solemnity interred at Fotheringhay. (Banks 354)

Both Dukes' monuments suffered defacement in the Dissolution, a dishonor Elizabeth rectified with the new construction she directed in 1573 (Howarth 163).

That Elizabeth chose to rebuild several monuments to ancestors is understandable, but there had been a great many tombs defaced in the fervor following the English Reformation. Why did Elizabeth select these *particular* tombs for refurbishment and restoration? David Howarth gives a reasonable answer as part of his book's wider purpose of detailing how those in power utilized art during the period:

Long before Fotheringhay came to be favoured by Yorkists in the fifteenth century, it had been associated with the royal house of Scotland. David I, who became King of Scotland in 1124, had six hides of land at Fotheringhay, while the manor remained an asset of the Scots until Edward I seized the English lands of John Baliol in 1294. All this may seem arcane antiquarianism; hardly something with which Elizabeth I would have been concerned. However, at this juncture, the figure of Mary, Queen of Scots, enters the story and for Elizabeth, her cousin was a living threat not merely an interesting historical relic from a remote past. A pedigree still exists "tracing the descent of Mary Queen of Scots, now married to Lord Darnley, from Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, and placing her in close proximity to the crown of England". It is dated 15 August 1565: a fortnight after Mary had married Darnley, and ten months before she gave birth to the future James VI and I. Could it be that the combination of the Scottish association with Fotheringhay, an association with that place older even than Elizabeth's Yorkist ancestors, Mary's rival kinship with the house of York and specifically with Richard, Duke of York, whose burial place was Fotheringhay, and finally her provocative if legitimate claim to proximity to the English crown through the Yorkist line, provided a strong incentive for Elizabeth to "capture" a shrine for the English monarchy in defiance of a long-standing historical association with the royal house of Scotland? (Howarth 164)<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Nearby Fotheringhay Castle was later, of course, the final prison and execution site of Mary Queen of Scots, a fact Howarth takes as further evidence of this conscious decision by Elizabeth to claim the space. "Could it also be that Fotheringhay was chosen as a prison for Mary because it lay at the centre of lands which had once belonged to the Scottish crown? By imprisoning Mary at the centre of what had been a significant holding of English land by the Scottish crown, Elizabeth hoped to negate symbolically the threat that her very existence presented to the stability of the Tudor regime" (164).



Figure 2.2 – Tomb of Edward, Duke of York (d. 1415) in the Church of Mary and All Saints, Fotherighay, Northamptonshire. Photograph from Lindley, Phillip. *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England*.

At Fotheringhay, Elizabeth used her money and her resources to build a monument for ancestors claimed by both herself and Mary, as a way to claim both their memory (and by association, the Yorkist inheritance) and to seize imaginative control of the space where they resided.<sup>66</sup>

All monuments, by their very nature, occupy a particular space and can be used to claim that space, and Elizabeth was one of many to use them in this way. Her grandfather, Henry VII, built the Lady Chapel on the east end of Westminster Abbey as a mausoleum for the Tudor dynasty he hoped to found, and it was his intention to have Henry VI sainted and his body moved to the chapel to cement his and his family's legitimacy.<sup>67</sup> Later, when James came to the throne, he too moved to lay claim to the same space through monuments, burying two infant daughters and the reinterred and commemorated body of his mother within the same chapel, in effect claiming the Tudor mausoleum as a Stuart one.<sup>68</sup> Such claiming of space was not exclusive to kings and queens. Jennifer Harding writes of the practice of burying family members under pews in order to claim the space in perpetuity, as a family's physical location in the church indicated a family's station in the social hierarchy (130-31).

Early modern playwrights used dramatically this potential for the dead to act almost as flags, planted to claim a space for an individual or faction. Even before burial, the corpses (usually the heads) of enemies could be used to stake a temporary claim. The head of the defeated Duke of York, placed overlooking the city of York to claim the town for the Lancastrian side in *3 Henry VI*, and Old Anthony's head set on the gates of Rome in defiance of the incoming Sulla in Thomas Lodge's late 1580s play *The Wounds of Civil War*, are two

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<sup>66</sup> The first of these points, the alteration of memory and, by extension, the rewriting of the past, will be dealt with later, both in section five of this chapter and in Chapter Four.

<sup>67</sup> Henry was successful with neither the effort to beatify Henry VI nor to move his body. For more on Henry VII's plans and the many adjustments made to them before and after his death, see Tatton-Brown and Mortimer.

<sup>68</sup> For more, see Woodward, who brings up James's intentions (and how far his actions fell short) throughout her book.



examples of this technique being put to use in period plays. Referencing tombs and monuments, however, offered two obvious advantages over the display of body parts. First, as symbols of honor, tombs could be used for friends and allies instead of enemies. Second, and more importantly, tombs symbolized permanency. The heads on London Bridge decayed quickly and changed regularly, but the monuments in the city's churches remained for future generations to see.

*I Henry VI* contains the most dramatic example of tombs used deliberately to claim space in Shakespeare's early history plays. When the French kill Salisbury with their cannons, Talbot is incensed. In a play where names alone evoke tremendous power,<sup>69</sup> Talbot announces, "Frenchmen, I'll be a Salisbury to you," and threatens to "make a quagmire of your mingled brains" (1.6.84, 87). The English attack eventually succeeds and Orléans is taken. Talbot has his men bring Salisbury's body into the town and orders them to "Advance it in the market place, / The middle centre of this cursèd town" (2.2.5-6). This display of Salisbury's body is only temporary, however; Talbot wishes the town to forever remember the wrath of the English:

And that hereafter ages may behold  
What ruin happened in revenge of him,  
Within their chiefest temple I'll erect  
A tomb, wherein his corpse shall be interred—  
Upon the which, that everyone may read,  
Shall be engraved the sack of Orléans,  
The treacherous manner of his mournful death,  
And what a terror he had been to France. (2.2.10-17)

Just as the temporary display of Salisbury's body is in the "middle centre" of the city, this permanent construction will occupy the "chiefest" of the churches in Orléans, ensuring that this English military victory is not forgotten.

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<sup>69</sup> See, for example, 2.1.79-83, where English soldiers charge the French crying "A Talbot! A Talbot!" and one declares that "The cry of 'Talbot' serves me for a sword, / For I have loaden me with many spoils, / Using no other weapon but his name."

Many critics have gravitated to this scene, responding to the intensity of Talbot's rhetoric and perceiving that his claim is central to the intended English project in France. Unfortunately, by not delving into the particular implication of Talbot's invocation of tombs, these critics have often misconstrued the intent of the passage. Tobias Döring provides a good illustration of such misunderstandings. Döring starts off in the right direction, pointing out that "Talbot's quick retaliation and the monumental tomb by which he plans to publish Salisbury's heroic story provide both the military and symbolic substitution for the loss suffered among the English nobles" (Döring 48). However, Döring's book focuses on the *personal* politics of mourning, and this leads him astray from what Talbot actually says. To Döring, Salisbury's monument is personal, an expression of Talbot's shame and anger. Döring correctly points out that "the same place where he commands Salisbury's corpse to be brought, the market place of Orléans, was previously the scene where Talbot himself suffered humiliation," an occurrence Talbot describes in 1.6. But then Döring misquotes the text about the tomb, claiming that this market square is where Talbot "plans to erect the noble tomb: the 'middle-centre of this cursed town'" (Döring 49). This reading causes Döring to miss the instruction Talbot wishes Salisbury's tomb to convey, his wish to instruct "hereafter ages... what a terror he had been to France." Döring may be correct that the first, public display of Salisbury's body serves as an attempted resolution of Talbot's own "trauma of unresolved personal suffering," but the final monument goes beyond personal pique (Döring 50).

An even more egregious misreading comes from Christopher Pye, who in his article "The Theater, the Market, and the Subject of History" makes the rather baffling decision in quoting 2.2.10-17 to cut out only one half line, "Within their chiefest temple," thus removing the specific site of Talbot's act of memorialization and setting up an avalanche of misreadings. He sees the

whole project as an expression of personal “revenge” (Orgel and Keilen 351). Building on Derrida, whom Pye says describes a tomb as a “‘cryptic enclave’ erected in the midst of the city forum or market-place, a fragile and irreducible enclosure that defines the open space of discursive and economic circulation,” he too misplaces the monument in the center of town (having conveniently excised the inconvenient part of the quote), writing “Talbot’s indeterminate ceremony, at once commemoration and disavowal, repeats in the psychic register the contradictions of this parietal, self-divided space, and might be seen to allegorize the distinctive condition—the internal fault-line—of subjectivity forged from the traces of the theater and market” (Orgel and Keilen 352). All of this might be true for Pye and even for Derrida, but it is inapplicable here. It is no “phantasm that is being laid to rest”; it is Salisbury, and no early modern audience, constantly confronted in their lives with elaborate funerals and costly monuments to the dead, would be inclined to lose their focus on his body on stage or the meaning that Talbot constructs for it in his impromptu eulogy (Orgel and Keilen 353).

What then does Talbot intend? He threatens to appropriate Orlèans’ “chiefest temple”<sup>70</sup> to an English purpose and to turn an important French locus of society into a monument to English military skill and conquest. Phyllis Rackin perhaps gets closest to Talbot’s intention when she notes the different rhetorical strategies of the two opposing armies as expressed through their champions, Talbot and Joan: “His language reifies glory, while hers is the language of physical objects. The play defines their conflict as a contest between English *words* and French *things*, between the historical record that Talbot wishes to preserve and the physical reality that Joan invokes to discredit it” (150-151). I am not sure if it is fair to take this difference to its logical extreme, particularly when Joan seems to speak a radically different language even from her own

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<sup>70</sup> This “temple” is left unnamed because, among other reasons, Salisbury was not actually buried there but in England. Talbot, on the other hand, *was* buried in France, in Rouen, although his heart was carried to England and buried at St Alkmund’s Church, Whitchurch.

compatriots, but this does demonstrate the impact of planting a monument to a great English hero on French soil. Soaring rhetoric is important and necessary, but the English must claim land as well; Talbot chooses to do this by fighting the French on their own ground, both literally on the battlefield and, more imaginatively, by using Salisbury's monument to permanently reinscribe a French icon as a symbol of English superiority.<sup>71</sup>

Such an action has precedent, as Talbot himself points out later in the play. Invading Rouen and trying to inspire himself and the future turncoat Burgundy, Talbot directs,

Vow Burgundy, by honour of thy house,  
Pricked on by public wrongs sustained in France,  
Either to get the town again or die.  
And I—as sure as English Henry lives,  
And as his father here was conqueror;  
As sure as in this late betrayèd town  
Great Cœur-de-lion's heart was buried—  
So sure I swear to get the town or die. (3.5.36-43)

Robert Jones, in his study on the ways dead heroes are imaginatively invoked in the history plays, points out that Talbot collapses time in his rhetoric, calling “on the recently dead Henry V and the long dead Richard I as equally living presences along with the young king he now serves” (Jones 6). Of all of these figures, however, only the one dead for the longest period, Richard Lionheart, is in any way *here*, and Talbot seems to derive strength from this fact, ending with Richard for inspiration in his backwards trip through time. After recently burying Salisbury

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<sup>71</sup> Of course, this monument to English superiority is permanent only if the French do not later deface it. This leads back to the passage from the chronicles Goy-Blanquet describes in an earlier footnote, where the French king is praised for ordering the preservation of an English monument on French lands. As far as Talbot's reaction to Salisbury's death is concerned, for an extraordinary alternative reaction to very similar circumstances, see Heywood's *The Second Part of King Edward IV*. The French fell Lord Scales with cannon fire outside St. Quintin's and, thinking his friend is about to die, the King asks for an orgy of destruction. He plans to reduce the city to “smould'ring cinders” and “ashes” and then stand upon the destruction and “in the stead / Of parchment, with my lance I'll draw these lines:— / ‘Edward of England left this memory, / In just revenge of hateful treachery” (Heywood *Dramatic* 1.4.83-88). This desire, expressed in language of paper and ash, is the epitome of ephemerality. He will destroy the town and the remnants, along with his message, will literally blow away in the wind. Scales survives, but in response to two other deaths from the incident, Edward returns fire, declaring that “To quit their deaths, [two Frenchmen] Shall both be cramm'd into a cannon's mouth, / And so be shot into the town again” (Heywood *Dramatic* 1.4.127-29). Again, this is anything but a permanent monument, however vivid in its grotesque display!

in Orlèans, Talbot invokes another English military hero, occupying in death another French town, to help with recapturing lost territory.<sup>72</sup> Richard I's heart symbolically holds the town for the English and makes it easier to reclaim.<sup>73</sup>

Like the previous two strategies for using tombs symbolically onstage, this one has a limited application.<sup>74</sup> Although Pye's point about the "the internal fault-line—of subjectivity forged from the traces of the theater and market" might not apply to what Talbot seems to attempt in his mementoalization of Salisbury, it does suggest the limitations of using monuments to claim space onstage. By its very nature, theatrical space cannot be claimed; it remains mutable in time and space, encompassing, in the words of the Chorus in *Henry V*, all "The vasty fields of France" and England besides (Prologue.12). Although Talbot's declaration may ring in the audience's mind for the rest of the play, the geographical permanence he aspires for is always transient in the theater. Forty lines after his pronouncement in Rouen, Talbot and his dead friend are swept off stage at the scene change, to be replaced with a new locale, the Countess of Auvergne's castle. To put this in terms used by Newstok, onstage the tomb can claim "*property*, in that the very location and endurance of this memorial 'here' depends upon some marking out and paying for space," but no such permanent claim can be made on a stage which has, as its very life's blood, the need for geographic and temporal fluidity (Newstok 37). Tombs and burial sites may work well as *settings* onstage (*Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and many others), but they cannot truly hold any of that space.

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<sup>72</sup> Although not declared outright in the text, Talbot gives the impression that Richard's presence is akin to having a man inside to help entry into the fortifications, a notion strengthened by the sneak attack earlier in the play.

<sup>73</sup> While the tomb to Salisbury in Orlèans is Shakespeare's invention, Richard I's heart was indeed buried in Rouen. The burial was marked (after an early one was destroyed in 1250) "by a recumbent effigy, on a table supported by four lions" (Dodson 59).

<sup>74</sup> See, however, the destruction of buildings and monuments (the reverse of the above) as a stage action that does have staying power. Two good examples can be found in *Edward III* and *Thomas of Woodstock*.

These, then, are three strategies for using tombs onstage that Shakespeare employed in his early history plays but which are seen rarely in his later works or in the works of contemporaries. All three strategies fail to tap into the significant theatrical potential of tombs and monuments. To use tombs to simplify a living character onstage risked negating all of the subtleties that could be generated by the intersection of script and actor. To use tombs to symbolize the end of the family line through the metaphorical entombment of children by parents was, after Shakespeare's three early examples, bound to appear derivative. Finally, to use memorials to claim actual geography was inevitably futile, undermined by the mutable nature of theater itself.

Juxtaposed to these three problematic articulations of memorialization are three techniques that Shakespeare used for deploying monumental imagery again and again throughout the period, techniques which other playwrights employed as well. The first two hinge on commemoration within a larger historic continuity, one stretching backwards and forwards in time; Newstok cites this as the epitaph's (and the tomb's) call for "*memory*, in that the statement 'here' yearns to be read and respected in perpetuity" (Newstok 37). The third deployment of tomb imagery is more symbolic, tied less to historic continuity and more to (theoretically) immutable ideals of status and virtue. All three are less developed in the three *Henry VI* plays than those already discussed. Nonetheless, all three have precedent in these works, and by examining these plays, it is possible to see the outlines of how monuments were to be used onstage in later plays of the period.

When Elizabeth published her “Proclamation against Breakinge or Defacing of Monumentes of Antiquitie,” her expressed intent was to prevent the loss of the inscribed information preserved on tombs. This potential erasure of history was a persistent concern of many in response to the iconoclastic fervor of post-Reformation England, most notably antiquaries like Weever. If, according to Nashe, the history plays show the great figures of English history “revived, and . . . raised from the grave of oblivion, and brought to plead their aged honours in open presence,” he himself points out that the facts of their lives must be “borrowed out of our English Chronicles” and dramatized to rescue them from their current resting place “buried in rusty brass and worm-eaten books” (Nashe 112-13). Brasses and other kinds of tombs were often considered equivalent to written histories. The word “monument” could be used to apply to written records, as in Foxe’s *Actes & Monuments* or in the play *Thomas of Woodstock*, where Bushy asks the king to consult “the monument of English Cronicles . . . / contayneing acts & memorable deeds / of all yor ffamous predissessor kings” (683-85).<sup>75</sup> There is even an extraordinary medieval example of a brass being consulted by the Court of Chivalry” in a dispute over which family had right of inheritance to a given coat of arms (Keen 43).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See *OED* “monument, *n.* def. 3. a & b. The author of *Thomas of Woodstock* (written 1590-1593) is unknown, and the title itself is problematic. As Wilhelmina Frijlinck points out, “The original bears no title, and no wholly satisfactory title has been found for it” (v). It is also sometimes known as *The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second*. Thomas of Woodstock’s beautiful brass, with “the central figure of the duke . . . surrounded by smaller figures of his parents and his eleven brothers and sisters, some of them on pedestals” was once in Westminster Abbey but has been lost over time and now is merely an indent near the Confessor’s Shrine (Saul 115). Of all the non-Shakespearean history plays written at this time, this play has by far the most numerous references to tombs, and it is unlikely that this fact is merely coincidental given the splendid monumetalization of the play’s subject.

<sup>76</sup> The case was “the Grey v. Hastings proceedings. On 3 August 1408 the commissioners, who had been sitting in the great hall of Norwich Priory, adjourned to Elsing, to view the tomb and brass of Hugh Hastings I (d. 1347): the brass, though damaged, still remains” (Keen 52).

Tombs served as conduits by which the past could be recorded to inform the present and the future. Just like plays, they served a disparate audience, in this case composed of all who entered the church; also like plays, they often told a story. In order to attract visitors, tomb patrons “no longer [sought] only the most sacred spots for their graves but also the most frequented” in order to increase the numbers that would see the monument (Ariès 220). Each visitor is confronted with “certain details of the tomb or of the life of the deceased. The writers of inscriptions address themselves to him... to tell him a story, assuming that he will be interested in it and that he is capable of remembering it and passing it on to someone else. This is the first part in the process of fame” (Ariès 220-21). Taken in conjunction with tombs for other family members, usually placed nearby, this individual story becomes part of a larger narrative. Ideally, a family could trace their lineage through monuments, each of which stood as a link in an unbroken chain back through history.<sup>77</sup>

This was particularly important in the case of kings. The phrase “The King is dead, long live the King,” insists that the instant a king dies, a mysterious spiritual transference takes place and his rightful successor becomes monarch, long before receiving the crown and scepter.<sup>78</sup> The need to maintain the illusion of an unbroken line was one of the reasons for the funeral effigy, as Jennifer Woodward argues with her division of “the two bodies of the monarch, the body natural and the body politic, ... represented by the corpse and the effigy respectively” (Woodward 94).<sup>79</sup> After interment, the funeral effigy would be (except in the cases where no monument was

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<sup>77</sup> In reality, this continuity was often a construct rather than a reflection of the true past. I will deal with fiction in tombs in the next section and in Chapter Four.

<sup>78</sup> Middleton’s [?] *The Revenger’s Tragedy* dramatizes a particularly vivid example of this transference, in this case with a Duke instead of a King. The Third Noble, speaking of the deceased Duke, says, “Let us bethink the latest funeral honors / Due to the Duke’s cold body—and, withal, / Calling to memory our new happiness / Spread in his royal son” (5.1.164-67). The speaker takes only a single line to move from the corpse of the Duke to the “new happiness” embodied in his heir.

<sup>79</sup> This is an argument Woodward develops in depth from those put forward by Ernst Kantorowicz in *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*.



constructed) replaced with the more permanent tomb to the monarch, Llewellyn's "social body after death."

Until this tomb was constructed, a symbolic break existed in the nation's continuity. It is this void, embodied by the as-yet-unburied corpse of Henry V, that the squabbling nobles encircle in Westminster Abbey in the first scene of *1 Henry VI*. This gap is made more problematic by the youth of the new king, Henry VI. As Janis Lull points out, the nation finds itself between leaders: "Instead of building a plot around the king as central character, Shakespeare reveals the emptiness at the centre of English society through a series of juxtaposed displays," including the play's opening scene, "the funeral of Henry V, conducted by his brothers Bedford and Gloucester, and his uncles the Duke of Exeter and the Bishop of Winchester," with Henry's young son, the new king, nowhere to be seen until his eventual entrance at the start of Act 3 (Hattaway 91). The English nobility, so recently unified under Henry V during the French campaign, now almost immediately fall to bickering and infighting. They argue about war and peace, about the primacy of the church or the state, and about what should be done to reverse the losses in France reported to them with absurd suddenness throughout the scene. In a brief, almost comic, exchange emblematic of the discord, Henry V's own brothers, Bedford and Gloucester, disagree about what effect the loss of the French conquests might have on their deceased brother. Addressing the messenger bringing the ill tidings, Bedford asks, "What says thou, man, before dead Henry's corpse? / Speak softly, or the loss of those great towns / Will make him burst his lead and rise from death" (1.1.62-64). Gloucester turns to the messenger as well, and in a Tweedledum and Tweedledee like counter, asks him, "Is Paris lost? Is Rouen yielded up? / If Henry were recalled to life again, / These news would cause him once more yield the ghost" (1.1.65-67). Were Henry alive, the news would kill him, but thankfully, the same

news might resurrect him as well. The brothers' contradictory hyperbole leaves the viewer uncertain of anything beyond the impression that, whatever the current state (of the dead King, of France, or of the unity of the nobility), it runs the risk of reversal.

Adrift and leaderless, the nobles look to the body of the slain king for unity. As Kirby Farrell points out, the central problem they face here and throughout the *Henry VI* plays is "how to overcome dread and recover the power lost with the hero's fall" (56). To some extent, Bedford expresses this with his wishful fantasy that Henry might rise up to reverse the losses in France. Exeter is quick to declare that "Henry is dead, and never shall revive," but others make fruitless attempts to turn back time (1.1.18). Bedford calls out "Henry the Fifth, thy ghost I invoke" in hopes that, if the old King cannot be present in body, perhaps his immortal substance can lend its military skill; later in the play, Lucy refers to him as "our scarce-cold conqueror, / That ever-living man of memory," again imagining Henry V in the liminal space between life and death (1.1.52, 4.3.50-51).

In these moments, Shakespeare seems to be touching on a tradition of "London pageants involving raising mayors from the dead" (Farrell 84). In one example of these pageants, "Chruso-thriambos: The triumph of Golde," Farrell sees a close thematic link to the play: "Like the mourners at the opening of *I Henry VI*, the pageant characters are gathered around a tomb, and their theme is the restoration of a former hero. Time then resurrects a fourteenth-century mayor, Nicholas Faringdon, reviewing his accomplishments and summoning him" (84). In the scene we also see the bodies of deceased heroes used as the loci of vows. *Thomas of Woodstock* contains many similar examples, including several where characters swear to deceased common relatives. Woodstock, for example, vows to his brothers York and Lancaster that he will do what

he can to divest young Richard II from his flatterers, saying, “by good king Edwards bones or [our] Royall ffather / I will remoue those hinderers of his health” (Frijlinck 197-98).

Bodies rot, however, and even bones turn to dust, so vows made to the flesh lack durability. As the nobles discover in the opening scene of the play, even Henry V’s legacy, his conquests in France, are as short-lived as the king responsible for them. Reaching for something with permanence, the nobles repeatedly turn to the language of monuments and tombs as a way to access the golden age of the previous king’s reign.

To start, however, with the exception, Gloucester is the one noble character who does not see stone monuments as sufficient for commemoration. His apocalyptic vision sees all existence in decay. In a passionate outburst in the first scene of *2 Henry VI*, Gloucester protests Henry VI’s marriage to Margaret. His speech decries the futility of attempting to resurrect a past effaced by recent events:

And shall these labours and these honours die?  
Shall Henry’s conquest, Bedford’s vigilance,  
Your deeds of war, and all our counsel die?  
O peers of England, shameful is this league,  
Fatal this marriage, canceling your fame,  
Blotting your names from books of memory,  
Razing the characters of your renown,  
Defacing monuments of conquered France,  
Undoing all, as all had never been! (1.1.91-99)

Men, honor, actions, talk, monuments and fame both written and remembered, Gloucester warns, will be swept away in a cyclone of destruction. As Döring points out, Gloucester’s words are one of the several ways this “early history play ... foregrounds issues of sixteenth-century religious campaigns whose consequences came to be reviewed, in late Tudor and in Stuart

culture, with some criticism and concern” (38-39).<sup>80</sup> The breadth of Gloucester’s fears points to something larger than a religious concern. He seems terrified that the very system of engaging with the past is crumbling.

Putting Gloucester’s exaggeration aside, however, other characters seem to gravitate to the language of monuments as signifiers of a stable link to the past, even if the present fails to live up to the previous standard. Returning to the first scene of *1 Henry VI*, the first messenger exhorts the gathered English leaders to do something about the reversals on the continent.

Awake, awake, English nobility!  
Let not sloth dim your honours new-begot.  
Cropped are the flower-de-luces in your arms;  
Of England’s coat, one half is cut away. (1.1.78-81)

The timing of this warning, while the nobles are gathered to bury Henry V, adds resonance to these lines as they reflect the actual appearance of Henry’s Westminster tomb: “On a wooden bar above [Henry’s tomb] are a shield and saddle, purchased for the funeral, and a tilting helmet which by tradition was worn by the King at Agincourt” (Westminster 92). In addition, his sword was also suspended over his monument. Edward, the Black Prince, father of Richard II, was commemorated in a similar fashion: “when buried in Canterbury Cathedral [he] had his shield, helm, shirt of mail, gauntlets, and sword hung over his tomb” (Rothery 24; Figure 2.3). Here, in referencing coats of arms, the messenger invokes an image of the shield that will hang above Henry as a monument not only to him, but also to his own, now lost, conquests. England, both as a country and as a word that could be used metonymically for the king himself (at this point

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<sup>80</sup> In fact, even Henry V’s own monument was defaced. His effigy, made of oak covered in silver, was stripped; “pilfering of the precious metal of the effigy began as early as 1467, and in 1546 the head, hands and plating were also stolen” (Dodson 76). It is quite possible that Shakespeare is alluding to this damage in Gloucester’s rant, but three facts make me think this is unlikely. First, the monuments he speaks of are plural and in France. Likely, this means that he is using “monuments” in a broader sense. Secondly, the remarkable number of different mnemonic aides he fears will be destroyed lends itself to a more general view. Most importantly, however, despite the defacement, Henry’s tomb seems to have remained a location inspiring awe rather than scorn during the early modern period. I will deal with Henry V’s tomb in greater detail in Chapter Three.

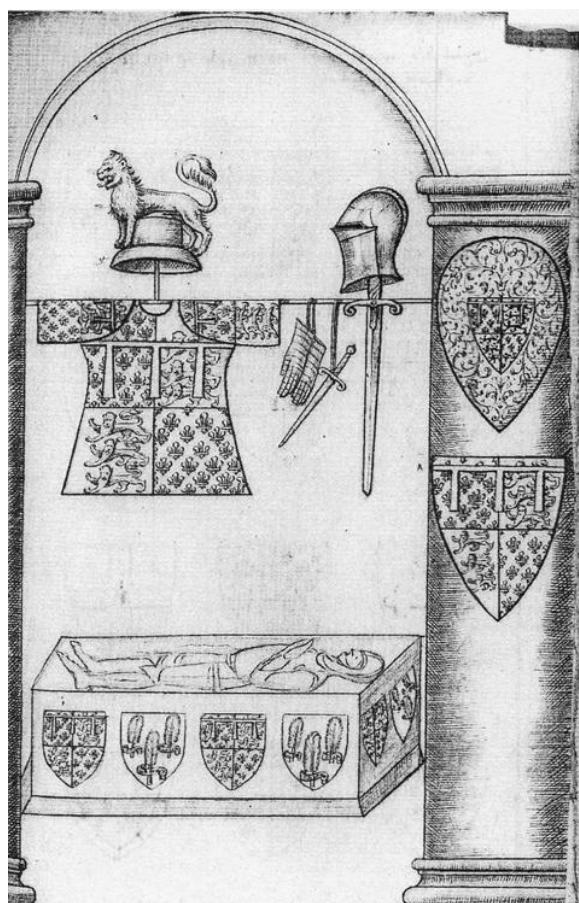
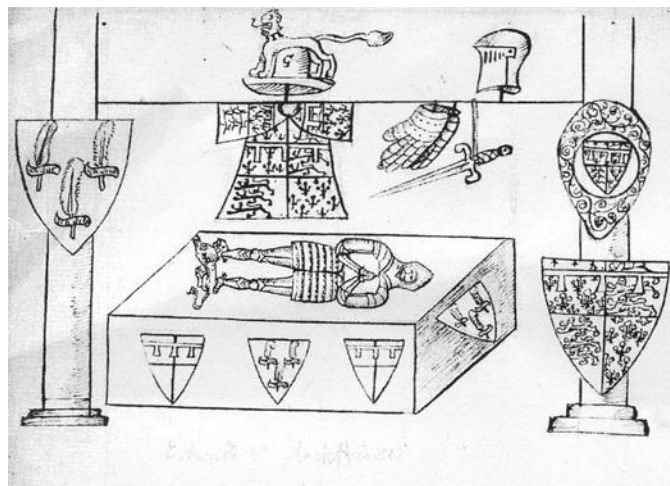


Figure 2.3 – Two illustrations of the arms, armor and sword of Edward the Black Prince (d. 1376), hanging over his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral. Henry V’s tomb had a similar arrangement for the display of his military gear. The top is from a drawing by John Philipot from 1613 (BL, Egerton MS 3310A. p. 19). The bottom is an Anonymous drawing from around 1600 (Society of Antiquaries of London, MS 162, fo. 33). Both appear in Collinson, Patrick, Nigel Ramsay, and Margaret Sparks, eds. *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*.

Henry VI), has been reduced in status; the messenger's reference to "your arms" implies that the previous king will be the last who can wear that heraldic device on his shield. Forever those "flower-de-luces" will reside above Henry V's effigy as a symbol of what has been lost.<sup>81</sup> No amount of imaginative conjuring by the nobles, remembering "His brandished sword [that] did blind men with his beams," will cause the sword or its owner to move from their permanent resting place alongside many of the other English kings in the Abbey (1.1.10).

Deployed in this way on stage, swords, coats of arms, and the tombs they grace symbolically lament a lost past. Such usage, however, constitutes only one way playwrights used tombs and monuments to symbolically link past and present. Döring argues that the funeral at the beginning of *1 Henry VI* demonstrates that "monumental funerals with all their pomp may well be seen as futile. They are material reassertions of social status in the face of death, but their symbolic efforts also undermine themselves. As Exeter insists, the whole spectacle does not so much commemorate King Henry's victories as King Death's" (50-51). Henry V's funeral may fall into this category, but the fault lies not in the ceremony itself but rather in the failings of those responsible for maintaining his legacy. The interment ceremony would be sufficient to uphold Henry's reputation if only the nobles responsible for burying him were up to the task. In a different context, these same funeral trappings can be symbols of continuity with the past and a method by which the present can transmit its values and honor to the future. An example of this kind of monumental optimism appears in the confrontation between Iden and the rebel Cade toward the end of *2 Henry VI*.

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<sup>81</sup> Of course, this is not true. English monarchs have continued quartering the English lions with the French fleur-de-lis up to the present day. Nonetheless, the shield here is being used as symbolic of Henry's accomplishments now lost by the present generation.

Act 4, scene 9 opens with Jack Cade on the run in Kent, after the collapse of his rebellion advocating social reversal, violence, and the abolition of literacy.<sup>82</sup> He sneaks into a garden in search of a “sallet,” only to be confronted by the owner, self-identified as “Alexander Iden, an esquire of Kent” (4.9.7, 40). They fight and Iden mortally wounds Cade, who with his dying breath identifies himself. Iden’s response to this revelation is telling:

Is’t Cade that I have slain, that monstrous traitor?  
Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed  
And hang thee o’er my tomb when I am dead.  
Ne’er shall this blood be wipèd from thy point  
But thou shalt wear it as a herald’s coat  
To emblaze the honour that thy master got. (4.9.63-68)

Although Iden does not know the intruder’s identity before the confrontation, as soon as he finds out what service he has done to the state, his thoughts instantly turn to commemoration.

Like the nobility, the lesser gentry also often displayed arms above tombs.<sup>83</sup> Iden makes it quite clear what purpose he intends his sword to serve, which makes it all the more surprising that critics frequently misread his actions. E. M. W. Tillyard argues that “Iden ... is a flat symbolic character, beautifully contrasted with the realism of the rebels. He is entirely content

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<sup>82</sup> Rackin compares the disruption caused by the uprising in *2 Henry VI* to that presented by the female characters in *1 Henry VI*, arguing that Cade’s actions “literalize and specify the objects of the anxieties that the women symbolically represent” (*Stages* 209). Building on Bedford’s warning in *2 Henry VI* that Margaret “will blot noble English ‘names from books of memory,’ raze ‘the characters of [their] renown,’ and deface the ‘monuments of conquer’d France,’” Rackin claims that this metaphorical threat is actually embodied in “Cade’s command to burn the historical records and tear down the historical monuments” (*Stages* 209). It would be excellent for this project if I could support her in this connection but, while there is certainly ample evidence of Cade’s interest in the former, I can find no support for his desiring to destroy the latter, beyond his threat to “set London Bridge afire, and, if you can, burn down the Tower too” (4.6.11-13). Destruction of tombs and monuments, particularly because of their textual element, would certainly seem to fit within the scope of Cade’s *modus operandi*, but I hesitate to ascribe such an action to him without more evidence, particularly because tombs (as opposed to court records and other written documents) rely every bit as much on imagery and non-textual symbolism as they do on the inscribed word. See, however, the peasant rebels in *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*, who do plan, in their invasion of London, to “all the Rich men displaste / And all the braveerie of them defaste, ...” (Longstaffe 92-93).

<sup>83</sup> “The helm of Sir Nichols Heron used to be above his monument in Croydon church until it was removed to the Museum of London, and the helm of Sir John St. John, who died in 1594, is still next to his tomb at Lydiard Tregoz in Wiltshire. Sir Roger Manwood’s tomb in St. Stephen’s, Canterbury, is surmounted by a helm and crest, a pair of gauntlets, and a mourning sword, dating from his funeral in 1592. And the most complete remaining set of armor in a church dates from an even later period, hanging above Sir William Penn, who was buried in St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, in 1670” (Jones and Stallybrass 251).

with his own station in the social hierarchy, as smug as any eighteenth century moralist over the virtues of the middle station of life” (Tillyard 153). Perhaps this is true when Iden first introduces himself with his name and title, but the language of heraldry apparent in his plans to hang his sword over his monument indicates social aspirations, even before the king knights him in 5.1.

Maurice Hunt offers an even more problematic reading of the scene in his essay “Climbing for Place in Shakespeare’s *2 Henry VI*.” Initially, Hunt becomes distracted by drawing comparisons between Genesis’ Adam and his garden and that of “Alexander Iden (Eden)” (Pendleton 171). If Shakespeare had wished to make this connection, surely he would have followed Holinshed, who called him the “gentleman of Kent named Alexander Eden,” instead of Hall who uses the name Iden (Holinshed et al. 635). In addition, to allude to Adam in such a context (that of a peasant uprising against the aristocracy) would be to invite echoes of the oft repeated slogan of social leveling spoken by Parson Ball in the anonymous play performed sometime before Shakespeare’s histories, *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*: “But when *Adam* delved, and *Eve* span, / Who was then gentleman?” (Longstaffe l. 62).<sup>84</sup> This association would work against Shakespeare’s (and, for that matter Pendleton’s) portrayal of Iden as a figure reinforcing the status quo. More significantly this formulation causes Hunt to lose sight of Iden’s wider goals:

In keeping with his sociopolitical modesty, Iden announces that he will let Cade’s blood dry on his sword so that his weapon might “wear it as a herald’s coat / To emblazen the honor that thy master got” (68-70). In Alexander Iden’s opinion, true honor derives from deeds loyal to the crown, those that preserve a private (and the public) commonwealth, rather than from inherited scutcheons or aristocratic titles, especially those acquired by upward climbing men like William de la Pole. (172)

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<sup>84</sup> This play, centered on a peasant uprising that, in some of its details, Shakespeare conflates with the later rebellion under Henry VI, would certainly have been familiar to Shakespeare. Because of myriad similarities between the two portrayals of rebellion, this play would have been in the forefront of most theatre-goers’ minds.



Unfortunately, this interpretation completely misses the point of Iden's actions. To begin, Iden himself is "upwardly climbing," or else there is no reason to "cut off ... [Cade's] most ungracious head... [to] bear in triumph to the King" (4.9.79-80). More importantly, Iden is very clear that this sword will "hang ... o'er my tomb when I am dead" (4.9.65). As Rackin states, "he transform[s] his deed from a defense of private property to a heroic victory in defense of his king and define[s] it in traditional chivalric terms, the sword that won it as a historical monument and a heraldic emblem of honor" (*Stages* 212). In other words, this sword will not only be a personal, self-aggrandizing icon, but it will also become a perpetual symbol of his family and their service to the crown. For all of Pendleton's scorn at the "inherited scutcheons" of others, this is *exactly* what Iden intends for his heirs.<sup>85</sup> The future display of the sword over Iden's tomb, presumably in the parish church, will forever be associated with the family and will be a constantly visible symbol of the family's elevated status. The blood left on the blade becomes a heraldic tincture.<sup>86</sup> In this way, Iden plans to use his future tomb to aid his heirs, preserving the fame and renown won by their ancestor and forever broadcasting the same in the public space of the church.<sup>87</sup> His tomb becomes a conduit by which the past is preserved in order to influence the future.

Unlike the other symbolic meanings for tombs discussed so far in this chapter, the referencing of tombs onstage to symbolize a continuum of remembrance stretching from the past

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<sup>85</sup> Scutcheon, def. 3 *OED*, "A badge" in the sense of a heraldic symbol used as an identifier for a family.

<sup>86</sup> This also has a parallel in *The Life and Death of Jack Straw*. When Walworth, Mayor of London, is knighted by the King for slaying the rebel leader, the King declares "that Time, shall nere abridge thy fame, / The Cittie armes shall beare for memorie, / The bloody dagger the more for *Walworths* honour" (947-49). The blade, complete with blood, then becomes a symbol of the city designed to remind future generations of the Mayor's brave actions. See also Stephen Greenblatt's article "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, and the Representation of Rebellion," which offers a different and compatible perspective on Iden's sword ("Murdering" 25).

<sup>87</sup> It is worth noting that neither Iden's hanging of the sword nor his knighting originates from the chronicles. Goy-Blanquet suggests on p. 103-04 that this also may have been suggested to Shakespeare by the passage from *The Life and Death of Jack Straw* mentioned in the previous footnote.

to the future continues to be developed far beyond Shakespeare's first tetralogy. In particular, deploying tombs in this fashion proved useful in later history plays because it allowed the ephemeral theater to anchor itself in the offstage historical and material world. By alluding to material objects familiar to London audiences, the playwright could evoke both a sense of veracity and an epic scope that otherwise might be hard to reproduce in the theater. I detail the development of this use of onstage monuments in an analysis of Shakespeare's second tetralogy in Chapter Three.

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From the mid-1580s until his death in 1621, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, spent a fortune constructing new monuments for his ancestors. The first of these, a vast tomb for his mother, Anne Seymour, Duchess of Somerset, was built in St Nicholas' Chapel in Westminster Abbey soon after her death in 1587 (Figure 2.4). Her husband, "[t]he Earl's father, the Duke of Somerset, had been executed in 1552 and therefore had no tomb. His widow's monument constituted a kind of cenotaph for him, while reflecting the retention of noble status by his descendents" (Sherlock 30). The tomb itself is visually arresting, severe in its emphasis on black marble, particularly in the four obelisks capped with silver spikes on the top of the tomb. It is also strangely beautiful, with the effigy of Anne Seymour peacefully reclining under a decorated canopy. Once drawn close by these features, visible from some distance, a visitor will likely be struck by the number of different methods used on the tomb to convey information about lineage and the connection of the family to other noble families. The tomb exhibits both "lavish displays



Figure 2.4 – Tomb of Anne Seymour, Duchess of Somerset (d. 1588) in Westminster Abbey. Photograph from Sherlock, Peter. *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*. 2008.

of heraldry including well over a dozen coats of arms” designed to communicate to the illiterate, as well as a remarkable amount of text, both in Latin and translated into English (Sherlock 30). Hertford presumably chose this bilingual approach “both to indicate learning and to be read by a wide range of people” (Sherlock 30). The epitaph was designed by Hertford “to present himself to his contemporaries as a dutiful son,” to gloss over his father’s ignominious end, and to highlight “his somewhat obscure descent from Edward III”; even “[t]he placement of the monument in Westminster Abbey suggested that the Seymour family and its matriarch were ... one of the most highly placed families in the kingdom” (Sherlock 32).

This was only the start of Hertford’s project of advertising his family using elaborate monumentation. He paid for two other tombs for family members in Westminster and had ancestors moved from dissolved monasteries and re-commemorated; appropriately enough, when he died in 1621, his heir chose to commemorate him with “one of the largest monuments ever seen in England over his burial vault in Salisbury Cathedral,” notable not only for its size and splendor but also for an inscription in “Latin ... so long that it is hard to imagine any but the most dedicated passers-by would stop to read and translate it” (Sherlock 36, 38). Not only was Hertford’s monument ostentatious, it was also less than accurate about the facts of his life. Of his three wives, “only his first... Catherine Grey was mentioned, owing to her significance as a prime contestant for Elizabeth’s throne,” and the monument placed great emphasis on the honors he received under the Tudors and Stuarts, never mentioning “the immense disgrace he suffered, first by his clandestine marriage early in Elizabeth’s reign and second by the disastrous marriage of his grandson to Arbella Stuart within the final decade of his long life” (Sherlock 38). Peter Sherlock effectively sums up the actions of Hertford and others: “Tombs were eminently suited

to promoting one's place in the world not as it actually was but as it should have been" (Sherlock 40).<sup>88</sup>

In the previous section, I detailed how tombs could be used on stage as a way of symbolizing the preservation of the past and the connectivity of past and future. Such a construction presents the tomb as accurate in its record of what has happened. While the information on most tombs might be factual, Renaissance playwrights were well aware that this could not be taken for granted. Monuments could be used as propaganda every bit as easily as printed texts or plays, privileging a biased or even fraudulent version of the past. Their creators could be selective in what they recorded and could even determine who was remembered at all. Obviously, these decisions were not made by those commemorated, but by those who survived them.<sup>89</sup> Just as history is written by the victor, tombs are constructed by the living, and often, in history and the plays that dramatize that history, the victors and the survivors are one and the same; they thus stand in a position to record history on paper and on stone in a manner of their choosing.

In his early history plays, one way Shakespeare approaches the question of how the vanquished will be remembered is through the rhetoric of the Yorkists. The Yorkists may not themselves be aware that their cause is doomed, but Shakespeare and his audience already know the end of the story. To foreshadow this historical inevitability, Shakespeare has them speak of their future tombs in a way unique in the history plays. To understand how Shakespeare handles the Yorkist faction, however, allow me to first establish a model or standard, a description of

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<sup>88</sup> Sherlock's book is required reading for anyone interested in the ways tombs were designed to manipulate, misrepresent or even construct fictional accounts of the past.

<sup>89</sup> Of course, many individuals included in their wills requests for the types of tombs they desired and many others had their tombs constructed before their death. Even this, however, was no assurance that they would be commemorated as they wished. Richard II had his own tomb constructed in Westminster Abbey well before his death, but his body was not interred there until the reign of Henry V. I will elaborate on this particular instance in Chapter Three.

how death and the grave are usually described by characters going into battle. Talbot, standing in front of Orlèans in *1 Henry VI*, can be seen as typical when he declares “here will Talbot mount, or make his grave” (2.1.34). He will succeed or else fall and be buried where he stands. Logically, to be buried at the foot of the wall of an enemy town is to be uncommemorated, so this construction implies that the two possible outcomes are victory and success or failure and dishonorable burial in an unmarked grave. Lord Clifford alludes to the same idea when, swearing his allegiance to the king, he declares,

King Henry, be thy title right or wrong,  
Lord Clifford vows to fight in thy defense.  
May that ground gape and swallow me alive  
Where I shall kneel to him that slew my father. (*3 Henry VI* 1.1.160-163)

Here, he cites the ignominy of making peace with the Yorkist cause, but again his rhetoric suggests that failure will cause him to be swallowed up by the earth, his burial site unmarked and unremembered. He is, of course, exaggerating; nobles on the losing side of civil conflict and even those executed by the state were still buried in churchyards and often even commemorated with monuments. Nonetheless, nobles frequently invoke this vision of a forgotten burial plot as the cost of defeat. In *3 Henry VI*, even Henry himself wishes for a “quiet grave” in his pastoral vision of abdication from the monarchy and its attendant responsibility. In other words, the typical maneuver in these imaginative constructions is to imagine either military and political success and fame *or* erasure from history through an uncommemorated end.

Typical, I should say, of everyone but Richard, Duke of York, and his sons. When Richard first mentions his grave,<sup>90</sup> in the rose picking scene from *1 Henry VI*, his rhetoric is in line with the conventional construction. He declares that his selected flower will “wither with

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<sup>90</sup> First in the chronological sense of the plays themselves, since it has proven impossible to definitively argue which of the plays was written first. It is worth pointing out, however, that the tomb imagery does seem to be deployed in a more sophisticated fashion from *1* to *2* to *3 Henry VI*. Whether this indicates their order of authorship, or if it just shows evidence of later revision is well beyond the scope of this study.

me to my grave / Or flourish to the height of my degree” (110-11). By 2 *Henry VI*, however, he has moved to a different deployment of tomb symbolism. Having just heard reports of losses in France, Richard speaks in an aside:

Cold news for me, for I had hope of France  
As firmly as I hope for fertile England.  
Thus are my blossoms blasted in the bud,  
And caterpillars eat my leaves away.  
But I will remedy this gear ere long,  
Or sell my title for a glorious grave. (2 *Henry VI* 3.1.87-92)

Gone is the link between failure and erasure. Richard hopes for success, but, if he fails, he still expects to be commemorated with a “glorious grave,” presumably a monument preserving his status as an epic failure. By 3 *Henry VI*, his sons have adopted this same formulation to press their father’s claim on the throne as well as their own. In the battle in the first act of the play, an unknown son of York (either Edward or Richard, the text is deficient) calls out for “a crown or else a glorious tomb” (1.4.17). In the next act, after his father has been humiliated and killed, Richard draws a link between them, swearing, “Richard, I bear thy name; I’ll venge thy death / Or die renownèd by attempting it” (2.1.87-88).

Why do the elder Richard and his two sons repeat this unusual “or” construction? The answer, I think, lies in their eventual fate. As Linda Charnes argues, well-known figures, particularly infamous ones like Richard III and, to a lesser extent, the rest of the Yorkists so demonized by the Tudor propaganda machine, enter the text burdened with a “notorious existence [originating] in earlier texts... a knowledge of which is shared by the audience” (Charnes 7).<sup>91</sup> These characters are “simultaneously overdetermined and represented as experiencing their textual existence as a *first-time occurrence*—one in which contingency is

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<sup>91</sup> This is not to say that Tillyard is correct in his claim that Shakespeare fully *supports* the “Tudor myth,” but merely that his plays were written in a culture permeated with critiques of the Yorkist faction in the Wars of the Roses.

fantasized by the subject even as it is prohibited by the social” (Charnes 7). They may not know their final fate, but they are aware that their project could fail as easily as succeed. The “or” points to an ambiguity, an awareness that remembrance cannot be equated with victory. The idea of a “glorious” tomb illustrates the Yorkist confidence that, regardless of their success or failure, they *will* be remembered.<sup>92</sup>

In fact, it could well be argued that one of the major points of contention between characters in the play is over who will get to write the history or, more specifically, construct the monuments recording the past. In *3 Henry VI*, when Henry offers to disinherit his son in favor of the Yorkist line, Queen Margaret counters that “To entail him and his heirs unto the crown—/ What is it, but to make thy sepulchre / And creep into it far before thy time?” (1.1.236-238). Henry’s action not only risks his own death, but it also empowers the opposition to inscribe what they will on his monument. The verb “entail” reinforces her criticism; in addition to its current meaning “to settle (land, an estate, etc.) on a number of persons in succession,” to entail was also “to carve, sculpture; to make carvings upon, ornament with carvings” (OED v.2.1, v.1.a). As he bequeaths the land to York’s children in the first meaning of the word, he carves and decorates his own “sepulchre” in the second. Later in the same play, Richard the younger and Clifford

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<sup>92</sup> It is worth noting that however the Yorks might be remembered in history, they are not well commemorated in stone. The elder Richard’s tomb was one that Elizabeth had to rebuild after it was destroyed at Fotheringhay. His son Richard’s tomb was constructed in the Greyfriars monastery in Leicester and was lost in the Reformation, and his grandsons, the princes in the Tower, were never commemorated at all. Only Edward IV had a monument in Shakespeare’s time and even that was less than impressive. He was buried at St. George’s Chapel at Windsor, and, although “[a]n elaborate monument was planned to mark the tomb, with a metal image of the king above another showing him as a dead body,” this double-decker transi tomb was never constructed and, instead “the location of the burial was marked by a black marble slab, ... [within] a pair of iron gates” (Dodson 79). According to Robert Tighe and James Davis, “[t]he whole of the work appears to have been executed in the most simple manner possible, and put together with similar simplicity” (394). They surmise that “perhaps out of sight [at Windsor], there was no reason for flamboyance, or Richard, who wanted to draw attention away from EIV and his children and towards himself, felt that simple was better” (Tighe and Davis 391). The latter seems most likely, since Windsor was not unvisited (and, in fact, was more frequented after Richard moved Henry VI there). It is, perhaps, an excellent case study in the premise that not all monuments are created equal.



more overtly bandy about issues of commemoration as, facing off on the battlefield, they challenge each other:

Richard – Now, Clifford, I have singled thee alone  
Suppose this arm is for the Duke of York,  
And this for Rutland, both bound to revenge,  
Wert thou environed with a brazen wall.  
Clifford – Now, Richard, I am with thee here alone.  
This is the hand that stabbed thy father York,  
And this the hand that slew thy brother Rutland,  
And here's the heart that triumphs in their death  
And cheers these hands that slew thy sire and brother  
And so, have at thee! (2.4.1-10)

Both argue that they stand as monuments to the fallen Yorks, Richard as emblematic of revenge and Clifford as symbolic of their failure. Their contest is thus couched in terms of a battle over which version of the past will survive. Their contest is indecisive, as Warwick, at this point still on the Yorkist side, interrupts. Eventually, however, Clifford is killed; it is no coincidence that, in victory, the Yorks precisely reverse the public memorial of shame visited on their sire.

Speaking of the head of the fallen Clifford, Warwick insists,

From off the gates of York fetch down the head,  
Your father's head, which Clifford placèd there.  
Instead whereof let this supply the room—  
Measure for measure must be answerèd. (2.6.52-52)

Measure for measure indeed; having won the day and the town, the Yorkist supporters can now determine how the fallen are remembered. Clifford's head is displayed in shame, and the head of the patriarch of their clan is moved to an honorable resting place.<sup>93</sup>

Winners create monuments, both temporary and lasting. Losers have no such privilege.

Clifford, who had offered his two hands and his heart as celebratory monuments to the slain

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<sup>93</sup> The importance of this gesture should not be underestimated. As Goy-Blanquet points out, in Hall's version of the histories, "Clifford is not held responsible for the killing of York in this account, only for the sacrilegious mockery that followed it" (Goy-Blanquet 142). Death and murder are an accepted part of war; shaming your enemy in a manner usually reserved for low-born criminals in spite of rank and due respect is considered out of bounds.

Yorks, now has his head placed on the battlements of York as a symbol of his enemy's success. Perhaps the most moving example of what happens to those who aspire but fail and thus must suffer their legacy to be written by the opposition is the Kingmaker himself, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, who switches from the winning side to the losing side, confidant in his own ability to reverse the tide. Things do not go according to his plan, however, and as he lies dying after the battle of Barnet, he muses at length on the vagaries of fate and remembrance:

Ah, who is nigh? Come to me, friend or foe,  
And tell me who is victor, York or Warwick?  
Why ask I that? My mangled body shows,  
My blood, my want of strength, my sick heart shows,  
That I must yield my body to the earth  
And by my fall the conquest to my foe.  
Thus yields the cedar to the axe's edge,  
Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle,  
Under whose shade the ramping lion slept,  
Whose top-branch over-peered Jove's spreading tree  
And kept low shrubs from winter's powerful wind.  
These eyes, that now are dimmed with death's black veil,  
Have been as piercing as the midday sun  
To search the secret treasons of the world.  
The wrinkles in my brows, now filled with blood,  
Were likened oft to kingly sepulchres—  
For who lived king, but I could dig his grave?  
And who durst smile when Warwick bent his brow?  
Lo now my glory smeared in dust and blood.  
My parks, my walks, my manors that I had,  
Even now forsake me, and of all my lands  
Is nothing left me but my body's length.  
Why, what is pomp, rule, reign, but earth and dust?  
And, live we how we can, yet die we must. (5.2.5-28)

To Goy-Blanquet, Warwick's final speech "is drawn from Hall's funeral oration: 'death did one thing, that life could not do, for by death, he had rest, peace, quietnes, and tranquillitie, whiche his life euer abhorred'" (149-50). To Tillyard, it "is full of the traditional commonplaces associated with degree [and] a whole sequence ... [drawn from] the chain of being" (189-90). Neither of these paths of analysis, however, deals with the primary theme of the speech.

Warwick is not simply concerned with the way he lived his life, the way he died, or where he fits in the scheme of the kingdom. His preoccupation centers on his concern that none of these things will be remembered. His final couplet expresses a clichéd *memento mori* sentiment, but the repetition of the language of tombs and monuments in the lines preceding indicate that his mind has moved to what remembrance will survive after his body has rotted away.

One critic who does look at the tomb imagery in this speech is Döring, but unfortunately, by focusing only on the language of the speech and not the material reality of tombs, he gets the passage exactly wrong. Focusing primarily on the final two lines, Döring argues:

Warwick's question is rhetorical and yet it reveals the troubling ambivalence of funeral pomp. On the one hand, the investments made in ceremonies, monuments and processions are material markers of distinction and so help reproduce the social order that death has disrupted. Against the levelling power of King Death, funeral performances mobilize the distinctive power of cultural devices to signify degree. On the other hand, these signifiers also allow different interpretations because, as material markers, they are themselves subject to transience. Funeral monuments, too, will eventually turn into "earth and dust" and so serve as *memento mori*. (51)

All this might be true, *if* Warwick had ever had a proper burial or tomb. In fact, his "dead body was exposed 'open and naked' in St. Paul's, lest it should be rumored that Edward IV's great opponent was still living" (Dryden 84-85). His body and the corpses of others who defied the Yorks "rest in nameless graves beneath the stately vaults of Tewkesbury" (Dryden 85).

Shakespeare might not have known all of the details or even where the Kingmaker's body eventually lay, but he certainly must have been aware that it was not in the Church of St. Mary in Warwick with others bearing the Warwick title. This chapel, less than ten miles from Stratford-upon-Avon, does, however, house the tomb of Richard Beauchamp, Nevill's father-in-law, a monument described by Hugh Collinson as "one of the most famous in the country" (Collinson 113). The tomb stands prominently in the center of the spacious Beauchamp Chapel with many



Figure 2.5 – Tomb of Sir Richard Beauchamp (d. 1439) in the Church of St. Mary in Warwick. Top, full view of tomb from Lindley, Phillip. *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England*. Bottom, Close-up of head and hands from Crossley, Fred H. *English Church Monuments A.D. 1150-1550: An Introduction to the Study of Tombs & Effigies of the Mediaeval Period*.

others of his family, and is worked so beautifully and intricately in gilt bronze that it is possible to see the veins on his folded hands (Figure 2.5). Beauchamp is conflated with Nevill in *1 Henry VI*, and this tomb was surely in the back of Shakespeare's mind when he penned the Kingmaker's speech. It is a perfect example of exactly what Nevill will *not* get after being killed on the losing side of history. A man whose very "brows... Were likened oft to kingly sepulchres" found himself commemorated only by a "body's length" of "earth and dust."

Many other plays written in the period, both by Shakespeare and others, employ the language of tombs (both their presence and their absence) to demonstrate the ways history can be shaped by those that survive. In *Titus*, for example, tombs are invoked both to dutifully record the past *and* to alter it in ways beneficial to the survivors. The play opens at Titus' family tomb, apparently a vast edifice in which Titus himself has buried more sons than are contained within the whole of Henry VII's vast Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey. Not all sons are equal, however, and he violently resists the notion, expressed by his surviving children, that his rebellious son, Mutius, should be laid to rest in the family tomb:

Traitors, away, he rests not in this tomb.  
This monument five hundred years hath stood,  
Which I have sumptuously re-edified.  
Here none but soldiers and Rome's servitors  
Repose in fame, none basely slain in brawls.  
Bury him where you can; he comes not here. (1.1.346-51)

Thomas Rist argues that this scene shows "funerary focus," the two sides arguing about "getting the style of burial right" (48). Rist misses the point, I think, because the issue for Titus is not *how* Mutius is buried but specifically *where*: "Bury him where you can." Titus worries what his rebellious son's interment will do to the family's reputation. When cooler heads prevail and Mutius is interred with his family, Titus remains furious, convinced that the body has polluted the monument and calling it "The dismall'st day is this that e'er I saw, / To be dishonoured by

my sons in Rome. / Well, bury him, and bury me the next” (1.1.381-83). His fury centers on the fear that the tainted memory of his rebellious son will corrupt the purity of his family reputation.

Later, however, Titus swears to the Emperor “by my father’s reverend tomb” (2.3.296). It is possible that Titus has simply forgotten the earlier incident, but it is more likely that Mutius’ actions have been subsumed under the collective honor Titus’ associates with his family. The same happens to the Emperor at the end. Despite the Emperor’s earlier actions, Lucius commands that he and his sister be buried properly, requesting:

Some loving friends convey the Emperor hence,  
And give him burial in his father’s grave.  
My father and Lavinia shall forthwith  
Be closèd in our household’s monument. (5.3.190-193)

The state must continue and families must protect their honor. Individuals may do wrong or be wronged themselves, but once dead they must be incorporated into the family collective. This is the problem with Naomi Liebler’s argument that “Lucius’ attempt to restore cultural unity is undermined by the truth about the bodies he would inter in the Andronicus tomb, once the symbol and locus of ritual integrity as Titus had argued in refusing to bury the son he had killed. The bodies of Titus and Lavinia are fragmented; they are missing parts” (148). One of the tomb’s most significant powers is in rendering its own contents irrelevant. There may be a whole body, a mere fragment, or the monument may even be a cenotaph with nothing underneath. Instead of noting the mutilated bodies of Titus and Lavinia, the tomb is designed to commemorate a communal “honor” that does not recognize any individual bodies at all.<sup>94</sup> The only ones excluded from this system are the outsiders, those who have no place in this closed

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<sup>94</sup> Helga Duncan makes a similar misreading in her article “‘Sumptuously Re-Edified’: The Reformation of Sacred Space in Titus Andronicus.” By focusing too much on what she refers to as the “culture’s impending collapse” in the play, she fails to understand what the tombs at the beginning and end of the plays are designed to *do* (427). Tombs at the end of plays frequently symbolize a restoration of order (often not the *same* order as that present at the start of the play, but order nonetheless). I will look at this particular strategy in Chapter Four with plays such as *Edward II*.

system of Roman families honoring their dead. Aaron is half-buried and left to starve and Tamora is cast out for “the beasts and birds to prey” (5.3.197). In this way, the symbolism of monumentalization onstage offers the victors the chance to rewrite the past to serve their own ends. Those on the victorious side are made blameless, while those opposed to them are either memorialized in such a way that they no longer pose a threat or they are simply allowed to rot and suffer erasure.

This power of tombs to create and preserve fictive accounts of the past becomes one of the most pervasive uses for monuments on stage in the period. In plays of almost all genres,<sup>95</sup> playwrights deployed tombs to serve as tools in the hands of the victors, allowing the conquerors to mold their own triumphant narratives and efface the achievements of their adversaries. The power was not always destructive, however; it could also be used to posthumously rescue a reputation unfairly tarnished in life. I discuss this usage of tomb imagery in the period in Chapter Four.

## 6

The two effective ways that tomb symbolism was used onstage detailed in sections four and five both stem from monuments’ ability to commemorate and record facts about the past as well as idealized or even fictional constructs edited to suit the purposes of the living. If this were all that tombs meant to an early modern audience, however, they could simply be seen as synonymous with chronicles and written genealogies, items primarily devoted to the function of recording facts and fictions. Tombs were, however, also elaborate works of art, designed to

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<sup>95</sup> All of them other than the history plays, for reasons we will see later.

engage the viewer on an aesthetic as well as an informational level. Weever, when describing the experience of viewing tombs, used words and phrases such as “delight,” “admiration,” “religious apprehension,” and “unfeigned repentance” (Weever 41). These tombs were designed to enchant the eye and then, having seized the attention, instruct and inspire the viewer.

The very architecture of churches was designed to channel the visitor’s gaze toward points of great holiness, the altar and the sanctuary, the choir, and important chapels. Tomb patrons naturally attempted to incorporate their ancestors’ tombs into this system, arranging them in such a way that the eye would be drawn to them. This could be done through size, through color or simply by placement.<sup>96</sup> A prime example of the latter is in Westminster Abbey. The Shrine to Edward the Confessor is located east of the sanctuary, behind the altar. A half circle of tombs, including Kings Edward I and III, Henry III and V and Richard II, surrounds it and the whole area is elevated some six feet above the floor level of the rest of the church. The result is quite extraordinary. Richard Jenkyns, in his book on the Abbey, waxes lyrical about the effect: “Entrance to the shrine area is narrow and awkward, and seemingly must always have been so,” but the result actually enhances the effect on the visitor reaching the top (Jenkyns 40). Once level with the shrine, one is confronted with

an astonishing place, impossible to represent in a photograph and not much easier to describe in words... As the Abbey is an oasis of sanctity within London, so the shrine area is a still point inside the busy life of the Abbey, where the shuffle of invisible tourists around the ambulatory below is muffled and softened to a seemingly distant murmur. Like the womb, this place is secret and sacred, intimate and exotic; it is the habitation of historic memory, yet mysterious. But it is not, as Henry VII’s Chapel is, an independent room or building. (Jenkyns 44-45)

Having had the good fortune to stand there myself with only a single Westminster warden as company, I can attest to the remarkable attributes of the shrine, and Jenkyns is exactly right to

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<sup>96</sup> On the increasing size of monuments for the Stuarts, see Llewellyn *Funeral* p. 313. For the importance of color on tombs during the period, see *ibid.* 139.



point out the importance of its central location, within the core of the church. What makes The Confessor's Chapel so remarkable is that it is right in the center of the building. No matter where else you stand on the east side of the altar, you can look up to see the tombs of kings looming far over your head, their effigies visible only in partial profile. Thus, the shrine is simultaneously intimate, a richly decorated enclave made solemn by the grave faces of the effigies of Kings all around, and also distant and seemingly inaccessible when the shrine's splendor is viewed from the ground.<sup>97</sup>

Of course, the beauty of these monuments extends well beyond their placement. Henry VIII's decision to hire Pietro Torrigiani, a well-known sculptor from Florence, to build his father's tomb in Westminster has been since viewed as "the herald of Renaissance style in English sculpture" (Sherlock 130). Even more influential than Italians, however, were the Protestant sculptors from the Low Countries who settled in London as a result of religious upheaval on the continent: "As aliens, they settled outside the City of London, several in Southwark... they thus collectively became known as the Southwark School" (Blundell 10). Tombs produced by the "Southwark School" ended up all over the country, including in Westminster. In fact, Shakespeare's own monument in Stratford-upon-Avon was made by these artists, in their studio "within a few hundred yards of the Globe theatre" (Wilson *Archaeology* 84).<sup>98</sup>

Tombs, then, were not merely inert depositories of information displayed in a public place; they were works of art meant, like literature in Sidney's most famous phrase, "to delight

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<sup>97</sup> I will deal with these tombs, particularly those of Richard II and Henry V in greater depth in Chapter 3.

<sup>98</sup> Obviously, the Southwark School has more bearing on Shakespeare's later plays, once he and the theaters had moved south of the river. I will deal with this point in greater depth in Chapter 5. I bring it up here, however, to make two points. The first is that, like actors and their playhouses, many of these artists and their studios were pushed to the periphery of London society. More importantly, however, the employment of talented sculptors for these monuments shows the value placed on artistry in funeral monuments. Some monuments, including many brasses, were in fact mass-produced at this time from standard molds, but major monuments were hand carved by teams of talented artists based in London and other major cities and then shipped to distant churches.

and teach.” This way of looking at tombs lent itself to a different symbolic meaning for monuments referenced on stage, one far more nebulous and difficult to deploy. Not until later in his career, perhaps even after he had moved to Southwark and lived close to these Low Country artists practicing their craft, did Shakespeare employ this idea frequently in his drama. Nonetheless, hints and whispers of this symbolic potential of tombs do appear in the early histories, perhaps most strikingly in an exchange between King Henry and Queen Margaret after Gloucester’s death. Henry, aware that Suffolk was complicit in the murder, orders the Duke banished. The Queen, far closer to Suffolk than to her husband, is mortified. When Henry laments, “Ah, woe is me, for Gloucester, wretched man,” his wife counters:

But woe for me, more wretched than he is.  
What, dost thou turn away and hide thy face?  
I am no loathsome leper—look on me!  
What, art thou, like the adder, waxen deaf?  
Be poisonous too and kill thy forlorn queen.  
Is all thy comfort shut in Gloucester’s tomb?  
Why, then Queen Margaret was ne’er thy joy.  
Erect his statue and worship it,  
And make my image but an alehouse sign. (3.2.72-81)

At first reading, it might seem odd to compare an alehouse sign and a tomb, but the passage is given weight by its position as the opening to Margaret’s impassioned 38-line monologue. Margaret sets up a contrast between two different kinds of personal monument. The one is formal and expensive, the official display of Llewellyn’s “social body after death” in the sanctified space of the church. The other is cheap and vulgar, a common signpost designed to pictorially identify a common establishment to the illiterate (“The King’s Head,” etc), displayed on dirty public streets. They are related, however, two points on a long spectrum of identities presented and preserved in art. Margaret’s complaint reflects the understanding of art shared by

many, including Weever, that commemorative art should be linked to the person it represents.<sup>99</sup>

A virtuous individual should be immortalized with a beautiful tomb, while, in the logical inverse of this equation, those dismissed as worthless by society should be commemorated only with a cheap, crudely-crafted sign or with nothing at all.

No artistic representation, of course, can compare with the original object. This point is made in a passage from *Richard II* strikingly similar to the passage quoted above. Again it is a queen speaking, Richard's Queen Isabel, but this time it is not in reference to a death but an anguished response to seeing her husband deposed and under guard:

But soft, but see—or rather do not see—  
My fair rose wither. Yet look up, behold,  
That you in pity may dissolve to dew,  
And wash him fresh again with true-love tears.—  
Ah, thou the model where old Troy did stand!  
Thou map of honour, thou King Richard's tomb,  
And not King Richard! Thou most beauteous inn:  
Why should hard-favoured grief be lodged in thee,  
When triumph is become an alehouse guest? (5.1.7-15)

Isabel's agitation makes the passage difficult to follow, but the series of comparisons at the end are unmistakable. Richard, uncrowned and imprisoned, is only a shadow of his former self. While Margaret's contrast between tomb and alehouse sign (alluded to in Isabel's upscale "inn" and lower class "alehouse") is built on the distance between worthy and unworthy forms of commemoration for the dead, Isabella's centers on the inadequacy of *all* commemorative techniques to fully preserve the living for future generations.

In Isabel's rant, however, it is important to observe what is *retained*. While Margaret's "alehouse sign" is indicative of the lack of value she feels the King places on her, Isabel's

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<sup>99</sup> Looking back on the lost golden age, Weever suggests that at one time "swelling titles, lofty inscriptions or epitaphs, were prohibited to bee inscrib'd, insculpt, or engrauen vpon the sepulchres of men of meane desert: but onley vpon the monuments of such as were of vertue, wisdom, and valour, as martiall men, or persons of eminent place of gouernment in the weale publike" (10).

negative extreme, the tomb she sees when she looks at her deposed husband, still acts as parallel to a “map of honor.” A tomb is not the same as the individual any more than a map is actually the landscape portrayed; both, however, preserve and record aspects of the original and can serve as guides and reminders. In this way, her lines echo another passage from the earlier play. King Henry, speaking of Gloucester a mere scene before his murder, says “Ah, uncle Humphrey, in thy face I see / The map of honour, truth and loyalty” (2 *Henry VI* 3.1.202-203). This “honour,” for Isabel, is what will remain inscribed on the tomb after her husband’s death, in much the same way as Margaret mockingly declares that Gloucester’s monument will become a site of “worship.”

Both queens gesture in their speeches toward what Llewellyn calls “*memoria*” (Llewellyn *Art* 28). According to Llewellyn, this meaning for tombs was necessitated by the Reformation in England:

To balance the traumatic effect of the loss of Purgatory the Protestant churches gradually developed the theory of *memoria*, which stressed the didactic potential of the lives and deaths of the virtuous. To illustrate this didactic theme images were produced about exemplary “good” deaths: the innocence or good scholarship of a dead child, the pathos of a dead soldier, the heroism of a death met in a great cause, the sacrifice of a martyr, the tranquility of an old man dying, the virtue of a good wife dying. (*Art* 28)

What is retained and displayed by such tombs are not the genealogical specifics of memory I covered in sections four and five, but rather general lessons presented as messages from the dead to the living. If tombs were designed “to delight and teach,” their beauty represents not merely “art for art’s sake,” but the general lessons for living inscribed in stone. As Weever suggests, “serious perusal, and diligent meditation of wise and religious Epitaphs or inscription, found vpon the tombes or monuments, of persons of approued vertue, merit, and honour, is a great

motiue to bring us to repentance” (Weever 9). These tombs act as didactic emplacements, teaching a specific moral code to observers.

This final strategy shows up only rarely in the history plays because, in such works based on real individuals, genealogical specificity is an overriding concern. Thus, descriptions of tombs onstage are usually deployed to reinforce historical accuracy. In later works, however, tombs are repeatedly used as a way of making abstract concepts like honor, morality and virtue more concrete. It is this idea of memoria and anchoring the intangible that I explore in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER 3

### “A ROYAL FELLOWSHIP OF DEATH”: PRESERVING THE PAST AND SHAPING THE FUTURE IN SHAKESPEARE’S SECOND TETRALOGY

In her excellent study *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Kathleen Cohen builds on the ideas of Erwin Panofsky’s *Tomb Sculpture*, arguing that “during the sixteenth century the traditional Christian sepulchral expression of hope for the salvation of the soul was gradually supplemented or replaced on funerary monuments by the commemoration of the past deeds and worldly glory of the deceased” (K. Cohen 8). As tombs were stripped of their intercessory function, they became primarily public expressions of the need to remember, erected by families, communities, or representatives of the state. This change in function was manifested in the form of new tombs<sup>100</sup> but was also applied in retrospect to the interpretation of older monuments.

During Henry VIII’s, Edward IV’s, and Elizabeth I’s reigns, reformers stripped tombs of symbols, statuary, and text deemed too Catholic. Chantry chapels lost their mass-intoning priests, monuments lost their guardian angels and saints, and inscriptions inviting readers to pray and speed the deceased through purgatory lost their influence on those passing by.<sup>101</sup> Some monuments escaped damage while others were irreparably mutilated. As long as a piece of the tomb survived, however, it remained a tomb, and as social values and beliefs toward monuments

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<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Nigel Llewellyn’s books, as well as those by Fred H. Crossley, Katharine A Esdaile, and others

<sup>101</sup> For details on damage caused during the English Reformation see Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 – c. 1580*.

changed, the meaning of these pre-Reformation tombs changed with them. The function of secular remembrance was retroactively prioritized over that of intersession or, in fact, any religious meaning at all. Some of these commemorative meanings were those encoded into stone by the designers and artists responsible for the tomb, while some were added over the intervening centuries.

In the previous chapter, I pointed out early examples in the *Henry VI* plays of tombs used onstage to serve as tangible, material markers of a continuity which includes the living as well as the dead. Tombs could function on stage as a link to the past as well as to the future.<sup>102</sup> Such a function is particularly useful to a playwright writing a history play. As Benjamin Griffin points out:

There is no other kind of drama the experience of which is so strongly affected by a text outside the text. A tragedy or comedy is *made from* a prior text (usually); but that is solely a genetic affair. The spectators' involvement with the pre-text is typically nonexistent; even if the outlines of a story are clear to them, a fiction is not liable to verification, as Sidney insisted. The native-historical subject is susceptible to the audience's perception of the 'text outside the text', conceived in two ways: first, as the common historical record ... second, as the historical continuum, the sense of the events lurking before and after the formal termini of the play-span. (73)

The relationship of history plays to the "text outside the text" requires "the use of gestures which have the effect of enforcing attention outside the formal bounds of the play: back toward the time before, and forward to the time after, the play's conclusion" (Griffin 78). A reference to a monument erected to a historical individual portrayed on stage is just such a "gesture," one mediated by the changes in the meaning of monuments from the time of their construction to their "appearance" on the Elizabethan stage.

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<sup>102</sup> This family continuity is most often symbolized through references to inherited titles and shared bloodlines. When a physical, material object is needed to symbolize this link, however, tombs and monuments are the most common choice. There are other alternatives, however, such as the mirror reflecting generations of Banquo's descendents in *Macbeth*.

This chapter explores Shakespeare's second tetralogy, four plays in which Shakespeare employs tombs to mark continuity between the past and future. In these plays, Shakespeare deploys tombs in a far more sophisticated and cohesive way than in the earlier tetralogy, manipulating the complex relationships between onstage invocations of monuments and the actual extant tombs of the historical personages played on stage. How different characters use tombs onstage offers important insights into their characters as well as insights into the public perception of the characters' historical analogues' actual resting places. In short, how the main characters talk of monuments demonstrates both their relation to memory and historical continuity *and* what symbolic potential their actual monuments had in the mind of audience and playwright alike (what I earlier called theatrical "shorthand"). As a result, this chapter, unlike the previous one, is organized by character rather than by subject. I will demonstrate how, in this second set of history plays, major characters mismanage or ignore monuments in ways that display their discomfort with the mechanisms of historiography and remembrance. Richard II's inward focused philosophizing prevents him from seeing his own death and interment as anything but a personal tragedy. Henry IV strives to erase the record of his usurping past and so refuses to acknowledge the power of tombs to connect the present to the past. Falstaff, no king but certainly a father figure to Prince Hal, obsesses on the fleeting present in ways that prevent concern for any but the most ephemeral commemorative projects. All of these characters, each failing in different ways to grasp the power and potential of tombs, pave the way for Henry V; he alone in the second tetralogy grasps the historiographic might of monuments in order to draw on the triumphs of his ancestors and, more importantly, to self-consciously construct an enduring legacy by permanently inscribing in stone his achievements and those of others.



Robyn Bolam writes of a recent (2000) production of *Richard II* directed by Stephen Pimlott, where “a grave-sized heap of earth occupied a prominent position stage-right throughout the play” (Hattaway 150). Characters interacted with this mound in varying ways throughout the evening:

The Duchess of Gloucester lay grieving over it in 1.2; Bullingbrook took a handful of it with him into exile and came back to return it to the mound. Richard ran his fingers through the earth, passed it through his diadem, and fell down to embrace it on his return from Ireland. It became a garden in 3.4 in which the gardener planted flowers, which the queen tore up and left lying across it like a grave bouquet. (Hattaway 150)

On the opposite side of the stage, “[m]imicking this plot of earth, stage-left, was a coffin-shaped wooden box which held the weapons for the duel, represented the looking glass, became an upright coffin-cum-torture chamber for Richard in prison, then his coffin, and finally ... [acted as] throne and crown ... [for] Bullingbrook” (Hattaway 150). Bolam felt the staging effective; “We are used to seeing *Richard II* as ceremonial in language and stage presence, but Pimlott forced his audience to look beneath the layers of ceremony and discover something less attractive” (Hattaway 150).

That such stage properties should be used for this play seems organic for a text full of references to burial and graves. That death looms large over the play is made clear in the full title, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*. Nonetheless, it seems interesting that Bolam chooses to draw such a contrast between the “ceremonial” nature of the play and the “something less attractive” she perceives underneath. It is true, as Tillyard points out, that “[i]n an age that was both passionately admiring of royal magnificence and far more retentive of tradition than our own the glories of Richard’s court must have persisted as a legend” (255). Shakespeare

clearly drew on these legends in writing a play so intimately concerned with the ceremonial trappings of kingship. Nonetheless, the historical Richard II's kingly opulence went beyond the typical manifestations we recognize today (patronage of the arts, building projects), to ground often overlooked by modern eyes because of its current morbid associations. Ceremony and something darker are closely intertwined in Shakespeare's play, largely because Richard II was also a major patron of tombs.<sup>103</sup>

Richard was, in fact, notorious for his willingness to break with tradition by "appropriating the east end of Westminster Abbey for the burial ... of his curial adherents... includ[ing] his chamber knights ... and the queen's chamberlain ... who were all buried either in the radiating chapels or the ambulatory" (Binski 200). Such actions were not without repercussion. Up until this point, "practically the only interments, and therefore monuments, allowed in the church, were those of members of the royal family and abbots" (Blundell 10). When "Richard II ... broke with this custom" and "insisted ... that John de Waltham, Bishop of Salisbury, be buried in Edward the Confessor's chapel in 1395," Joe Whitlock Blundell writes that it was viewed as an "affront both of Londoners and the Abbey community" (10).

It is quite possible that Richard's concern with ostentatiously commemorating those close to him stemmed from the role he played early in his life in the construction of monuments for his father and grandfather who had died roughly a year apart. Richard's father, Edward the Black Prince, is buried in Canterbury Cathedral, while Edward III, Richard's grandfather, is interred and memorialized in Westminster Abbey. The decisions regarding Edward III's tomb were "finalized c. 1385 by Richard II, either personally or acting with his Council," at which time the new king would have been seventeen, almost certainly old enough to have some say, or at least

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<sup>103</sup> In fact, I would argue that this would be particularly noticeable to Shakespeare and his contemporaries because of the contrast with their current monarch, Elizabeth I, who was far more notable for *not* sponsoring very many large tombs (as mentioned in the previous chapter).

interest, in the proceedings (Binski 197). The location of both tombs is important. Edward III was buried in what was becoming established as a ring of kings around Edward the Confessor's shrine, a half-circle that already contained Edward I and Henry III and would soon house Richard II and Henry V. The Black Prince died before he could be king and thus was commemorated near a different saint; his tomb lies directly beside the tomb of St Thomas Beckett, a location so sacred that it could only have been secured for Prince Edward through "direct royal intervention" (Binski 197).

Edward III's tomb stands on the south side of the Confessors' Chapel, just to the west of that of his wife, Philippa of Hainault, who predeceased him by eight years. He rests beneath an "altar-tomb... of Purbeck marble with table and effigy of gilt bronze and oak 'tester', or flat canopy over the effigy" (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 30). On the north and south faces of the tomb are twelve niches, six per side, which all contained sculpted figures, called "weepers," carved in the likeness of Edward's twelve children. Those toward the raised area of the shrine were damaged by visitors, but those looking out over the ambulatory remain relatively pristine, including the figure of Edward's eldest son Edward, Richard's father (Figure 3.1 and 3.2). Traditional tomb elements that reflect other royal monuments in the ring are combined with the prominent display of the children, in "an inversion of that older, often royal and clerical habit, of asserting a sense of family continuity by a retrospective display of pedigree or lineage" (Binski 198). The result is a tomb which Paul Binski calls "the most roundly dynastic of any in the church" (198). He sees this tomb as "a striking departure from one of the



Figure 3.1 – Sculpture of The Black Prince in niche on the side of Edward III’s tomb. From Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets*.

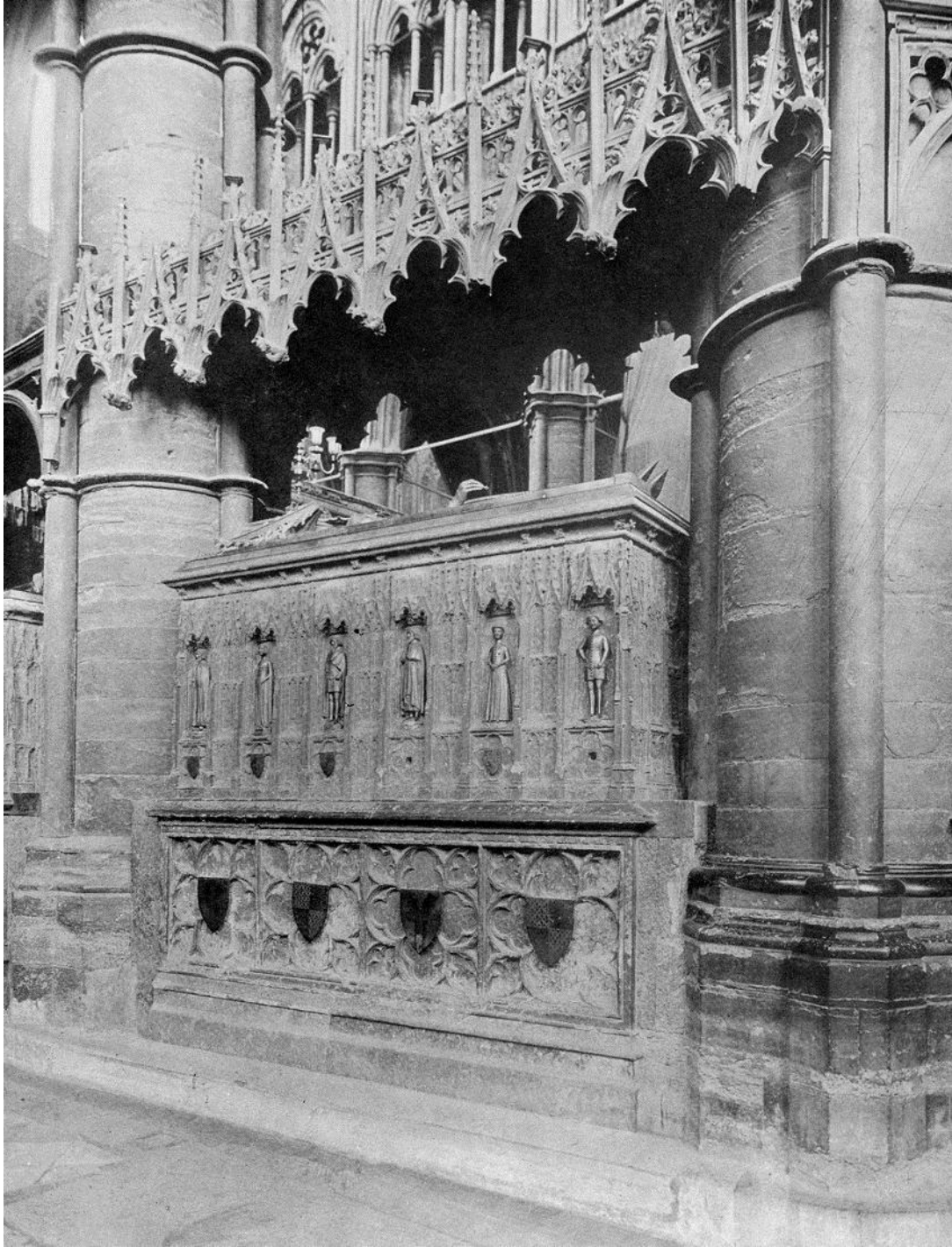


Figure 3.2 – Side view from Presbytery of Edward III’s tomb with niches containing six of his children as weepers. From Royal Commission on Historical Monuments *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London Volume 1: Westminster Abbey*.

central themes of the thirteenth-century royal mythology: that royal and national virtue should be embodied in the person of a chaste family-less royal saint, the Confessor. Fecundity, and not chastity, was the attribute of the ideal king,” a contrast made even more striking by the proximity of both the Confessor’s shrine and the tomb of Edward’s childless grandson, as we will see in a moment (Binski 199).<sup>104</sup>

Whether or not the need to construct tombs for his father and grandfather had any bearing on the way he chose to inter his royal favorites, it almost certainly must have influenced Richard’s desire to ensure his own tomb was finished before his death. It is also possible (although, of course, it can be nothing more than a supposition) that he chose to build his own tomb from a sense of nostalgia, a longing for a better time, brought about by the struggles he faced in the last decade of his reign and, just as importantly, by the loss of his wife. Unlike his grandfather who lies alone in a tomb separate from that of his queen, Richard chose to make his final resting place a double tomb where he would be buried alongside his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, who had died in 1394. Their two bronze effigies lie side by side on the top of the tomb chest, the hands between them clasped together, likely a sign of affection and an indication of Richard’s deep sense of loss (Figure 3.3).<sup>105</sup>

In most respects, the tomb was just a larger version of the one housing Edward III, complete with an “altar tomb... of Sussex or Purbeck marble,” a “gilt-bonze table and effigies and oak ‘tester’” (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 31). There are eight niches on either side of the tomb chest, which all now lie empty due to damage over the centuries, but

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<sup>104</sup> Binski is stretching the point a bit; production of heirs was always an important royal responsibility. He is, however, fairly pointing to a shift from heirs as *a* key duty of a king without which they could still be successful and revered (Richard I is another example), to *the* foremost duty (hence Henry VIII’s near manic anxiety about his inability to produce a male heir).

<sup>105</sup> Binski suggests that the hand holding was “an increasingly common feature of tombs of the period,” but even he must admit that Richard’s grief at the loss of his wife was extraordinary; her death “so moved Richard that he demolished the place of her death, the royal residence at Sheen” (201, 200). It was certainly her death that spurred the king to construct their Westminster monument, which was started mere months after her passing (Binski 200).



Figure 3.3 – From top to bottom. The double effigies: Richard II and Anne of Bohemia, Sir Gyles Daubeny (1507) and Elizabeth his wife (1500), Henry VII (1509) and Elizabeth of York (1502-3). The hands of Richard II and his wife were once clasped but have since broken off. From Royal Commission on Historical Monuments *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London Volume 1: Westminster Abbey*.



Figure 3.4 – Empty Niches on the side of the tomb of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. From Royal Commission on Historical Monuments *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London Volume 1: Westminster Abbey*.



which once housed weepers of some type (Figure 3.4).<sup>106</sup> The exact nature of these weepers is unknown (they were likely angels), but it is certain that they could not represent children, as the couple was childless. Thus, the fecundity of Richard's grandfather, celebrated by Shakespeare as "Edward's seven sons... seven vials of his sacred blood," so prominently displayed on his tomb, stands in stark contrast with the childless successor commemorated next to him (*Richard II* 1.2.11-12). The damage suffered at the Reformation, when Richard and Anne's angels or saints were torn out while Edward's sons, secular nobility, were left, makes Richard's failure to produce an heir even more visually striking for the visitor.

Another difference between the two tombs is worth noting here: "The profusion of personal devices that appear on Richard's effigy is in stark contrast to the unpatterned robe of Edward III's image, evincing the young king's predilection for densely layered, overstated, personal symbolism" (Goodman and Gillespie 263). Such symbolic density indicates Richard's struggle to maintain his personal identity and position in the face of increasing challenges from the nobility. Anthony Tuck has argued that "The epitaph he composed for himself, which began 'He threw down whomsoever violated the royal prerogative...' hardly amounts to a theory of kingship" (Tuck 222). That may be true, but they are certainly the words of someone emphatically asserting power in response to threats and a perceived lack of personal respect. Richard's design for his tomb shows a king struggling to maintain an idealized image of the past, both in terms of his marriage and his rule, whose failures both to govern and to generate an heir appears particularly deficient when compared to his predecessor's. In short, Richard's tomb displays exactly the type of king Shakespeare portrayed in *Richard II*.

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<sup>106</sup> It is possible that the sheer number of weepers, sixteen, on Richard II's tomb, might have inspired the many instances of weeping and crying in the play (see Dorothea Kehler in her article "King of Tears: Mortality in *Richard II*").

The language of tombs, graves and burial shows up frequently in *Richard II*. Its most consistent deployment from characters *other* than Richard is as a link to the past. John of Gaunt, punning on his name while lying on his deathbed, may say that he is “gaunt as a grave, / Whose hollow womb inherits naught but bones,” but this inheritance, while barren, is permanent; for anyone wanting to access the memory of their ancestors, the tomb is the place to find them (2.1.82-83).<sup>107</sup> The Bishop of Carlisle’s detail in revealing to Bolingbroke that Norfolk “at Venice gave / His body to that pleasant country’s earth” indicates that place of death and interment was often common knowledge.<sup>108</sup> This would, of course, be particularly true for relatives. For example, Northumberland, acting as emissary for Bolingbroke, offers the following vow from the rebel to the king:

Thy thrice-noble cousin  
 Harry Bolingbroke doth humbly kiss thy hand,  
 And by the honourable tomb he swears,  
 That stands upon your royal grandsire’s bones,  
 And by the royalties of both your bloods,  
 Currents that spring from one most gracious head,  
 And by the buried hand of warlike Gaunt,  
 And by the worth and honour of himself,  
 Comprising all that may be sworn or said,  
 His coming hither hath no further scope  
 Than for his lineal royalties, and to beg  
 Enfranchisement immediate on his knees. (3.3.102-113)

The vow starts at the vividly invoked monument to their shared royal ancestor (Edward III) and travels from there through Bolingbroke’s father, Richard’s uncle, and on to the swearer

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<sup>107</sup> Permanence is, of course, relative. John of Gaunt’s tomb was lost when St Paul’s burned down in the Great Fire.  
<sup>108</sup> He was, by Shakespeare’s day, no longer there, his bones having been “exhumed from the basilica of St. Mark’s for reinterment in England” in 1531, only to have its new place of burial, “The Cluniac Priory of Thetford . . . dynastic mausoleum of the Howard family and their predecessors, the . . . Mowbray earls and dukes of Norfolk” dissolved by order of the King eight years later (Lindley 13). There is no way to know if Shakespeare knew any of this later history; Norfolk was just one of a staggering number of nobles whose resting place was lost due to the fervor of reformers.

himself.<sup>109</sup> The physical tomb of the man, whose “seven vials of sacred blood” runs at two generations’ remove through both of their veins, acts as a physical manifestation of the connection between the two rivals.

Robert Jones writes of this passage that it is “the sort of reference to their heritage that Richard himself never makes, though here, despite his [Bolingbroke’s] posited humble posture, the virtual equivalence suggested in their ‘royalties’ stemming from the same ‘royal grandsire’ may tell us more about the opaque usurper’s designs than he himself ever does” (85). Jones is right on both counts. The language sets them on the same level, a logical first move for a challenger to a throne, but it also displays a connection to the past made striking by Richard’s refusal to say anything equivalent in the play. In the precursor play, the anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock*, a play with which much of (although by no means all) Shakespeare’s audience would have been familiar,<sup>110</sup> all characters reference ancestors’ tombs and buried bones to connect themselves to their past and heritage. The titular Woodstock swears to his brothers in the name of “good king Edwards bones or [our] Royall ffather” that he will combat the scourge of Richard’s favorites (1.1.197). Not two scenes later, Richard hurls curses at these same figures, his uncles, invoking both their father and their brother: “by my grandsier Edwards kingly bones / my princly ffathers Toombe, king Richard swears / wele make them weepe these

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<sup>109</sup> It is worth noting that it is Northumberland making this vow, not Bolingbroke directly. Henry Bolingbroke, soon to be Henry IV, consistently proves unwilling to cite the past in the later plays, as I will discuss in section two.

<sup>110</sup> Benjamin Griffin’s analysis of the relation of the two plays is particularly well expressed:

A good deal of critical energy has been lavished on the question of whether Shakespeare’s *Richard II* ‘expects’, or ‘requires’, knowledge of the antecedent play *Woodstock*. This pursuit postulates an ideal spectator who is then made to stand as a Representative Elizabethan. But it is impossible for *all* the spectators of Shakespeare’s play to have known *Woodstock* as it is for none of them to have known it: simply, some did and some didn’t. The audience’s experience of the play will certainly have been affected by what and how much they knew; and this is a generic signal in itself, for tragedy and comedy are, typically, not much affected by such considerations. (Griffin 116)

In other words, familiarity with the earlier play works much like the knowledge of monuments I am positing for some in Shakespeare’s audience. The text is designed to be fully comprehensible for those who were unfamiliar with the tombs of the kings in Westminster; however, for those who did know them, either through first-hand experience or second hand reports, an extra layer of meaning was added.

wrongs in bloody teares” (1.3.558-560).<sup>111</sup> Shakespeare’s Richard makes no such references; when he cites tombs, he has them do a different kind of imaginative work than what we see applied in the language of others. Repeatedly in *Richard II*, Richard invokes graves and tombs not when he is describing his lineage or heritage, but when he is talking about himself and his own increasingly tenuous position.

The first instance is in Richard’s great meditation on kingship, death, and most critically, loss of identity.

No matter where. Of comfort no man speak.  
Let’s talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs,  
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes  
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.  
Let’s choose executors and talk of wills—  
And yet not so, for what can be bequeath  
Save our deposèd bodies to the ground?  
Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke’s;  
And nothing can we call our own but death,  
And that small model of the barren earth  
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones....  
For within the hollow crown  
That rounds the mortal temples of a king  
Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits,  
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp ...  
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,  
As if this flesh which walls about our life  
Were brass impregnable...  
Throw away respect,  
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,  
For you have but mistook me all this while.  
I live with bread, like you; feel want,  
Taste grief, need friends. Subjected thus,  
How can you say to me I am a king? (3.2.139-173)

Critics gravitate to this speech; there is probably no passage in the play so extensively parsed and analyzed. Most, however, fixate (understandably) on the vivid portrayal of a sadistic death hovering over kings and taunting them into enjoying the benefits of their position only to make

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<sup>111</sup> The line numbers in this edition are continuous from the beginning.

their inevitable fall greater by contrast. Barbara Hodgdon describes the central section of this lament as a contemplation of the “generalized mortality of Kings” (137). At both ends of the speech, however, Richard’s language becomes far more personal. He alludes to tales of kings who lose their crown to death, but in his situation it will be Bolingbroke, not some ghostly personification, who will steal his kingship. Death will follow, but not for two acts yet.

Richard says there is no point in talking of wills, as he has nothing to “bequeath” beyond a body that he fears will be placed in an unmarked grave. This king, so careful to construct his own tomb, feels that because he is being stripped of his kingship and the symbolic, ceremonial trappings that identify him as king, he has been stripped of his entire identity. Having constructed his own future tomb, imaginatively separating himself from the same through an anonymous burial serves as shorthand for the annihilation of his royal self-identification. The permanence of “brass” and stone walls (similar to the bronze and marble of his actual tomb) are to be replaced with transient substances like “dust” and “paper”; the eternal text of his engraved epitaph will become words written with tears in the dust.

Just a scene later, a vision of his death and burial comes to him again, this time even more intensely. Current events have forced him to make a lopsided exchange:

And my large kingdom for a little grave,  
A little little grave, an obscure grave;  
Or I’ll be buried in the King’s highway,  
Some way of common trade where subjects’ feet  
May hourly trample on their sovereign’s head,  
For on my heart they tread now, whilst I live,  
And buried once, why not upon my head? (3.3.152-158)

To jump from the anonymity of an unmarked grave (not all that uncommon, particularly for those without titles) to burial beneath a crossroads is extraordinary. Prevented from church

burial, prostitutes were nonetheless buried simply in unsanctified ground.<sup>112</sup> Although criminals often had their bodies displayed temporarily, their bones were usually eventually interred somewhere; even excommunicates were spared treatment as degrading as being buried beneath a thoroughfare (Gittings 76-77). Burial in the crossroads, usually with a stake through the heart, was reserved for suicides, and even then it was largely for superstitious reasons (Gittings 72-73). It could be possible that with such an allusion, Richard hints at the blame he deserves for his own downfall. More certainly, it seems a fitting image for the full turn of fortune's wheel, the king lying unremembered under the boots of those over which he once ruled. As much as he wishes to retain his exalted position, both in the minds of others and himself, Richard cannot seem but to envision his lowly, final resting place. Even his address to the usurping Bolingbroke displays this urge: "Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit, / And soon lie Richard in an earthy pit" (4.1.208-209).

Why does Shakespeare's Richard harp on visions of his own debased burial? First, I think it likely that the idea of a king constructing his own tomb only to be stripped of his title before death, lent itself to a particular set of ideas.<sup>113</sup> Deposed by Henry and stripped of his title and its attendant pomp and ceremony, Richard laments that his very identity is gone: "I have no name, no title... I have worn so many winters out / And know not now what name to call

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<sup>112</sup> For example, prostitutes dying in the parish of St Saviour were interred in "an unconsecrated burial ground known as the 'Cross Bones' at the corner of Redcross Street, formerly called the Single Woman's burial ground, which is said to have been used for the purpose" (Taylor 141).

<sup>113</sup> That Shakespeare was aware of Richard's tomb construction as well as what happened to his body after his death (one of the topics of section four) is very likely. First of all, it seems clear that a lot of information about tombs was common knowledge, shared in much the same way, by word of mouth, as information about public monuments today. The information can also be inferred by combining two passages from Holinshed. First, in a description of the latter years of Richard's reign, Holinshed writes, "Anne departed this life, to the great greefe of hir husband king Richard, who loued hir intirelie. She deceassed at Shene, and was buried at Westminster, vpon the south side of saint Edwards shrine" (481). That is where the double tomb she shares with Richard rests to this day. That the tomb was constructed by Richard himself, and that Henry V ordered him moved there, is indicated by the latter's actions soon upon taking the throne: "he caused the bodie of king Richard to be remooued with all funerall dignitie conuenient for his estate, from Langlie to Westminster, where he was honorablie interred with queene Anne his first wife, in a solemne toome erected and set vp at the charges of this king" (543-44).

myself” (4.1.245-249). Not only does Richard possess an archaic idea of kingship, one where the monarch dictates via imperial decree, but he has also created a static identity, both in his mind and in gilt bronze in Westminster. The personal devices clustered so densely on his monument depend on his status as king, a position he no longer holds. In effect, his action of creating his likeness on a tomb in the ring of Kings has fused the individual to the position in such a way that, when the position is removed, the individual cannot stand.<sup>114</sup>

In addition, Richard’s self-pitying descriptions of an unmarked grave illustrate a larger, more fundamental problem with Richard’s kingship. As I already discussed, Robert Jones sees an inability or unwillingness to engage with the past as one of Richard’s central problems. He claims that halfway through the play Richard chose “the *de casibus* mode for his ‘story,’” thus limiting his historical perspective:

‘tales / Of woeful ages long ago betid,’ is Richard’s closest approximation to looking back in time. But with its perfectly repetitive pattern, it is perfectly unhistorical in essence, since time brings no meaningful succession of person or events, acting only as the constant agent of dusty death and destroying every king alike regardless of his accomplishments. (Jones 90-91)

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<sup>114</sup> Of course, as I alluded to earlier, much of this symbolic density was likely a *response* to threat. See, for example, Nigel Saul’s article “Richard II and the Vocabulary of Kingship,” which deals with the historical Richard II’s move to require more elaborate and formal forms of address as his power came under threat in the 1590’s. Such actions, of course, only function as intended so long as the individual remains in power. Once Richard is deposed, such actions retroactively become indications of the tyranny he attempted to wield, just as the symbolism on his tomb becomes an indicator of unnecessary, self-indulgent pomp. A recent critic, Lisa Hopkins, suggests that Richard is given the gift of eloquence in Shakespeare’s play as a substitute for “the splendor of the visual imagery more normally associated with him,” citing portraits, his tomb and other works of art he commissioned (Dutton and Howard 396). The point is thought-provoking, but problematic because of her conflation of what Elizabethans knew with what audiences today bring to the play. Her statement that “this play, more perhaps than any of Shakespeare’s other histories, depends on knowledge of things outside itself for full comprehension, which is of course one of the reasons why it is so hard to maintain a coherent perspective,” is applicable *only* to us (because we are the only ones not carrying the requisite historical context into the playhouse), although she applies the theory to both sets of audiences (Dutton and Howard 398). As a result, her conclusion that “the play is not consciously medievalizing and concerned with actual reconstruction of the past” because of the paucity of this contextual information, rings false to me (Dutton and Howard 399). Repeatedly, through this play and so many others, I see evidence of Shakespeare assuming he can draw on a shared, collective knowledge of events, objects, and places outside the theater space. When tombs (or portraits, or any other memorial objects) are cited on stage, particularly in the history plays, playwrights are likely to have a specific object in mind.

I wholeheartedly agree and would add to it a corollary; these tales not only show Richard's inability to deal with the past in a meaningful way, but they also demonstrate his struggles envisioning the future.

This is not to say that he does not try. In fact, the argument could certainly be (and has been) made that this is just about all Richard does for half the play. Graham Holderness, for example, suggests that the grand speech on Death and kings shows "Richard... consciously creating himself in the role of tragic king, consciously dramatising his own historical myth" (*Shakespeare's History* 60). This resembles Jones' argument, and we see support for this position when Richard implores his queen to "Tell... the lamentable fall of me," (5.1.44). Such actions show Richard trying to control the narrative of his own life after he is gone. In other words, he is trying to imagine and alter the future.

On some level, Richard succeeds. After all, his story does become the basis for the tragedy in which he delivers this speech. His assumption that he can fully control this narrative is naïve, however, showing his lack of political realism. Richard's vision of an anonymous burial demonstrates his inability to see that, even if he is deposed, he will eventually have to be incorporated into the narrative of English Kingship by his successors, and that this process will inevitably include some form of tomb. Every single English monarch before Henry VIII (with the exception of the unfortunate prince in the Tower) received a monument of some type, although several were subsequently lost in the Dissolution. If Richard understood the politics of kingship, he would perceive that Henry Bolingbroke, soon to be Henry IV, would never bury his predecessor in the highway for fear of undercutting the very authority that Henry hopes to seize. The play, in fact, ends with Henry IV criticizing Richard's murderer in delightfully ambiguous language: "They love not poison that do poison need; / Nor do I thee. Though I did wish him



dead, / I hate the murdered, love him murderèd” (5.6.40). The final line allows for the double meaning of loving the man murdered and loving that he *was* murdered. The latter is, in the context provided by the previous two lines, surely the case, but soon after having admitted he wished Richard dead, Henry shifts his rhetorical weight behind sympathy for the now dead king. He tells Exton to join “Cain” and to “go wander through the shades of night” while he himself will gather the nobles and “morn... for what I do lament / And put on sullen black” (5.6.43, 46-47).

All of this brings us back to the tomb Richard had constructed for himself both as a way of mourning his first wife and as a method of combating his troublesome nobility, erecting a splendid icon of his power and royalty next to his grandfather Edward III, his great-great grandfather Edward I, and Saint Edward the Confessor. To the newly crowned Henry IV, whose position is so insecure that Shakespeare has him spending the next two plays putting down rebellions by force and by guile, Richard’s tomb is a problematic object. To tear down the tomb would, as suggested above, threaten the sanctity of the position of king, but to place Richard *in* that tomb would be to allow the possibility that his gravesite might become a locus of dissent next door to London.<sup>115</sup>

In some ways, the symbolism on the tomb Richard had constructed for himself made the decision of what to do with him easier. As I mentioned above, the niches on the side of Richard’s tomb, built to emulate those on Edward III’s, were filled with angels or saints instead of the children adorning the side of his predecessor’s monument. Edward’s many children and

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<sup>115</sup> Shakespeare would know all about this kind of consideration as similar problems had arisen in recent history for the three children of Henry VIII. Both Edward VI and Mary I ended up buried without monuments during Elizabeth’s lifetime because each were interred under the rule of a sibling with opposing religious beliefs. Edward was placed under an altar in Westminster without text to mark his location while Mary was placed in a “narrow [unmarked] vault in the north aisle of Henry VII’s Chapel at Westminster” which she would eventually share with her sister (Dodson 94, 96). By not marking the burial sites, Mary and later her sister Elizabeth could prevent the tombs from becoming *de facto* shrines for members of the religious or political opposition.

their portrayal on the side of his tomb illustrated a new vision of kingship, one that valued fecundity and dynastic security. As Binski points out, “[t]he fact that this cult of the family was so utterly confounded by Richard II’s failure to produce an heir is one of the many ironies of royal display at Westminster,” an irony exacerbated by Richard’s choice to place his tomb beside that of his grandfather (199).<sup>116</sup> During the years Richard ruled, “the cult of St Edward [the Confessor] enjoyed a form of Indian summer” and it is quite probably that Richard’s affinity for this saint was also part of what attracted him to this burial spot (Binski 199). Richard, although certainly not as saintly as Henry VI, was perhaps a better martyr than king. In some ways, then, Richard’s tomb displays his failures as a king every bit as much as it shows his love of royal splendor. As a result, by burying Richard in the church at Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, while leaving Richard’s tomb as a cenotaph in Westminster, Henry could have the best of both worlds.<sup>117</sup> The king’s body could not be used as a focus for revolt while his self-designed tomb stood empty, displaying the ways Richard fell short as a monarch.

Thus, in Shakespeare’s play, we see the dramatic Richard II’s failures expressed through references to the historic Richard II’s material commemoration. Just as the historical Richard II

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<sup>116</sup> An irony heightened by the increased number of niches necessitated by the grandiose size of the monument (as described above).

<sup>117</sup> Richard’s body was brought to Westminster by Henry V to lie with his wife in the tomb he constructed for them both, a fact I will discuss in section four. It is worth noting that an article by John J. Joughin, “Richard II and the performance of grief” (Joughin has a similar article under the title “Shakespeare’s memorial aesthetics” in Peter Holland’s *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*) muddles the discussion of Richard’s tomb by asking if the “question of Richard’s actual burial place, which was never certain” leaves a gap in the heart of the play creating a “sense of dispossession” at “the crypt of nationalism” (Cavanagh, Hampton-Reeves and Longstaffe 22). Bringing to attention the (temporarily) empty tomb is a useful tactic, but setting Joughin’s delightful phraseology aside, his point that Richard’s burial location is in doubt seems anachronistic. The chronicles clearly detail his body’s reburial, and the only doubt that I can find regarding the resting place of Richard’s bones postdates Shakespeare by 150 years. According to Dodson, “removal of a series of metal plaques from the substructure of the tomb... resulted in the exposure of the burial cavity to curious hands, who removed a number of items, including Richard’s mandible in 1766” (72). Joughin tries to equate Richard’s situation to that of another king who met a bad end; “by the end of the play, like Old Hamlet, Richard is still in some sense without a tomb” (22). Such a comparison not only flies in the face of historical fact (Richard certainly had a tomb complete with marker, even before making his way back to Westminster), but it would also come as a surprise to Hamlet, who pleads with his father to tell him “Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death, / Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre / Wherein we saw thee quietly enurned / Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws / To cast thee up again” (1.4.28-32).

undercut his own legacy with his tomb, the fictional version shows, in the very way he deploys tomb language on stage, how unfit he is for power. When he speaks of tombs and graves, he imagines his abdication of kingship. The tomb metaphorically stands in for the conflation he has made between his royalty and his identity, and having lost the one he also loses the other. The same language also shows his lack of vision, both of the past, and, more critically for him, of how his legacy will be used against him in the future. Finally, with its childless niches, almost certainly already made empty and gaping via iconoclastic destruction before Shakespeare's time, Richard's tomb becomes the perfect object to symbolize his failure to perpetuate his dynasty. Bringing such a monument to the audience's mind as the tragic king bemoans his imagined link between graves and erasure, only illustrates how much he failed to both control and even imagine his legacy.

2

After the frequent deployment of tomb imagery in *Richard II*, a reader looking for similar material in the two *Henry IV* plays is in for disappointment. No character (save Hal, an exception I will deal with in section three) talks about tombs with any frequency in the plays. *Richard II* and *Henry V* are crammed with talk of tombs but the two *Henry IV* plays are largely silent on the subject. As such, a study of this type is left with the responsibility of accounting for the gap and explaining why it is there.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> The idea of *Richard II* and *Henry V* as pendants with the two *Henry IV* plays serving as a transitional space between them has a long critical history. No less a figure than W. B. Yeats, for example, suggested that Richard and Henry V were already, by 1901, described by critics as figures who only make sense when seen in conjunction; "I have turned over many books in the library at Stratford-on-Avon, and I have found in nearly all an antithesis, which

The generic instability of the plays could theoretically account for the absence. Jean E. Howard points out in her introduction to *2 Henry IV* for *The Norton Shakespeare* that, “*2 Henry IV* is the only history play of which more than half is written in prose, and much of that richly varied prose occurs in the numerous scenes involving these humble figures Shakespeare added to the historical narrative of one king’s death and another’s coronation” (Shakespeare *Norton* 1321). Prose stands as a marker of the generic hybridity of the two plays.<sup>119</sup> Graham Holderness asserts that “The *genre* of the Renaissance history play was... considerably more elastic and flexible than the deterministic medium of these literary tragedies,” and that in these plays, “the style of historiographical drama interacts with older modes, with the conventions of romance and the manners of comedy” (*Shakespeare Recycled* 15). The *Henry IV* plays are packed with material closer to the comic than the historical mode, and most of this material centers on a fictional group of individuals, the Eastcheap crowd, who obviously have no material tombs offstage to reference. When James C. Bulman describes *2 Henry IV* as a “social history of the *other* England,” it certainly seems plausible that such a play would have fewer references to royal ostentation (Hattaway 169).

While this focus on figures below the highest tier might contribute in some small way to the paucity of tomb language in these plays, it is actually less of a deciding factor than one might assume. As surprising as it might seem, plays belonging to genres other than history and tragedy contain more than their fair share of tombs. In Chapters Four and Five, I discuss *The Winter’s*

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grew in clearness and violence as the century grew older, between two types, whose representatives were Richard II, ‘sentimental,’ ‘weak,’ ‘selfish,’ ‘insincere,’ and Henry V, ‘Shakespeare’s only hero’” (Forker 374-375).

Nonetheless, I would like to emphasize that this is *not* what I am arguing. The lack of tomb imagery does not imply that the plays somehow occupy a liminal space or are less important. On the contrary, the lack of language regarding monuments on stage in these plays shows an *active* lack, Shakespeare the playwright signaling to his attentive audience that the characters in this play have a different way of dealing with memory and history than Richard II or Henry V. That Henry IV and his mirror/parallel Falstaff do not talk of tombs is every bit as illustrative of their character as Richard II and Henry V’s tendency to leap imaginatively to that subject.

<sup>119</sup> Prose appears rarely on large tombs and monuments for the nobility except in bland descriptions of names and dates.

*Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, all of which contain multiple, important references to tombs and all of which have a scene that takes place, at least in part, at a monument site. As far as social status is concerned, in regard to Bulman's "other England" the last of these three plays contains multiple tomb references from both the lower status characters, the mechanicals, and a character to whom status is difficult to apply, Robin Goodfellow. While the subject matter of certain types of plays might lend itself to tomb language, genre alone does not restrict the appearance or importance of tomb imagery.

What then does determine whether playwrights reference tombs or not? The answer lies in the individual characters, be they entirely fictional constructs or characters based on real world individuals. The way characters do or do not invoke monuments in their rhetoric illustrates their relation to history, memory, and the codes of honor and inheritance these objects represent. The two *Henry IV* plays are often viewed as a dramatization of Hal, the future king, determining how best to live his life pulled between two poles, the austere responsibility of his father Henry IV and the hedonistic misrule represented by Falstaff. Looking at the way these two "father" figures *both* avoid the language of tombs and monumentation, however, reveals that they possess a strikingly similar attitude toward the past (although for radically divergent reasons), an attitude that Hal signals he will reject from his first moments in the play.

Let us start with Henry IV. There is, on the surface, one obvious reason that Shakespeare feels little need to have Henry IV discuss his future tomb. While Richard II and Henry V were both involved in planning their memorials before their death, Henry IV was not. Perhaps even more importantly, unlike both his predecessor and his successor, Henry IV lies not in nearby Westminster, but rather in a tomb near that of The Black Prince in Canterbury Cathedral over sixty miles from London. As a result, Shakespeare surely saw little value in evoking his actual

tomb on stage, unfamiliar as it would have been to a majority of the London audience.<sup>120</sup> In contrast, much is made in the play of Henry IV's place of death. The usurper king, having declared at the end of *Richard II* his desire to "make a voyage to the Holy Land," echoes the same desire at the start of *1 Henry IV*, telling his nobles of his desire to travel "As far as to the sepulchre of Christ" (5.6.49, 1.1.19). Part of his single mindedness is a result of a prophesy that foretold that he "should not die but in Jerusalem" (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.365). On his deathbed in Westminster Abbey, he turns to Warwick and asks, "Doth any name particular belong / Unto the lodging where I first did swoon?" to which Warwick replies, "'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord" (4.3.360-362). Chagrined and admitting that he had, understandably, "vainly... supposed" that prophecy to indicate "the Holy Land," he orders his attendants, "bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie; / In that Jerusalem shall Harry die" (4.3.366-368). By providing such detail, Shakespeare clearly draws on expected first and second-hand audience knowledge of this nearby locale. The actual tomb of Henry IV would carry no such weight, particularly when contrasted with the Westminster memorials of Richard II and Henry V.

Of course, that does not mean that Henry IV's tomb was completely unknown to London playgoers. After all, the Black Prince's Canterbury tomb is frequently cited in the history plays, even in plays where he is yet living.<sup>121</sup> Nonetheless, Henry IV's chooses not only to avoid

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<sup>120</sup> David Ainsworth suggested to me in a discussion on the topic that this distance, contrasted with the London tombs of Richard II and Henry V, could be one of many factors contributing to Henry IV's mantra that it is best to be mysterious and "seldom seen" by the populace (*1 Henry IV* 3.2.46).

<sup>121</sup> In *King Edward III*, possibly written partly by Shakespeare, the King observes his son, battling in France and surrounded by enemies, and refuses to send him aid. If he wins, "Nestor's years on earth / Will make him savour still of this exploit"; if he dies, "then his epitaph is lasting praise" (Shakespeare *Edward III* 3.2.50-51, 53). More specifically, thinking his son fallen, Edward III describes to the Queen the monument that he will construct for their son through the havoc he plans to wreak in France:

The pillars of his hearse shall be their bones,  
 The mould that covers him, their city ashes,  
 His knell, the groaning cries of dying men,  
 And in the stead of tapers on his tomb  
 A hundred fifty towers shall burning blaze,  
 While we bewail our valiant son's decease. (Shakespeare *Edward III* 5.1.170-175)

discussion of his own future Canterbury memorial, but also not to speak of monuments belonging to others or even about tombs in the abstract. Henry's refusal to do so reveals his purpose in regards to history and memory. As he says to his son toward the end of *2 Henry IV*, his stated plan is to "waste the memory of the former days" (4.3.343).<sup>122</sup> In other words, Henry's goal as king stands directly in opposition to the purpose of tombs.

In *Richard II*, before Henry becomes king, his rhetoric often highlights that more mobile and warm image of family connection: blood. He addresses his father John of Gaunt as "the earthly author of my blood" and describes himself, rather disingenuously as far as the second part is concerned, as "Near to the King in blood, and near in love" (1.3.69, 3.1.17). Others in the play echo this language. Murdered Gloucester is described as "One vial full of Edward's sacred blood ... cracked, and all the precious liquor spilt," a continuation of the "seven vials of [Edward's] sacred blood" described earlier (1.2.17-19, 12). Blood is a fine image of family connection, but it is far more ephemeral than stone. It can easily be spilt, as in the case of Gloucester, and it can just as easily be washed away, as Henry himself makes clear at the end of the play; his expressed goal for wishing to go on a crusade is "To wash this blood off from my guilty hand" (5.6.50). That he would choose an image of blood here at the end of the play, rather than the far more common promise to bury and commemorate the deceased, illustrates vividly his desire to erase the past and move on as soon as possible. He does talk of going to "mourn," putting on clothes of "sullen black" and "weeping after this untimely bier," but all of these actions are performative rather than commemorative (5.6.47, 48, 52).

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<sup>122</sup> Leggatt wishes not to accept this statement "at face value" for, to do so "is damning" and shows "a cynical, self-protective strategy" (83). To me, this seems a fair description of Henry IV's behavior as king, however much Leggatt wishes to see "guilt beneath Henry's *malaise*" demonstrating "a king whose concerns are larger than the protection of his own position" (83)

Once he becomes king, his project of attempting to whitewash the past becomes more pressing. Toward the end of his life, a sickly Henry admits “God knows, my son, / By what bypaths and indirect crook’d ways / I met this crown,” but until that point, his object is to conceal this very process (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.311-313). At the heart of the rebels’ anger in both plays is a sense of injustice caused by a King who does not remember what he has done and whom he owes. In *1 Henry IV*, Hotspur regales Sir Blunt with a lengthy tale of his family’s tremendous service to the king, a king who, once crowned, turned on his friends (4.3.54-107). In much the same vein, Northumberland berates the king two scenes later, capping his list of the royal abuses by accusing him of “Forg[etting] your oath to us at Doncaster” and acting in “violation of all faith and troth / Sworn to us in your younger enterprise” (5.1.58, 70-71). In a far more vivid phrasing in *2 Henry IV*, the Archbishop of York says that Henry aims to,

wipe his tables clean,  
And keep no tell-tale to his memory  
That may repeat and history his loss  
To new remembrance. (4.1.199-202)

Tombs and monuments would only be a threat to such a project. They would stand as stark reminders of individuals, accounts, oaths, and connections that Henry must suppress to successfully rule. Even far away in Hertfordshire, Richard’s corpse offers a potential rallying point for rebels, as when the Archbishop of York suggests those around the king “that when Richard lived would have him die / Are now become enamoured on his grave” and, as a result, they call out “O earth, yield us that king again, / And take thou this” (*2 Henry IV* 1.3.101-102, 106-107). To unite Richard with his splendid Westminster tomb, interring him amongst his fellow kings, would only be to make his memory more powerful, and even to talk of tombs and monumentation would be to undermine the blank slate Henry wishes to create.



The other of Hal's father figures, Falstaff, has no tomb in London or elsewhere; fictional characters are rarely commemorated in stone.<sup>123</sup> Falstaff's alter ego, the martyr Oldcastle, was also not memorialized, as elaborate tombs for those executed by the state are nearly as uncommon as those for invented persons.<sup>124</sup> While Henry IV merely avoids the rhetoric of tombs because it works against his project as king, Falstaff is actively dismissive of the commemorative project. Again, as with Henry IV, a logical place to start would be to assume that his relation to his offstage tomb, or in this case the lack thereof, is a factor in his attitude; again, however, this seems not to be the primary driving factor. In fact, the other fictional characters who surround him have wholly different attitudes toward commemoration. Their invocations of commemorative practices are humorous, bordering on the parodic, but this stems from their discomfort with the techniques and language of formal commemoration, not any lack of seriousness in their attitude. Hostess Quickly's description of Falstaff's deathbed deportment in *Henry V* is case in point. David Cressy describes "Exemplary Christian biography featuring the 'holy life and happy death' of one or another worthy" as "a popular genre of seventeenth-century writing" (390). Such descriptions were frequently read at gravesites and "could be considered as protestant versions of the instructive lives of saints. All included edifying deathbed scenes" (Cressy 390). This is exactly what Quickly tries to accomplish with her declaration that Falstaff "cried out. 'God, God, God', three or four times" and her insistence that he did not speak ill of women in his final moments (2.3.17).<sup>125</sup> A more amusing instance (and

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<sup>123</sup> Although, as we will see at the start of Chapter Four, there are certainly exceptions.

<sup>124</sup> I have chosen to use the name Falstaff rather than Oldcastle, the choice of the Oxford editors, for two reasons. The first is for convenience in engaging with critics. As Howard puts it in the introduction to *1 Henry IV* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, the name Falstaff is the one "Shakespeare consistently used after the initial act of censorship" and, since that time, it is "become part of the textual history of this and other plays" (1183). The second reason is, however unfashionable this might be, I am inclined to take the Epilogue at his word at the end of *2 Henry IV* when he tells the audience that "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man" (Epilogue 28).

<sup>125</sup> It is quite possible that this scene, with its resonance of protestant hagiography, is an inside joke for those who still thought of Falstaff as Oldcastle, the Lollard martyr. This scene is often misunderstood, largely by critics

one closer in its relation to tombs) is Mistress Page's declaration that she plans to immortalize the weapon used to batter the old knight in a manner reminiscent of that described by Iden in 2 *Henry VI*: "I'll have the cudgel hallowed and hung o'er the altar. It hath done meritorious service" (*Merry Wives of Windsor* 4.2.177-178).<sup>126</sup> As misplaced and comedic as these instances may be, they reveal a group of individuals who at least nominally adheres to the societal conventions of mourning and commemoration.

Not so with Falstaff. He may refer to Bardolph's reddened face as "a death's head, or a *memento mori*," images portrayed frequently on tombs as well as other art objects, but this only briefly causes him to "think upon hell-fire"; within moments he is suggesting that his companion's face is more useful for less pious tasks like lighting the way at "Gads Hill in the night to catch my horse" (*1 Henry IV* 3.3.26, 27, 32-33). Throughout, such lessons are rejected by him, as when he tells Doll, "do not speak like a death's-head, do not bid me remember mine end" (*2 Henry IV* 2.4.208-209).<sup>127</sup> So far disconnected is Falstaff from the economy of commemoration (among other things), that he has "forgotten what the inside of a church is made of" (*1 Henry IV* 3.3.6-7).

When Falstaff does mention tombs, he does so obliquely, as part of his larger project of dismissing social conventions of honor. In public, the old knight tends to speak glowingly of chivalric virtues. After the Gad's hill incident, he calls out "A plague on all cowards" and asks

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unfamiliar with this type of recitation. For example, Donald Hedrick argues that the fact that those "reporting the death that occurred offstage, cannot even agree about what *just* happened and what Falstaff said" shows Shakespeare criticizing the ability of anyone to report history correctly: "If a dying man's words are thus in dispute, history becomes tyrant to the fragile facts of a measurement by ear, foot, or hand" (Hedrick 475). In fact, the scene seems less about accurate reportage, and more about the efforts of the bereaved to retell the past in a manner complimentary to the deceased. Mistress Quickly attempts to tell the story in a way that displays Falstaff in the purest light possible while the Boy, perhaps less attuned to social conventions, contradicts her with what is likely a more accurate, if less flattering, account. I will return to this scene again in Chapter Four.

<sup>126</sup> Of course, this passage is not from the actual *Henry IV* plays. Just like the characters themselves, however, the subject of this quote is clearly meant to allude to those works and to the genre of history in general.

<sup>127</sup> This refusal is exactly what the newly crowned Henry V challenges in his brutal repudiation of his old friend: "Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace. / Leave gormandizing; know the grave doth gape / For thee thrice wider than for other men" (*2 Henry IV* 5.5.50-52).

rhetorically, “Is there no virtue extant?” (*1 Henry IV* 2.5.107-108).<sup>128</sup> When alone onstage, however, Falstaff makes it clear that he does not care the slightest about shame or reputation, so long as his life remains intact. On the battlefield at Shrewsbury, Prince Hal informs Falstaff that he “owest God a death” (*1 Henry IV* 5.1.126). After the prince leaves, Falstaff muses on this debt:

‘Tis not due yet. I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, ‘tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? How then? Can honour set-to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word ‘honour’? What is that ‘honour’? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o’Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. ‘Tis insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I’ll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon. And so ends my catechism. (5.1.127-139)

To call this a catechism implies a set logical progression, one ending with the conclusion that honor is useless to the living and truly held only by the dead. The escutcheon, the small flag or heraldic marker most often displayed at funerals and over tombs, stands as the final point of that progression. The living, as Falstaff says, are subject to slander and thus their honor is transitory; according to him, only the dead can securely rest on their laurels. Garber is partly correct when she argues, “[t]o Falstaff, honor is just the empty sign of something, not a commodity, an agent, or anything actually palpable or useful” (Garber 327). This is quite true for the living, but Falstaff admits that it *is* a commodity for the deceased, embodied in the material trappings of monuments. Such a commodity simply holds no interest for the fat knight, dedicated as he is to fleshly, worldly pleasures.

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<sup>128</sup> Earlier, he vows to Hal that he will work with him on the highway robbery, declaring, “an I do not, call me villain and baffle me” (1.2.88-89). According to the *OED*, the definition of “baffle” in use here is “to disgrace a perjured knight with infamy,” particularly by hanging him upside down.

Falstaff's dismissal of tombs and monuments, then, stems not from a wish to erase the past like Henry IV, but rather a desire to embrace the present and to avoid thinking about the future. For the man so engaged with the here and now that when we first see him he is being mocked by Hal for a disingenuous question about the time, the preferred form of commemoration is something more immediate and perhaps ephemeral (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.1). Thus, when he asks Prince John for a reward for having captured a prisoner, Falstaff requests that his actions "be booked with the rest of this day's deeds; or, by the Lord, I will have it in a particular ballad else, with mine own picture on the top on't, Coleville kissing my foot" (*2 Henry IV* 4.2.41-44). To him, the proper form of remembrance is in song, transmitted through cheaply printed ballads. In terms of the spectrum of commemoration I described in the previous chapter, Falstaff inclines far closer to the alehouse sign than the tomb.

3

*The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, composed about 1586, is an anonymous precursor play to Shakespeare's second tetralogy, which "in span of events, approximates the familiar trilogy dealing with Henry of Monmouth" but which "in length ... is but half one of them" (Pitcher 4).<sup>129</sup> Shakespeare drew heavily on this earlier play, and as such it is useful to

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<sup>129</sup> The relation of this play to Shakespeare's histories is vexed. Seymour M. Pitcher, editor of the play, argues that Shakespeare himself was the author. He claims "It seems impossible that the play was his mere source for the later three. He used it ingeniously, as he used his sources, but more than that, he used it instinctively as if it were his own. He knew it by heart, by total assimilation" (Pitcher 6). There is no question that Shakespeare's plays display a close connection to this earlier work, but it seems just as likely that it was more of a formational influence. For the purpose of this argument, however, the question is irrelevant. My argument focuses on the radical difference between the character of Hal / Henry V in the two works, a difference that depends on Henry's particular engagement with the past and the future, figured through his understanding and deployment of tombs and monuments.

compare related passages to see differences in characterization and theme.<sup>130</sup> In *Famous Victories*, the confrontation between Henry IV and his son Hal is far shorter than the elaborate scenes found in both *1* and *2 Henry IV*. Nearing death and recalling his deposition of Richard II, the King speaks of the crown he just caught Hal lusting over: “God knows, my son, how hardly I came by it, and how hardly I have maintained it” (8.64-65). The Prince’s response is curt and dismissive, “[h]owsoever you came by it I know not” (8.66). Benjamin Griffin’s analysis of this passage is excellent.

Here is the Prince’s opportunity to accept and justify his father’s actions in the past; instead, he denies knowledge of them. They have been swept away into a recordless oblivion: Harry’s relation to antecedent events is ahistorical. He is presented, not as an innocent of his father’s crime, but as oblivious of it – a status he retains to the end: not for this play the anxious prayer before Agincourt. (61)

Hal is presented as a character even more willing than his father to let bygones be bygones. Possession is, to the Hal of *Famous Victories*, all of the law; once his father has given him the crown, he declares, “I will keep it. And he that seeks to take the crown from my head, let him look that his armor be thicker than mine, or I will pierce him to the heart, were it harder than brass or bullion” (8.67-70). What has come before is of no concern.

What a difference there is between this version of Prince Hal and the one found in Shakespeare’s plays. As Jones argues, Young Henry’s project, both before and after becoming king, is “*awakening* memory rather than ... denying it” in the manner performed by both Henry IV and Falstaff (Jones 96). The most important and sustained engagements with the imagery of tombs and monuments in the *Henry IV* plays come from Hal; all show his desire to break with

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<sup>130</sup> “The multitude of available treatments of history allowed full play to the kind of generic handy-dandy Shakespeare was practicing in *Richard II*; and the resonance of his own *Henry IV* and *Henry V* plays is apparent if we compare them to *The Famous Victories*; not as source and derivative, but as contemporary plays” (Griffin 118). In other words, showing how the character of Henry V differs in the two plays shows decisions made on Shakespeare’s part every bit as much as deviations from Holinshed.

both of his “fathers” so that he can usher in a rule engaging both past and future, a rule that will allow him to create and sustain the legacy he aims to build.

Prince Hal first invokes commemorative language on the field at Shrewsbury. Not long after Falstaff has so dismissively referred to honor as a “scutcheon,” Hal faces off against his prime adversary, Hotspur, with both of their honors at stake. The prince has taken some pains before the battle to speak of his opponent with the greatest reverence. Vernon tells Hotspur before the battle that Hal,

Trimmed up your praises with a princely tongue,  
Spoke your deservings like a chronicle,  
Making you ever better than his praise  
By still dispraising praise valued with you. (5.2.56-59)

Meeting Hotspur on the battlefield, the prince makes very clear what he plans to do with all of the praise, from himself and others, that has been heaped on his opponent. The country is not big enough for the two of them, so Hal informs Hotspur,

...think not, Percy  
To share with me in glory any more.  
Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere,  
Nor can one England brook a double reign  
Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales. (5.4.62-66)

Hotspur arrogantly expresses concern that theirs will not be a fair fight; he wishes Hal’s “name in arms were now as great as” his own (5.4.69). The Prince tells him not to worry: “I’ll make it greater ere I part from thee, / And all the budding honours on thy crest / I’ll crop to make a garland for my head” (5.4.70-72). This, of course, is exactly what he does, and as he stands over Hotspur, he tells his fallen rival to “take thy praise with thee to heaven. / Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave, / But not be remembered in thy epitaph” (5.4.98-100).

Why is Hal so generous? However noble he may be, Hotspur is a rebel to the crown, the same crown Hal hopes someday to wear. The answer lies in Hal’s particular ability to

...foresee how the present will be perceived as past in the future. It is thus that he plans to frame his future action by the memory of what he has been and creatively shapes what will come to be the 'story' of his past. This is the gist, of course, of the early soliloquy in which he previews for our benefit, with an accuracy granted no other forecaster in the play, his carefully planned 'reformation.' (Jones 99)

In a strong analysis of this scene, Robert Jones delves into the ways Hal's words differ from other examples of extemporaneous commemoration on the battlefield, particularly that performed by Talbot in *1 Henry VI*. The key point is that Hal can now afford to "[allow] that spirit's praise to ascend to heaven, consigning its ignominy to the grave" because he has been victorious (Jones 109). All the praise he heaped on Hotspur now rebounds to him: "Insofar as Hotspur's honor lives on, it lives now as Hal's, with no 'share' left for the dead rival. To this extent only does the prince perpetuate his legacy from Percy" (Jones 110). Leggatt's suggestion that Hotspur's "insistence that [honor] cannot be shared means... that his loss to Hal is devastating," misses the fact that Hal is not interested in sharing honor either (*Shakespeare's* 85). He has simply learned a lesson that, to praise a rival and to then overcome him is to indirectly, but *very* effectively, praise oneself.<sup>131</sup>

If this is his purpose, why talk of a grave and epitaph? Even his earlier rhetoric of cropped honors serves to bring to mind the "achievements": the helmet, shield and sword that hung above Henry V's tomb.<sup>132</sup> The answer is that Hal is not interested in building a temporary narrative, like Falstaff's ballads, but rather an enduring one. On one front, he knows that famous

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<sup>131</sup> In a similar vein, R. A. Rebholz is inaccurate when he argues, "[I]mplicit in Hotspur's concept of honor is his expectation that it will survive death in the memories or thoughts of those who live. In his dying words, he realizes that he is wrong—honor, like life and time, will eventually be invisible like air" (83). Hotspur is, in fact, not wrong at all; his honor does outlive him and never fades to invisibility. Hotspur is merely wrong about who that glory eventually serves to glorify; his achievements grace Henry, not himself.

<sup>132</sup> Similar echoes of tomb language, or at least of art and heraldry, are found in his soliloquy pointing toward his plans of future redemption near the beginning of the play:

And like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,  
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes  
Than that which hath no foil to set it off. (1.2.190-193).

As young as he may be, Hal clearly already grasps the mechanisms for the preservation of fame.

victories will make him a more effective king by displaying his military prowess. The language of achievements and epitaphs, however, shows the prince already has one eye affixed on his legacy. Hal is not yet king, and the historical Hal was, at this time, still a long way from beginning work on his own tomb, but Shakespeare here foreshadows Hal's extraordinary interest in looking both to the past and to the distant future.

An entirely different logic governs Hal's major deployment of tomb imagery in *2 Henry IV*. As Act five, Scene two begins, Henry IV has just died and Warwick and the Lord Chief Justice confer about what the new regime will bring. Clearly Hal has played the fool well, for both men fear what will come next. The Lord Chief Justice declares, "I... do arm myself / To welcome the condition of the time, / Which cannot look more hideously upon me / Than I have drawn it in my fantasy" (5.2.10-13). Upon the new King's entrance, the Chief Justice is called upon to defend his actions, and the "great indignities... laid upon" the Hell-raising prince (5.2.68). The Chief Justice does so, and his opening rhetorical move is to invoke the King that has just died: "I then did use the person of your father. / The image of his power lay then in me" (5.2.72-73). Of course, this has all been a test, and having feigned annoyance, now Henry V reveals his pleasure at the Justice's actions. Having been crowned, he fulfills his vow made at the start of *1 Henry IV*, to "pay the debt I never promised" and to "throw off" all of his previous "loose behaviour" (1.2.187, 186).<sup>133</sup> Now speaking as King, he builds on the Chief Justice's reference to his father in a complex and confusing passage:

...princes all, believe me, I beseech you,  
My father is gone wild into his grave,  
For in his tomb lie my affections;  
And with his spirits sadly I survive  
To mock the expectation of the world,  
To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out

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<sup>133</sup> Garber actually views the following speech from young King Henry, his turning away from his previous life as "structurally and emblematically, the pendant or reply to his 'I know you all' soliloquy" (Garber 355).



Rotten opinion, who hath writ me down  
After my seeming. (5.2.121-128)

Henry V's imagery here has caused some difficulty for critics. Howard, for example, is one of many to point out the disconnect between the second and third lines; the speech starts "as if Henry [the elder] himself embodied the principle of disorder, now buried. Yet Hal continues, suddenly making problematic whose wildness the grave holds" (Shakespeare *Norton* 1325). Leggatt even goes so far as to suggest that in this passage the new King's "command of language and imagery is no longer secure... The first line suggests, hauntingly, the old King's death as an unabsolved sinner. But that will not square with the picture of steady continuity Henry is trying to project, and so he gives it a forced interpretation that tidies it up" (*Shakespeare's* 109).

This approach to the passage is misguided. It seems unwise to assume that a character so controlled in his language from the first moment we see him at the tavern would completely lose his rhetorical grip the moment his plans have come to fruition.<sup>134</sup> More useful is an analysis of the speech offered by Alison Thorne. She sees the play as a struggle between two views of history: history as fact and history as mutable narrative. While *Henry V* begins with a Chorus that apologetically admits how far theater may fall short of the realities of history, *2 Henry IV* opens with a speech from Rumor, an appropriate figure for a play full of misinformation. To Thorne, "Hal's coronation appears to signal the demise of 'memory-history,'" and it is at this moment that the transformation from rumor to fact occurs:

Determined to succeed where his father failed, the new king makes it his mission to wipe clean the tables of both individual and collective remembrance... In place of the ... rumours, prophecies, gossip and fantastic stories that proliferated under his father's rule, Hal imposes upon his subjects a new style of historical discourse whose authority is enforced with the full weight of the paternal law (figured by the Lord Chief Justice). (Cavanagh, Hampton-Reeves and Longstaffe 61-62)

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<sup>134</sup> I will certainly grant that this does happen at times to tragic, anti-heroes such as Macbeth and Richard III, but Henry V is emphatically not such a figure.

Thorne is exactly right about the shift from one kind of memory to another, but I believe there are two, connected, problematic elements in her argument. The first is her point about erasure. Her statement implies that Hal's project will be to erase the past and to replace it with his own, self-serving narrative, upheld by force of law. This was Hal's father's project, but not Hal's. In contrast, the younger Henry wishes to record the past more or less accurately and then *use* this record to further his ends. He used Hotspur in this fashion on the field of Shrewsbury, and he undertook his sojourn in the Eastcheap slums for this very purpose. If everyone forgot his unsavory past, they would not be surprised at his kingly actions in the present. To put it in his own terms, the "breaking through" of the "sun" only appears impressive because of the contrast with the "base contagious clouds" and the "foul and ugly mists / Of vapours that did seem to strangle him" (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.175-181).

Thorne also misidentifies the agent Hal invokes to perform this commemorative work; he does not ask the Lord Chief Justice "to raze out / Rotten opinion," but he instead sets that responsibility upon himself, aided by the assistance of his father's tomb. There is no disconnect between the second and third line quoted above because Hal describes here a process, a *causal* connection between the two lines: Hal says "My father is gone wild into his grave, / *For* in his tomb lie my affections" (emphasis mine). The physical site of his father's tomb, the material anchor connecting Hal to his immediate past, serves as the object that will transform him into a good king. Hal must kill off his wildness at the same moment his father dies and so he buries it with him. Furthermore, to show continuity with the past, he will reincarnate part of his father in himself: "with his spirits sadly I survive / To mock the expectation of the world." In fact, to return to what Thorne gets absolutely right, Hal's words offer no internal contradiction but rather a repudiation of previous approaches to memory and history. Both of Hal's "fathers" rejected

the imagery of monuments and the connection to the past that they represented. Falstaff, the libertine, avoided the whiff of death that emanated from thoughts of the tomb while Henry IV, the usurper, always felt a threat from any connection to the past. His son, however, sits stable on his throne and with this speech can usher in an entirely new way to engage with the past. Thus, in these plays detailing his father's reign and his own accession to the throne, we see a foreshadowing of an entirely different way of engaging with the past that will be fully developed in Henry V's rhetoric in the play that bears his name.

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In *1 Henry VI*, Sir William Lucy stands on an empty stage and laments the chaos he sees about to engulf his country. He fears “the vulture of sedition” will soon “betray to loss / The conquest of our scarce-cold conqueror, / That ever living man of memory / Henry the Fifth” (4.3.47, 49-52). Given the early date of this play's composition, of course, the second tetralogy was not even a glimmer in Shakespeare's eye.<sup>135</sup> Nonetheless, as has been seen by a variety of critics, Lucy's phrase is a resonant one for the figure we see at the center of *Henry V*. As Gary Taylor points out, for example, the word “memorable” is “[u]sed by Shakespeare only four times, all in this play” (Shakespeare *Henry V* 149). Jonathan Baldo suggests that *Henry V*, while not particularly effective at staging conventional battle scenes (something the Chorus repeatedly admits), is instead engaged with dramatizing a different type of fighting: “most of the battles in the play are over memory, the importance of which to the formation and strength of a sovereign

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<sup>135</sup> If Pitcher is correct, and Shakespeare had a hand in *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, this is perhaps less true, but it has little bearing on the final conclusion. Whether Shakespeare is rewriting material composed by someone else or by himself over a decade earlier, it is still clear that he presents Henry as a figure deeply concerned with the process of memory and commemoration.

national stage is evident throughout. This play... is ... a remarkable study of how a nation remembers” (Baldo 132). As would be expected, most of this revolves around Henry himself, and, as the word “memorable” suggests, this engagement with memory is not restricted to the past. To remember what is memorable is to recall what has come before, but to *be* memorable is to engage with the future, to set oneself in the continuum of commemoration in an enduring fashion. *Henry V* presents the king as a figure who, unlike his father, willingly embraces the past, and, unlike Richard II, can imaginatively project himself into the future. In short, Shakespeare’s Henry V stands as the only king dramatized by the playwright who productively engages with his position in the grand sweep of history, and he does this largely through the language of tombs.<sup>136</sup> Henry V behaves differently than the oblivious Richard II and the intentionally amnesiac Henry IV by using tombs as a locus to engage with the past.

At the beginning of the play, the scheming Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Ely attempt to interest the young king in an invasion of France. Their initial choice of rhetorical strategies to attain this end tends to seem almost comic on the modern stage: they engage in a lengthy summation of Henry’s lineage and the law surrounding succession in France. This speech is a “paraphrase” of Holinshed so near to its source that Boswell-Stone’s *Shakespeare’s Holinshed* puts them side by side, treatment reserved for Shakespeare’s most extensive borrowings (Boswell-Stone 168-171). The speech is extraordinary, 63 lines, dealing at great length with Henry’s rights in France, although, as Maus and others have pointed out, the clerics

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<sup>136</sup> In the introduction to *Henry V* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, Katherine Eisaman Maus suggests that the Chorus’ allusion to Henry VI’s failures at the end of the play defines the work as “one of a group of plays rather than a freestanding work. It refers constantly to events before and after its own temporal limits, events familiar to Shakespeare’s audience from plays they had already seen performed” (1471). Depending on one’s perspective, this seems both fair and unfair. Because this play was the last to be composed, it does have a rich fabric of other *plays* to allude to. However, it is no more embedded in actual history than any other history play and to dismiss this relation to the past as an inevitable result of its date of composition is, I think, to misunderstand its conception of memory and history. *Henry V* depends on references to the past and future because Henry himself (and to a lesser extent the other characters) makes it so.

gloss over the situation in England since they “use against the French a principle that, if it were enforced against him, would strip him of both English and French kingdoms” in favor of a female claimant (Shakespeare *Norton* 1476).<sup>137</sup> Despite its thoroughness, the speech does not achieve its desired effect. King Henry’s one line response is succinct and cutting, underlining the insufficiency of everything the Archbishop has just said: “May I with right and conscience make this claim?” (1.2.96).

His previous line of reasoning so succinctly dismissed, the Archbishop fumbles for an alternative line of attack, deciding finally on a strategy taken up in succession by himself, Ely, and Exeter:

Canterbury: Look back into your mighty ancestors.  
Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire’s tomb,  
From whom you claim; invoke his warlike spirit,  
And your great-uncle’s, Edward the Black Prince,  
Who on the French ground played a tragedy,  
Making defeat on the full power of France,  
Whiles his most mighty father on a hill  
Stood smiling to behold his lion’s whelp  
Forge in blood of French nobility.  
O noble English, that could entertain  
With half their forces the full pride of France,  
And let another half stand laughing by,  
All out of work, and cold for action.

Ely: Awake remembrance of those valiant dead,  
And with your puissant arm renew their feats.  
You are their heir, you sit upon the throne,  
The blood and courage that renownèd them  
Runs in your veins—and my thrice-puissant liege  
Is in the very May-morn of his youth,  
Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises.

Exeter: Your brother kings and monarchs of the earth  
Do all expect that you should rouse yourself  
As did the former lions of your blood. (1.2.102-124)

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<sup>137</sup> Joan Lord Hall, in a delightful tongue-in-cheek defense of *The Famous Victories*, cites this passage as one that gives the edge to the earlier play. “As a prosaic version of the *Chronicles*, this play offers clarity as well as brevity. Students grappling with the Archbishop’s lengthy, involved speech on the Salic law (*Henry V*, I.ii.33-95) may well prefer *The Famous Victories*’ succinct explanation (despite one tautology and a skipped generation!): ‘Your right to the French throne of France came by your great grandmother Isabel’ (ix. 68-69)” (Hall *Henry V* 18-19).

The King is sold on the project. His next lines indicate that the decision has been made and all that is left is the logistical problem of protecting England from the Scots.<sup>138</sup>

So, why does this new line of appeal work? Part of its power lies in its uniqueness. While tombs appear often in the history plays, this contact with the past is both “entirely positive, with none of the chiding (*3HVI*, II, ii, 34 ff.; *RII*, II, i, 171 ff.) or accusation (*3HVI*, II, vi, 14 ff.) or grievance (*2HVI*, I, i, 76 ff.) or regret (*RII*, II, iii, 99 ff.) with which noble counselors in earlier plays recall lost leaders as they address their lapsed descendants” and, it also implies “an absolute identification of the present with the past, whose heroes are not lost but will live again through their ‘ripe’ young heir” (Jones 126). As Robert Jones point out, “[h]ere, then, the ideal of emulation, which had been ignored, violated, or distorted through seven plays since Talbot fulfilled it by ‘renewing’ the dead Salisbury’s spirit in his own, is affirmed as never before” (127). Clayton MacKenzie argues that the phrase “warlike spirit” invoked by Canterbury “becomes a metaphor for a fine quality of military conduct,” one that “stands outside the domain of physical mortality, never irretrievable lost in the death of the individual but, paradoxically, relying for perpetuation on the spawning of heirs. King Henry is not simply the physical descendant of his great ancestors, but their ‘spiritual’ inheritor as well,” because he is the only member of the noble line since Edward III and the Black Prince who can live up to this burden (*Emblems* 33).

This still does not explain why there is such emphasis placed on the actual tombs. Why, in order to invoke this spirit, does Canterbury insist that Henry not just think on their spirit, but

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<sup>138</sup> To Blanpied, it is the gift of tennis balls that is the spur to real action for Henry (215-216). Such a moment might be far more accessible to modern audiences than the invocation of the moldy dead and their resting places, but such a reading is not consistent with the scene nor does it take into account the real power tombs have in this play, both here and elsewhere. The taunt may inspire some impassioned *rhetoric*, but it would be unfortunate if he were more likely to be driven to *action* by the contents of tennis courts than cathedrals.

rather make a pilgrimage: “Go, my dread lord, to your great-grandsire’s tomb... And your great-uncle’s, Edward the Black Prince” (1.2.103-105)? The answer lies in the question. To talk of spirits is all well and good, but it is difficult to access the immaterial. Tombs and monuments are logical access points to the dead, and their splendor has the potential to drive the viewer to emulate the achievements of those commemorated. John Ferne in his *The blazon of gentrie* published in 1586, cites tales where, “[t]he very name of *Philip*, being sounded in the eares of *Alexander*, incensed him to become a conquerour. When *Iulius Cesar* had but seen the statua of *Alexander*, how bewayled he the loss of his age, as slouthfully spent” (26). He goes on to surmise the following from these and further examples:

Then if it be so, that dumbe images of the noble: if tables painted, with the heroicall gestes, of such as were straungers in bloud, haue not a little moued the posteritie, to the attempting of the like vertues, and semblable exploites? much more shall the worthy merites of the auncestor, figured out, in the secreet emblemes, or sacred sculptures of the coat-armour, stirre vp the sonne, to imitate the same vertues, whereby his auncestor obteyned to make them both Gentlemen. (Ferne 26)

The commemorative display of heroic deeds is thus described as inspirational, particularly to direct descendants. In terms of expressing martial valor and accomplishments, no work of art could compare with the tombs of Edward III in Westminster and The Black Prince in Canterbury. Both tombs stand near monuments to kings and shrines to saints, and The Black Prince’s tomb rests under his displayed weapons and armor. It is no wonder that the Archbishop seizes on these sites as the most effective way to push the young king toward continental conquests.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> It is worth pointing out that Tillyard sees the Archbishop’s speech as particularly pointed toward the audience: “These lines not only dazzle us with their brilliance but they place Henry in the grand context of English history and make us forget the subtle personal touches of his previous character” (307). This may, in part, be true, but it does not account for why they have such power to sway the king as well.

That this approach is selected as *particularly* suited to appeal to Henry V by the Archbishop (and the playwright) can be seen by comparing it with a remarkably similar passage in *Edward III*. Whether or not this play, written five years previous, was actually written fully or in part by Shakespeare is irrelevant; certain scenes in *Henry V* clearly follow it as a model. In the corresponding scene in *Edward III*, the Frenchman Artois plays the part of Canterbury, pushing Edward toward an invasion of France by walking him through the same tangle of inheritance (although shorter by three generations) as the Archbishop. There is, however, absolutely no mention of tombs or the dead in the whole passage. Edward's ancestors are only mentioned in terms of their procreation and ancestry, and the closest Artois gets to anything resembling the passages in *Henry V* is when he addresses Edward as "the lineal watchman of our peace," a phrase that only obliquely engages with the past while emphasizing the present (Shakespeare *Edward III* 1.1.36). In so many ways the parallels between the two scenes are uncanny, but the repeated references to tombs and the memorialized dead in *Henry V* show a different strategy at work for the proponents of war.

Henry himself invokes tombs as a way of engaging with the past, and notably he does so with a piece of history that his father had assiduously avoided and even attempted to erase. This invocation occurs in what may be the most intimate moment audiences have with Henry in the play: his prayer on the eve of Agincourt.<sup>140</sup> Alone on stage after his tour of the camp, he prays to the "God of battles" to "steel" his "soldier's hearts" (4.1.271). Having earlier encouraged his soldiers to ready their souls by striving to "do as every sick man in his bed: wash every mote out

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<sup>140</sup> R. A. Rebholz writes that this is the only moment in the play where we are not confronted by "a public figure defined by the façades or roles he brilliantly creates and uses to manipulate others and public opinion" (8).



of his conscience,” he tries to follow his own advice, both for his own sake and that of his army (4.1.166-167). He prays:<sup>141</sup>

Not today, O Lord,  
O not today, think not upon the fault  
My father made in compassing the crown.  
I Richard’s body have interrèd new,  
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears  
Than from it issued forcèd drops of blood.  
Five hundred poor have I in yearly pay  
Who twice a day their withered hands hold up  
Toward heaven to pardon blood. And I have built  
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests  
Sing still for Richard’s soul. More will I do,  
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,  
Since that my penitence comes after all,<sup>142</sup>  
Imploring pardon. (4.1.274-287)

The main act Henry references here is one performed at the beginning of his reign. As Peter Saccio puts it, Henry’s first actions as king were designed

to win the allegiance of his magnates and bury the quarrels that had resulted from his father’s usurpation. His chief act was literal burial. The corpse of Richard II had lain at King’s Langley since his (probable) murder in 1400: Henry had it disinterred and ceremoniously reburied at Westminster Abbey, in the tomb that Richard had built for himself during his own lifetime. This was a gesture of piety.

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<sup>141</sup> While the earlier “God of battles” may well be Mars, this second prayer clearly invokes the Christian God.

<sup>142</sup> *The Norton Shakespeare* has “ill” as the last word of this line, following an emendation by Gary Taylor, but I have restored it to the “all” found in all contemporary editions and most modern ones. In his Oxford *Henry V*, Taylor gives an extended argument for his alteration in Appendix B. It is a strong one, largely based on the implausibility of the three possible meanings he sees for the second “all” in the passage. The third of these he defines as “‘all [that has happened]’ – meaning, presumably, primarily ‘the fault | My father made in compassing the crown’” which he later extends to possibly refer also to “Henry’s inheritance” (Shakespeare *Henry V* 296-297). This reading, to Taylor, “is vague – not obscure, not strikingly difficult, but simply unclear, unemphatic, indeterminate, its obscurity a function of no more than imprecision of reference. This imprecision, moreover, does not contribute to an ambiguity which is itself meaningful; any ambiguity is functionless and presumably unintended” (Shakespeare *Henry V* 298). The Third Series Arden retains the original “all” and editor T. W. Craik argues that, while “Taylor’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s purpose is excellent” he feels the “emendation... is neither necessary nor desirable: if ill did not precede penitence there would be no point in the penitence. More probably *all* is correct and the vagueness is intentional” (Shakespeare *Arden Henry V* 277). I would in fact propose the possibility that the “all” is even more vague, or, more precisely, all encompassing, than either Taylor or Craik allow. “All” could quite literally mean all, everything that has come before, from the transgressions of his father, through his father’s entire reign and on to the battlefield of Agincourt. Since this short prayer has moved from Henry’s army, through his father’s actions and on to his own, both in the past and those he plans in the future, this seems like a legitimate alternative reading that eliminates the need for an arbitrary (if plausible and ambiguity-removing) word change not supported by any period textual variants. This reading also supports my view that Henry V possesses an extraordinarily holistic view of past and future.

It was also probably a gesture of friendship, as the young Henry had once served as page to the king his father deposed. Politically, it was a gesture indicating that the past was past: the usurpation was to be considered a closed issue. (Saccio 67-68)

Whether the reinterment of Richard is indicative of piety or friendship or a combination of the two is, of course, impossible to say; Henry kept no journal. However, his actions clearly demonstrate a different attitude to dealing with inconvenient past events than that practiced by Henry IV. The previous king had surely hoped that Richard II's death would be considered "a closed issue" when he quietly buried him outside of London; for his son and successor to have Richard dug up and reburied with great ceremony indicates a radical change of policy.

Of course, for the *character* Henry V to bring up Richard in his prayers indicates, at least from a moral standpoint, an uncertainty over the issue's resolution. Nonetheless, his actions in the play show that, for the stage version as for the real king, the best way to deal with this complex historical reality was to confront it directly through the medium of commemorative and spiritual memorials. From the Catholic perspective, the "Five hundred poor" and the "solemn priests" engaged by Henry to pray for Richard's soul would have been contracted in perpetuity and thus considered every bit as much a part of the permanent memorial as the stone itself. Collectively, the new chantries, the individuals hired to say masses, and the placement of Richard's body in the tomb alongside his long interred wife represent Henry's attempt to renegotiate the past through monuments.

It is, however, not just the past Henry engages in this passage. Although he speaks in the context of a contrition he fears is "nothing worth," made ineffectual by his retention of the ill-gotten crown, Henry also swears to do more for Richard's memory in the future. Many critics have connected the last lines of this passage with those from *Hamlet's* Claudius, who, feeling his prayers are in vain, calls out "'Forgive me my foul murder'? / That cannot be, since I am still

possessed / Of those effects for which I did the murder” (3.3.52-54).<sup>143</sup> The comparison is illuminating, but not because the two prayers are identical. Even if we invoke the biblical precept that sons are responsible for their father’s crimes, and ignore Claudius’ direct responsibility for killing a king, there is still the question of active repentance. Claudius does nothing but pray, and, by his own admission, pray rather insincerely. Henry, in contrast, has actively worked to bring Richard both into active memory, through public reburial in the ring of kings at Westminster, and into grace, through masses for his soul. He could easily have left Richard where he was, tacitly continuing his father’s strategy of erasing the past, but instead he actively tries to *restore* the past. In addition, he moves Richard to the tomb the deposed king had built for himself and his wife, not to some alternative monument constructed to directly further Henry V’s own legacy, a sacrifice that Shakespeare’s Henry boasts of in his prayer.

Why does Shakespeare have the ever-canny Henry bring attention to this course of action? One answer would be to emphasize Henry’s wish for some semblance of forgiveness, even if complete forgiveness is impossible. There is, however, something larger at work here. In an article mostly about the wooing scene at the end of the play, Donald Hedrick makes a passing comment that is worth engaging. On the subject of Henry’s St. Crispin’s day speech, he writes, “Henry pictures Agincourt’s battle already done, from the future perspective of the victory’s anniversary, now familiar to a Shakespearean audience reflecting this community” (Hedrick 472). In this speech, Henry talks not just of the period following the battle in the immediate future, but the distant future, when “He that shall see this day and live t’old age” will tell tales, look back on this victory and “remember, with advantages / What feats he did that day” (4.3.44, 50-51). The deeds will survive even beyond living memory; “Crispin Crispian shall ne’er go by / From this day to the ending of the world / But we in it shall be rememberèd” (4.3.57-59).

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<sup>143</sup> See, as one of many examples, Rebholz 51-52.

Jonathan Baldo writes of this scene, “Henry rouses his troops before the Battle of Agincourt by depicting it as both a reenactment of England’s glorious past and a capital reserve of memory on which his soldiers will be able to draw in future years” (140). Henry exemplifies a figure unique among Shakespeare’s pantheon of monarchs, one capable of envisioning himself in the grand sweep of history.<sup>144</sup>

This is not the only time in the play that Henry envisions what the future will look like. Richard II was unable to imagine any part of himself surviving his demise beyond the “sad stories of the death of kings,” while Henry IV’s policy of “being seldom seen” seems to have stretched even beyond his life so that he was sequestered far from London in Canterbury (*Richard II* 3.2.152, *1 Henry IV* 3.2.46). In contrast, Henry V seems concerned from very early in the play with not only how he will rule, but also how he will be remembered. Having determined to invade France after all the encouragement from his clerics and nobles, Henry quickly shifts to a call to action that also simultaneously imagines the position he will hold in the continuum of English kings. Describing the French throne he hopes to seize, he declares,

...there we’ll sit,  
Ruling in large and ample empery  
O’er France and all her almost dukedoms,  
Or lay these bones in an unworthy urn,  
Tombless, with no remembrance over them.  
Either our history shall with full mouth  
Speak freely of our acts, or else our grave,  
Like Turkish mute, shall have a toungeless mouth,  
Not worshipped with a waxen epitaph. (1.2.225-233)

Although he here describes it primarily in the negative, in this passage Henry outlines two possible futures similar to those we saw earlier in the *Henry VI* plays. In one, he fails in his

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<sup>144</sup> Baldo tends to see this as a manifestation of “the precedence of a consolidated national memory over several other forms that might compete with or offer resistance to it” universally present in the play, but I would argue that this is largely so because of the particular way memory and commemoration are utilized by Henry as an individual (140). Depending on how one looks at the play, this might just be splitting hairs. See also Jones, 130-132.

conquest and, in so doing, is found wanting as a king. In this future, his legacy is a virtual blank, recorded in perpetuity in the humblest way possible, “an unworthy urn” without tomb or epitaph. Alternatively, he implies that success will allow for the opposite, a worthy tomb, a vocal epitaph and a proper effigy. In *Famous Lives*, as usual, Henry is far more succinct, declaring “What! not King of France? Then nothing. I must be King” (20.6-7). As with all other examples from this play, it is clear that Shakespeare’s alterations turn Henry from a character concerned only with the present to one with an eye constantly on the future and his place in it. I think that Phyllis Rackin’s reading of the *Henry V* scene – that “[t]he Henry who acts on Shakespeare’s stage, unlike the image of perfection already completed in the past evoked by the words of the chorus, is a Henry engaged in the process of acquiring his authority and his place in history” – puts emphasis on the wrong side of the equation (*Stages* 167). Henry may not know exactly what his legacy entails, but his audience surely does, and, regardless, the very fact that he is already deeply concerned with how he will be remembered in the future shows where the young king’s energies lie. Scott Newstok also, I think, misreads this scene when he argues that, “Shakespeare’s works ... display a notable indifference, if not distrust, of [epitaph’s] sincerity” (163). He writes that in this passage and others “Shakespeare establishes another dramatic convention in the repeated theatrical defiance of epitaphic memorialization” (Newstok 163). There is potential in this argument elsewhere in Shakespeare’s canon, but such a reading is only sustainable in this instance by ignoring the actual material facts of Henry’s commemoration.

Henry V, like Richard II, planned his future commemorative apparatus well before his death. I use the term “apparatus” because Henry intended far more than just a tomb similar to those of his forbearers. In fact, he planned a combination of tomb and chantry chapel more elaborate than anything that had ever been constructed for a post-conquest monarch in

Westminster, one which would not be outshone by anything that came after it until Henry VII's rebuilding of the Lady Chapel as a shrine to the Tudors. Henry V's instructions for this tomb and chapel were elaborate and specific: "Henry's long and pious will of 1415 had required that he be buried in the place in which the relics were kept...lying between the shrine of St. Edward and the Lady Chapel.... thus appropriating the one remaining remotely available space in the vicinity of the royal burials" (Binski 147). Henry's tomb was designed to act as an end-cap to the half-circle of king's tombs surrounding Edward the Confessor's shrine. Henry's tomb is similar to those of the other kings buried nearby, consisting of an "altar-tomb... of Purbeck marble" decorated on "each side with three recesses" and topped "with [an] oak effigy in Parliament robes, hands and head missing. The head was of silver and the effigy and slab were covered with silver plates, of which some of the fixing-nails remain" (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 73). The tomb has no tester above it for reasons that will be apparent in a moment.

As is clear from the description, the tomb has been heavily damaged over the years. The despoiling of Henry's tomb started early, motivated first not by religious fervor but by avarice for the silver; "parts were stolen as early as 1467, but the whole of it was stripped in 1545 and lost during the general pillage of those times" (Crossley 26). However, the tomb itself was only a small portion of the larger commemorative effort. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Henry's arms, sword and armor were suspended on a bar above the monument; the reference cited earlier from *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* makes it clear that they were undisturbed in Shakespeare's time. Above both tomb and arms looms the chantry chapel itself.

The chapel's unconventional position was the result of necessity. The area around Edward's chapel had become increasingly crowded; Henry V was in fact the last monarch to be

buried there. As a result, “Henry’s will... set out, ingeniously, to retain the devotional integrity of the site he had chosen by exploiting its sole remaining spatial potential, the space above it” (Binski 148). The will goes into significant detail on the chapel structure, particularly in regard to the elements that would be seen by the public and thus serve part of the commemorative purpose. For example, “The altar was ... to be installed in such a way that the celebrating priests could be seen from below,” particularly from the nave of the cathedral (Binski 148). In addition, carved images were to adorn the massive stone “stair turrets” that contained the access stairs for the chapel, as well as the sidewalls of the chapel itself, which stood above the heads of any who visited Henry’s tomb (Hope 156). Many of these are simple sculptures of saints and nobles, but there are also “two portraits of Henry on his charger ... and two scenes of his coronation. Both crowning scene and oath-taking scene are surrounded by statuettes of the assembled peers significant portrayal of a row of prisoners hung from the battlements of a captured castle” (Hutchison *Henry V* 216; Figure 3.5).<sup>145</sup> The statues are dramatic in their presentation and portray Henry as an ideal, larger-than-life monarch. The impressive figure cut by the king in the sculpted images has caused some to see the statuary in metaphorical terms. For example, one recent Westminster guide reads, “The two images of him on horseback with fortified cities behind him have been interpreted as the King jumping a stream, but surely for ‘stream’ we should read the English Channel” (Wilson et al. 127). Regardless, in their implied motion and in their coronation robes, and behind one of the spirited sculptures of Henry at full gallop is the

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<sup>145</sup> For the purposes of this study, I am looking at the effect of Henry’s tomb and chantry in the aggregate rather than pursuing specific connections between statuary elements and Shakespeare’s plays. I do think that it would be a fruitful path of inquiry, however. For example, the prominence of the scene of battlefield execution brings to mind Henry’s brutal speech before Harfleur, the murder of prisoners on the field of Agincourt, and even the execution of his long time comrade Bardolph. See the following pages for one more example of this line of inquiry.

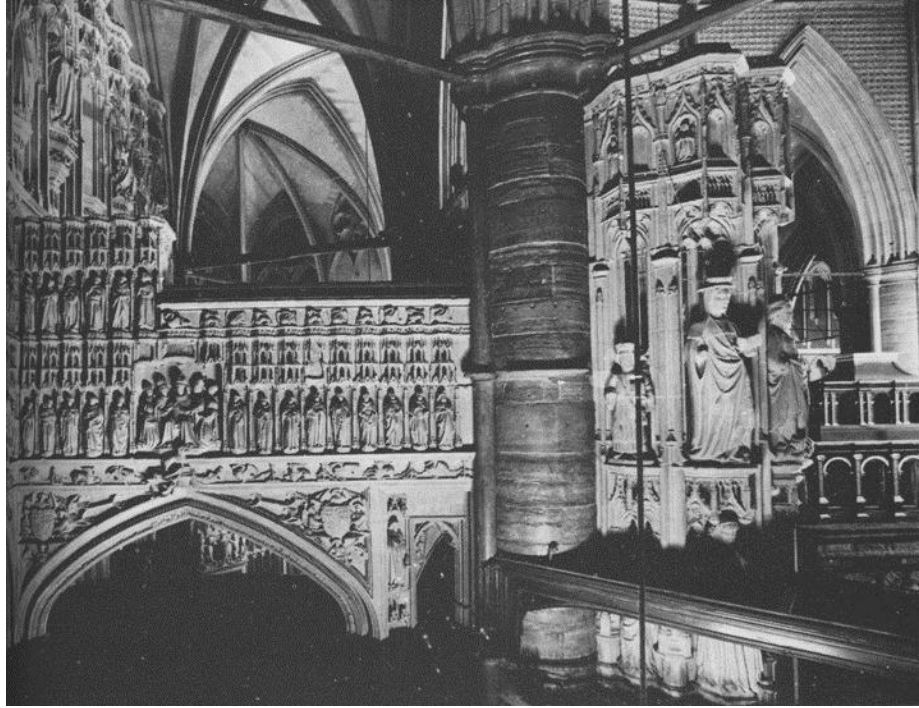


Figure 3.5 – Top: North Face of Henry 5's Chantry Chapel. From Wilson et al. *Westminster Abbey*. Bottom: Two scenes (Henry V's Coronation and Henry V riding a charger) from carvings on Henry V's Chantry Chapel. From Hutchison *Henry V*.



careful staging, the images are unquestionably theatrical, designed to portray an idealized image of Henry for the illiterate masses.<sup>146</sup>

To some extent, the intended effect has since been undermined by the damage inflicted on the tomb and chantry over the years, much of it occurring well before Shakespeare's time. As mentioned before, the effigy was stripped of all its silver, but the commemorative apparatus suffered other indignities as well. What Phillip Lindley calls the "paratomb," a term he coins to cover "the whole varied panoply of liturgical commemorations of the deceased," was also naturally swept away during the Reformation, leaving only the empty chapel (4). This had been originally intended, as with so many other burials in pre-Reformation Europe, to be part of a permanent commemoration of the deceased. It is this split with the past that causes Helga L. Duncan to argue that "for Shakespeare's audience, traditional sacred spaces were a thing of the past" (426).<sup>147</sup>

Focusing on what was destroyed, however, takes attention away from what survives. For a generation for whom the chantries had always been empty and silent, at least since childhood, these works of architectural and sculptural magnificence must have taken on new meanings no longer defined primarily by monks praying for grace for a patron. The elevated position of the chantry preserved the exquisite statuary, which now no longer stood as merely an aesthetic accompaniment to divine services for the deceased. This chantry instead became the whole focus of any Westminster visitor in search of material remembrance of England's great hero.

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<sup>146</sup> St John W. H. Hope's still invaluable article on the chantry chapel gives a sense of the theatricality of the two coronation scenes depicted on the exterior of the chapel walls. "Now during the coronation of the king of England there are two supreme moments: the one, when the crown is placed upon his head and the whole vast assemblage shouts 'God save the King'; the other when the newly crowned sovereign is led up to and set in the royal throne, surrounded by all the great officers of the state and the nobles who bear the regalia, while *Te Deum* is sung. This splendid ceremony has always been followed by the peers of the realm presenting themselves to do their homage. These two great incidents of the coronation, the acclamation and the homage, are, I venture to submit, what are represented on King Henry V's chapel" (Hope 172-173).

<sup>147</sup> This particular comment is made in the context of an article about *Titus Andronicus*, but Duncan clearly intends her argument to have wider implications.

While other monarchs rested in static tombs decorated with a few battered weepers or empty niches, Henry was remembered by towering columns emerging from the perimeter of the circle of kings and a raised, walled platform, covered completely with finely carved figures and scenes. While the other kings appear in death, placidly resting in effigy on top of their tombs, Henry appears alive and active, riding on horseback into battle or standing to receive his crown.

Minor aesthetic details, like those pointed out by St John W. H. Hope, would gain importance when no longer competing with the shine of the silver effigy or the droning of hired priests. Take, for example, the coronation scene on the north side of the chapel. In this freeze frame of the investiture ceremony, “The king is shown ... seated in his parliament robes, with the remains of the rod in his left hand, while the right, which is broken off, no doubt held the sceptre or orb with the cross. The two prelates<sup>148</sup> stand on either side, but their hands are now used to save the crown from pressing too heavily upon the king’s head and to support his arms while holding the sceptres” (Hope 174). Although it would be irresponsible to suggest this image served as direct inspiration for Shakespeare, the detail of the crown as an object so weighty that two men must hold it from weighing down the new king’s head does call to mind Hal the prince defending his theft of the crown from his father’s bedside by telling him “I put it on my head, / To try with it, as with an enemy / That had before my face murdered my father” (2 *Henry IV* 4.3.293-295).<sup>149</sup>

When Henry speaks in 1.2 of his own tomb, he is imaginatively constructing his legacy while dramatically referencing what Shakespeare and the audience could still see in the Westminster of their day: a damaged but enduring physical manifestation of a glorious, idealized

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<sup>148</sup> Earlier identified by Hope as “the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas of Arundel, ... [and] the abbot of Westminster, William of Colchester” (173).

<sup>149</sup> By extension, the visual also calls to mind Richard II’s lament that “within the hollow crown / That rounds the mortal temples of a king / Keeps Death his court” (*Richard II* 3.2.156-158).

past. Henry is acutely aware that monumentation is one of the most direct routes to immortality; he tells Montjoy the herald (in language clearly addressed in part to his troops whom he has just called to action with his Feast of Crispin speech) that “many of our bodies shall no doubt / Find native graves, upon the which, I trust, / Shall witness live in brass of this day’s work” (4.3.96-98).<sup>150</sup> The word “live” is a powerful one here, as is his reference to brasses, a type of commemoration which, because of its affordability, was becoming increasingly popular among

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<sup>150</sup> Of course, another direct route to remembrance is language. On this subject, it is worth pointing out that, beyond Westminster itself, one of Shakespeare’s possible inspirations for having Henry V talk of his own tomb is Samuel Daniel’s *The First Fovvre Bookes of the Ciuile Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke*, long recognized as a secondary source for Shakespeare’s plays. The relation of Daniel’s work to Shakespeare’s on the subject of *Henry V* would be an excellent subject for deeper examination elsewhere, but I will briefly outline the basics here. Daniel does not often invoke tomb imagery in his epic look at the Wars of the Roses. The main exception is Henry V, whose spirit breaks the fourth wall and addresses the author directly, criticizing him for focusing on the grim events of those years and not the positives, such as conquests made at Agincourt and elsewhere. These, he suggests, would be better substance for heroic verse: “O what eternall matter here is found! / Whence new immortall *Iliads* might proceed” (Daniel 4.6.1-2). In distress, Henry’s spirit laments:

O that our times had had some sacred wight,  
Whose wordes as happie as our swordes had bin  
To haue prepar'd for vs *Tropheis* aright  
Of vndecaying frames t’haue rested in:  
Triumphant Arkes of perdurable might  
O holy lines: that such aduantage win  
Vpon the Sieth of time in spight of yeares,  
How blessed they that gaine what neuer weares. (Daniel 4.8.1-8)

Speaking of laudatory verses metaphorically as monuments is nothing new. Henry continues the metaphor, however, in several interesting ways. In bemoaning the destructive energies of time, he derides the power of tombs: “dombe stones erected for our sake, / Which formles heapes few stormie chaunges make” (Daniel 4.9.7-8). The word “few” seems to reverse the meaning of the passage (and, in fact, the stanza it comes from), but taken in context with Henry’s next request, it is perhaps an acknowledgement that little more can be done to damage Henry’s actual tomb than had already happened by 1595. What follows is, in fact, a direct request to Queen Elizabeth:

Tell great ELIZA since her daies are grac’d  
With those bright ornaments to vs denide,  
That she repaire what darknes hath defac’d,  
And get our ruyn’d deedes reedifide:  
Shee in whose all directing eye is plac’d  
A powre the highest powers of wit to guide,  
She may commaund the worke and ouersee  
The holy frame that might eternall bee. (Daniel 4.10.1-8)

The request is, again, for a written commemorative effort, but this time the metaphorical invocation of monuments is stronger than before. To someone less directly invested in the primacy of print than Daniel, the passage is likely to bring to mind the damage to Henry’s tomb or of Queen Elizabeth’s re-commemoration of her Yorkist ancestors at Fotheringhay. Daniel is clearly writing of tombs in the abstract, as a way of glorifying the preservative power of the written word. Nonetheless, other resonances are clear in the passage that others, including Shakespeare, might well have thought to develop.

the rising affluent classes in Shakespeare's day and would thus reinforce the egalitarian sentiment that all the assembled English were a "band of brothers" (4.3.60).<sup>151</sup>

Any reading, therefore, that privileges the *erasure* of monumentation during the Reformation is doomed to lead the critic astray. Brian Walsh, for example, argues that Henry's prayer before Agincourt detailing the commemorative work he has and will do for Richard, would, in its

mention of chantries and intercessory practices ... have induced nostalgia for a world of such rituals, or may have worked to remind audiences of an unsavory practice now safely in the past. ... I want to make a very simple point: Shakespeare represents Henry referring to practices that place him in a time period clearly distinct from the 1590s London stage, a temporally distant, *past* era. (Perry and Watkins 157).

This may be true for intercessory prayers, but it is emphatically not true for Henry's tomb and chapel. Despite his article's title, "Chantry, Chronicle, Cockpit: *Henry V* and the Forms of History," Walsh astonishingly does not mention Henry V's chantry at all, a work of art very much in the present. The chantry no longer serves its original intended purpose, but it still retains its potency as an object of commemoration, one Shakespeare clearly felt had enough theatrical power to reference, obliquely and directly, several times in the play.

Up to this point I have looked at the memorials associated with Richard II and Henry V in isolation but not as objects interacting in the sacred space of the Abbey. For a sense of the overall scene, here is Harold F. Hutchison, describing the effect "Henry's superb chantry chapel" had on this most central and most holy of spaces in the Abbey:

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<sup>151</sup> Donald Hedrick does not address the issue of brasses in his analysis of this passage. It is an interesting omission because it seems to reinforce his line of reasoning, building on Derrida and Marx, that even the dead should be part of the workforce (474-475). He focuses on the more vivid and gruesome suggestion Henry makes next, that the corpses of those who do not make it back to England will "Break out into a second course of mischief" and "breed a plague in France" (4.3.107, 104). It is a powerful image, but perhaps not as interconnected to the rhetoric of the rest of the play as the comment about memorials dedicated to those that survive and die on home ground.

It pushed aside the sacred relics, stole much of the glory from the tombs of Queens Eleanor and Philippa and towered above the Plantagenet graves and the shrine of the Confessor beneath. It was deliberately planned to be high enough for congregations far down the nave to see the priests officiating in it, and masses were to be for ever offered up for the soul of the first of our kings who thought it appropriate to have his own separate chantry. The elaborate sculptures on the exterior are still excellently preserved (Hutchison *Henry V* 216).

Seen in this context, Henry's decision to inter his father's old adversary with pomp and splendor in the ring of kings makes far more political sense. His preservation and commemoration of Richard II serves to enhance Henry V's own legacy since his chapel towers over Richard's tomb. It is, in fact, *precisely* a permanent, stone version of what Henry did with Hotspur in *I Henry IV*. At that juncture, Prince Hal spoke well of a rival and then defeated him on the field of battle in order to elevate himself; he informs Hotspur he will "crop to make a garland for my head" a victor's crown from "all the budding honours on thy crest" (*I Henry IV* 5.4.71-72). Now, as king, Henry engages in the same kind of self-aggrandizing commemorative project; working with the heart of Westminster as his medium, he allows Richard's body great honor, understanding that it will only serve to heighten the effect of his own monument. In Shakespeare's time, shorn of the praying priests, this is exactly what the chapel represents and why the playwright must have found the image so powerful and worth invoking on stage. Henry's grand monument stands as an architectural colossus, astride the end of the shrine to Edward the Confessor and the other English kings, enduring (unlike that ancient statue) *beyond* the date of the empire's fall. Long after the tragic events of Henry VI's reign alluded to in the final Chorus, this self-contained material manifestation of Henry V's conquests and heroism looms as large over the play as it did in the minds of his countrymen in the centuries since.

The language of monuments and tombs serves as a device to express Henry's intimate awareness at all times of both the past (in particular of the ways it can be used to benefit himself

in the present) and the potential of the future (how his reign will be remembered).<sup>152</sup> Thus, Henry can be seen as nearly an ideal king, or at least one who has not fallen into the traps of his predecessors: the solipsism of Richard II and the cultivated amnesia of Henry IV.<sup>153</sup> Unlike yet another king, who describes himself metaphorically as having “one auspicious and one dropping eye,” Henry V is portrayed positively throughout the tetralogy as having one eye on the past and one trained on the future (*Hamlet* 1.2.11).<sup>154</sup> The Chorus contributes to this process as well. Much has been made of the Chorus’ final lines, directing the audience to remember the failures of Henry VI, “which oft our stage hath shown” (Epilogue 13). The very last reference to Henry V, however, is to “his sword / By which the world’s best garden he achieved, / And of it left his son imperial lord” (Epilogue 6-8). The Chorus mentions this sword earlier as well, in the description of the victorious army’s return to England:

So swift a pace hath thought, that even now  
 You may imagine him upon Blackheath,  
 Where that his lords desire him to have borne  
 His bruised helmet and his bended sword  
 Before him through the city; he forbids it,  
 Being free from vainness and self-glorious pride,  
 Giving full trophy, signal, and ostent  
 Quite from himself, to God. (5.0.15-22)

The arms and armor that, at the moment, the King does not allow to be paraded in his piousness are still paraded through our memory by the Chorus. The specificity of the image may mean little to us, but to the London audience of the period, the evocation of Henry’s arms drew a direct

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<sup>152</sup> It is, of course, only one of several strategies Shakespeare employs for portraying this trait. See, for example, the moment Prince Hal thinks his father has died and he has become king. His very first thought is of the long line of “So many English kings” that had previously worn the crown (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.167).

<sup>153</sup> For more on the way Henry V’s actions are designed to be seen in contrast to those of Richard II, see Garber 396. For a more grim view of Henry’s interaction with the past, see Leggatt 134-135.

<sup>154</sup> Even in Henry’s wooing of Katherine at the end of the play, there are references to “Bullingbrook’s deposing of Richard and its domestic consequences that led to Henry’s foreign war against France” and the future, through his imagined heir, who he hopes to create with the French princess (Rebholz 65).

line to where his implements of war and conquest still hung, above the tomb of Henry V in Westminster Abbey, just under his massive, splendid chapel.

## CHAPTER 4

### “LET MY GRAVESTONE BE YOUR ORACLE”: THE POWER OF TOMBS TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

In his book *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments and Early Modern England*, Phillip Lindley details an extraordinary tale of mass deception perpetrated in the twelfth century by the monks of Glastonbury Abbey. Facing a financial crisis precipitated by declining tourism revenues, the Glastonbury monks funded a fraudulent story about the origins of the monastery linking them to St Joseph of Arimathea. When a fire destroyed the abbey in 1184, further exacerbating their financial woes, the monks hatched an even more audacious plan. Seven years later in 1191, the monks “discovered at a depth of sixteen feet... in the monks’ cemetery,” the bodies of Guinevere and King Arthur, the latter resting “below a [buried] stone” and “a leaden cross stating that this was the body of Arthur” (Lindley 143, 144). Of course, as Lindley points out, “the entire exhumation seems to have been a monastic fraud,” but this did not stop an engraving of the cross from appearing in Camden’s 1607 *Britannia*, nor did it limit popular fascination with the elaborate tomb constructed for the mythical couple, “placed centrally, before the high altar, with Edmund the Elder on its north side and Edmund Ironside to the south” (Lindley 145, 151).

The Glastonbury monks’ ruse succeeded because they anchored their fiction simultaneously to the mythic and to the material. They chose figures who already had legendary



associations with the abbey, they played on the assumption that everything buried is ancient (useful to perpetrators of other historical hoaxes such as the Piltdown Man), and they even included a bit of theater; according to one account of the burial's discovery, the excavating monks were "surrounded by a crowd, but screened from direct view by curtains," almost like magicians performing a conjuring trick (Lindley 144). The most important elements, however, were the artifacts they "discovered" and the material reality of the tomb the monks swiftly constructed to support their account of the original burial. After the excavation, the monks obtained a "substantial and magnificent monument of black marble or touchstone... nobly carved and of excellent workmanship" to commemorate Arthur and Guinevere (Lindley 150). This tomb served as the most convincing piece of evidence for antiquarians such as John Leyland that the famed couple was indeed buried here, and it is primarily through Leyland's effusive account, written three hundred and fifty years after the original deception, that we possess any physical details about the tomb; it and the abbey that housed it were destroyed in the Dissolution.

The previous chapter dealt with Shakespeare's second tetralogy and the various ways characters used tombs and tomb symbolism to preserve the past. Shakespeare had little need to emphasize the power of tombs to support and preserve fictions in the story of Henry V. Elizabethan audiences viewed the historical King Henry as a national hero; as a result, Henry the character's quest to be remembered, his monumental project if you will, was fairly straightforward. While his techniques for self-aggrandizement and self-memorialization might be portrayed as Machiavellian in the plays, the historical facts about his reign were clear; he conquered both rebels at home and enemy lands across the Channel. Henry needed to employ almost no dissimulation to preserve his reputation as one of England's great monarchs, at least by the yardstick of military accomplishment.

Not all monumental projects had the good fortune of such an accomplished subject, nor did the intentions of those constructing the monument always align with the desires of the subject to be commemorated. Fortunately, “no one is under oath when inscriptions are written” (Llewellyn *Funeral* 118). While the previous chapter detailed the way tombs on stage symbolized the largely unmodified preservation of the the accepted historical record, this chapter takes Llewellyn’s assertion that “the post-Reformation monument was a powerful tool of fiction as well as history” and demonstrates the ways early modern playwrights, working within an astonishing variety of genres, used the symbolic potential of tombs to alter, falsify, and even erase the past (*Funeral* 118).

Distinguishing fact from fiction in *offstage* tombs can be just as impossible as determining absolute historical “truth.” While most monuments have more factual basis than the Glastonbury monks’ deceptive shrine, outside of verifiable details like names, birth and death dates, and lists of titles, most tombs understandably employ varying levels of exaggeration and dissimulation. Separating truth from fiction is far easier in the world of the playhouse. Audiences collectively watch the action of the play unfold before them; if a character suggests an account of past events that does not match what the audience has seen transpire, they instantly know a fiction is being created. The use of tomb symbolism allows a playwright to shift this fictive account of the past from the ephemeral to the permanent and to make claims about who controls the recording of history and to what ends.

The historiographic power of tombs to alter the past can be wielded onstage in a variety of ways. Individuals can be denied tombs entirely in an effort to allow their memory to fade into oblivion. If this proves impossible because they have already prepared their tombs before their deaths, these existing tombs can be reinterpreted. Epitaphs and even whole monuments can be

ambiguous, leaving space for canny survivors to recast the intended messages in a different light.<sup>155</sup> Finally, entirely new tombs can be constructed in an effort to disseminate and preserve a biased and even fraudulent vision of individuals and events. In all of these deployments of tomb imagery, the action of onstage characters to permanently inscribe fictive descriptions and interpretations of witnessed events lays bare the very processes of historiography whereby the victor (or at least the survivor) gets the opportunity to dictate what will be remembered.

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During this period, a surprising number of important individuals did not receive tombs at all. According to Peter Sherlock, the percentage of members of the nobility “commemorated in material form . . . is probably about one-third” (21). Because this leaves two-thirds without tombs, “the question becomes why some nobility did erect tombs, rather than why others did not. Far from being formulaic objects build by most wealthy people, tombs had specific purposes and were constructed with particular outcomes in mind” (Sherlock 21). This extremely important question is one to which I will return. First, however, I must question Sherlock’s refiguring of the issue and explain why the proverbial dog did not bark: why *were* there so few tombs for nobles?

In an extended reading of the monuments in the Bedford Chapel in Chenies, Buckinghamshire, Sherlock demonstrates that the vast number of tombs on display there, “commemorat[ing] six generations of the Russell family across 150 years,” were not erected over

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<sup>155</sup> We saw this in part in the previous chapter where Richard II’s tomb, stripped of its statuary and left empty as a cenotaph, could be seen to stand as a symbol of his childlessness.

the same span of time but were, in fact, produced in short bursts by just four individuals (28). These individuals constructed tombs in the chapel “to make specific claims about their place within the lineage... Many of the monuments were provoked by crises in the succession of title and property” (Sherlock 28). As he puts it succinctly later in his book, “tombs were eminently suited to promoting one’s place in the world not as it actually was but as it should have been” (Sherlock 40). As a result, if survivors did not perceive a threat to their position or a wrong to be righted, they felt less pressure to construct tombs. Noble lines secure in their status and dynasties confident in their continued perpetuation could safely allow individual members to perish without constructing an expensive and showy “social body after death.” A lack of a tomb therefore often signified family security. There were, however, other reasons for not constructing tombs. The example is medieval, but Nicola Smith’s description of the complex negotiations over what kind of monument could be constructed in York Minster for Archbishop Scrope, a Becket-like figure executed on orders of Henry IV, demonstrates the difficulties inherent in deciding how to commemorate a controversial individual. “Permission was given for his burial in York Minster, though no effigy was to be allowed on his tomb, an indicator of how powerful the three-dimensional sculpted image of the individual was thought to be” (Smith 30).<sup>156</sup> According to Christopher Wilson, this fear of tombs as a potential loci for dissent and rebellion may have served as Mary I’s rationale for having her brother Edward VI “uniquely and

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<sup>156</sup> Unfortunately for the authorities, this still proved to be too much of a monument. Smith continues, “The decision gave cause for regret almost immediately, as miracles were soon reported at the site of his death and burial. Rumours also began to circulate which said that, from the moment of the execution, Henry IV was afflicted with leprosy. Logs and stones were piled on to the grave to try and stop people venerating it and leaving offerings there, but that tactic only gave rise to a new miracle story. The archbishop was supposed to have appeared in a vision to an elderly man, commanding him to do penance at his tomb and to remove the obstacles from it, which he apparently did with ease, lifting weights said to be such that three strong men could barely manage them. Offerings then piled up at the tomb as at a shrine, a tempting source of revenue which before long was deemed acceptable enough to be used to fund current building projects at the Minster” (Smith 30).

bizarrely” interred “below the high altar”; such a location made “it impossible to raise a monument over the burial site” (Tatton-Brown and Mortimer 187).

While Sherlock’s explanations almost certainly hold in the real world of early modern England, the refusal to erect a monument to an individual in a *play* universally signifies something far more akin to the situation of Edward VI and Archbishop Scrope. When characters on stage speak of *not* building a memorial, it represents a conscious effort on the part of the survivors to erase those that might otherwise be commemorated. In John Marston’s *The Malcontent*, Mendoza banishes Aurelia and states his retribution will outlast her life; he will not “permit on death / Unto the body any ornament; / But, base as was thy life, depart away” (Bevington et al. 4.3.61-63). She receives this treatment despite her noble birth and marriage. Banishment is not sufficient punishment; Mendoza strives to erase her even from future memory. A dying Beatrice, at the end of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s *The Changeling*, actually calls this same curse down upon her own head. Having earlier commanded that her murdered servant Diaphanta receive a dignified burial, Beatrice feels herself so irredeemable that she deserves no such courtesy. She pleads with her father:

Oh, come not near me, sir; I shall defile you.  
I am that of your blood was taken from you  
For your better health. Look no more upon’t  
But cast it to the ground regardlessly;  
Let the common sewer take it from distinction. (Bevington et al. 5.3.158-162)

Beatrice speaks of bloodletting, but she also embeds in this passage a request to be uncommemorated, her body “cast to the ground” and forgotten. In the end she gets her wish. Her father, Vermandero, despairs at the shame she has brought, lamenting, “Oh, my name is entered now in that record / Where till this fatal hour ‘twas never read!” (5.3.190-191). Her husband, Alsemero, offers a solution similar to the one Beatrice suggested: “Let it be blotted out,

let your heart lose it, / And it can never look you in the face, / Nor tell a tale behind the back of life, / To your dishonor” (5.3.192-195). By metaphorically abandoning Beatrice to the gutter, Vermandero can allow his dishonor to fade along with the memory of his daughter’s very existence.

If mere erasure proved insufficient, other options outside the playhouse included making the act of burial as shameful as possible so that the humiliation might live on in memory, if not in stone. This kind of ignominious interment came in several forms. Prostitutes, for example, suffered the shame of resting forever outside of consecrated ground.<sup>157</sup> As commoners, they were of course unlikely to receive elaborate monumentation under the best of circumstances, but even including them within the churchyard was deemed too lenient. St. Saviour’s in Southwark, close to the Globe, possessed an unconsecrated plot set aside for women from the Stews: “The women inhabiting these houses are said not to have been allowed Christian burial unless reconciled to the church before their death, [sic] there is an unconsecrated burial ground known as the ‘Cross Bones’ at the corner of Redcross Street, formerly called the Single Woman’s burial ground, which is said to have been used for the purpose” (Taylor 141).

The bodies of suicides received far worse treatment. According to John Weever, such individuals were buried “in or neare to the high wayes, with a stake thrust through their bodies, to terrifie all passengers, by that so infamous and reproachfull a buriall; not to make such their finall passage out of this present world” (22). Few records of this treatment survive; it may have been carried out infrequently, but it is also possible that preserving accounts of the victims’ details in local archives compromised the erasure of such individuals and so their punishment went unrecorded. Nonetheless, Gittings describes one example, found in the 1573 parish register

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<sup>157</sup> Of course, the reasons for such a burial were overtly theological, but such traditions derived from shame and a desire not to fraternize in death with the contaminated.

of Pleasley, Derbyshire where a drunk hanged himself from a tree and was duly “at midnight buried at the highest crossroads with a stake in him” (72).<sup>158</sup> A combination of motivations, both superstitious and practical, fueled this practice. The actual form of the ceremony originated from ancient fears: “crossroads were chosen in order to diffuse the evil influence of the body in several different directions, thus rendering it less harmful; the stake was to prevent the ghost from walking” (Gittings 73). The theater of it, however, resulted from the preventative power of shame: “The feare of not hauing buriall, or hauing of ignominious and dishonourable buriall, hath euer affrighted the brauest spiritts of the world” (Weeever 22).

The horror of such a fate occasionally finds its way into the period’s drama. In John Webster’s *The White Devil*, Zanche tells Flamineo she will murder him and then claim he killed himself so that his corpse will be buried in crossroads with “a stake / Through thy body” (Bevington et al. 5.6.147-148). The practice seems, however, to have held little terror for Shakespeare; as incongruous as it might seem, most of his references to suicides buried in such a manner are found in his comedies. In *All’s Well that Ends Well*, Bertram’s follower Paroles satirically condemns the idea of virginity, suggesting that breeding perpetuates mankind; in contrast, remaining chaste “‘Tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity is to accuse your mothers, which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin; virginity murders itself, and should be buried in highways, out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature” (Norton 1.1.127-32). *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* contains a more menacing reference. Puck suggests that he must hurry before “Aurora’s harbinger” arrives:

At whose approach ghosts, wand’ring here and there,  
Troop home to churchyards; dammèd spirits all

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<sup>158</sup> Gittings goes on to point out that the practices continued long enough for Thomas Hardy to record an instance of such a burial in his lifetime.

That in cross-ways and floods have burial  
Already to their wormy beds are gone,  
For fear lest day should look their shames upon.  
They willfully themselves exiled from light,  
And must for aye consort with black-browed night. (3.2.381-388)

As Stephen Greenblatt points out, “Two different types of spirits are quickly sketched here: the first are the ghosts of those who have been buried in churchyards; the second are the ghosts of those who have not received proper funerals” including “those who have committed suicide and hence have been buried at crossroads, where men will walk disrespectfully upon their graves” (*Hamlet* 162). It is odd that a procedure specifically designed to prevent the return of evil spirits would contribute to the legions of restless dead. Perhaps, as Greenblatt suggests, “the universe of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is hyperanimated, especially at night, by restless wanderers” despite the teachings of “Catholic and Protestant theologians [who] would have assigned these spirits a place in the otherworld... lock[ed] away ... securely in a sphere from which they could seldom, if ever, return” (*Hamlet* 162). Whether the intent was to foster theological debate or only to prompt thoughts of an overpopulated, sinister spiritual world, Oberon immediately brushes off the whole issue: “But we are spirits of another sort” (3.2.389). It may be the sort of world where terrifying spirits walk free, but thoughts of such things must be banished to the fringes of this comic play.<sup>159</sup>

Ghosts and spirits aside, however, such burials, while shameful, lacked any elements of permanent display. An individual interred in unsanctified ground or even at a crossroad would leave no material marker and so would be soon forgotten. The easiest way to combat the immediate erasure of an individual from memory was to exhibit the body instead of burying it, both disgracing the subject by preventing burial and also creating a temporary memorial,

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<sup>159</sup> In fact, Shakespeare only discusses the burial of a suicide at length once outside of his comedies: before Ophelia’s burial in *Hamlet*. Even here, it appears within the trappings of comedy; her fate is debated between the two gravediggers in one of the funniest moments of the play.



recording (in slowly decaying fashion) the identity of the deceased. This insulting treatment appears often in the history plays. In *3 Henry VI*, Lancastrian forces mount the head of York where it can look out over the city of York; in *2 Henry VI*, the rebels march into London with the heads of Lord Saye and his son-in-law on pikes where they are made to kiss (*3HVI* 1.4.180-181, *2HVI* 4.7.86, 100-103, 138-144). Marlowe's *Edward II* overflows with references to the display of heads and other parts of bodies, starting with the very first scene. Kent pleads with his brother the King, exhorting him to respond swiftly to the insolent nobles and to "let these their heads / Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues" (1.1.120-21). The nobles respond in kind; Mortimer Jr. tells the King that "our hands, I hope, shall fence our heads, / And strike off his that makes you threaten us," while Lancaster ensures Edward that, if he continues protecting his favorite, he should "look to see the throne where you should sit / To float in blood, and at thy wanton head / The glozing head of thy base minion thrown" (1.1.126-27, 134-36).

Such was the punishment of traitors, present and past, to be displayed at the entrances of the city and then to have this display reenacted within theaters outside the city's limits. As James Calderwood amusingly puts it, this sentence was the payment for excessive pride:

Man's evolutionary presumption in standing erect and raising his head above those of the beasts is dangerously augmented by the head-raising of individual men striving for elevation on the social or political ladder. As a result a good many in Shakespeare's time—Essex, Christopher Blount, and Raleigh most notably—were obliged to leave life some seven or eight inches shorter at the top, a public reminder that if you do not incline your head in the presence of queens and kings you may have to do so in the presence of the executioner. (34)

However, this prohibition against excessive pride was not universal. An individual could potentially increase his (or more rarely her) own status in perpetuity *and* go to great lengths to ensure proper interment and commemoration of his body, all by the socially acceptable step of constructing his own tomb while still living.

As pointed out earlier, Sherlock argues persuasively that tombs were not constructed as a matter of course but usually served as responses to a threat to family continuity. Such threats were particularly frequent at this stage in history: “The great fear of all dynasts is oblivion and in our period such fears were well founded” (Llewellyn *Funeral* 58). Uncertainties surrounding the English Reformation and the resulting changes in techniques of monumentation fed “anxiety that proper remembrance would not be paid after one’s death [and] contributed to an increased valuation of memorialization while living” (Newstok 19). John Weever in 1631 tried to argue, through the use of extensive biblical and historical reference, that the practice of self-monumentation always had been common: “IT was vsuall in ancient times, and so it is in these our dayes, for persons of especiall ranke and qualitie to make their owne Tombes and Monuments in their life-time ... most especially because thereby they thought to preserue their memories from obliuion” (18). His claims about the commonness of the practice in medieval times are belied by the material evidence, however, not to mention the drama of the period. In an exchange about the proverbial good old days and the decline of present generosity in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benidick insists to Beatrice that “If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps” (5.2.65-67). This duration, he continues, rarely exceeds “an hour in clamour and a quarter in rheum. Therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm—his conscience—find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself” (5.2.69-72).

It is one thing, of course, to trumpet virtue if you have it; one could argue that Benidick fares pretty well in comparative virtue with most of Shakespeare’s comic heroes. In Ben Jonson’s satirical *Every Many Out of His Humour*, we can see the other side of this coin. Sogliardo, an absurd social climber trying to buy a title (possibly a job at Shakespeare), talks of

his father's hobby horse which hangs in his house as a mark of pride similar to the "achievements" discussed in the previous two chapters. The fool, Carlo Buffone, suggests that "when you die, 'twill be an excellent trophy to hang over your tomb" (Jonson 2.1.62-63).

Sogliardo thinks this is a splendid idea:

Sogliardo – Mass, and I'll have a tomb (now I think on't); 'tis but so much charges.

Carlo Buffone – Best build it in your lifetime then; your heirs may hap to forget it else.

Sogliardo – Nay, I mean so; I'll not trust to them.

Carlo Buffone – No, for heirs and executors are grown damnable careless, specially since the ghosts of testators left walking. (Jonson 2.1.64-70)

The final joke rests on the recent theological changes; no longer are survivors burdened with the responsibility to commemorate the dead with flashy tombs that plead for passersbys to stop and pray the deceased through purgatory. In Protestant England, an individual with no merits who wishes to perform a bit of postmortem social climbing must see to it before he passes away.

Such tombs became notorious for their fictions. In the same play, a later speech by Macilente, an envious scholar, compares tombs to the clothes of courtiers. "Be a man ne'er so vile / In wit, in judgement, manners, or what else; / If he can purchase but a silken cover, / He shall not only pass, but pass regarded" (Jonson 3.9.9-12). This power possessed by clothes, Macilente muses, resembles the power inherent in monuments such as the tomb of Lord Chancellor Christopher Hatton (d. 1591), regarded as a splendid landmark in Old St Paul's:

His gravity, his wisdom, and his faith  
To my dread sovereign, graces that survive him,  
These I could well endure to reverence,  
But not his tomb: no more than I'd commend  
The chapel organ for the gilt without,  
Or this bass viol for the varnished face. (Jonson 3.9.24-29)

Ben Jonson, like John Webster and (as I shall touch on later) Middleton, seems to harbor strong suspicions about the power of tombs. This may partially explain Macilente's unusually perceptive comments. Nonetheless, this passage points effectively toward the main limitation of attempting to write one's own legacy through the tomb; after you are dead, you have no control over alterations to your monument or the way others interpret it.<sup>160</sup> Scott Newstok has the following to say about the act of self-memorialization:

Many would concur with the inclination that writing your own epitaph entails an act of hubris, since such an action presumes that you could fully anticipate your own posterity. There is the suspicion that finalizing the epitaph would, in turn, finalize the life, or that writing your own epitaph means that, in some respects, you are already dead to the world. Presumably there should be a degree of self-evidence in your characterization that would not require you to shape it for others; in other words, writing your own epitaph would ideally be superfluous, in that your life should naturally manifest the intentions that you had for it. (62)

There are, I feel, a few problems with Newstok's formulation. He seems to posit a kind of absolute, universal reputation, leaving little room for the kind of fictive and status-altering monuments that I examine in sections two and three in this chapter. Before moving to that point, however, we need to consider how tombs designed by individuals before their own death often fail to "finalize the life" in the way Newstok implies and, in fact, still leave survivors the opportunity to weave fictions around the deceased.

History is littered with examples of individuals who planned their own burials only to have their wishes ignored or forgotten. Henry VIII, in one of his many plans for self-monumentation, selected as a centerpiece the giant "black marble sarcophagus 7 ft. long and 4 ft. wide" from the monument the disgraced Cardinal Woolsey had planned for himself (Hutchinson

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<sup>160</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, the self-monumentalizing project can go either way. Both Richard II and Henry V saw to their own monuments before their deaths; only the latter was remembered as he intended. This has less to do with the tomb construction and more to do with the vagaries of history; narratives about the past tend only to be preserved if they do not challenge those in power. While an examination of how this conflict plays out offstage is well outside the boundaries of this study, this is exactly the process I am examining *onstage* in this chapter.

262). Henry never completed the tomb during his life, however, and the sarcophagus, which had lain disused for centuries, was “sent to London in 1808 for re-use in the huge monument to Lord Nelson in St Paul’s,” while Henry himself, astonishingly, lies under a simple marble slab in St George’s, along with three more otherwise uncommemorated royal figures (Hutchinson 270).<sup>161</sup> Virtually the opposite fate befell Cardinal John Morton (d. 1500). Preferring a modest route and defying the protestations of his friends and colleagues, he chose to be buried out of the public eye, in the Canterbury Cathedral crypt, with only a simple marble marker to denote his resting place. Although his requests were honored at first, his preference was soon overruled: “within a few years an imposing cenotaph arose on the nearest accessible spot to his grave. No doubt there was a feeling abroad that the memory of so notable a statesman and improver of the Cathedral fabric deserved to be kept alive by a tomb such as he had been encouraged to build in his lifetime” (Collinson, Ramsay and Sparks 485).

For figures who lived their lives in the public eye, there loomed danger that someone could come along after their death and re-work their legacy. Perhaps this explains why many of the dramatic examples of self-monumentation come from hermits and lonely cynics. Robert Greene’s *James the Fourth*, a madcap effort to cash in on the history play craze, opens with Oberon, king of the fairies, dancing around the tomb of Bohan, a misanthropic Scotsman. When asked why he not only built his own tomb well away from civilization but also chose to live in it with his two sons, Bohan responds that he wished to avoid false “friends” who “eat me and my meat” (Introduction 64, 65). Finding “the court ill, the country worse, and the city worst of all,”

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<sup>161</sup> Hutchinson’s final chapter, “Tombs of Brass are Spent” (pp. 259-273), contains a wealth of excellent information on Henry VIII’s various plans for self-commemoration and explanations of why they never came to fruition. The slab over Henry’s resting place reads as follows: “IN A VAULT / BENEATH THIS MARBLE SLAB / ARE DEPOSITED THE REMAINS / OF / JANE SEYMOUR QUEEN OF KING HENRY VIII / 1537 / KING HENRY VIII / 1547 / KING CHARLES I / 1648 / AND / AN INFANT CHILD OF QUEEN ANNE / THIS MEMORIAL WAS PLACED HERE / BY COMMAND OF / KING WILLIAM IV. 1837” (Hutchinson 273). That Henry is now commemorated along with an executed king and an unnamed child (not to mention the extraordinary delay in even this notice being posted) shows how far his final resting place fell short of his own designs.

he tells Oberon he chose to construct this rural “tomb, where if I die, I am sure I am safe from wild beasts; but whilst I live, cannot be free from ill company. Besides, now I am sure, gif all my friends fail me, I sall have a grave of mine own providing” (Introduction.67-8, 71-74).

Oberon draws him out from his tomb and, over the course of the play in a variety of scenes,<sup>162</sup> shows him a number of tombs of great men. In one such scene, Oberon summons for Bohan a dumb show of Alexander weeping over the tomb of Cyrus; when the Scotsman asks what he has seen, Oberon explains:

Cyrus of Persia,  
Mighty in life, within a marble grave  
Was laid to rot; whom Alexander once  
Beheld entombed, and weeping, did confess  
Nothing in life could ‘scape from wretchedness:  
Why then boast men? (Chorus 7.3-8)

Bohan laconically responds to this moving pageant, “What reck I then of life, / Who makes the grave my home, the earth my wife” (Chorus 7.8-9). “Reck” here takes on meaning 5a from the *OED*, “To concern, trouble, or worry; to matter to; to interest.”<sup>163</sup> Bohan will have none of Alexander’s weeping; he himself has already come to the grave and has found nothing about the situation worthy of such histrionics. In a later chorus, Oberon shows Bohan “Sesostris, who was conqueror of the world, / Slain at the last, and stamped on by his slaves,” but this similarly has no effect on the sardonic Scot. (Chorus 8.5-6). Bohan simply tells the king of fairies, “How blest are peur men, then, that know their graves!” (Chorus 8.7). He then literally dances Oberon back to the land of the fairies: “Hail me ne mere with shows of guidly sights; / My grave is mine, that rids me from despites; / Accept my jig, guid king, and let me rest; / The grave with guid men is a gay-built nest” (Chorus 8.15-18). By withdrawing entirely from the world and *literally* living in

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<sup>162</sup> No one is sure exactly where these scenes belong in the chronology of the play. See Sanders edition for further details.

<sup>163</sup> Greene has an entry under this word and this particular definition from his *George a Greene*, published in 1599 well after his death.

his own grave, Bohan successfully avoids the vagaries of life and death. What to others might be serious cause for worry and weeping serves for him merely as an invitation to dance.

Shakespeare and Middleton's representative self-monumentalizing misanthrope, Timon, fares rather worse than his creative forbearer Bohan, although he gets off to a much better start.<sup>164</sup> In an effort to control his own enduring reputation, Timon also constructs his own tomb. His efforts are undermined, however, by both his carelessness in epitaph composition and by his importance to the public, an importance that causes those that outlive him to actively reinterpret his legacy. While Bohan seems unknown, living a waking death within his own tomb and forgotten by all but the fairy realm, Timon announces his intentions to no less of an audience than a gathering of Athenian senators who have come to plead with him for help. He refuses their requests and announces his intentions in his final *living* words in the play:

Come not to me again, but say to Athens,  
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion  
Upon the beachèd verge of the salt flood,  
Who once a day with his embossèd froth  
The turbulent surge shall cover. Thither come,  
And let my gravestone be your oracle.  
Lips, let four words go by, and language end.  
What is amiss, plague and infection mend.  
Graves only be men's works, and death their gain.  
Sun, hide thy beams. Timon hath done his reign. (5.2.99-108)

There is much to digest in this passage. Timon insists on a highly unusual location for his tomb, on the shore of the sea. In so doing, he plans to take himself not merely far from any consecrated ground<sup>165</sup> but far from all humanity. Rolf Soellner, a critic whose intense love for the play leads,

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<sup>164</sup> I find it odd that Greene's play is not listed among the secondary sources and inspirations of Shakespeare and Middleton's *Timon of Athens* in *The Norton Shakespeare* or the most recent Oxford and Arden editions of the play. Bohan's rant about false friends that eat him as they devour his goods directly parallels the events that drive Timon to flee Athens. Apemantus, for example, in one of several similar references in the play, is stunned when he watches the banquets: "what a number of men eats Timon, and he sees 'em not! It grieves me to see so many dip their meat in one man's blood" (1.2.38-40).

<sup>165</sup> However anachronistic such an idea might be in ancient Greece.

at times, to intriguing but possibly strained conclusions,<sup>166</sup> claims, “The pulsating sea... evokes the up-and-down movement of his life. Lapped by the waters that change and obliterate, his grave is a powerful symbol of the ultimate fortune to which all men must come: death” (154). While the former point seems a bit of a stretch, the latter is likely close to the mark. John Jowett also, I think, gets it only half right when he claims “[t]he imagery of lying buried in a grave washed by the sea looks forward to Shakespeare’s late plays, the sea acting as an agent of both time and immortality” (Shakespeare and Middleton *Oxford Timon* 85). Here, at this moment, neither Soellners’ undulating life nor Jowett’s “immortality” seem to apply; rather the description holds overtones of an obscure death and erasure from history. In his lyric meditation on what it means to die and to be buried, Robert Pogue Harrison points to the power of the sea to swallow any human attempt at commemoration: “There are no gravestones on the sea. History and memory ground themselves on inscription, but this element is uninscribable. It closes over rather than keeps the place of its dead, while its unbounded grave remains humanly unmarked” (12). The anonymity and uninscribable uniformity of the seas partially accounts for Pericles’ distress when he must toss his (seemingly) dead wife from his boat to quell the storm as well as Ferdinand’s impotent grief at Ariel’s taunting song that starts “Full fathom five thy father lies” in *The Tempest* (1.2.400). In late Shakespeare, there is little immortalizing about the sea.

When Timon first plans to construct his own tomb, he tells himself, “Timon, presently prepare thy grave. / Lie where the light foam of the sea may beat / Thy gravestone daily” (4.3.370-372). Timon here clearly paints an imaginative image of erosion and erasure. When Flavius, Timon’s old steward, returns to see his former lord, he is overwhelmed and cries out, “Oh you gods! / Is yon despised and ruinous man my lord, / Full of decay and failing? O

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<sup>166</sup> At the beginning of his study, to counterbalance the many critics who have treated the play so harshly over the years, he asks the reader that “I may be forgiven if I have lapsed occasionally into fervor when defending its merits” (Soellner 1).



monument / And wonder of good deeds evilly bestowed!” (4.3.451-454). Life and fortune have here made Timon “despised and ruinous,” literally a living “monument” to man’s inhumanity to man. In this context, Timon’s plans for a seaside monument, discussed once before and once after Flavius’ outburst, seems an invitation to the sea to finish the job of destruction, effacement, and annihilation in death that has already taken its full course in life.<sup>167</sup>

Timon fears no such immediate erasure; he does not believe his tomb will be forgotten by the living. In his final speech, Timon declares, “let my gravestone be your oracle.” “The word *oracle*,” as Soellner points out, “provides a reminder that Timon is an ancient Greek” while “the prophecy itself has a pseudo-biblical rhythm” (81). Both allusions, I think, find traction here, but no Greek oracles (or any other oracles that I can find) waited until *after* death to speak their words of truth. Soellner proposes that the cryptic allusion to “‘four words’ ... evoke the four horsemen of the apocalypse and in general the magic number four associated with apocalyptic prophecies” (81). Again, these suggestions are possible, although clearly not overt in the text; the “four words” to which Timon alludes comprise a well-known crux of the play. In the Oxford edition, Jowitt postulates Timon “may well refer to the four subjunctives directed at the ‘plague and infection’, ‘Graves’, ‘death’, and the ‘Sun’. These ‘words’ (in the sense ‘utterances’, ‘maxims’, or ‘commands’) recapitulate Timon’s former anger” (Shakespeare and Middleton *Oxford Timon* 85). The most recent Arden avoids the issue entirely, emending “four” to “sour” and assuming “a minor error in reading long *s* as *f*” (Shakespeare and Middleton *Arden Timon*

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<sup>167</sup> For another interesting example of this kind of symbolism combined with a death, see Heywood’s 1600 *Edward IV: Part 2*. Mathew Shore, distressed at his wife Jane’s infidelity with the king, secretly changes his name to Matthew Flood and, on the verge of being hanged, speaks in an aside:

To die, unknown thus, is my greatest good:

That Matthew Shore’s not hanged, but Matthew Flood,

For floods of woe have washed away the shore

That never wife nor kin shall look on more. (Heywood *King Edward IV* 12.97-100)

The Flood, here overtly his own name and the sea, has washed away the Shore, both his old life and the solid ground of life itself.

*Third Ed.* 328). I believe that the focus on this crux is misguided. What Timon's "Lips" allow to "go by" really matters very little because no one has heeded his words sufficiently anyway. Only in death will he transform, through the medium of the monument, to an oracle speaking truth to power and being heard. This final message might be, as we will see, a bit unclear, but as Sherlock points out, "[t]he dead had more to say to the living than we might realise. Their desire to speak was symbolised in the continuing use of speech scrolls on sixteenth-century brasses" and through them, "[t]he living were constantly reminded of their own mortality" (95).

As mentioned earlier, Timon's short speech describing his burial plans proves to be his final *living* words. His goal, however, remains to speak on as an "oracle" after death. He constructs his own tomb, inscribes his epitaph(s) on it, and presumably climbs inside and dies. Immediately, however, Timon's plans begin to unravel. Obviously, once an individual is dead, he ceases to control how he is remembered and commemorated. While no one actually alters Timon's physical monument, the *interpretation* of his tomb shifts well away from his original intentions.

The first impediment to the ability of Timon's tomb to speak proves to be the same one that confronted all tomb patrons and designers during the period: an illiterate audience.<sup>168</sup> An unnamed soldier searching for Timon stumbles across his monument: "What is this? / Dead, sure, and this his grave. What's on this tomb / I cannot read. The character I'll take with wax" (5.4.2-4). He brings this wax to his captain, Alcibiades, whom he refers to as "[a]n aged interpreter, though young in days," in the hopes that he will be able to read and explicate the hidden meaning (5.4.6).

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<sup>168</sup> This is one reason for the proliferation of symbolic figures and objects on tombs which I will address in the next chapter.

The editors of *The Norton Shakespeare* actually performed some effacing of their own here. In the Folio (the only source for the play), there are two extra lines found after the soldier's exclamation, "What is this?" The Norton removed this couplet without so much as a footnote; "Tymon is dead, who hath out-stetcht his span, / Some beast read this; There do's no liue a Man." These lines have stirred up quite a bit of speculation. Jowett feels that while this "clearly ... proclaims the inhumanity of 'man', it also happens to remind us that few people are likely to stumble on this obscure memorial and read it" (Shakespeare and Middleton *Oxford Timon* 87). More often, however, the fact that the lines form a rhymed couplet has caused critics to read it as an epitaph that the Soldier somehow reads despite his illiteracy. In their Arden edition of the play, Anthony Dawson and Gretchen Minton follow Harold Staunton in arguing "that there are in fact two epitaphs: one in the vernacular read here by the Soldier, and one in a language that the Soldier cannot read (assuming that the authors are thinking of an English, not a Greek, soldier, the unknown language might well be Latin)" (Shakespeare and Middleton *Arden Timon Third Ed.* 331). If so, it turns out to be one of *three* epitaphs that, in the Folio, grace Timon's tomb. When the Soldier (who, in the Folio is inexplicably retitled Messenger for the final scene) arrives at Alcibiades' camp, he engages in the following exchange that I quote at length because it raises several important issues:

Soldier – My noble general, Timon is dead,  
 Entombed upon the very hem o'th' sea;  
 And on his gravestone this insculpture, which  
 With wax I brought away, whose soft impression  
 Interprets for my poor ignorance.

*ALCIBIADES reads the Epitaph*

Alcibiades – 'Here lies a wretched corpse,  
 Of wretched soul bereft.  
 Seek not my name. A plague consume  
 You wicked caitiffs left!  
 Here lie I, Timon, who alive  
 All living men did hate.

Pass by and curse thy fill, but pass  
     And stay not here thy gait.<sup>7</sup>  
 These well express in thee thy latter spirits.  
 Though thou abhorred'st in us our human griefs,  
 Scorned'st our brains' flow and those our droplets which  
 From niggard nature fall, yet rich conceit  
 Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye  
 On thy low grave, on faults forgiven. Dead  
 Is noble Timon, of whose memory  
 Hereafter more. (5.5.66-86)

Not only does Alcibiades read *two* four-line epitaphs here, they are mutually exclusive; the former tells visitors to “Seek not my name” and speaks generally of a “wretched soul,” while the latter proudly proclaims his name and station here on earth.<sup>169</sup>

What can be made of this? While the soldier gamely hopes the wax impression he has brought “Interprets for my poor ignorance,” we as an audience are likely left scratching our heads. Most editors read this double epitaph as evidence that Shakespeare and Middleton were not finished with the play and had perhaps not decided which of the two epitaphs (both of which appear in Plutarch’s “Life of Antony”) to keep and which to strike. The most recent Arden, in fact, goes further and chooses for us, eliminating the first epitaph completely.<sup>170</sup> I prefer Jowett’s take on the multiple epitaphs. In a note to the first of the three possible inscriptions, he writes, “a superfluity of epitaphs seems oddly appropriate to the play and the character” (Shakespeare and Middleton *Oxford Timon* 317). Dawson and Minton criticize Jowett for not clarifying what he means by this comment, but it seems to complement an observation the philosopher Apemantus makes to Timon after the latter has retreated to his cave: “The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends” (4.3.300-301). Timon shifts

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<sup>169</sup> See Joshua Scodel’s *The English Poetic Epitaph : Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth*, pages 53-56 for an interesting discussion of the name itself serving as an epitaph.

<sup>170</sup> Dawson and Minton’s justification for this action can be found on pages 104-109. It is thought-provoking reading, and, although I do not agree with their final decision, I find their frankness on the difficulty of editing and the need to consider “the intentions on the part of authors, players, publishers, composers and anyone else who may have contributed to the text” quite refreshing (Shakespeare and Middleton *Arden Timon Third Ed.* 106).

violently in his life; he starts as an overly generous spendthrift, becomes a misanthropic ranter, and finally ends up as the subject of an oracular monument. Nonetheless, through all of this, he never speaks in a voice interpretable by the common Athenian. He is, as Apemantus states, above the highest of the high and below the lowest of the low, alternately used and reviled, but never understood. In the end, he unnecessarily clouds his own legacy and leaves this final interpretive puzzle for Alcibiades to untie.

It is initially surprising, then, that Alcibiades expresses no confusion at all but merely glosses over the contradictions. He states that these epitaphs sound like Timon's voice, he speaks of "faults forgiven," and he closes praising Timon's "memory." A careful reader might ask, as Soellner does, "whose are the 'faults forgiven'? They are hardly Timon's, since it was supposedly his conceit to make Neptune weep by erecting his grave at the seaside. Timon never forgave the Athenians, and they, guilty of ingratitude, would forget their own faults if they forgave Timon" (60). Choosing to ignore the oracular monument, which, due to Timon's choice of a secluded burial location, remains conveniently inaccessible and thus reinterpretable, Alcibiades styles himself "the universal forgiver and the inheritor of Timon's legend—quite contrary to the dead man's wishes" (Soellner 60). In a shift surprisingly overlooked by Scott Newstock, "[t]he epitaph's 'stay not here thy gait' is therefore applied—misapplied—to 'here' before the walls of Athens, and to the 'here' that will become the final cleared stage" (Shakespeare and Middleton *Oxford Timon* 88). In so doing, the general who plans to enter Athens and "use the olive with my sword" glosses over any inconsistencies in Timon's final message to create a narrative supporting his goal of regime change (5.5.87).<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> H. J. Oliver, in his earlier Arden second edition of the play, usefully suggests that Alcibiades "is the Octavius, the Aufidius—the man who survives partly because he has a clearer view of things and is more efficient, but partly because (it is the thought that recurs most often in Shakespeare) efficiency has been bought at the price of a certain loss of sensitivity. Timon, like Hamlet, Coriolanus and Antony, has a greater soul than the man of action with

Alcibiades can alter the public perception of Timon in this way because Timon positioned himself as an outcast from Athens and because he placed his monument well away from the public eye. When Octavius wishes similarly to rewrite the reputations of Antony and Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play that, quite tellingly, carries their names and not his, he has neither of these advantages; his foes are two of the great figures of the classical world and their final moments are staged within Cleopatra's massive monument. Here, like in *Timon*, a military figure strives to appropriate the memory and legacy of the dead to support his regime, and like Alcibiades, Octavius must do so within the constraints of an existing monument. In Octavius case however, the fame of his adversary and the size of her monument forces him to take bolder actions than Alcibiades, who merely engaged in a rhetorical recasting of Timon's epitaph.

Octavius greets news of Antony's death with the acknowledgement that the world was never big enough for the two of them: "I must perforce / Have shown to thee such a declining day, / Or look on thine. We could not stall together / In the whole world" (5.1.37-40). Even in death, however, Antony remains a threat. By the fifth act of *Antony and Cleopatra*, "the struggle between Cleopatra and Octavius turns toward where and how the triumph of Caesar will be staged. Cleopatra clearly is politically defeated at this point; but the fifth act of the play is concerned almost exclusively with the *representational* politics of this defeat" (Charnes 131). It is this final conflict that concerns me, and I find it surprising the number of critics who call the conflict in Cleopatra's favor. In all fairness, the reaction is understandable; Cleopatra stands as one of Shakespeare's most interesting, charismatic, and complex creations, and the drama of the play's final minutes pulls in a different direction from the actual facts of the scene. Nonetheless, it sometimes seems as if critics simply stop reading. Harold Bloom certainly gives this

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whom he is contrasted" (Shakespeare *Arden Timon Second Ed.* xlix). While I have little interest in measuring and comparing souls, it is no coincidence, I think, that both Octavius and Aufidius also feature in this chapter as individuals who use the power of tomb symbolism to craft enduring narratives.

impression when, in the forward to a collection of essays on the play, he chooses to write an “introduction [which] centers upon the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra, with particular emphasis upon the astonishing transmutation as the representation of a consciousness” (Bloom vii).

Nothing, of course, is wrong with focusing on a particular subject or moment, but here, in an introduction to essays on the play as a whole, the move seems indicative of the close scrutiny Cleopatra’s death has received to the detriment of the rest of the final scene.

What is the full context, how does the fight over representation take place, and what are the stakes? Anne Barton does a solid job outlining the parameters of this conflict from Octavius’ perspective:

Caesar... wants passionately to get a living Cleopatra back to Italy because, as he says, ‘her life in Rome / Would be eternal in our triumph.’ If only he can do this, he will fix the qualities of the story forever in his own terms, which are those of the strumpet and the gorgon, not the lass unparallel’d and the Mars. Cleopatra will fade into a mere parody queen in the epic pageant of his own imperial greatness, and Antony will become the brother-in-arms who deserted his superior for a light woman and got what he deserved. (Bloom 51)

This aptly summarizes the constraints of Cleopatra’s last ditch rear-guard action; having already lost the war, she spends the last act of the play fighting over how she will be remembered, the only battlefield open to her. This particular fight takes place within Cleopatra’s own monument. A figure deeply concerned about her eternal reputation, Cleopatra saw to her own commemoration long before death. She hauls a dying Antony up into this monument, and her last confrontation with Octavius takes place within this memorial. While a significant number of individuals may have constructed their own tombs during this period, few would have spent significant time there while still living; used in this way, her monument acts not as a commemorative installation but simultaneously as a fortress and a prison. The tomb represents, in fact, all that remains of her once vast holdings; an Egyptian messenger calls her “A poor

Egyptian, yet the Queen my mistress, / Confined in all she has, her monument” (5.1.52-53). We do not know how the play was staged, but David Bevington, in his recent Cambridge edition, reflects current consensus by suggesting the tomb might have been first represented (in 4.15) by the balcony as Cleopatra and her women winch Antony up with much grim wordplay. Later, however, “[i]n 5.2 Cleopatra is seemingly no longer ‘aloft’; she and her maids come onstage as though to a room within the monument, whereupon Proculeius holds her in conversation while Roman soldiers enter from behind and rush upon her” (Shakespeare *Cambridge Antony* 42). This final showdown between Cleopatra and Octavius thus takes place within her monument, imaginatively encompassing the entire stage for this final scene.

Within this monument, the characters make their closing statements, their final attempts to determine their places in history. Some of these speeches have been interpreted as carrying far more weight than others. For example, Cleopatra’s declaration upon deciding to die, that she is now “marble-constant,” captures the attention of many critics (5.2.236). Janet Adelman argues:

death bolts up change for Cleopatra, and she becomes almost statuelike in her attainment of stasis... This transformation is emblematic of the power accorded art in this play: the poetic assertion itself will confer a kind of eternity. In *The Winter’s Tale*, art or poetic assertion becomes literal fact of nature: the statue moves from her pedestal and comes to life. And in *Antony and Cleopatra* the art does not remain lifeless: the poetic assertion moves into the realm of nature. (Adelman 168)

It is tempting because of the theatrical power of the scene to agree, but in truth Adelman makes an extraordinary set of claims. In effect, she argues both that Cleopatra employs performative language to literally make something true with her words *and* that her desperate declaration of constancy before killing herself (a significant change in status and one that prevents her from having any say in her own representation) somehow allies her with Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale*, who actually moves from false marble constancy to real flesh and blood! John Wilders, in



his introduction to the Arden third edition of the play, views her deathbed rhetoric in much the same way. He admits “it is a scene of absolute defeat in which the queen is shown as having lost everything” (Shakespeare *Arden Antony* 3). However, he still tries to argue that “[i]n her last moments ... she asserts that by her death she will be reunited with her lover in a world where they will be immune to time and change,” and that her claim that her death acts as a kind of “apotheosis” leaves audiences “in doubt as to whether her death is a defeat or a kind of victory” (Shakespeare *Arden Antony* 3).

Cleopatra displays Adelman’s constancy insofar as she carries through with her plan to kill herself and she does win “a kind of victory” by undermining Octavius’ plan to display her in Rome. Octavius certainly takes the news as a setback, admitting he must have revealed his hand too much: “She levelled at our purposes, and, being royal / Took her own way” (5.2.326-327). Nonetheless, in the final lines of the play, Octavius offers his final assessment on the situation:

Take up her bed,  
And bear her women from the monument.  
She shall be buried by her Antony.  
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it  
A pair so famous. High events as these  
Strike those that make them, and their story is  
No less in pity than his glory which  
Brought them to be lamented. Our army shall  
In solemn show attend this funeral,  
And then to Rome. Come, Dolabella, see  
High order in this great solemnity.

*Exeunt all [soldiers bearing CLEOPATRA on her bed,  
CHAIRMAN, and, IRAS] (5.2.346-356)*

While perhaps not the dramatic center of the play, these final moments determine, I believe, how we should view the result of Octavius and Cleopatra’s battle over representation. The lines “No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous” indicates to Joan Lord Hall an unquestioned victory for Cleopatra; Octavius, “must defer to the glory of Antony and Cleopatra,

who attain such celebrity through their deaths” (*Antony* 144).<sup>172</sup> In isolating this line, however, Hall misses the bigger picture; I have retained the final stage direction above to highlight the critical issue of staging. Octavius orders his soldiers to “Take up her bed,” and although his command “bear her women from the monument” does not explicitly include Cleopatra, the final “*Exeunt all*” (even before the editorial emendation) leaves no doubt that the stage, at this moment representing Cleopatra’s monument, must be cleared. Many critics miss this fact. Jan H. Blits, in an otherwise careful reading of the play, declares “Antony and Cleopatra will be buried in the tomb in which they both died,” and when Robert Ornstein argues “we know that Cleopatra will live in art because she fashions her own incomparable memorial,” he misses the fact that our last image on stage is of Roman soldiers carrying her “from” that very memorial (Blits *New* 216; Rose 96).

By removing Antony and Cleopatra from her memorial, Octavius recasts the entire situation in a way that flatters his position. In an excellent article detailing the emblematic language linking Cleopatra to the figure of fortune, Peggy Muñoz Simonds properly balances the ineffectuality of words in the face of actions: “although a bereft Cleopatra attempts in the end to immortalize her own brilliant performance of Fortuna in the great theater of the world as transcendent artistic work of marble statuary, the play does end tragically—if somewhat ambiguously so—for both the lovers. Caesar removes their bodies from the monument built to honor the Egyptian queen for eternity and buries them together, we know not where” (223).

While Octavius cannot simply erase Antony and Cleopatra from memory, the fact that only he

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<sup>172</sup> I find Hall’s reading of this scene particularly baffling as, eighty pages earlier in her book, she reads the final scene much as I do. At this point in her study, she claims “The primary concern of the perpetually decorous Caesar is to project an impressive social persona . . . In his self-aggrandizing way, he can even turn the lovers’ funeral into a ‘great solemnity’ that redounds to his own ‘glory’” (Hall *Antony* 64-65). I think it possible that, like other critics, Hall becomes swept up in the soaring rhetoric of Cleopatra’s final moments and so loses touch with her own claims.

remains standing allows him to have the last word and so alter how they are remembered. He can use their worth as foil to his own splendor, to speak of “their story” as “No less in pity than his glory which / Brought them to be lamented” (5.2.351-543). In addition, he takes the teeth out of their legend by “swiftly translat[ing] them from rebellious figures who escaped his control and punishment into legendary lovers” (Charnes 145). Although she perhaps misidentifies the final mechanism by which Octavius permanently inscribes his chosen version of Antony and Cleopatra’s story, Linda Charnes understands the errors made by others in reading the end of the play:

While many critics have observed that Octavius’ historiography ‘officially’ wins in the end, most tend to assume that Antony and Cleopatra have triumphed on ‘other’ grounds that are not, finally, Caesar’s. But such an assumption occluded the fact that it is Octavius himself who legitimates, and hypostatizes into frozen monumentality, this ground. ... In the logic of his own terms, Octavius cannot elevate them enough, since whatever symbolic capital he produced by generating ‘pity’ for their story is commutable into the surplus value of his own glory. As the self-proclaimed maker of ‘high events as these,’ Octavius—who earlier assured Cleopatra that he was ‘no merchant, to make prize with you / Of things that merchants sold’ (5.2.182)—in fact will return to Rome in his new role as the venture capitalist of notorious identity: the Merchant of Legend. (145-46)

It is not, however, “this ground” that Octavius imprints with his preferred version of events; he will march in triumph out of Cleopatra’s monument to inter and commemorate the lovers in a place and manner of his choosing. As Cleopatra earlier told him, “we, / Your scutcheons and your signs of conquest, shall / Hang in what place you please” (5.2.130-132). Although Cleopatra’s death defeated Octavius’ plan to display her living body in Rome, her corpse will still serve his political and symbolic ends; just like the swords and other achievements I discussed in Chapters Two and Three, her glory in life will only go to further his after her death. The pair will not “clip in” the “grave” Cleopatra designed to preserve her earthly glory but one planned by her enemy to reduce her status to that of one half of a pair of lovers.

And yet, to return to Charnes' comments, in another sense it is precisely on "this ground" that Octavius acts, seizing the ground in the wider sense of the theater as a whole. Even if we, as an audience, engage with Antony and Cleopatra, sympathize with them, and admire their love, in so doing we still reduce them, just as Octavius wishes, from twin pillars of the world to a pair of "clip[ping]" lovers in a tomb. Walter Cohen introduces the play in the *Norton* as follows: "What if Shakespeare had second thoughts about *Romeo and Juliet*? (2633). He extends the comparison to encompass their differences (age instead of youth) and similarities (miscommunications and erroneous accounts of death), finally concluding that, in this version, "when they are both finally dead, the audience may be less likely to lament the loss of 'star-crossed lovers' than celebrate the fulfillment of a heroic passion" (2633). Octavius' subtle machinations so effectively neuter Antony and Cleopatra's reputations that they become older analogues of a pair of powerless teenage lovers. While Cleopatra may draw the critics' attention, it is Octavius who emerges as the unquestioned victor in their conflict over her permanent representation.

## 2

In the previous section, I explored the ways individuals tried (and often failed) to control their own legacy by constructing their monuments while still alive. Most often, however, the dead ended up in tombs constructed by others and so granted complete control to their survivors. Often, the tomb patrons chose to present biased or even fictive narratives about the deceased in order to further their own ends. "Monuments were able to present highly selective if not fictional historical narratives for their viewers," and, rather uniquely at this particular moment in

history, individuals deeply invested in how the deceased were remembered had the opportunity to inscribe their version of the story (Llewellyn *Funeral* 40). According to Clare Gittings, “The period from the mid-sixteenth century to, roughly, the mid-eighteenth century, marks the zenith of the bereaved’s control over the funeral rituals of relatives and friends” (86).<sup>173</sup> Despite the fact that his whole study deals with monuments (of the Cobham family), Nigel Saul could not be more wrong when, *after* admitting the mass production of some monuments (such as brasses) and the fact most monuments were procured by others after the commemorated’s death, he asserts that “making allowance for these exceptions, it is probably fair to say that most brasses were laid within a year or so of the subject’s death. If that were the case, then it is not unreasonable to take them as a guide to the latter’s self-image and aspirations” (229). All the evidence I have seen leads to a very different conclusion; neither patrons of brasses nor of more elaborate forms of monumentation appear at all concerned about the “self-image” or “aspirations” of the deceased. Instead, they actively worked to project an image of the commemorated that both reflected well on surviving members of his or her family and also served the family’s political, social, and dynastic ends. The tomb in fact, often represented the last in what was often a *series* of efforts by survivors to revise and manage the reputation of the deceased.

It is well beyond the remit of this study to delve too deeply into the many options available for altering an individual’s posthumous reputation before a single stone was laid for the tomb, but nonetheless, the subject warrants a brief digression to demonstrate some of the factors

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<sup>173</sup> Gittings goes on to explain the reason for this power at this particular historical moment: “Before the Reformation... the dying took considerable interest in their own funeral preparations and laid down, often in great detail, directions to be followed by their executors. The rationale for this concern about one’s own funeral was simply swept away in the doctrinal changes at the Reformation; with it went, for the most part, testators’ interest and control in this area. From the late seventeenth century onwards, the development of the undertaking profession began to curtail much of the executors’ decision-making power. Although nominally providing their clients with a range of options from which to choose, undertakers were able to bring considerable pressure to bear on those who availed themselves of this service, and it was the undertaker, rather than client, who really called the tune” (86).

in play with such a process. The first opportunity to rewrite a life occurs, logically enough, moments after death. The tradition to “not speak ill of the dead” often immediately manifests itself in survivors sanitizing the deceased’s reputation. In the early modern period, this often took the form of positive reports of deathbed deportment. We see a humorous example of this in the account of Falstaff’s death in *Henry V*. In this scene, Hostess Quickly and the Boy both describe Falstaff’s death, but they are unable to agree on what actually happened. Quickly focuses on positives, emphasizing his peaceful passing and insisting he never railed against women in his final moments. The Boy, however, will not budge from his version of events, recalling not only Falstaff’s final misogynist rantings but also other insults he leveled against men and women during his lifetime. Critics often focus on the multi-vocality of this scene (a recurrent theme of the play) or on a historiographical point about the unreliability of first hand reports of events. Such analyses fail to take into account pervasive traditions that equated a peaceful death with a good person. The Hostess, familiar with this tradition, scrambles to create a fiction surrounding Falstaff’s death and so to paint him as the great man she and the other tavernites want to remember. Meanwhile, the alternate and likely more factual report is voiced by a Boy too young to be aware of the need to lie in this situation. “From the mouth of babes,” or so the saying goes.

If needed, these preliminary oral embellishments about the life and death of the departed could be more formally expressed and disseminated through the funeral sermon at the graveside. The “account of the deceased... usually came at the end” of the priest’s graveside address and “commonly took up about a quarter of the sermon, but sometimes a third” (Houlbrooke 311). This section of the sermon, the “commendation of the dead,” delivered “respect to their memory, gratitude and praise to God, and instruction of those yet living” (Houlbrooke 311). As one can

imagine, exaggeration and adulation were the norm. If family or friends wished to spread such reports beyond those attending the funeral, they could have the sermon printed or they could take advantage of another growing genre: “Exemplary Christian biography featuring the ‘holy life and happy death’ of one or another worthy contributed to a popular genre of seventeenth-century writing...All included edifying deathbed scenes” (Cressy 390).

Reports of deathbed demeanor, funeral sermons, and printed biographies demonstrate that tombs were not always necessary in the construction of accounts of an individual’s life. Only when the survivors needed to perform some historiographical heavy lifting would the expensive and time-consuming process of monument design and construction be justified. Once the bereaved decided they required a tomb, a bewildering array of options for encoding the desired information still confronted them. Two quick examples drawn from St Helen’s Bishopsgate in the north of London can be used to demonstrate some of the possibilities. On one monument, to Sir John Spencer, can be found “the recumbent figures of Sir John and his wife in the habits of the times in which they lived, the size of life, and at their feet is the figure of their daughter, in the attitude of prayer” (Cox 70). The inscription on the monument reads as follows (translated from Latin): “Here lies John Spencer, Knight, Citizen and Member of Parliament for London. Lord Mayor of the same City A.D. 1594. By Alicia Bromfeld his wife he left an only daughter, who was married to William Baron Compton. He died March 3 in the year of our salvation 1609. To his most excellent father-in-law, this was erected by William Baron Compton” (Cox 70). Although not literally false, the tomb can be seen as deceptive. The unusually prominent inclusion of the daughter, both on top of the monument and in references in the text on the side, are designed to retroactively enhance the status of the wife’s parents by emphasizing their daughter’s marriage and her status. John and Alicia had no son to carry on the Spencer name, so

instead the apogee of their family's ascent in rank had to be preserved through stone and through the emphasis on their daughter's fortunes. Elsewhere in the church can be found a tomb to the delightfully named Sir Julius Caesar, a London lawyer. As described by Nigel Llewellyn, "His monument was erected by his widow and displays inscriptions which simulate the form of a legal document on parchment written in chancery characters together with a large seal of the Caesar arms. It stresses the antiquity of the law and in so doing impresses on the onlooker the legitimate lineage of the Caesars, who were, in fact, recent immigrants" (Anglo 153). The combination of heraldry, symbolism, language, and his splendid name helped create a fiction of a long legacy.

Period audiences did not always regard as benign the power held by tombs to enforce a particular account of a life. In fact, a distrust of monuments can be traced to biblical precepts. Matthew 23:27 reads (in the King James translation) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness." Plays often directly invoked this passage. In Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Constabarus calls his wife Salome "merely ... a painted sepulchre, / That is both fair and vilely foul at once; / Though on her outside graces garnish her, / Her mind is filled with worse than rotten bones" (Bevington et al. 2.4.41-44). Similarly, Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, compares prostitutes to tombs for they are both "Goodly without, within all rottenness" (Chettle 2.3.824).<sup>174</sup> Exactly this threat, that the splendor and beauty of the tomb can hide all manner of sins, occupies a vital but often overlooked sub-plot in Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*.

In his recent study on Marlowe, Clayton MacKenzie argues that the playwright

drew widely—much more widely than is presently thought—on the visual diversity of his age. The low literacy rates of sixteenth-century England supported a highly visual society in which images (tavern signs, flags, tapestries,

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<sup>174</sup> This edition of Chettle's play has act and scene divisions but also has continuous line numbering.



church ornaments, murals, clothing, book emblems, and all manner of everyday objects) were more central conduits of meaning for the ordinary person in the street than the written word. Marlowe, as a playwright creating visual tableaux on stage, could rely on a common understanding of a rich array of visual knowledge. (*Deathly* xvi)

According to David Bevington and James Shapiro, however, Marlowe “does not visualize exterior architecture or geographical location in *Edward II*. Editors’ attempts to provide names of places for scenes are frustrated by Marlowe’s conflating or altering his sources” (Friedenreich, Gill and Kuriyama 265).<sup>175</sup> Taken in conjunction, these two observations point to a way of handling locations, buildings, and famous landmarks very different from that employed by Shakespeare. Shakespeare referenced specific locales for evocative purposes, from the distant Agincourt to local landmarks familiar to the audience such as local taverns or the tombs of Westminster Abbey. In contrast, Marlowe invokes many iconic and emblematic commonplaces shorn of their individual specificity. To put it simply and within the terms of this project, Shakespeare (at least in his early career) made references to specific tombs or classes of tombs familiar to the audience in order to evoke a particular image; Marlowe tended to use tombs theatrically in a more unspecified sense in order to tap into the universal potential of tomb symbolism; Shakespeare stressed the importance of the particular, while Marlowe emphasized the general.<sup>176</sup>

In this vein, the opening scene of *Edward II* takes place in an indefinite location, but with a highly evocative visual spectacle: a royal funeral. The deceased is Edward II’s father, Edward I. Astonishingly, the son does not seem to even know his father’s funeral is taking place; he asks the presiding Bishop of Coventry, “Whether goes my Lord of Coventry so fast?” to which the Bishop replies, “To celebrate your father’s exequies” (1.1.174-175). Edward II’s reign gets off

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<sup>175</sup> This point by Bevington and Shapiro undermines many of the interesting but ultimately improvable suppositions put forth by critics about how growing up next to Canterbury Cathedral might have influenced Marlowe.

<sup>176</sup> As Chapter Five will show, Shakespeare moved toward Marlowe’s stance later in his career.

to a hideous start: in this first scene he fights with the nobles over Gaveston's return, forgets his father's funeral, and then, to compound his incompetent mismanagement of affairs, encourages Gaveston's assault on the holy man and so interrupts the proper interment of his own father and the symbolic changing of the guard enacted by this ceremony.<sup>177</sup>

The scene serves as an appropriate opening of the play, not only because of its clear symbolic implications of a kingdom in disorder, but also because concern about proper burial recurs frequently as a powerful theme in the play. Earlier in this chapter, I set out the astonishing number of unburied body parts, particularly heads on pikes, which clutter just the first scene of the play. These acts of display must be read carefully. Clare Harraway, for example, badly misinterprets Kent's request for his brother, Edward II, to "revenge ... and let these their heads / Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues" (1.1.120-121). To Harraway,

The heads which preach on poles are ... more than a symbol of absolute might; they are an expression of the refusal of the past to be silenced. The act of decapitation significantly fails to muzzle the outspoken. Instead, death, paradoxically, renders the dead more capable of speech. Indeed, in death the traitors do not simply talk, they preach. In other words, the decapitated are imaged in the play as the deliverers of sermons or moral lessons; they are the teachers of the present. Like history which makes the past pertinent to the present, the dead in Edward II educate those who have executed them. (Harraway 64)

Not all sermons are created equal, and these mute pastors cannot preach on any subject beyond the silent representation of their own shame and the absolute victory of their conqueror. To give them volition is to both miss the point of Kent's threat and give the ventriloquist's dummy agency.

The return of the King's favorite, Gaveston, initiates the conflict here between the nobles and the King. More generally, however, the clash stems from the nobles' deep feelings of class

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<sup>177</sup> Although I do not see sufficient evidence in this scene to think Marlowe is making a specific reference to this, it is worth noting that Edward II did not comply with his father's wishes for burial. The Hammer of the Scots had wished for his heart to be transported to Palestine and for his bones to be carried in battle against the Scots. Instead, he rests peacefully (and in one piece) in Westminster Abbey in the circle of kings (Daniell 87-88).

resentment. They hate Gaveston because he is “base and obscure,” mock him as “the new earl,” and call him a “peasant,” “Ignoble vassal,” and one of the “creeping ants” (1.1.100, 1.4.11, 14, 16, 15). According to Claude J. Summers, in fact, all the other elements of Gaveston’s character that often draw the focus of modern critics are irrelevant; “the barons’ objection to Gaveston (and, later, to Spencer) has nothing to do with morality and everything to do with class” (Friedenreich, Gill and Kuriyama 225). Marlowe makes this more explicit by making Gaveston, as well as the Spencers who follow him as King’s favorites, much lower born than they were in Holinshed. Putting this in far more positive terms than Edward’s nobles, Summers argues that “[b]y reducing their origins and presenting their rise in stark contrasts, Marlowe effectively captures a dizzying sense of freedom in the escape from a prescribed social status” (Friedenreich, Gill and Kuriyama 226). The nobles, in contrast, perceive Gaveston’s meteoric rise as a sign of disruption and danger to the state as real, they fear, as visible meteors in the sky.<sup>178</sup>

In a speech that clearly sets out the parameters of the class conflict, Mortimer Jr. points to the particular frustrations he has with the upstart Gaveston:

Uncle, his wanton humor grieves not me,  
 But this I scorn, that one so basely born  
 Should by his sovereign’s favor grow so pert  
 And riot it with the treasure of the realm  
 While soldiers mutiny for want of pay.  
 He wears a lord’s revenue on his back,  
 And Midas-like he jets it in the court... (1.4.401-407)

Eleven more lines of fury follow, directed at Gaveston’s dress and that of his retinue. Building on speeches like this from the nobles and, on the King’s side, Edward’s suggestions for “Gaveston not only to jest at the barons’ attire, but also to strip the Bishop of Coventry of his “sacred garments,” Roger Sales argues that “Costume,” the marker of status in early modern England, “becomes the battleground on which Edward and his enemies fight each other early on

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<sup>178</sup> See *Richard II* 2.4.7-24 as one of many examples of the negative symbolism of meteors.

in the play” (127-28). It is, however, always the visible conflict of a war by proxy, with the upstart Gaveston’s fresh titles as the true point of tension.

Even early in the play, the nobles envision the death of Gaveston as the best solution to their problems. Lancaster imagines a mortal showdown between himself and the pair of Gaveston and the King: “Ah, wicket king! Accursèd Gaveston! / This ground which is corrupted with their steps, / Shall be their timeless sepulchre or mine” (1.2.4-6). When the nobles succeed in getting Gaveston banished, Lancaster suggests the only way he will return to England is if his body floats to shore after a shipwreck, to which Warwick rhapsodizes, “And to behold so sweet a sight as that / There’s none here but would run his horse to death” (1.4.206-207). In many of these fantasies, as in this one, Gaveston’s dead and often mutilated body serves as focal point. Before Gaveston’s banishment, Mortimer Jr. wants to “hale him from the bosom of the King / And at the court gate hang the peasant up” (1.2.29-30). After Gaveston is sent away, Mortimer Jr. builds on Lancaster’s imagined shipwreck, spinning an elaborate tale of Gaveston being devoured by fish which then, in turn, become poisonous to consume (1.4.221-224). The physicality of Gaveston’s body, once covered with expensive clothes beyond his station, clearly haunts the nobles’ imagination.

Gaveston’s return forces events to a head and the nobles immediately plot to kill him. Even in the moments before his death, however, the nobles continue their obsession with his physical body as they muse over what to do with his remains. When Arundel arrives, asking for Gaveston to be returned to the king, Mortimer Jr., the hothead of the group, suggests making a gruesome point in response to the request:

Thus we’ll gratify the King:  
We’ll send his head by thee. Let him bestow  
His tears on that, for that is all he gets  
Of Gaveston, or else his senseless trunk. (2.5.48-51).

The worldlier Lancaster, however, strongly resists this suggestion, responding, “Not so my lord, lest he bestow more cost / In burying him than he hath ever earned” (2.5.52-53). When Gaveston is killed, the nobles choose this second course of action; Warwick ambushes Pembroke who had taken custody of Gaveston and, having killed the hated favorite, Warwick “in a trench / Strake off his head, and marched unto the camp” (3.1.119-120).

The nobles’ concern with Gaveston’s body while he lived may stem, as Sales suggests, from their anger at his ostentatious attire; their similar concern with his body in death originates in a similar fear of display. Were they to return Gaveston’s body to Edward, he could construct an elaborate and expensive tomb for his favorite. This would not only be a drain on the nation’s finances, but it would also serve to retroactively legitimize what they see as a base-born flatterer. The nobles fear the King’s power to rewrite Gaveston’s legacy, to create, in effect, a permanent costume for him that sets him in the pantheon of England’s greatest figures.<sup>179</sup> This is why Harraway’s misreading of heads on poles is so unfortunate. Gaveston’s detached head no longer has agency; while it still could have a powerful voice, that voice originates from the individual *controlling* the head’s display. In the hands of the nobles, Gaveston’s severed head remains a warning to low-born social climbers; returned to the king, it potentially becomes an elaborate shrine praising exactly the behavior the nobles wish to crush.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Nicola Smith details what happened to Lancaster later, after he was executed for treason. It is striking how similar these events are to those the nobles feared in regard to Gaveston. In both cases, an ignominious death precedes a dignified interment and a reassessment of status and reputation. “Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, the cousin and rival of Edward II, is barely remembered today, but after his execution in 1322 for his part in a rebellion against the king he was revered. He was buried in Pontefract and miraculous cures were soon occurring at his tomb. The same thing happened in front of his image set up in St Paul’s Cathedral in London. Both sites drew great crowds and guards were posted to try to prevent people reaching the locations of his execution and burial. Little metal ‘pilgrim badges’ showing his execution and the ascent of his soul were mass-produced, similar to those manufactured as popular souvenirs of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The Bishop of London was reprimanded by Edward II for allowing the cult to develop, and he was instructed in no uncertain terms to put an end to it immediately” (Smith 30-31).

<sup>180</sup> It is worth noting that the nobles’ efforts to keep Gaveston’s body from Edward were in vain. “Shortly after Christmas 1314, he made arrangements for an impressive funeral. Gaveston’s remains were still with the black

While the nobles' hold on the body of his favorite prevents him from building a tomb and retroactively solidifying Gaveston's status, Edward strives for a different type of memorial, created from the dead flesh of England's noble lines:

If I be England's king, in lakes of gore  
Your headless trunks, your bodies I will trail,  
That you may drink your fill and quaff in blood,  
And stain my royal standard with the same,  
That so my bloody colors may suggest  
Remembrance of revenge immortally  
On your accursèd traitorous progeny,  
You villains that have slain my Gaveston! (3.1.135-142)

Edward clearly employs the language of remembrance and commemoration, but the petulance and inappropriateness of this response is hard to overstate. The king, the very figure that should uphold continuity in the state, rhetorically imagines such a bloody destruction of the older order that the "royal standard," normally a symbol of unity and stability, will become the "bloody colors." Such a flag would forever commemorate a king who turned on his own nobility and his own country

He fails, of course, to achieve even this monument of corpses and blood. The nobles depose and murder him, and his son, Edward III, must reestablish order. Just as an interrupted funeral of a king symbolized chaos in the first scene, proper ceremonies for another monarch in the final moments of the play demonstrate the restoration of order. In addition, just as the king himself was responsible for violating the appropriate transfer of power represented by the first

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friars at Oxford, and Edward had provided funds for their proper care. Now, he arranged for Gaveston's final resting place – it was of course to be at Langley. The king, the archbishop of Canterbury, four bishops, fourteen abbots but, significantly, not many of the barons, attended an impressive ceremony in the church of the Dominicans which Edward had endowed at Langley. Royal funds financed masses for Gaveston's soul in churches all over England, and his family was also remembered" (Hutchison *Edward II* 90). There is no reason to believe that Marlowe knew this, however. The Priory at King's Langley was destroyed in the dissolution and no mention of this burial appears in Holinshed. Harold Hutchinson, in his biography of Edward II, actually points, I think, toward how Marlowe and his audience perceived Gaveston's reputation when he writes "[i]t is difficult for a modern observer to see Gaveston clearly. He can look on what is probably the recumbent effigy of Gaveston's father in Winchester's retro-choir, but there is nothing more to reveal Gaveston himself" (Hutchison *Edward II* 72). The nobles effectively (to Marlowe) prevented Gaveston's survival in material form.

funeral, his son in turn interrs him (and symbolically his misrule) with a properly executed and deftly symbolic ceremony. At Edward I's funeral, the king encourages a figure embodying a threat to the state (Gaveston); at Edward II's, the threatening figure (Mortimer Jr.), responsible for the murder of Edward II, is beheaded and his head made grimly to adorn Edward II's coffin as a vivid reminder of treachery: "on his mournful hearse / Thy hateful and accursèd head shall lie, / To witness to the world that by thy means / His kingly body was too soon interred" (5.6.29-32).

In an intriguing article on the parallelism of the two halves of the play, Sara Munson Deats writes that "the two Edwards' reflect reverse images of kingship" in the play:

Young Edward II rejoices in his father's demise, appears unconcerned about the deceased King's funeral, wrangles with his nobles, defies his dead father's fiats, and allies himself with the presumptuous overreacher against his peers. Conversely, young Edward III mourns his father's death, honors the former king with appropriate services, and seeks the 'aid and succor' of his nobles in executing the hubristic Machiavel, thus demonstrating his allegiance to his murdered father's cause. (Friedenreich, Gill and Kuriyama 244)

Deats is correct, but her larger argument (a structural one that necessitates a scene by scene analysis of parallel elements) prevents her from developing her argument fully. This final carefully choreographed display shows a king with a full understanding of the techniques of preserving history and maintaining power, two qualities Edward II totally lacked.

Edward II's foolish disruption of his own father's funeral at the start of the play shows a king unaware of the mechanisms for transferring power. Even in his final days, we see that Edward has learned nothing on this subject. As Berkeley takes the deposed King away to what Edward anticipates will be his death, Edward says, "Whither you will; all places are alike, / And every earth is fit for burial" (5.1.145-46). Just like Richard II in Shakespeare's later *Richard*

*II*,<sup>181</sup> we see a king so self-centered that he cannot imagine the country will continue after his death, that there will be another king (in Edward II's case, this new king will even be his son, not an usurper from another family line), and that this new king will have to legitimize his own reign through a ritual that transfers power at the graveside. "Every earth" will most certainly not suffice.

Fortunately, Edward III understands the mechanisms of power transfer and its descent. We see him, in the final lines of the play, combining the symbolic powers of his father's "hearse," the "wicked traitor's head," and his own "tears" into a potent mixture that will solidify his grasp on the throne despite his youth (5.6.98-101).<sup>182</sup> His words evoke a visual tableau of the murdered king (his faults forgotten) and the displayed head of Mortimer Jr., who, in this context, represents both a universal symbol of villainy and an example of the justice-dealing might of the new regime. The ceremony that ushers Edward III to the throne also serves as a spectacle of his strength to right wrongs and properly keep the realm from chaos. Ivo Kamps argues in his *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* that, "The late Elizabethan Shakespeare and the early Stuart dramatists... astutely abandon a view of the prince as the repository of power and maker of history in favor of a prince who is an opportunistic manipulator not merely of historical events themselves (many of which turn out to be largely beyond his control) but also, crucially, of their *representation*" (4-5). He argues that this first takes place in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. While I agree with Kamps' points in the main, I cannot go so far as he does to suggest that we do not see hints of this behavior here in *Edward II*. In this play, a child king comes to power

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<sup>181</sup> A play, it must be said, that clearly bears all the hallmarks of a playwright with a close eye on Marlowe's earlier work.

<sup>182</sup> Although it is not specifically referenced in the play, likely because Marlowe was *not* interested in specific locations in the same way as Shakespeare, Edward II's tomb in Gloucester Cathedral, paid for by Edward III, is a lovely monument and continues this theme of proper commemoration. Brian Kemp calls it a "masterpiece of the Decorated period" (Kemp 33).



following events over which he has no control, and promptly seizes the tools of editing and recording history to shape the narrative in a way that legitimizes his own authority and retroactively whitewashes his father's reputation.

Marlowe's reticence to allude to specific locations in his plays, pointed out by Bevington and Shapiro, prevents this funeral (a temporary display) from reaching Edward II's tomb site (the location of permanent commemoration). Taken in conjunction with the concern of the nobles over Gaveston's body, however, the implication of this last scene is clear. The nobles act to prevent Edward II from gaining possession of the corpse of his favorite for fear that he could transform Gaveston's reputation through the power of memorial. In much the same way, Edward III uses his father's body, along with the head of his enemy, in a ceremonial display that legitimizes his rule and rescues his father's reputation.

While *Edward II* demonstrates the power of funerals on stage and imagined tombs off stage to whitewash the past, both are employed by Marlowe in this play as blunt instruments of historiography. Gaveston's imagined tomb is simply costly and not in keeping with his status, while the final staged funeral glosses over the complicated questions of blame and complicity to create a simple narrative of the innocent, victimized Edward II at rest beneath the demonized head of Mortimer Jr. Later in this period, we see tombs employed in the rewriting of history in more sophisticated ways. In particular, many onstage characters use tombs specifically to erase past actions and, in a related fashion, to protect (or damage) the status of an individual or an

entire family. These are fine distinctions. In *Edward II*, for example, it has been argued by critics that the final funeral scene effectively rights the wrongs perpetrated in the play; others claim the scene serves as a band-aid for deeper, systemic problems. The staged funeral and the proposed tomb can be viewed as tools to heal the reputation of an individual (Edward II, for any number of acts or perceived deficiencies), to heal a family (Edward III is, after all, Edward II's son), or to heal a nation.

Nonetheless, some tombs act more surgically than others; the tomb built by Dionyza for her ward Marina in *Pericles* serves as a perfect example of a clear point of contact between a monument and a problem to be solved. Dionyza, in appreciation for Pericles' rescue of Tarsus in time of famine, agrees to care for his child Marina, but when her ward grows into a woman more beautiful and charming than her own daughter, Dionyza tries to have the competition murdered. After explaining her rationale to her horrified husband, Cleon, Dionyza outlines how the tomb she will build for Marina will protect them both from being fingered for the crime:

And as for Pericles,  
What should he say? We wept after her hearse,  
And yet we mourn. Her monument  
Is almost finished, and her epitaphs  
In glitt'ring golden characters express  
A gen'ral praise to her and care in us,  
At whose expense 'tis done. (17.41-47)

Their alibi is twofold. Dionyza assures her distraught husband that nothing ill will befall them if they properly perform grief (mourning then and mourning still) and laud Marina's virtues in expensive gilt stone befitting her station.<sup>183</sup> By these proper techniques of commemoration,

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<sup>183</sup> The "glitt'ring golden characters" may be real gilt gold or may just be a metaphorical representation of the flattering tomb inscriptions that Gower later reveals to the audience. The inscriptions to Marina are a particularly textually problematic element in this notoriously difficult-to-edit play. Two alternative epitaphs are offered by the Oxford and Norton editors.

Dionyza hopes that she can successfully erase a specific event in the past: the attempted assassination of her daughter's rival.

Of course, Dionyza's overarching purpose is to enhance her daughter's prospects and so maintain and improve the status of her family. Understandably, most fictive tomb projects in drama, just like those off stage, revolve around the protection of family status and honor. David Howarth defines tombs as a way to make sure "[t]he splendour which accompanied men to their graves did not sink with them beneath the earth... remain[ing] on the surface as tribute to the greatness of a house" (155). Period tomb designers and patrons crammed monuments "with as many armorial bearings as the family could decently muster. Thus the house was rendered immortal, whatever the fate of the individuals. It was an expensive form of advertising. The product was the family, the logo: blazons, quarterings and crests, approved by those standards officers of the day in the College of Arms" (Howarth 156). The advertising metaphor is an apt one; no official agency existed to ensure claims made on tombs matched the facts, and families, just like companies, would do anything they could to protect their "brand."

The fear of any family, beyond the basic concerns of protecting their wealth and status and continuing the line through children, was often that a single member might so egregiously and permanently besmirch the family name that all who followed would be tainted. The Duke in Middleton's [?] *The Revenger's Tragedy* uses tomb imagery to express exactly this fear. After his youngest son commits rape, the Duke laments:

His violent act has e'en drawn blood of honor  
And stained our honors,  
Thrown ink upon the forehead of our state,  
Which envious spirits will dip their pens into  
After our death, and blot us in our tombs. (Bevington et al. 1.2.2-7)

The Duke expresses terror that his son's actions will taint the memories of his parents and family, literally staining them as they rest within their tombs. The First Judge agrees with the Duke's assessment, asking, "what is it to have / A flattering false inscription on a tomb, / And in men's hearts reproach?" (Bevington et al. 1.2.12-14). Again, as we saw earlier, tombs are simply one possible option in a spectrum of commemorative possibilities. For Middleton, these other vectors of remembrance, transmitted orally rather than via stone, speak powerfully and have the potential of trumping any falsehood inscribed on a monument.

Unlike his fellow playwrights, as we have seen, Shakespeare usually adjudges this contest in favor of the tomb, at least in his plays.<sup>184</sup> In Chapter Two, for example, we saw a very similar situation resolved in the reverse way; an individual's supposed crimes were forgotten through the power of the tomb. Titus, furious at the transgressions of his son, forbids him from even being buried in the family tomb for fear that he will corrupt the monument that "five hundred years hath stood," and which had been "sumptuously re-edified" by Titus himself (1.1.347-348). This work by Titus indicates both real improvements made to the monument under which he has interred many of his twenty-five sons, as well as metaphorical honors earned by Titus in his lifetime that have become part of the commemorated fame of the family name. Nonetheless, when his sons overrule him and bury Mutius within the vault over his protestations, the rebellious son is actually subsumed within the family honor. In pleading for the lives of two of his three remaining sons two acts later, Titus specifically says, "For two-and-twenty sons I never wept, / Because they died in honour's lofty bed" (3.1.10-11). The rebellion of number twenty-two, Mutius, is forgotten even by his father, the only individual he actually wronged.

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<sup>184</sup> His Sonnets tell a different story. Whether this difference is attributable to audience, to medium, or to generic conventions is a topic beyond the scope of this study.

*Much Ado About Nothing* affords audiences the opportunity to see in practice as it unfolds how tombs can cleanse the reputation of the unjustly treated. During the play, Claudio, in a display of astonishing gullibility, allows himself to be tricked by Don John into leaving Hero at the altar and calling her appearance of virtue “only the sign and semblance of honour” (4.1.31). As I pointed out earlier, Elizabeth Cary and Henry Chettle chose tomb imagery as the easiest way to show exactly this kind of situation, to denote a lovely exterior hiding a foul interior. In this instance, however, Shakespeare has Claudio call her a “rotten orange,” for tombs have other work to do in this play (4.1.30). Once Claudio abandons Hero, it becomes clear that Leonato, Hero’s father, takes her shame as a blot on the very fabric of the family. He wishes that, instead of raising a daughter of his own, he had adopted “a beggar’s issue... Who smirched thus and mired in infamy, / I might have said ‘No part of it is mine, / This shame derives itself from unknown loins” (4.1.131-134). Hero’s purported actions have brought the family into disrepute, but unlike the conclusion we find in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, this reputation will not follow Hero into her tomb. Since Hero is, in fact, blameless, she and her family can use the tomb to clear her name.

The Friar puts forward the suggestion that Leonato and the rest of Hero’s family should

publish it that she is dead indeed.  
Maintain a mourning ostentation,  
And on your family’s old monument  
Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites  
That appertain unto a burial. (4.1.203-207)

Leonato, baffled, asks “What shall become of this? What will this do?” to which the Friar responds, “Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf / Change slander to remorse” (4.1.208-210). Hero’s feigned death and fake burial actually erases the lies told about her and, in what sounds almost like an alchemical process, turns them into “remorse” and idealization of what has

been lost. After this declaration, the Friar spends over thirty lines explaining how reports of Hero's death will make Claudio remember her through love-tinted glasses. His polished argument rests on the idea that actions create feelings. As Tobias Döring puts it, the Friar argues that "performances of mourning *engender* the appropriate attitude and intensify the emotional investments we are prepared to make. Instead of looking for a reality 'behind' ritual utterances, therefore, we should rather acknowledge the realities in which they result" (163).

Word of her death will trigger these changes, but the transformation from shame to honor actually occurs at the tomb. When Leonato confronts Claudio, he insists, "thou hast belied mine innocent child" and that now "she lies buried with her ancestors, / O, in a tomb where never scandal slept / Save this of hers, framed by thy villainy" (5.1.67, 69-71). Leonato sees his spotless family tomb now stained with dishonor, but it is a manufactured dishonor, a scandal based not on truth but on Claudio's "villainy." Since her "death" has made it clear that blame for her infamy lies on Claudio's shoulders, only his actions can purify her reputation and, by extension, her family's honor. To this end, Leonato insists that Claudio must do two things, both designed to achieve the same goal:

Possess the people in Messina here  
How innocent she died, and if your love  
Can labour aught in sad invention,  
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb  
And sing it to her bones, sing it tonight. (5.1.265-269)

These requests show Leonato's sophisticated understanding of the ways memory and commemoration work. First, he requests Claudio and Don Pedro spread word among the populace of Hero's innocence. Rumor spreads at almost mythic speed, and Leonato knows that to prevent the scandal from taking hold, he needs the ostensibly aggrieved parties to begin stamping out fires immediately. Throughout the play, he remains deeply concerned with his

family's enduring reputation. To this end, he demands that Claudio also compose an epitaph to be displayed on the monument, an act of public versification and tomb adornment designed to recuperate his family's honor. It is important to notice that he requests this epitaph be both displayed *and* performed. In so doing, Leonato makes sure that the content of the epitaph is known to both the illiterate (who can listen to the performance) and the literate (who can read the displayed copy at their leisure). This whole performance can also be viewed, in conjunction with Leonato's request that Claudio marry his niece, as a reverse unstaining; Claudio violated the wedding and, through shaming it, Hero's tomb; now he must cleanse both.

Since Hero still lives, Leonato knows this whole process is only temporary. Instead of using a monument to permanently inscribe his version of history, he instead employs the tomb as a proper venue for shaming and humbling Claudio and rescuing his family's honor and reputation. Claudio and Don Pedro do not know this, however, and they enact these requests even beyond the minimums Leonato requires. In an unusual move for a comedy, act five, scene three takes place at Leonato's family monument as Claudio, accompanied by Don Pedro and some musicians and singers, arrive to read the prepared epitaph. Claudio produces pedestrian and clichéd poetic verses; Döring actually goes so far as to say "the linguistic clumsiness is calculated, a point of poetic mockery befitting the occasion," and that "the whole scene... is parodistic" (Döring 164). Döring's point is primarily theological,<sup>185</sup> but the whole scene appears fairly ludicrous for audiences as well, fully aware that Claudio is being duped.<sup>186</sup> It is important,

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<sup>185</sup> "The verses of the dirge and epitaph are trochaic, in Shakespearean drama usually a sign of gnomic, magic or self-consciously archaic language. The ceremonial movements we observe, such as the circling around the tomb, are strange and certainly do not look like a Christian burial" (Döring 163).

<sup>186</sup> This is one of the most important contrasts between this scene and the mourning at a monument that occurs at the end of *The Winter's Tale*, a frequent point of comparison for critics. In this later play, the audience has no reason to think that Hermione's death was anything but genuine.

however, to take a step back, to see what he actually says, and to understand the scene from his (limited) perspective. His epitaph in full reads:

Done to death by slanderous tongues  
Was the Hero that here lies.  
Death in guerdon of her wrongs  
Gives her fame which never dies.  
So the life that died with shame  
Lives in death with glorious fame. (5.3.3-8)

He admits his fault in her death; he declares that, in repayment, Death will ensure her immortality in men's minds; and he predicts that her perceived flaws in life will be replaced with a lasting reputation for virtue and modesty. In hanging these words on the tomb itself, Claudio adds a couplet, addressing his verses: "Hang thou there upon the tomb, / Praising her when I am dumb" (5.3.9-10). This couplet echoes the promises of immortality found in the sonnets, but the language employed (particularly considering the awkwardness of the versification) erases the author of the words as well, leaving only the fame of the commemorated, reiterated on the wall of her tomb.

By posting his verses, Claudio fulfills this portion of his responsibility to Leonato, but he himself determines to do more. As he prepares to leave, he addresses Hero again: "Now, unto thy bones good night. / Yearly will I do this rite" (5.3.22-23). This annual performance will both serve as a regular reminder of his maltreatment of her and will reinforce the message to the illiterate that is so important to Leonato. Anyone unable to read the epitaph and who missed or forgot the first performance can yearly get a refresher course in Hero's virtue and innocence. In so doing, Claudio annually reiterates her virtue and maintains the reputation of her family. In fact, her *family's* reputation perhaps gets the greatest boost from this reiterated performance by a noble. In the first line of the scene, when Claudio first arrives, he asks an unnamed lord, not if this is *Hero's* tomb, but rather "Is this the monument of Leonato?" to which the lord replies, "It



is, my lord” (5.3.1-2). This reinforces the point that has already been made repeatedly by Leonato in conjunction with Hero’s original shame; the stakes of this slander and performative recuperation focus less on Hero’s individual reputation than on the very name of Leonato’s family in Messina.

Exactly this concern for family honor drives one of the least understood characters in Shakespeare’s most studied play: *Hamlet*. Critics often dismiss Laertes as a headstrong, choleric, rabble-rouser, a near analogue to the brave but easily-manipulated Hotspur from *Henry IV*. Commentators usually see his wrathful return to Elsinore and subsequent belligerence as one exclusively driven by revenge for Polonius’ and later Ophelia’s death. Unquestionably this serves as a major component of Laertes’ motivation; even before his sister’s suicide, he wishes to “cut [Hamlet’s] throat i’th church” (4.7.98). Nonetheless, a pattern emerges from his demands and actions that point to an underlying anxiety that has little to do with simple revenge.

When Laertes bursts into the King’s chamber, his first words directed to Claudius are “O thou vile king, / Give me my father” (4.5.111-112). As opening requests go, a call for his father’s corpse seems a bit peculiar. I would expect a question such as “What happened to my father” or, alternately, a demand that Claudius explain his mishandling of Polonius’ affairs in Laertes’ absence. Why, instead, does Laertes ask for his father’s body? To Jan Blits, who sees Laertes as “the leading spokesman in *Hamlet* for the rights and duties of birth,”<sup>187</sup> Laertes’ question indicates that “[t]o Laertes, his father’s corpse remains ‘[his] father’” (Blits *Deadly* 288, 289). Perhaps, but none of the lines that follow demonstrate any sentimentality toward Polonius,

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<sup>187</sup> An assertion that is simultaneously outrageous (in a play with a plot driven by the invocation to revenge of a ghost to his son) and, as we will see, worth serious rumination.

nor is Laertes merely asking to *see* his father's body; he expressly desires to take his father's corpse elsewhere.

Where does Laertes want to take the body and for what purpose? An indication of the answer to these questions comes earlier in this same scene. When Ophelia enters, driven mad by some combination of Hamlet's maltreatment of her and her father's murder, she sings a number of songs, one of which seems to point to the circumstances of Polonius' burial: "He is dead and gone," she sings, "At his head a grass-green turf, / At his heels a stone" (4.5.30-32). She continues that this grave was "Larded with sweet flowers, / Which bewept to the grave did—not—go / With true love showers" (4.5.37-39). Most editions gloss the "not" in some way; the most recent Arden edition for example states that "[t]his unexpected and extrametrical negative occurs in all three texts and is usually explained as Ophelia's deliberate alteration of the song to suit her own experience" (Shakespeare *Arden Hamlet* 376). Polonius' body, then, was not properly mourned according to recognized tradition.

Audiences have been warned before Ophelia reaches the stage, of course, not to read too much into her songs; Horatio tells Gertrude that "Her speech is nothing, / Yet the unshapèd use of it doth move / The hearers to collection" (4.5.7-9). However, Claudius, the very person who should have ensured the loyal statesman was commemorated properly in his son's absence, admits that Polonius' interment indeed lacked sufficient ceremony and splendor. The King expresses concern to Gertrude about the people's dissent, for he fears they have become "Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers / For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly / In hugger-mugger to inter him" (4.5.78-80). Claudius himself suggests that his actions in trying to swiftly bury Polonius, presumably in an effort to sweep the incident under the rug (or behind the arras), were in error. By not paying the proper public respects to a central

figure in his regime, he distressed Ophelia, upset the populace, and perhaps even undermined the legitimacy of his own reign.

It is in this context that Laertes bursts into the room and demands his father's body. Laertes concern does not merely revolve around the insufficient ceremony; at the end of the scene he explicitly sets out his complaints:

His means of death, his obscure burial—  
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,  
No noble rite nor formal ostentation—  
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,  
That I must call't in question. (4.5.208-212)

When Thomas Rist states that “[u]nambiguously, the absence of a fully performed, un-obscured and ritual funeral is the cause of rebellion” in this scene, he misses half of Laertes’ complaint (70). The problem is not merely the deficiency of “rite” and “ostentation.” According to Laertes, Polonius’ resting place lacks honors and trophies commemorating his achievements. Laertes expects what Guy Cadogan Rothery once called “mortuary glory,” but instead his father has merely received an “obscure burial” (109). The *OED* lists several possible meanings for “obscure” in this context. The most obvious is definition 4, “Of a place: remote from observation; hidden, secret” but there may also be overtones of 6.a and 6.b: “Of a person, group, etc.: not illustrious or famous; humble” and “Of a thing: inconspicuous, undistinguished, unnoticed, little-known.” All three definitions share a central impression of not merely a hidden ceremony but a hidden resting place. Instead of an elaborate monument, complete with escutcheons and displayed arms, Polonius has been concealed with no marker beyond perhaps Ophelia’s lamented mound of grass and two small stones.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> See Chettle’s *The Tragedy of Hoffman* 5.1 for a similar scene where it is the ceremony, not the location and manner of burial, that upsets the bereaved. It is also worth noting that, in this scene from *Hamlet*, Roland Mushat Frye sees some tomb symbolism in Claudius’ question to Laertes about whether his grief is genuine or just “painting of a sorrow.” Frye argues that Claudius “is here referring to those crude and unconvincing figures of widows and

The same issues surface in conjunction with the burial of Ophelia. In this scene, we see Laertes concerned with both the rites performed over his sister's interment and the permanent commemoration she will or will not receive. He begins with the former, twice asking the presiding priest "What ceremony else?" to which the cleric responds, "Her obsequies have been as far enlarged / As we have warrantise" (5.1.205, 207-209). The priest wants to replace any "charitable prayers" with "Shards, flints, and pebbles... thrown on her" and insists that to treat her body better would be to "profane the service of the dead" (5.1.212, 213, 219). He also touches on the subject of permanent commemoration, expressing his wish that "She should in ground unsanctified have lodged / Till the last trumpet" (5.1.211-212). Laertes picks up this theme and develops it for the rest of the scene. First, he suggests that nature itself will rebel against Ophelia's maltreatment and will prepare an organic monument of its own: "Lay her i'th earth, / And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring" (5.1.221-223).<sup>189</sup>

To focus only on Laertes' concern with the deficiencies in the ceremony, as Greenblatt does in his *Hamlet in Purgatory*, risks ignoring Laertes' reasoning in what follows. While Greenblatt's readings are sound in their theological implications, they (like those of many other critics) tend to ignore Laertes' complex psychology and motivations. The distressed young man demands that everyone

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children in stereotyped postures of mourning which adorned tombs in Tudor and early Stuart England" (Frye 138). The point is interesting but unconvincing. The *last* thing Claudius wants to do in this situation is invoke tomb imagery to a son who is irate at his father's insufficient monumentation, particularly since Claudius alone is responsible for the deficiency. To do so would be a huge rhetorical misstep of the type we rarely see from the ever politic Claudius.

<sup>189</sup> A good way to fully grasp the significance of this language of natural monumentation is to look at *The Maid's Tragedy* by Beaumont and Fletcher, a play that clearly draws and expands on the ideas raised by Ophelia's burial. In the first scene, poor jilted Aspatia is observed by Lysippus wandering through the "unfrequented woods" and "tell[ing] / Her servants" that "a bank / Stuck full of flowers" is "a pretty place... To bury lovers in" (1.1.91-95). Such a location is obviously inappropriate for Christian burial, so we see Aspatia, in her grief, imagining lovers as operating outside normal societal expectations. In Act 2, Scene 1, Aspatia herself communicates a similar sentiment. She sings and speaks of a hearse and grave decorated only with natural elements, "the dismal yew," "flattering ivy," and "willow garland," while her funeral will be attended not by individuals that reflect her rank but rather her status, "Maidens" that can speak eloquently on "The truth of maid and perjuries of men" (2.1.73, 104, 120, 74, 107).

—Hold off the earth a while,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.  
[Laertes] *leaps into the grave*  
Now pile your dust upon the quick and the dead  
Till of this flat a mountain you have made  
To o’ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head  
Of blue Olympus. (5.1.233-238)

He expresses intense grief here, but it manifests itself in a desire for the opposite of an “obscure” monument. Laertes pleads for an enormous “mountain” to be erected, visible from great distances.

Hamlet builds on this imagery when he mocks Laertes and engages in the banter of competitive grief and commemoration. Following Laertes’ pattern, he begins in the realm of actions: “show me what thou’lt do. / Woot weep, woot fight, woot fast, woot tear thyself, / Woot drink up eisel, eat a crocodile? / I’ll do’t” (5.1.259-262). From there, he progresses to the imagined monument, challenging Laertes “if thou prate of mountains, let them throw / Millions of acres on us, till our ground, / Singeing his pate against the burning zone, / Make Ossa like a wart” (5.1.265-268). In this passage, just like in his conversation with the gravediggers, we see his mind focused on burial and remembrance. We saw this same focus earlier. His first address to the ghost of his father also displays a fixation on the materials of commemoration; Hamlet asks why his father’s

canonized bones, hearsèd in death,  
Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre  
Wherein we saw thee quietly enurned  
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws  
To cast thee up again. (1.4.28-32)

Because his father, though, has a proper sepulcher to escape, Hamlet misunderstands a key source of Laertes’ grief, and when Hamlet apologizes for his actions before the duel, Laertes quibbles on the word “honour” in a way that makes clear his concerns:

I am satisfied in nature,  
Whose motive in this case should stir me most  
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour  
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation  
Till by some elder masters of known honour  
I have a voice and precedent of peace  
To keep my name ungor'd. (5.2.181-187)

This passage puzzled me for years. The word “should” seemed unclear; what “should” be the impetus to “revenge” and what did Laertes feel to be the *actual* “spur,” the threat to his “honour” and to his “name.” The answer, I think, is to be found within the accepted rites of mourning and commemoration through ceremony and tombs. Laertes, in the final acts of this play, has been on the receiving end of what must, to him, appear to be a systemic and coordinated attempt to erase his family honor and his very name. His father was murdered in mysterious circumstances and rushed to burial without appropriate ceremony in an unmarked tomb concealed at an obscure location. Soon after, his sister, who clearly should receive full rites and a burial and tomb befitting her status,<sup>190</sup> undergoes a similar, ignominious treatment.

This brings us back to Laertes’ specific complaint to Claudius in 4.5.208-212. As Frye points out, “His allegations are contained in the first three lines, running to a total of twenty-one words, and of these only the first four refer to the killing itself, the remaining seventeen being concentrated upon particular details of the hugger-mugger interment. We may assume this concentration upon expected social form to be but another example of Laertes’ superficiality” (144). The first part of this is absolutely correct; Laertes specific charges indicate a particular concern with the details of his father’s burial and commemoration. In no way, however, should this be taken an indication of superficiality. It might be fairer to characterize Laertes’ concern as rather cold and calculating, a far cry from the mindlessness and rashness of which he is usually

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<sup>190</sup> See Frye’s *The Renaissance Hamlet* for a detailed analysis of Ophelia’s burial. Frye persuasively concludes that audiences would have sided with Laertes against the “churlish priest.”

accused; it is a perfectly appropriate reaction for an individual in his position. His father served as one of the trusted councilors of the realm and his sister had seemed on the verge of marrying the likely successor to the throne. In quick succession, both die under troubling circumstances, leaving the family's fortunes to rest exclusively on Laertes. Claudius' actions, however, swiftly make Laertes' position nearly impossible. All of the political gains made by both Polonius and Ophelia go unpreserved in stone; there will be no "social body after death," no material embodiment that preserves their position and worldly accomplishments, or, to put it in Laertes terms, no preservation of "honour" and "name." Instead, Claudius' refusal to materially commemorate Polonius and Ophelia results in the preservation of a revisionist history devastating to Laertes' ambitions and hopes. In Laertes' pleas and demands for proper monumentation, we see his frantic struggle to prevent his family's erasure from the rolls of the Danish elite. It is no wonder that he acts in the play with such desperation and violence.

## CHAPTER 5

“DOES NOT THE STONE REBUKE ME / FOR BEING MORE STONE THAN IT?”

### TOMBS THAT PREACH AND TEACH

In an article entitled “Ethics Girls: The Personification of Moral Systems on Early Modern English Monuments,” Jean Wilson discusses the practice of using sculpted figures to represent virtues on period tombs. Allegorical figures had long been a part of public display; during Elizabeth I’s coronation procession, “one of the pageants ... represented [the new queen with] a child supported by four virtues, each trampling its contrary vices underfoot – *Pure Religion* with *Superstition* and *Ignorance*, *Love of Subjects* with *Rebellion* and *Insolence*, *Wisdom* with *Folly* and *Vainglory*, and *Justice* with *Adulation* and *Bribery*” (Wilson “Ethics” 100). Later, similar figures began to appear on monuments within the sanctified space of the church. Most represented traditional virtues, “*Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude* and *Justice*,” but some were unusual; examples on period tombs include “*Wisdom... Fame... Victory... Justice... Modesty, Prudence, Love, Obedience*,” and even a figure on a monument “in Burford Church to Sir Lawrence Tanfield... [which] exalts materialism and self-advancement” (Wilson “Ethics” 87, 88, 93).

Tanfield’s tomb dates from 1628; in fact, Wilson’s article cites only one example from the sixteenth century. Brian Kemp’s work with allegorical statuary finds that these commemorative objects came into fashion in the last decade of the 1500s and first two decades of the 1600s.



Kemp draws the conclusion that during this period “[t]he long-term effect of the Reformation was now most strikingly apparent in the absence of specifically Christian imagery, for instead of saints, religious panels and the like, decorative schemes were composed entirely of secular and antique pagan motifs transmitted through the Renaissance tradition (70). Understanding this religious rationale helps explain not only why such symbols came to be popular but also demonstrates the symbolic gap being filled: “To balance the traumatic effect of the loss of Purgatory the Protestant churches gradually developed the theory of *memoria*, which stressed the didactic potential of the lives and deaths of the virtuous” (Llewellyn *Art* 28). It took a long time after the Reformation for the church to become comfortable with any allegorical statuary in the sanctuary, but once it did, pagan representations of exemplary virtues were a logical replacement for saints, allowing “monuments [to act] as frameworks for didactic iconography in a transformation of the ritual roles played by the pre-Reformation tomb. So, the mature Reformist tomb existed both for the living as a permanent replacement for the dead and, by example, to encourage the living to a better life” (Llewellyn *Funeral* 345).

This symbolic statuary contributed to a shift in the meaning of monuments. We have already seen the first stages of this shift in the dramatic works of the previous chapters. In the history plays, popular primarily in the 1570s to early 1590s, playwrights made both specific and oblique references to actual pre-Reformation monuments. Interpretation of these monuments may have shifted in the intervening years (take, for example, the empty niches on Richard II’s tomb or Henry V’s chantry chapel shorn of its praying priests), but all were originally Roman Catholic in design. In addition, when referencing these real world tombs, playwrights tended to take a conservative line with history. On one hand, their position can be seen as a reinforcement of government’s official position, a reflection of the playwright’s anticipation of the censor’s

pen.<sup>191</sup> It is striking, however, that even in service to official views of history, the chronicle plays rarely show *an extant* tomb used to legitimize a lie. Just like Weever, who bemoans the power of tombs to promulgate falsehoods while simultaneously accepting the evidence on older tombs at face value, playwrights seemed largely convinced by the narratives espoused by these historic tombs. As I demonstrated in Chapter Four, however, when playwrights *imagined* tombs (even for historical figures like Gaveston or Cleopatra), they were far more willing to see them as objects useful for legitimizing *fictional* accounts. In this chapter, I show how those playwrights who used the power of tombs to construct narratives, particularly those writing after 1600, kept abreast of the evolving trends in monumentation by turning individuals into a variety of different types of exemplar.

As we have already seen, tombs work well on the stage largely because they provide material manifestations of the complex and often abstract processes of commemoration, fame, and history-making. How do tombs make this history, however, and for whom? In the first chapter, I mentioned that strangers, individuals who did not know the subject commemorated, comprised the primary audience for tombs. This anonymous audience could have effected where a tomb was located, but, more importantly, it forced tomb designers and patrons “to give this indifferent passerby ... a story, assuming that he will be interested in it and that he is capable of remembering it and passing it on to someone else. This is the first part in the process of fame” (Ariès 220-221).<sup>192</sup> Of course, the complete chronicle of a life, with all its vagaries and lack of narrative coherence, would make a lousy story even if it could fit on a stone. Tombs, by necessity, must be reductive and also must convey as much as possible to the illiterate, a majority

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<sup>191</sup> Whether this stems from a fear of punishment, an internalization of the dominant ideology, or a wish to reinforce a narrative like the “Tudor Myth,” the effect is the same.

<sup>192</sup> During the period “the authors of wills no longer seek only the most sacred spots for their graves but also the most frequented” (Ariès 220).

of the individuals who would pass by the tomb. The question then becomes what to keep and what to cut. Tombs serve to preserve history and the memory of the deceased, but as Graham Holderness writes, the recording of historical fact also served a wider moral purpose:

Early modern historical thinking and historiographical practice followed Cicero and other ancients in a preoccupation with both truth and instruction. ... But ‘truth’ as value-free objectivity was not at this point clearly separable from ‘truth’ as moral instruction. The ‘truthfulness’ of history could be thought of either as accuracy or fidelity to record; or as the revealed truth of providential wisdom. ‘Truth’ was inseparable from ‘instruction.’ (Cavanagh, Hampton-Reeves and Longstaffe 223)

This is what Weever argues when he marvels at the “concourse of people [who] come daily, to view the liuely Statues and stately monuments in Westminster Abbey... A sight which brings delight and admiration, and strikes a religious apprehension into the minds of the beholders” (Weever 41).<sup>193</sup> These tombs, increasingly popular tourist destinations after 1600, could inform, but in so doing also had the power to instruct and even to inspire (Lindley 99).

This dual purpose informed decisions about tomb design, particularly in iconographic details aimed at those who could not read. Heraldic markers could inform observers of the deceased’s identity and trace familial relationships, useful for marking the subject as an elite member of the nobility but little else. Before the Reformation, when the main stated purpose of tombs was to tell visitors whom to pray for, this might have been sufficient, but not in Protestant England. Tomb effigies, wrongfully assumed by many modern audiences to be realistic portraits of the subjects, often only served to show rank, position, and family dynamics. At the turn of the century, tomb designers sought other emblematic options for “celebrating and commemorating

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<sup>193</sup> This conflation seems to confuse Newstok, who argues, in contrast to Llewellyn, that epitaphs fitting into “the *exemplum* tradition” appear less frequently in the Elizabethan period (Newstok 91). In fact, in the same paragraph, when he points to “a new emphasis on verification of historical facts in the period,” he has to concede that “what makes the figures of Holinshed and Stow so intriguing is that their very real intentions to be ‘carefull’ in their deference to ‘the honestie of the matters’ sometimes become entangled with this residual medieval notion of moral rather than factual veracity” (Newstok 92). What he sees as an “entanglement” is just a manifestation of what Holinshed and Stow expected to see from a pursuit of “truth.” The *exemplum* tradition did not leave the tombs; it simply began to appear visually in a form outside of the remit of Newstok’s study of textual epitaphs.

office and achievements, as well as ... stressing personal characteristics and eulogizing virtues” (Lindley 35). It was through the addition of symbolic statuary or the transformation of the individual into an exemplar that tomb designers could portray an ideal life and simultaneously inspire the passerby to live a better life. All tombs simplify, but this particular brand of simplification was ascendant in the early seventeenth century, and its effect quite naturally found its way into the drama.

In his *Shakespeare and the Question of Culture*, Douglas Bruster suggests “[g]enre affects ... the kinds of props appearing on stage. It is apparent, for instance, that certain kinds of properties serve as generic signals: A lute or a hobby-horse could signal a comedy, a skull or dagger, a tragedy. And knowing the genre of a play can lead one to expect it to feature certain properties” (Bruster 108). Bruster’s point seems to hold for many of the playhouses’ properties, but it does not seem to apply to tombs, which appear in history plays, tragedies, romances, and even a few comedies. Tombs do not *function* the same way in each genre, however. As we have seen in Chapters Two and Three, history plays, because they dramatize the lives of medieval monarchs commemorated with pre-Reformation tombs, largely use monuments to signify the remembrance of history and the hope for future fame. Such tombs do present idealized images of the past, but, because of their historical distance, these monuments largely function as links to historical record in the chronicle plays and appear far more as *commemorative* objects rather than *instructive* ones. In fact, in section six of Chapter Two, I showed how these medieval tombs are only tentatively connected to ideas of memoria and only when contrasted with more ephemeral and popular examples of representation such as alehouse signs. In the late 1580s and early 1590s, ideas of tombs functioning as Protestant memoria had not yet permeated the church and

cathedral, much less the playhouse, and they certainly had not significantly altered the perception of tombs constructed two hundred years ago.

In other genres, however, whatever the dramatic location or time of the play's action, the plays reflected contemporary London, and thus it should come as no surprise that new fashions in tomb-making made their way into the playhouse. This recent influence need not merely have come from playwrights noticing new tombs in churches. As mentioned earlier, one of the most important groups of tomb makers, the so called "Southwark School," was located very close to the playhouses on the South Bank (Blundell 10). In fact, "[t]he tomb of Shakespeare's patron, the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon, in Westminster Abbey (1596)" was constructed in these nearby Southwark workshops (Wilson *Archaeology* 85).

Hunsdon's tomb is enormous, described as the "[m]ost megalomaniac" of the Westminster tombs built under Elizabeth (Jenkyns 57). It takes up two bays in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist and stands "36 feet high... the tallest tomb ever to be erected in the Abbey" (Gittings 186). Even Gittings, a critic intent on stressing the rise of the individual and the humanizing aspects of tombs of the period, concedes that this monument has the opposite effect:

In place of an effigy is a stone sarcophagus, presumably chosen because any human figure would appear dwarfed by the sheer bulk of the monument... It is... principally a monument to an ideal which no real person could fully emulate ...[and] [i]t is, perhaps, significant testimony to the nature of that ideal that no human figure could appear upon this monument; like the heraldic funeral, it was created for political ends and not as a reflection of an actual human being. (Gittings 186)

While this particular tomb did not boast any sculpted figures representing virtues, it was, like all tombs, designed to highlight certain aspects of Hunsdon's life and achievements, particularly "his descent (he was Elizabeth I's closest living relative), his career as a soldier, a Christian and a cultivator of the arts of peace, and, in its lavishness, his wealth" (Wilson *Archaeology* 85).

Hunsdon's tomb and many other monuments constructed during the period display a bewildering variety of idealized aspects of the individual to visitors. As they were to be permanent commemorative markers erected in the country's holiest places, it was imperative that the simplified stories they presented accorded with the accepted religious and political narratives of the day. Playwrights, discouraged from (overtly) discussing theology or current political events in their plays, picked up this new focus on Protestant "memoria" in the last decade of the 1500s and the first decades of the 1600s and gave it a more secular and universal cast. By this point, most characters in plays were less like the archetypes that often graced the stage in the first decades of the opening of the theatres. As a result, tombs became more useful as tools of intentional simplification, symbols for highlighting only certain aspects of individuals. Tombs as illustrative of the complete life story fall out of fashion in the playhouse; instead of presenting a layered narrative, monuments become shorthand for a kind of reductive categorizing of the deceased by the living.

These theatrical "memoria" can be divided roughly into three overlapping categories by what they chose to emphasize.<sup>194</sup> Two of these are closely linked and vary only in degree from earlier practices: stage tombs frequently stress the status and position of individuals or reduce them to primarily their achievements or actions. In these later plays, status or achievements become the entire focus of tombs rather than merely facts that deserve preservation. Instead of young Henry being pressed to visit his "great-grandsire's tomb" for a multitude of inspirational reasons, tomb references begin to shift toward more simplistic views of what tombs retain (*Henry V* 1.2.103). The shift becomes even more apparent in the last of the three categories, the use of tombs to demonstrate the deceased's adherence to ideal (usually feminine) virtues. Over

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<sup>194</sup> The choice of the term "memoria" in the context of these stage tombs could be seen as problematic as the origins of all three of the following categories stretch to Catholic England. This, however, is to be expected; much of the impetus behind the popularization of memoria was a filling of the void created by the absence of the Catholic saints.

the course of this study, we have seen few women mentioned as the subject of tombs. Partly this is a generic issue: women are largely excluded from power in history plays and thus are excluded from the commemorative system designed to create a fictive continuity in the transfer and maintenance of power. The exceptions, most notably Joan, tend to have the commemorative power of tombs used against them, rather than for them. In late Elizabethan and early Stuart plays, women begin to appear more often as the subject of imaginative invocations of monumentation, but only as idealized representations of qualities that fall very closely in line with contemporary ideals of feminine virtue as expressed on monuments and tombs.

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Westminster Abbey contains dozens of visually striking tombs, but the most unusual and arresting of the monuments, in my view, belongs not to a king, queen, or bishop, but rather to a knight, Sir Francis Vere (d. 1609), an individual described simply by Cyril Tourneur in a funeral poem as “a *Souldier* borne, aswell as bred” (Tourneur B2r). This soldier’s tomb sits in the east isle of the north transept, in what once was the chapel of St. John the Evangelist. The monument:

consists of a moulded plinth on which are four figures in armour, kneeling on one knee and supporting on their shoulders a moulded slab; on the slab are a helm, the various pieces of a suit of body-armour and a cartouche-of-arms; below the slab is a recumbent effigy... of a man in civil costume resting on a rush mattress and with his feet against a boar crest. (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 48)

Many literary critics, including Greenblatt, have tried to show the literary influence of the medieval style double tomb with a transi figure, the top effigy an image of the deceased resting

peacefully in death, while the bottom figure represents a rotting corpse. As I pointed out earlier, however, there are no examples in London of such a tomb with its memento mori symbolism of an ever present death waiting beneath every living human, ready to strike.<sup>195</sup> In addition, such tombs were out of fashion by the early modern period, at least in England. Critics rarely discuss Vere's double tomb, which presents a radically different and far more modern bifurcated view of the individual.<sup>196</sup> Instead of a contrast between the lifelike effigy and the rotting one, the contrast between life and death, Vere's tomb shows the separation between the public life (the armor of the soldier) and the private life (the peacefully reclining figure beneath). What is more, instead of showing two bodies, Vere's armor is left empty on the top slab of the tomb, exposing its status as a costume to be inhabited by the true individual, resting tranquilly below (Figure 5.1).

Vere's tomb can be seen as a literal manifestation of what Jones and Stallybrass identify in their *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*: "it was investiture, the putting on of clothes, that quite literally constituted a person as a monarch or a freeman of a guild or a household servant. Investiture was, in other words, the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social function, a 'depth'" (2). Thus, when Llewellyn writes of the tomb's function to "preserve the social body after death," we see in Vere's tomb a sophisticated acknowledgement that this social body was a uniform separate from the individual (*Art* 9).<sup>197</sup> The socially destructive anonymity of death must be prevented, and, since "In post-Reformation

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<sup>195</sup> The most famous English example of a tomb of this type belongs to Henry Chichele (d. 1443) in Canterbury Cathedral.

<sup>196</sup> The lone exception I have found is Jean Wilson, who confusingly elides the fact that it is only the empty armor held aloft when she suggests "Sir Frances Vere is shown on his monument on Westminster Abbey in civilian dress, but attended by four soldiers, who bear his armour above him in a composition similar to that of the last moments of *Hamlet* as the prince is carried like a soldier off the stage by four captains" (*Archaeology* 83).

<sup>197</sup> This is not to say that the body beneath was a representation of a truly private body, but, then again, it is hard to say exactly what such a body would look like or if it would be appropriate for the highly public space of Westminster!





Figure 5.1 – Two images of the tomb of Sir Francis Vere (d. 1609). From Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, (England). *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London: Volume 1. Westminster Abbey.*

England, the sense of belonging in society went hand in hand with a recognition of difference ... The monumental body was, therefore, charged with the task of re-establishing social difference” (Llewellyn *Art* 104) Due to its 1609 date, this particular tomb clearly did not contribute directly to much if any of Shakespeare’s work, but the division of self and status, and the importance of preserving the latter, can be seen clearly elsewhere in monuments of the period.<sup>198</sup> Vere’s tomb also shows the early modern self-awareness of the process, the understanding that position was a thing that could be, and often needed to be, preserved independently from the individual.

This outlook can be seen clearly in act four, scene two of *Cymbeline*. As the brothers Guiderius and Arvaragus mourn the disguised Innogen, whom they believe to be dead, they do their best to prepare the finest natural grave, one that will be “haunted” by (presumably friendly) “female fairies” and decorated with “ fairest flowers... pale primrose... azured harebell... [and] leaf of eglantine” (4.2.218-224). Although the limitations of their wilderness home causes her grave to be constructed from ephemeral natural materials, they do their best to emulate the traditional familial groupings found in a church burial by interring her “By good Euriphile, our mother” (4.2.235). While they prepare the burial spot, they call shame on “Those rich-left heirs that let their fathers lie / Without a monument” (4.2.227-228). It is an odd and seemingly unnecessary digression, but makes more sense when taken with their treatment of the body of Cloten, whom Guiderius just fought and beheaded. The father, Belarius, insists:

He was a queen’s son, boys,  
And though he came our enemy, remember  
He was paid for that. Though mean and mighty rotting  
Together have one dust, yet reverence,

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<sup>198</sup> See Jean Wilson for a discussion of the idea that, in both monuments and in history plays, an accurate portrayal of rank was more important than an accurate physical resemblance. Those who lived their lives in the nobility, “wished to be remembered as gentlepersons. But, having lived out their lives representing that role, they were content that after their death they should be perceived through other representations – stone actors playing their parts for eternity. Provided the actors played the parts correctly, their physical likeness to the deceased was a matter of indifference” (Wilson *Archaeology* 56).

That angel of the world, doth make distinction  
Of place 'tween high and low. Our foe was princely,  
And though you took his life as being our foe,  
Yet bury him as a prince. (4.2.245-252)

It seems impossible to have a more succinct summation of the division of individual and position, as well as the need for monumentation to preserve the latter, even when the former is allowed to fade. Cloten, quite frankly one of the most revoltingly unpleasant characters ever penned by Shakespeare, still must be afforded a burial spot befitting his position. This princely grave turns out to be directly beside Innogen, whom they also assume to be noble; earlier, Belarius says of Innogen, “This youth, howe’er distressed, appears hath had / Good ancestors” (4.2.47-48). It seems that, setting aside the personal touches that show the brothers’ affection for their disguised sister, the father, a former courtier, wants to make sure that the burial practices show the proper deference to rank, even in this empty wilderness.

The same kind of concern for rank above all else also appears in *Pericles*. This play, unusual in many other respects, is also peculiar in its large number of tomb references, all of which seem to be working to different ends. Perhaps this symbolic discord stems from the dual authorship, or from the identity of the narrator, late medieval author John Gower; Gower’s splendid, brightly painted monument still stands in St. Mary Overy (now Southwark Cathedral), a building called “the players’ church” by William Thompson because of its connections to area acting troupes (Thompson 30).<sup>199</sup> We earlier saw a tomb used in this play to cover up an

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<sup>199</sup> The most frustrating failed connection in this entire project has been my inability to find a direct connection between Gower’s tomb, which Shakespeare and much of his audience knew (see Shakespeare *Pericles* 60) and any particular reference in Shakespeare’s plays. There are beautifully detailed descriptions of the monument in works written by Reverend S. Benson and William Taylor, but it seems this particular tomb never made it directly into any drama. The reason is probably to be found in the generic discussion at the start of this chapter. Gower’s tomb received no reference in the history plays because Gower himself did not figure into the narratives, and his medieval monument was considered too archaic for references in other plays as playwrights kept up with evolving trends. As it stands, the only nod to the monument is Gower’s oblique reference to his resting place in the first two lines of *Pericles*: “To sing a song that old was sung / From ashes ancient Gower is come” (Scene 1.1-2). I would suggest, however, that it is extremely likely Gower’s stage costume reflected his effigy’s attire rather than his arriving

attempted assassination, and we will see in a moment a direct reference to the new fashion of employing symbolic statuary, but the most emotionally moving tomb references are made by Pericles himself as he laments the wife he thinks has just died. He speaks to her body, mournful that he does not “have... time / To give thee hallowed to thy grave, but straight / Must cast thee, scarcely coffined, in the ooze” (Scene 11.57-59). He tells her the sea, and all its sea creatures, must become the “monument upon thy bones” and he must rush through her services, offering only the briefest “priestly farewell to her” (Scene 11.60, 68).

Pericles manages one more response to her death, however, and it demonstrates his hope for a more permanent and appropriate monument. He sends for “spices, ink, and paper, / My casket and my jewels,” and, when the coffin washes up ashore in the next scene, we find his purpose (Scene 11.64-65). The note he pens is read aloud by Cerimon, and reads in full:

Here I give to understand,  
If e'er this coffin drives a-land,  
I, King Pericles, have lost  
This queen worth all our mundane cost.  
Who finds her, give her burying;  
She was the daughter of a king.  
Besides this treasure for a fee,  
The gods requite his charity. (Scene 12.66-73)

In Pericles' hastily written couplets, we see exactly the same dynamic at work as was found in *Cymbeline*. The poem contains only one possible reference to Thaisa's character (“This queen *worth* all our mundane cost”) which, paired with the jewels contained in the coffin and the description of “treasure” and “fee,” is oblique at best. In contrast, Pericles includes three distinct and intersecting descriptors of her status: he describes her as married to a king, a queen in her

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onstage as Susan Gossett suggests, “with walking stick and laurel and dressed in the antiquated short coat and square cap he wears on the title-page of *Painful Adventures*” (Shakespeare *Pericles* 121). *Painful Adventures* is George Wilkins' prose version of *Pericles* which shares a hotly-debated relation with Shakespeare and Wilkins' co-written play. Only two copies of Wilkins' work survive, and it may well never have been that popular, while Gower's likely was more familiar to audiences than the tombs in Westminster.

own right (as opposed to a mere consort), and the daughter of royalty. These three references strategically woven around the plea to “give her burying,” show that her status, far beyond her particular individual attributes or even any desire to curry favor from the generic “gods,” should be the reason for and, critically, the exclusive subject of her monument. Pericles does not mention their nationalities; they are quite simply a generic king and queen. He does not even include Thaisia’s name! The confused citizens on the shore of Tarsus receive a bag of jewels and a request that they make sure this woman gets a monument splendid enough for royalty, but they receive no personal or identifying information whatsoever. Modern Westminster has its prominent tomb to the Unknown Soldier; here Shakespeare envisions a monument to the Unknown Queen.

3

Like titles, achievements had long been celebrated on tombs. In the medieval period, however, their importance had been subsumed in commemorative works beneath questions of ancestry; one had to be great in blood before one could be truly remembered as great in works.

As the near absolutism of the medieval three estates faded, however:

Slowly a challenge evolved from a new code of public service, honoured in heraldry and founded on education rather than lineage alone. Gradually honour came to be gained through service to the state; it came to be seen as developed and nurtured, rather than as a natural condition. ... On monuments too, virtue became the new insignia; blood alone no longer sufficed. (Llewellyn *Funeral* 300-301)

While characters such as Pericles and the once powerful lord Belarius define acceptable monumentation almost exclusively through position, others, particularly those outside the inner circle of the nobility, use different criteria to determine how individuals should be remembered.

Caius Martius can serve as a prime example of these alternate criteria. Like virtually all of Shakespeare's characters, he comes from the elite or near-elite, but only his accomplishments on the battlefield earn him fame and his new name: Coriolanus. His legendary achievements remain, while he lives, literally inscribed on his face and body. Menenius and his mother Volumnia, who earlier insisted that blood "more becomes a man / Than gilt his trophy," discuss his return and what wounds he has received (1.3.36-37). She says that in the latest action, he was wounded "I'th' shoulder and i'th' left arm. There will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place" (2.1.133-135). His wounds will be displayed as a visual record of his merits, each too numerous to catalogue. Volumnia declares that "He had before this last expedition twenty-five wounds upon him," to which Menenius responds, "Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash was an enemy's grave" (2.1.139-142). The scars thus represent not only Coriolanus' bravery, but also his enemies' deaths; quite literally, he has markers to those he has slain carved into his flesh. The aggregate result is powerful; Menenius later pleads in the marketplace to the populace; "The warlike service he has done, consider. Think / Upon the wounds his body bears, which show / Like graves i'th holy churchyard" (3.3.50-52). These scars, each signifying the death of an enemy to Rome, collectively sanctify him and make his very body a visual monument of his service to the state.

At least, of course, until he opens his mouth. Most monuments are mute, and Coriolanus might well have had a more successful political career if he followed their example. Instead, he so angers the population that they turn on him and order him banished. Instead of a living

monument to be replaced eventually by a tomb, he divests himself of even his name; Cominius reports that ““Coriolanus’ / He would not answer to, forbade all names, / He was a kind of nothing, titleless, / Till he had forged himself a name o’th’fire / Of burning Rome” (5.1.11-15). Aufidius, Coriolanus’ sworn enemy and soon-to-be ally, muses on what happened to the great warrior. He lists a number of possible faults, suggesting Coriolanus may suffer from “pride,” “defect of judgment,” or a “nature” that drives him to try “commanding peace / Even with the same austerity and garb / As he controlled the war” (4.7.37, 39, 41, 43-45). Any of these, he thinks, could have “made him feared, / So hated, and so banished” (4.7.47-48). Even his faults, however, should not have been enough to cause his banishment:

But he has a merit  
 To choke it in the utt’rance. So our virtues  
 Lie in th’interpretation of the time,  
 And power, unto itself most commendable,  
 Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair  
 T’extol what it hath done. (4.7.48-53)

The *Norton* justifiably footnotes this passage as “confusing,” but taken in the context of what has just happened to Coriolanus, Aufidius’ point seems clear (*Norton* 2865).<sup>200</sup> Coriolanus’ manifold “virtues” are forgotten by the citizens, either because the fashion of the time has turned from war to peace or because the fickle populace overlooks his past accomplishments. His achievements, largely at Aufidius’ expense, should have been remembered with a suitable monument that would inspire future generations to follow in the great warrior’s footsteps; this tomb would “extol” not just Coriolanus’ name (a name, it must be noted, that Aufidius does not mention until the end of the scene, well after this talk of monumentation), but also his virtues and

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<sup>200</sup> The confusion stems largely from a lack of a clear antecedent for “it” in the second line. I take it to mean the call for banishment in the line preceding and so read what follows as a condemnation of the way the public treats the valorous. Alternatively, “it” could refer to the “merit” itself, which somehow renders itself unspeakable, presumably because of Coriolanus’ previously listed faults. I find the second reading less plausible (if syntactically clearer) because of the implied shift in reason signified by “But”; to say Coriolanus’ faults outweighed his merits would actually be the logical implication of the previous lines. In addition, the former reading seems to fit more snugly with the words on commemoration and remembrance that follow.

victories. Instead, the hero receives no remembrance whatsoever, not even an object as mundane as a chair.

When Coriolanus' achievements are not commemorated, however, an opportunity arises for a clever rival to usurp the potential representative power inherent in such a monument. We saw this when Alcibiades stepped in and rewrote Timon's self-penned epitaph and when Octavius pulled Antony and Cleopatra from her monument. Aufidius performs similar work on Coriolanus, an editing job made easier by the Romans' refusal to materially commemorate their hero. Before Aufidius' executes his clever trap for Coriolanus, one of his conspirators effectively lays out the plan: they will kill Coriolanus before he has a chance to "express himself or move the people / With what he would say"; then, once he is safely dead, the conspirator tells Aufidius, "After your way his tale pronounced shall bury / His reasons with his body" (5.6.54-55, 57-58). Once Coriolanus' mouth is silenced in death, his great rival can recast his reputation any way he pleases. He does so in the most overt and startling way possible. First, he calls Coriolanus a "traitor" and "Insolent villain" and tells the Volscian lords, after Coriolanus' death, that they should "rejoice / That he is thus cut off" (5.6.85, 129, 138-139). Moments later, as the lords order Coriolanus to be "regarded / As the most noble corpse that ever herald / Did follow to his urn," Aufidius executes a dexterous about-face (5.6.143-145). He pretends to lament his supposedly rash action, saying "My rage is gone, / And I am struck with sorrow," then insists on being one of the soldiers to bear Coriolanus' body (5.6.147-148). Most importantly, he maintains, "Though in this city he / Hath widowed and unchilded many a one, / Which to this hour bewail the injury / Yet he shall have a noble memory. Assist" (5.6.151-154). Memory, here, almost certainly carries the now obsolete meaning of a memorial, and thus can be seen as an elaboration of the unnamed lord's "urn." Aufidius' words, the last of the play, hint at what



such a memorial will remember: Coriolanus was a great warrior but a bloody enemy to the Volscians and thus an unsuitable figure for heroic reverence. Such adulation will now, naturally, be directed at Aufidius. By stepping into the commemorative gap created by the Romans and by Coriolanus himself, Aufidius can appropriate the great Roman warrior's monument and use it to strengthen his own position.

As in this case, the use of tomb symbolism to signify the proper commemoration of worldly achievements often denotes success in battle. This is not, however, always the case. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, we saw Octavius effectively efface Cleopatra's political achievements and Antony's military ones in order to create a monument that celebrated only their love. A similar process can be seen in *Romeo and Juliet*, a play written in the mid-1590s that even at this early date demonstrates the reductive power of monuments. Of all of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* is by far the most pervaded with tomb language. Most references center on the "pair of star-crossed lovers," but other characters also become swept up in the rhetoric of commemoration, including Paris.

Paris carries flowers and perfume to Juliet's tomb, carefully stepping his way across the "hollow ground" of the churchyard (5.3.4). He promises to water her tomb nightly, with either perfume or his tears, and conflates her tomb with her "bridal bed," borrowing one of Juliet's recurring images in the play (5.3.12). As he dies at Romeo's hand, he makes an interesting request; "If thou be merciful, / Open the tomb, lay me with Juliet" (5.3.72-73). He never actually married Juliet and, more importantly, he was kinsman to the Prince and thus should be entombed with the leaders of the city, not merely in the monument to one of the important families. He is so focused on love in his dying moments, however, that he wishes to forgo the grander monumental trappings he might enjoy and be remembered only through his love for Juliet.

Romeo sees in Paris a kindred spirit, telling him “O, give me thy hand, / One writ with me in sour misfortune’s book” (5.3.81-82). He promises Paris:

I’ll bury thee in a triumphant grave.  
A grave—O no, a lantern, slaughtered youth,  
For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes  
This vault a feasting presence full of light.  
Death, lie thou there, by a dead man interred. (5.3.83-87)

The Norton glosses “lantern” as “lighthouse”; the first OED example of this meaning is not for another six years, but that seems close enough to assume this meaning may have been in circulation. Metaphorically, an instructive monument could be thought of as a lighthouse, guiding the weary traveler not to a safe port but to wisdom and moral understanding. In 1610, Fulke Greville wrote of his planned monument for Sir Philip Sidney, which he envisioned functioning “like a lighthouse enabling the reader to navigate ‘the straits of true vertue, into a calm and spacious Ocean of humane honour’” (Anglo 158-159). However, a lighthouse or simple roadside lantern does not bring a wanderer directly to itself, but rather guides them to something nearby. In Paris’ case, his monument will draw visitors into the “feasting presence” created in the tomb by Juliet’s company. Romeo thus offers Paris part of what he wants, but also reduces the noble still further. Romeo ignores Paris’ lineage, his relation to the Prince, and while Paris will rest near Juliet, he will not “clip” her like Antony to Cleopatra. His monument, be it lantern or lighthouse, will serve as a beacon or signpost, meaningless in itself; Paris’ whole identity will be subsumed under his attachment to Juliet.

Paris’ example is not unique; throughout the play, particularly in Juliet’s rhetoric, death frequently threatens to undermine individualized and distinct identities. From act three, scene five to act four, scene three, Juliet has three separate visions of tombs and monuments, only one of which allows for *any* surviving individuality. Juliet’s use of tombs is very unusual; she

constantly envisions the interior of the monument rather than the exterior. As a result, even though she constantly refers to monuments, her terror seems to center on burial; her musings sound most like those of Richard II, who feared separation from the tomb he had constructed in life and burial in an undifferentiated grave. In his case, as we have seen, Richard's worries are initiated by the threat of usurpation which leads to crisis of identity. Juliet's motivation seems similar; threatened with both a separation from her new secret husband and banishment from her family, she seems haunted by the symbol of her family's enduring legacy: the Capulet monument.

Juliet's first motion toward the tomb comes in her plea to her parents to "Delay this marriage for a month, a week; / Or if you do not, make the bridal bed / In that dim monument where Tybalt lies" (3.5.199-201). On one level, Juliet simply expands on the suggestion of her mother, who exclaims in frustration "I would the fool were married to her grave" (3.5.140). Juliet's deployment of tomb language, however, is far more nuanced. She expresses her affection for the slain Tybalt, her submission to her parents' will in all but this issue, and her wish to remain a part of the family in the face of her father's threat of banishment.

Juliet articulates her preference for death rather than marriage to Paris far more vividly when she converses with Friar Laurence. She lists the horrors she would gladly endure rather than go through with the wedding:

Or hide me nightly in a charnel house,  
O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,  
With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;  
Or bid me go into a new-made grave  
And hide me with a dead man in his tomb—  
Things that, to hear them told, have made me tremble—  
And I will do it without fear or doubt,  
To live an unstained wife to my sweet love. (4.1.81-88)

Juliet comes up with this horrific vision *before* the Friar suggests his plan of doing almost exactly this. As such, it could be viewed as a simple foreshadowing, a trigger for the Friar's desperate plot, or a reasonable suggestion of the culmination of a young woman's fears.<sup>201</sup> Nonetheless, a few details are striking. In the four lines preceding, her fevered mind speeds through four separate terrifying images. The next five, however, all center on burial and bodies and, most importantly, the anonymity of death. The charnel house, storage space for fleshless bones, can be considered the pinnacle of such unrecognizability,<sup>202</sup> while the second tomb, with markers for only its primary resident, will result in her own erasure.

Understandably, her visions of tombs only intensify after she agrees to the Friar's desperate plan. Left alone in her room, and preparing to take the sleeping potion, Juliet imagines the things that could go wrong in an extended and intense account of the possible terrors of waking amongst the dead:

How if, when I am laid into the tomb,  
I wake before the time that Romeo  
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point.  
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,  
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,  
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?  
Or, if I live, is it not very like  
The horrible conceit of death and night,  
Together with the terror of the place—  
As in a vault, an ancient receptacle  
Where for this many hundred years the bones  
Of all my buried ancestors are packed;  
Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,

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<sup>201</sup> While any direct inspirational connection for Shakespeare could only be considered highly speculative, in the spirit of Caroline Spurgeon it seems worth pointing out that the church of Shakespeare's youth, Church of the Holy Trinity, Stratford-Upon-Avon, had a charnel house that had survived to Shakespeare's time. Beatrice and Percy Home make just such a suggestion in their book on the building. "The doorway just below Shakespeare's monument led at one time to an old building, taken down in the early years of the nineteenth century ... with a crypt which was used as a charnel or bone house. It was the proximity to this bone house which is said to have inspired the poet to write the lines above his grave. He had probably seen the miscellaneous collection of bones, dug up to make room for others, and cast carelessly into this dreadful repository, for he writes with an intensity of horror in *Romeo and Juliet*" (Home and Home 16-17).

<sup>202</sup> Except, perhaps, for the Gravedigger in *Hamlet*, with his mysterious ability to recognize skulls.

Lies fest'ring in his shroud; where, as they say,  
At some hours in the night spirits resort—  
Alack, alack, is it not like that I,  
So early waking—what with loathsome smells,  
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,  
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad—  
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,  
Environèd with all these hideous fears,  
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,  
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,  
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone  
As with a club dash out my desp'rate brains?  
O, look! Methinks I see my cousin's ghost  
Seeking out Romeo that did spit his body  
Upon a rapier's point. Stay, Tybalt, stay!  
Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's drink. I drink to thee. (4.3.29-57)

I quote the passage at length both because its vibrancy resists the scalpel and because it reveals

Juliet's progression, both within this scene and from her previous representations of the tomb.

Again Juliet conjures a vision of the inside of the tomb with the detail of a frequent visitor.

Considering the feud and the dead Capulet children mentioned at the start of the play, Juliet must have visited many times this “ancient receptacle... packed” with the indistinguishable “bones” of her ancestors. Tybalt is there too, “fest'ring in his shroud,” still identifiable but perhaps not for much longer. This confusion of corpses reflects her earlier description of the tomb, where she expressed a deep fear of anonymity; to be buried in a family tomb or within someone else's grave is to lose any personal identity. In this passage, however, that loss is amplified by the loss of identity *before* death, through madness. She fears she could abandon all sense of decorum and respect for the hallowed dead and commit suicide in a frenzy of fear, grief, rage, and insanity that would make her, quite literally, not herself. This is beyond simplification; we are in the realm of absolute destruction of the individual.

The distaste of the young for tombs was axiomatic in the period; in *The Changeling*, for example, Beatrice speaks of how she “loathed” the hideous De Flores “As much as youth and

beauty hates a sepulchre” (Bevington et al. 2.2.66-67). Certainly, an audience cannot expect an agonized, frantic thirteen year-old to consider at length the commemorative potential of the family monument or the way her memory will be shaped and molded after her death; it is not really the kind of thing we would expect anyone, young or old, to consider in the teeth of a crisis. Nonetheless, even in the midst of their sorrow at the losses of their two children (and, in the case of the Capulets, their sole surviving child), this is exactly the kind of calculation Romeo and Juliet’s parents make.

In their final words of the play, the two fathers make a pact to remember their lost children:

Capulet – O brother Montague, give my thy hand.  
This is my daughter’s jointure, for no more  
Can I demand.

Montague – But I can give thee more,  
For I will raise her statue in pure gold,  
That whiles Verona by that name is known  
There shall no figure at such a rate be set  
As that of true and faithful Juliet.

Capulet – As rich shall Romeo’s by his lady’s lie,  
Poor sacrifices of our enmity. (5.3.295-303)

Nothing could be further from Juliet’s fevered fears of anonymity and erasure. What Capulet and Montague propose resists the subsumption to the collective typical of the family monument. Both manage their grief with economics rather than emotions.<sup>203</sup> In these calculations for the future monuments, what matters first is size. “Amongst their audience and patron group it was more usually ‘scale’ than ‘quality’ that was taken as a sign of high status and the tombs of great people were correspondingly ample. They represented a costly investment and the patrons intended that they would remain perpetually conspicuous” (Llewellyn *Funeral* 364). Just like Henry VIII, who specifically requested in his will that his tomb be 25% bigger

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<sup>203</sup> Kirby Farrell correctly points to the use of “economic vocabulary and competition” used by Montague and Capulet, but he gets hung up on “psychic debts” rather than the economic realities of their conversation (145).

than his father's, the parents plan an enormous monument designed to endure and inspire so long as the city stands (Howarth 162). The second consideration is cost: "[b]y about 1600 monuments were treated as items of conspicuous expenditure ... [and] the on-going problem of excessive magnificence in personal spending required new kinds of sumptuary law ... [for tombs] to maintain precedence by confining extravagance to certain specified ranks" (Llewellyn *Funeral* 248). The fathers, in their commemorative plans, suggest virtually priceless gold effigies. Thus, Montague and Capulet can be seen as adhering to the fashion of the time.

What makes this splendor disturbing, however, is not the subject of their work but the truncated message it will preserve. The parents offer to work together (although Montague's language unquestionably carries a sense of competition) to erect costly monuments that will record a sanitized version of the tragedy. Their version glosses over the actions of the parents and the Friar that led to the lovers' deaths; it instead focuses on Juliet's embodiment of ideal virtues and the pairs' dubious accomplishment, their service as sacrificial lambs, "Poor sacrifices to our enmity." The whole encounter seems crassly self-serving. Capulet and Montague clearly realize how much trouble they are in with the Prince and attempt to effectively buy off punishment with an offer to construct a costly and conspicuous civic emblem that simultaneously elevates the lovers' to virtual sainthood and publicly buries the hatchet. It is a mighty effort, but it is hard to say if it succeeds; the Prince's ominous declaration that "Some shall be pardoned, and some punishèd" leaves the audience, and the mourning parents, in some doubt over whether their recast narrative will suffice (5.3.307).

While the two fathers commemorate Romeo and Juliet collectively as lovers, recasting their deaths as a “sacrifice” that wins a victory for peace and harmony, Montague adds an extra element to his suggested monument for Juliet. It will, he claims, preserve her as “true and faithful Juliet.” No such adjectives are attached individually to Romeo. This is easy to miss or to read as simply a part of the collective project. I would suggest, however, that it would be better seen as an early example of what would become a popular and important use of tomb symbolism on stage in the 1600s: the simplification of women into exemplars of feminine virtues.

Except in rare cases, as we have seen, real world tombs usually functioned to preserve the status quo against external threat. Such a project could include deception or elision of inconvenient truths, but usually monuments held a fairly conservative line. In a patriarchal culture, this significantly affected the symbolism surrounding women on tombs, particularly when they appeared in conjunction with or in support of others: “The placing of the nominally powerful below the nominally weak – the right below the left or the male below the female – symbolized precisely those damaging, disruptive aspects of death which monuments were designed to contain” (Llewellyn *Funeral* 286). Llewellyn argues that “For women to be represented on monuments, not simply as appendages of their fathers or husbands, they had to exemplify gender specific virtues” (*Funeral* 286).<sup>204</sup>

This simplification could take a variety of material forms. Most striking were the symbolic “Virgin’s Crown[s] ... made ... from wood and paper to be carried before the coffins of local virgins... [and] to hang in the church as a challenge to any imputation against the purity

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<sup>204</sup> Exceptions exist, but this is a fair generalization.



of the deceased. Once the proper period had elapsed, they were hung from the rafters to act as a continuing symbol of virtue” (Llewellyn *Art* 59). Such crowns, so displayed, ceased to commemorate the individualized identity of the deceased at all, merely serving as an aspirational symbol for young women and girls attending service. More often, this reduction to idealized virtues occurred through the allegorical statuary and iconography discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This representation of virtues particularly suited monuments for women because their exclusion from civic and military engagement left little else to dramatize. Near Sir Francis Vere’s tomb, for example, are two others from the same decade, a large standing monument to Henry, Lord Norris (d. 1601) and his wife Margaret, and a wall monument to Anne Bodenham (d.1603), wife to James Kirton. Lord Norris’ tomb has panels on two sides “carved with military scenes [of] infantry, and cavalry on the march,” while the neighboring wall monument bears only “a weeping eye, the tears of which are represented sprinkled over the inscription” (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 48).

Occasionally, characters directly refer to such allegorical figures on stage. In the climactic scene of *Pericles*, for example, Pericles marvels that Marina had suffered far worse than him and “Yet . . . dost look / Like patience gazing on king’s graves, and smiling / Extremity out of act” (Scene 21.125-127). More often, however, the lack of a specific offstage referent (like those found in the history plays) made it more convenient to present the overall effect of the monument than to detail individual visual elements. In the nearly unreadable drama *The Tragicomoedi of the Vertuous Octauia* (1598) by Samuel Brandon, the titular heroine spends the entirety of the play defiantly resisting suggestions that she should repay Antony’s infidelities by infidelities of her own or by encouraging Caesar to go to war. In recompense, the Chorus speaks at the end of the play of her virtue “purchast therewithall: / That fame her honor singeth,” fame

that will manifest itself in “A monument most rare, / Of pure Arabian gold” (Brandon F6r). The Chorus insists time will only increase the reverence for Octavia’s name:

Whiles any sparke of worth,  
Doth lodge in womans brest:  
Thy praise among the rest,  
Be evermore hencefoorth,  
    In noblest mindes preserved:  
Of Diamonds most pure,  
A tombe let Angels frame:  
And there engrave her name,  
    For evermore t’endure,  
    T’eternity reserved. (Brandon F6v)

The passage emphasizes the materials of the monument (gold and diamond) and the decorative elements (angels and engraved messages), but everything operates in service of acting inspirationally on the remaining “sparke of worth” found in “womans brest.” The play’s main character, so didactically referred to in the title as “Vertuous Octauia,” will endure eternally as an exemplar of ideal gendered qualities.

Women in drama, regardless of their power in the *present*, rarely are allowed any power to influence their own enduring legacies in any but the most passive ways; Octavia for example simply lives so pristine a life that the Chorus calls out for proper monumentation. In some dramatic works, however, women seize at least limited agency in this process. In George Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears*, Cynthia weeps so faithfully and passionately over her (supposedly dead) husband’s grave that the observing Tharsalio suggests she will change the very meaning of the monument: “For this does she look to be deified, to have hymns made of her, nay to her; the tomb where she is, to be no more reputed the ancient monument of our family, the Lysandri, but the new-erected altar of Cynthia” (Chapman 4.1.114-117). Her actions carry such power that they potentially alter the reputation not only of herself and her husband, but also of the entire family line. She does not have full control here, however; she neither

designs a new monument nor pays for one herself. When her husband Lysander arrives in disguise to attempt to seduce her, he also speaks of tombs, but he does so in a way that strips Cynthia of any agency whatsoever. He speaks of “Women’s glory” and “Men’s shame,” repentant that he had ever accused her of wrongdoing (Chapman 4.2.1-2). Instead of suspicion, he suggests, women

rather merit altars, sacrifice,  
Than love and courtship.  
Yet see, the queen of these lies here interred,  
Tearing her hair and drowned in her tears,  
Which Jove should turn to crystal, and a mirror  
Make of them, wherein men may see and wonder  
At women’s virtues. (Chapman 4.2.5-11)

Here again we see a nod to pagan imagery and, more importantly, we see Cynthia reductively cast by no less than the gods themselves as a generic exemplar of the constancy of women. In this case, it will be men rather than women who come to learn from her example, but the central premise remains the same: preservation centers less on her identity as Cynthia than on her status as the generic “queen” of “women’s virtues.”

Lysander’s opinion of the message Cynthia will leave for posterity dramatically changes when she falls for his disguise, accepts his advances, sleeps with him in her husband’s supposed tomb, and even offers her husband’s corpse to replace the body of a criminal stolen while the disguised Lysander was supposed to be on watch. Lysander, curious how much further she will go, asks her if she has any concerns that, “They that in former times / Ador’d thy virtue, would they not abhor / Thy loathest memory?” (Chapman 5.1.452-454). Cynthia concedes this danger but refuses to be deterred by such possibilities: “All this I know, but yet my love to thee / Swallows all this, or whatsoever doubts / Can come against it. / Shame’s but a feather balanc’d with thy love” (Chapman 5.1.455-458). She is willing in this case to sacrifice her reputation and

even become an anti-memoria, eternally reviled as an example of the opposite of the virtues for which she had been celebrated an act earlier.

We saw something similar in *Much Ado About Nothing*, where Hero ran the risk of being held up not as a positive exemplar but as warning for others. Being immortalized as an exemplar carries other risks as well. Despite the overtly didactic nature of tombs that emphasize memoria, the possibility of misinterpretation remains. It is key, for example, that the audience be receptive to moral instruction. This, perhaps, explains the odd caveat on Octavia's memorial; it will stand "Whiles any sparke of worth, / Doth lodge in womans brest." Perhaps, in this passage, Brandon envisions some depraved, amoral future, or at least visitors to Octavia's monument who lack any ethical compass. Brandon's concern, shared by others in the period, was that individuals unreceptive to the moral message might get the wrong ideas or, worse still, actually be inspired to evil.

An extreme example of the right and wrong ways to respond to a memorial commemorating its subject as an ideal of feminine virtue can be found in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1610-1611), attributed most frequently now to Middleton. The heroine, simply named Lady, asks her husband Govianus to kill her rather than allow her to fall into the clutches of the aptly named Tyrant. As he prepares to stab her, however, she tells him to "Hold," as she must engage in "a chief and worthy business" before her death, presumably meaning a prayer (Middleton 3.1.98-107). It is not only her spiritual future that concerns her; she fears that "neglect" of these duties "would have made me forgotten / Where I desire to be remembered most" (3.1.108-109). She already has one eye trained on her reputation and commemoration as one victim in the line of women who died in defense of their chastity. Once she dies, Govianus

moves to memorialize her in exactly this way.<sup>205</sup> He makes plans to bury her at his “father’s side,” where he calls on the public, “Help me to mourn, all that love chastity” (3.1.244, 252, 254). He calls her a “delicious treasure of mankind, / To him that knows what virtuous woman is, / And can discreetly love her.” The specific love he references is, of course, their shared love, but by extending the idea to “mankind,” Govianus makes it clear that she now stands as a public figure, an exemplar of a “virtuous woman” who can be “discreetly love[d]” by all. Discretion, unfortunately, is a concept foreign to the Tyrant and his response to the Lady’s memorialization astonishes with its vulgarity. Frustrated that the Lady is now “married to death and silence, / Which nothing can divorce,” he gets soldiers to bring him the keys to the cathedral, “lanthorns and a pickaxe” determined that “Death nor the marble prison my love sleeps in / Shall keep her body locked up from mine arms” (4.2.27-28, 45, 48-49).

The next scene opens with the Tyrant entering the cathedral with his soldiers, approaching the monument described in the stage directions as “*richly set forth*” (4.3.0.3). In the footnote to her edition of the play, Anne Lancashire suggests this could indicate the tomb boasts “a marble effigy of the Lady” (Middleton 208). This would reinforce some of the imagery of the scene, as well as adding “emphasis to the theme of idolatry, and violent sexual overtones to the Tyrant’s tomb-breaking. The marble body of the effigy—cold, silent, lifeless—would provide a visual and thematic parallel to the corpse of the Lady” (Middleton 208). True or not, the Tyrant misreads the tomb in the most egregious way possible. Seeing this monument, designed to portray the Lady as an exemplar of chastity, he insists “The monument woos me; I must run and kiss it” (4.3.9). He sees tears on the tomb, either imagined or carved stone like those on Anne Bodenham’s, and instead of interpreting them as tears of innocence, he announces that the effigy

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<sup>205</sup> And lies dead, it must be pointed out, at her own hand since Govanus, that “poor-spirited man” faints before he can do the deed himself (3.1.150).

“‘Twas weeping to itself before I came” in “pity” for him and his love (4.3.12, 13). Even death and burial will not stop him; the Tyrant laments that “We miss her ‘mongst the glories of our court” and insists “Thou grey-eyed monument, shall not keep her from us all” (4.3.21, 23). He succeeds in stealing the body and replacing the cover, turning the tomb into a cenotaph.<sup>206</sup>

The main person deceived is Govianus. In the next scene, he demonstrates, in opposition to the Tyrant, exactly how one *should* behave before a monument to such an exemplar. The stage direction indicates that, instead of a wielding a pickaxe, he arrives “*in black, a book in his hand, his Page carrying a torch before him*” (4.4.0.1-2). Following Samuel C. Chew, Lancashire suggests religious symbolism here: “[f]avourite Protestant emblematic attributes of Truth were a lighted candle and an open book” (Middleton 218). His appearance and behavior reinforce the Lady’s transformation into symbolic exemplar. He continues with this theme, speaking of her “monument,” “Temple of honor,” and “Chamber of peace,” which speaks through “silence” to his inner being, “Where truth and love in every man should dwell” (4.4.1, 4, 5, 7, 9). His accompanying Page sings a song extolling her “virtuous honour” (4.4.15). The Page insists “Never lady earned her fame / In virtue’s war with greater strife” and that her actions “To preserve her constant name” should be praised and honored not just by her husband, but also by “You virgins that pass by her,” who presumably would be expected to emulate her actions (4.4.18-19, 20, 26). All the while, Govianus continues his adulation of this “Eternal maid of honour, whose chaste body / Lies here like virtue’s close and hidden seed” (4.4.37-38).

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<sup>206</sup> This act of deception causes one of the observing soldiers to become the second individual in early modern drama, after Titus in *Titus Andronicus*, to make a connection between a coffin and a meat pie:

Life, must this on now to deceive all comers,  
And cover emptyness? ‘Tis for all the world  
Like a great city-pie brought to a table  
Where there be many hands that lay about;  
The lid’s shout close when all the meat’s picked out.  
Yet stands to make a show and cozen people. (4.3.129-134)

Of course, he is mistaken; the Lady's body no longer resides in her tomb. Fortunately, her spirit still stands in attendance, and it arrives with the truth. She informs him that "The monument is robbed," and names the Tyrant as perpetrator (4.4.61). This call to action naturally prevents any further concern over the Lady's tomb or her status as memoria, at least until her body is safely recovered. Finally, with the Tyrant dead and Govianus made king, her widowed husband actually takes time to physically honor her dead body before returning her to the monument. He tells his men, "Here, place her in this throne; crown her our queen / The first and last that ever we make ours, / Her constancy strikes so much firmness in us" (5.2.200-202). Having vividly and rather morbidly made his point, he orders her "solemnly borne / Unto the house of peace from whence she came / As queen of silence" (5.2.203-205). Again, the silent reverence he called on earlier is paramount, but now the exalted status of queen has been added to her virtue to raise her profile among available feminine exemplars.

It is with another queen, Hermione from *The Winter's Tale*, where all of these elements of the commemoration of women as ideals conjoin in Shakespeare. Over the course of the play, other characters repeatedly reduce Hermione's complex and vibrant character to a variety of archetypes through an assortment of imaginative and artistic truncations, none of which she controls. The first reduction comes from jealous Leontes. His first thoughts upon convincing himself of his wife's infidelities center on his own possible shame, a disgrace he insists "Will hiss me to my grave" (1.2.190). Soon, however, he turns his attention to Hermione and begins to construct a legacy for her by which she will become an anti-memoria. Her beauty and seeming virtue make her a "goodly lady" on the surface, but this is only "her without-door form" (2.1.68, 71). He struggles to find a suitable designation for her: "She's an adultress... she's a traitor... she's / A bed-swerver, even as bad as those / That vulgars give bold'st titles" (2.1.90, 91, 94-96).

Leontes feels her dishonor to be so great that even the foulest name conjured up by the lowest citizen in the land would be insufficient to contain her supposed foulness.

At her trial, Hermione's delivers long and grand speeches in her own defense, but at their core stand questions of name and reputation:

... behold me,  
A fellow of the royal bed, which owe  
A moiety of the throne; a great king's daughter,  
The mother to a hopeful prince, here standing  
To prate and talk for life and honour, fore  
Who please to come and hear. For life, I prize it  
As I weigh grief, which I would spare. For honour,  
'Tis a derivative from me to mine,  
And only that I stand for. (3.2.35-43)

She touches here on all the major commemorated aspects of individuals discussed in this chapter: her dual claim to rank, her accomplishments in producing an heir, and her steadfast defense of her honor, the grandest prize she has to hand down to her descendants. Ambitiously, she makes the marriage bed (the symbolic center of what she is accused of polluting) along with the son produced in that bed, the material anchors of her argument. She even calls down curses on her own future resting place, insisting that if she ever acted "one jot beyond / The bound of honour" then she would deserve to have "my near'st of kin / Cry 'Fie' upon my grave" (3.2.48-49, 51-52). It is all to no avail, however; she herself admits that Leontes controls the reins of the commemorative apparatus. As we saw in Chapters Two and Three, pamphlets, ballads, and alehouse signs stand on the opposite end of the spectrum of commemoration from tombs. In a move designed both to cement her reputation as unfaithful and lower her status through these more populist methods of memory making, Leontes ensures that Hermione is "on every post / Proclaimed a strumpet" (3.2.99-100).



Not fifty lines later, Leontes starts desperately backtracking, but the damage has been done. In the midst of a reading of Hero's fake death in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Sarah Beckwith suggests "Lines 5.4.65-6 best encapsulate the movement from funeral to wedding . . . to Don Pedro's amazed response—the former Hero, Hero that is dead!" Leonato replies: "She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived," anticipating Leontes' brutal, petrifying slandering of Hermione" (Perry and Watkins 48). It is a clever turn of phrase and suggests an interesting way of looking at *The Winter's Tale*. Leontes' accusations indeed act to petrify Hermione, but the actual "slandering" is emphatically *not* petrified along with her. In fact, her statuefication becomes the process by which she sheds the slander and is reborn. The first attempt at cleansing her reputation comes not from Paulina, but from Leontes, who plans to bury mother and son together and ensure that, on their monuments, "The causes of their death appear, unto / Our shame perpetual" (3.2.234-235). Like Henry V at Agincourt, another king who knows that the damage done cannot be reversed, Leontes promises to render obsequies to the dead: "Once a day I'll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation" (3.2.235-327).

Leontes' proposed monument and actions can do no more, however, than any other tomb; it can work to cleanse Hermione's reputation and demonstrate Leontes' penitence but cannot bring back the past. However much power tombs may have, they boast no magic. It is surprising, then, that Paulina chooses to reveal Hermione at the end of the play through an elaborately staged unveiling of a "statue," a monument to the supposedly dead queen. Why not simply reveal that Hermione has survived? An argument that such a revelation would be theatrically ineffective seems undermined by *Pericles*, *The Tempest*, and any number of other plays in which the assumed dead emerge from hiding. The answer lies in the specifics of what Paulina attempts to achieve with Hermione's monument.

Before mention of the statue, Paulina becomes involved in an exchange with Leontes in which he insists that, were he to remarry, Hermione's ghost could justly haunt him. Paulina gets him to promise not to remarry without her consent and then she suggests he should never do so, "Unless another / As like Hermione as is her picture / Affront his eye" (5.1.73-75). The audience takes her to mean "picture" in the figurative sense: "A person who strongly resembles another; a person who appears to be a likeness or image of someone or something else" (OED 3.a). Unbeknownst to anyone on or off stage, she also embeds the now rare meaning of picture as "A three-dimensional representation of something, esp. as a work of art; a statue, a sculpture" (OED 1.d). Both meanings carry the sense of providing a true image, a reminder if you will, of what Hermione was truly like.

An explanation for why Paulina feels such a "picture" necessary comes moments later. A Servant arrives, praising Perdita as "the most peerless piece of earth, I think, / That e'er the sun shone bright on" (5.1.94-95). Paulina, always on guard for any slight against Hermione, laments that "As every present time doth boast itself / Above a better, gone, so must thy grave / Give way to what's seen now!" (5.1.96-98). She then confronts the Soldier, reminding him that once he had so praised Hermione: "thus your verse / Flowed with her beauty once. 'Tis shrewdly ebb'd / To say you have seen a better" (5.1.101.103). The Soldier's response is cold, if understandable: "Pardon, madam. / The one [Hermione] I have almost forgot" (5.1.103-104). A "picture" is needed to refresh the memory of those who have clearly forgotten Hermione's many qualities before her return can be properly appreciated.

What, then, can Hermione's statue remind the Sicilian court? The audience actually receives an unusual amount of information about the new monument, starting with the name of the sculptor. The Third Gentleman calls it "a piece many years in doing, and now newly

performed by that rare Italian master Giulio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile nature of her custom, so perfectly is he her ape. He so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer” (5.2.87-92). The *Norton* glosses Giulio as “An Italian painter, a follower of Raphael, who died in 1546 and was most famous for a series of erotic drawings illustrating sexual positions or ‘postures’” (Shakespeare *Norton* 2956). This explanation seems both insufficient and baffling; there seems little reason Paulina would select a painter of smut for a sculptor of virtue. Leonard Barkan offers a more plausible reason for this selection. He posits “Shakespeare knew the name Giulio Romano from Vasari’s *Lives*,” which contained “two epitaphs” for the artist, one of which “credits Giulio with mastery of three arts, presumably painting, architecture, and sculpture” (Barkan 656). The later inscription reads in part, translated from Latin, “Jupiter saw sculpted and painted bodies breathe and the homes of mortals made equal to those in heaven through the skill of Giulio Romano” (Barkan 656).<sup>207</sup> Barkan goes on to point out that these epitaphs “leave no doubt that he was indeed a sculptor” and also strongly reflect particulars of the “statue” of Hermione, including the illusion of breath from the statue. He concludes:

Shakespeare required such a figure with whom he could credit the creation of a work of art that was, after all, both sculpted and painted and which finally proves to be not a work of art at all. This multiplicity of possibilities lies at the heart of the passage describing Giulio’s ‘statue.’ All is contained in the richly ambiguous verbs: ‘A piece many years in *doing* and now newly *performed* by that rare Italian master.’ Shakespeare preserves the ambiguity by never actually saying that Giulio Romano sculpted the statue. These indefinite verbs apply to both life and art, and moreover to both sculptural and theatrical art. Hermione is indeed ‘many years in doing.’ (Barkan 657)

In order to clearly impress upon the audience the lifelike nature of the “statue,” Shakespeare has the Gentleman not only describe its vivacity, but also name the artist responsible as well as his credentials for audience members unfamiliar with his work.

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<sup>207</sup> These epitaphs only appeared in the 1550 first edition (Barkan 656).

Emphasis on the lifelike helps Shakespeare put the real actor playing Hermione on stage while still maintaining the illusion that the character is a statue. The same holds true for the repeated references to paint on the monument. When Perdita reaches to kiss the statue's hand, Paulina halts her; "O, patience! / The statue is but newly fixed; the colour's / Not dry" (5.3.46-48). Soon after, when Leontes tries to kiss the static Hermione, Paulina warns him "Good my lord, forbear. / The ruddiness upon her lip is wet. / You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own / With oily painting" (5.3.80-83). Obviously, these are both efforts to prevent anyone from touching the statue and so spoiling the surprise, but they also indicate further emphasis on its naturalistic appearance. Although many sixteenth and seventeenth tombs were painted, by the time of *The Winter's Tale* painted monuments were falling out of fashion (Llewellyn *Funeral* 227). Inevitably, paint on a monument obscures the materials of production, so as more expensive imported materials came into style, painting began to disappear. The repeated emphasis on paint thus makes the monument seem traditional as well as emphasizing the lifelike nature of the work.

All of these details (the named sculptor, the theatricality of the monument, and the lifelike paint) contribute to an image of realistic and naturalistic sculpture. Unfortunately, this only raises the original question again: if the goal is to reveal a statue that looks exactly like Hermione, why not bring out Hermione herself? The answer comes in the particular work that monuments can do; in other words, the difference in the way individuals react to a lifelike statue of an individual and the individual herself.

A monument can remind a viewer of the appearance of the deceased. Although, as Llewellyn repeatedly points out, a tomb effigy need not truly resemble the individual commemorated, in some cases it could, such as the recently erected tomb to Elizabeth I in

Westminster with its effigy's face sculpted with the aid of her death mask.<sup>208</sup> Certainly, it is clear that the Soldier with whom Paulina earlier argued had allowed his mental picture of Hermione to fade. In addition, this gambit allows Paulina to ready the audience for Hermione's age through the "carver's excellence, / Which lets go by some sixteen years, and makes her / As she lived now" (5.3.30-32).

All monuments to the nobility, royalty in particular, must remind audiences of the importance of rank. Paulina tells those assembled that the statue's craftsmanship "Excels what ever yet you looked upon, / Or hand of man hath done" (5.3.16-17). The splendor of tombs was expected to be commensurate with the rank of the commemorated. Leontes marvels at the "Royal piece" and twice in five lines speaks of the "majesty" of the statue (5.3.38, 35, 39). Perdita likewise speaks first, addressing the statue as "Lady, / Dear Queen" rather than the more informal "mother" used by Marina to the flesh and blood Thaisa in similar circumstances in *Pericles* (5.3.44.45, Scene 22.67).

Most importantly, monuments to women could be used to demonstrate their adherence to ideal feminine virtues. Upon seeing her, Leontes' instantly recalls her in life "as tender / As infancy and grace" (5.3.26-27). More to the point, he properly reads these virtues as didactic, apprehending her as a paragon of virtue who, through her exemplarity, condemns his sins. He insists, "I am ashamed" and asks, "Does not the stone rebuke me / For being more stone than it?" (5.3.37-38). He asserts that her likeness, reduced in this way to a monument rather than flesh and blood, "has / My evils conjured to remembrance" (5.3.39-40).

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<sup>208</sup> Stephen Orgel suggests that Hermione's statue was designed to bring to mind those to Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, both of which were finished by roughly the same time as *The Winter's Tale* was written. "[B]oth statues were lifelike, in the sense that they were painted, as Hermione's is said to be, and as effigies always were in the period. The royal patron of the King's Men was not a connoisseur or a collector, but he nevertheless relied on the power of art to memorialize, reconcile and restore" (Shakespeare *Winter's* 56).

Through this monument, then, Paulina attempts to systematically remind the assembled of what has been lost so long ago and to rebuild, through the power of *memoria*, an idealized portrait of Hermione. She even guides the King and his retinue through their “reading” of the statue in order to protect against any misreading. Leontes is, at least at this point in the play, not a monstrous figure like the Tyrant, but Paulina’s continuous commentary makes it clear that she fears he will misread the statue if left to his own devices. She explains why the statue is “so much wrinkled” and, as she brings the statue to life, repeatedly assures the audience that her magic trick is not the result of “wicked powers” (5.3.28, 91). Simply bringing Hermione forward would have, as in other plays, caused great celebration, but Paulina instead uses the monument to guide the King and his followers through visual and spoken reminders of Hermione’s beauty (along with her true age), rank, and unspotted virtue before allowing the real queen to step forward.

The power of *memoria*, however, comes paired with some severe limitations, particularly when used to portray the living. As we saw in Chapter Two, the French used tomb imagery to simplify Joan of Arc in an effort to silence her threats to the established order. Although it seems unlikely Paulina intends to quiet Hermione, many critics have noticed the Queen’s relative silence in Act Five; after she steps down from her dais, she speaks only eight lines, all questions and blessings directed at her daughter. There are unquestionably a variety of reasons for this silence; if nothing else one could expect some frosty tension between the Queen and the King who so suddenly and brutally turned on her years ago. Nonetheless, it seems at least possible that Paulina’s ruse contributes to Hermione’s reticence. Having been quite literally on display as an exemplar before an audience, there seems little that Hermione can say. The reductive power

of the statue powerfully reminded the King of his wife's virtue and value, but now she must step off her pedestal and live up to her idealization. It is no wonder she is hesitant to speak!

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: "TWO DISHES, BUT TO ONE TABLE"

The early modern stage overflowed with the dead. Some were the historic dead, "revived" as Nashe claimed, "raised from the grave of oblivion, and brought to plead their aged honours in open presence" only to be slain again in battle on the skirmish scale (Nashe 112-113). Some were the tragic dead, pleading like Hamlet on the blood-soaked stage to be remembered: "Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied" (5.2.281-282). Some were merely dead in jest, commemorated before their time like Hero and Hermione, only to revive dramatically in the final act. All, however, eventually stepped back on stage, doublets still stained with fake blood, or rose from their tombs in order to give final bows. At the end of the "two-hours' traffic," the audience filed out, the characters both dead and living resumed actors' lives with a trip to the tavern, and someone at the bottom of the troupe's hierarchy came out to scrub the stage down for tomorrow's performance.

By its very nature, theater is an ephemeral medium. The plays themselves, until Jonson published his *Workes* and Shakespeare's friends followed suit with his plays, were hardly considered literary, but instead existed primarily in the playhouse, spoken before the audience for a brief run and then locked away until the public was ready for a revival. If the main plot function of a staged death was emotional impact, that could be achieved by soaring verse and the dramatic intervention of swords and poison. If, however, playwrights needed to illustrate the



lasting consequences of such a death or embed the individual in an historic continuity that stretched beyond the moment, they by necessity had to reach for referents outside of the transient world of the playhouse.

Often, far more often than critics have realized, playwrights accomplished a level of permanency in an ephemeral medium via references to tombs. Fundamentally, monuments are devices for raising, or at least changing, the stakes, for providing the stage with the illusion of historical or narrative permanency. Tombs allowed playwrights to anchor the stage action in either the material reality of history or the imagined material reality of an alternate, fictive world. Tombs and monuments, even when they serve as the settings for scenes, may not appear to carry the emotional weight of the action, as Greenblatt's contrast between "cold" and "green memory" will attest. In a wider sense, however, their inclusion and importance on stage and in dramatic rhetoric are often what gives weight and a sense of lasting importance to otherwise fleeting achievements.

Within this framework, tombs prove highly flexible in their theatrical functionality. Death, while a definitive answer to some queries, actually raises a series of other questions, questions that must be answered by characters in ways that demonstrate how they see themselves and others being remembered. Characters must decide what to do with the dead body. As we saw in the history plays, the display of heads on pikes and the representation of an effigy on a tomb can be seen as two poles on the spectrum of commemoration. Once buried and commemorated, the body must then be reinterpreted. While the dead, rotting body beneath the ground may be a symbol of leveling, the medieval memento mori, the tomb above lives on, the "social body after death," reinscribing the rotting flesh with all the markers of degree, respect, and accomplishment. Hamlet may jest that the dead bodies of "Your fat king and your lean

beggar” are only “two dishes, but to one table,” but no one will mistake the splendid sarcophagus of his late father with the unpretentious patch of earth from which the gravedigger unceremoniously tosses Yorick’s skull (4.3.23-24).

Tomb construction, patronage, and display allow the living to imprint their own narrative on the dead. In some instances, this can be a reclamation project, an attempt to cleanse an unjustly sullied reputation. In others, tombs can allow the living to defame the deceased permanently, either for malicious ends or as an effort to reshape the narrative of the past. Tombs can even be used for neither; they can ignore the commemorated almost entirely, focusing instead on presenting a message in support of those currently wielding the commemorative power. In all these instances, tombs function in drama as a symbol of the power to inscribe and bequeath a specific narrative to history, a symbol that works far better on stage than references to chronicles or other commemorative media.

In his poetry, Shakespeare, like so many poets throughout history, maligns marble and brass when compared with the awesome commemorative power of the pen. He insists “Not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this pow’rful rhyme” and he assures his subject that his sonnets will make him “outlive a gilded tomb, / And ... be prais’d of ages yet to be” (Sonnets 55.1-2, 101.11-12). Such poetry circulated within a small and obviously literate audience, an audience that valued handwritten manuscripts as prized possessions. The stage, however, exposed the flimsy *materiality* of paper, and the largely illiterate audience placed less value on the written word. In this context, it was the tomb, not the tome, that effectively stood as a symbol of permanence.

Finally, tombs are objects of narrative and didactic art. They preserve the memory of individuals for generations of viewers, but they can only retain so much. Tombs inevitably

prune the multifaceted individual into a shape that can fit snugly within the collective memory. As readers of and participants in history, individuals tend to simplify and create unambiguous narrative persona when thinking about historical figures. Tombs contribute to this process and frequently function as a type of persona creation not unlike that which takes place on stage. As a result, when tombs are invoked in drama, they can present alternate identities for the deceased, and sometimes function as shorthand for narrative reduction.

This, then, is the dramaturgy of tombs,<sup>209</sup> a dramaturgy that continued to evolve, gaining power as the seventeenth century progressed and more individuals outside the nobility were able to afford tombs.<sup>210</sup> While I have confined this project to Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama, later playwrights continued to develop the remarkable symbolic potential of tombs in their own work. John Webster, for example, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, has the titular heroine initially challenge the reductive power of tombs. When she sees Antonio hesitate in his wooing, she asks, “What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir; / 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb” (Bevington et al. 1.1454-456). She has already been portrayed in effigy on her husband’s tomb, either lying beside him, or as was often the case, as a kneeling “weeper,” praying by his side. She resists this ossification, insisting that her blood still runs warm; while a figure of her may lie in eternal devotion to her dead husband, she is still alive and able to make decisions about her life other than those recorded in stone. Inevitably, however, the forces arrayed against her wear her down over the course of the play; when Bosola comes to torment her, he does so disguised as a “tomb-maker,” here to “flatter the dead” (4.2.144-145). He speaks at length of the differences between the lives of princes and their monumental

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<sup>209</sup> Thanks to Sharon O’Dair for this evocative phrase.

<sup>210</sup> We can see hints of this, for example, in *The Winter’s Tale*, with Camillo’s reference to brasses; even the Old Shepherd thinks in a moment of crisis of his family’s burial plots (1.2.361, 4.4.440-446).

portrayal, all the while letting the Duchess know that she will have even less control over her final representation than she has been able to seize in her own life from her two evil brothers.

As a short illustration of the continued development of tomb imagery and as a way of drawing an end to this project, I offer one final brief reading of a play penned at least a decade after Shakespeare's death. John Ford's *Love's Sacrifice* contains an astonishing variety of tomb symbolism, all taking place on a stage which may well "have been draped in black" to simulate the conventions of the "funerary ritual" (Ford 39-40). Bianca expresses the potential of becoming a negative memoria when she suggests that to cuckold Duke Caraffa would be to "let my sins be written on my grave, / My name rest in reproof" (2.4.70-71). Other characters in the play fear that even having a bad child or a promiscuous spouse is enough to heap "Shame" on an innocent individual's "grave" (3.1.8-9). Later, after murdering Bianca only to find her innocent, Caraffa attempts to invoke the cleansing power of tombs, turning her monument "i'th college church" into "the shrine / Of fairest purity" where he can come to "offer up the sacrifice / Of bleeding tears" (5.2.109, 5.3.37-38, 42-43).

All of this melodrama serves as the precursor to the astonishing final act. The supposed lover, Fernando, leaps from the tomb, chastises Caraffa for not trusting his wife, and promptly kills himself by drinking poison.<sup>211</sup> Understandably, Caraffa first rails at him, shouting "Fernando, man of darkness, / Never till now, before these dreadful sights, / Did I abhor thy friendship" (5.3.70-72). Within moments of Fernando's death, however, he radically changes face, calling Fernando "a friend unmatched" and insisting, "when I have finished my last days, / Lodge me, my wife, and this unequalled friend / All in one monument" (5.3.102, 103-105). He then immediately turns to suggesting what this extraordinary triple tomb might signify to

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<sup>211</sup> A. T. Moore usefully suggests that Fernando's appearance in this scene may reflect the "shroud figure of John Donne in St Paul's Cathedral" (Ford 75).

visitors. Inexplicably, however, he omits any mention of Fernando whom he just ordered interred with them:

Never henceforth let any passionate tongue  
Mention Bianca's and Caraffa's name,  
But let each letter in that tragic sound  
Beget a sigh, and every sigh a tear.  
Children unborn, and widows whose lean cheeks  
Are furrowed up by age, shall weep whole nights,  
Repeating but the story of our fates. (5.3.106-112)

Caught up in the drama of the moment, Caraffa promptly stabs himself; Rosetti, the new Duke, is left to carry out his orders. After condemning the villainous D'Avolos, Rosetti announces "We'll rear a tomb / To these unhappy lovers which shall tell / Their fatal loves to all posterity" (5.3.153-155). This declaration is supremely ambiguous, however. Ford makes it clear through the heightened rhetoric, the tombs on stage, and the repeated calls for monumentation, that this story must be commemorated, but he leaves the language open regarding what version will eventually be preserved. Will it be the narrative of the chaste Bianca, virtuously resisting Fernando despite all temptation? Does Rosetti's "these unhappy lovers" include only Bianca and Caraffa, or will Caraffa's original wishes be heeded, creating a funereal ménage-a-trois? If the former, how can Fernando's actions be elided, and if the latter, how can his presence in the relationship be explained? In effect, the proposed tomb raises the commemorative stakes, but the ambiguous execution leaves the actual message to be preserved unclear. Perhaps, this is by Ford's design. After decades of tombs standing in the playhouse as the symbolic representation of the historiographical struggle over who is remembered and how, Ford finds a novel way to frame that conflict. Instead of keeping all the agency in the hands of the characters on stage, Ford here offers some to the audience. By leaving the tomb metaphorically blank, he allows his

audience to choose what message they see inscribed on that blood-soaked stage monument, to choose what the final message to posterity will be. They get to choose what they remember.

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