

March 2016

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Recommended Citation

Holl, Jennifer (2014) "Immortal Parts: Ghostly Renown in Shakespeare," *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference*: Vol. 7 , Article 6.

Available at: <http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc/vol7/iss2014/6>

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Immortal Parts: Ghostly Renown in Shakespeare

Jennifer Holl, *Rhode Island College*

In Act 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*, a misinformed Balthasar rushes to the banished Romeo to relay news of Juliet's seeming demise: "Her body sleeps in Capel's monument," Balthasar informs him, "And her immortal part with angels lives" (5.1.18-19).¹ Though early modern theological and philosophical theories of body and soul comprised a rich and varied canon of thought, this reference to Juliet's "immortal part" reflects a fairly consistent strain in an otherwise diverse set of beliefs—namely, in the divide between the finite and corporeal body and the undying spirit.² The fleshly body, in this configuration, remains the property of the Earth, enclosed within the family tomb and left to succumb to its material limitations, while the liberated, celestial soul departs this world at death to take its place in the heavens.

While invoking the identical phrase employed by Balthasar, *Othello's* Michael Cassio offers an alternate perspective on the nature of immortality. After the drunken brawl that costs him his lieutenancy, Cassio bemoans, "Reputation, reputation, reputation—Oh, I ha' lost my reputation, I ha' lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial!" (2.3.246-248). It's fair to suggest that immortality provides one of the most abiding themes in all of Shakespeare, but as Cassio's declaration demonstrates, immortality is by no means a monolithic concept; rather, it is one of those "things in heaven *and* earth" (1.5.68, emphasis mine), as Hamlet would say, operating in both the celestial and terrestrial realms. For Shakespeare, immortality is a characteristic of the gods and the otherworldly, yet is also achieved, oxymoronically enough, by mere mortals through any number of human devices: biological reproduction, the penning of verse, or, as Cassio laments, the circulation of public repute. Fittingly, then, as Shakespeare cleaves the material body from its eternally enduring counterpart, he locates the immortal part of the human condition in two distinct fields of existence: amongst the angels in the heavens in *Romeo and Juliet*, and in the everyday, earthly forum of public opinion in *Othello*. Elevating public opinion to near-supernatural proportions, Cassio likens reputation to the Platonic conception of the soul that fueled much early modern theological thought,

as reputation, here, animates the base, material architecture of the human body, leaving behind only a “bestial” shell in its absence. Unencumbered by his base humanity, his reputation perpetuates in the uncontrollable arena of public commentary, loosed from the corporeal body not at the moment of death, but rather, at the moment that his unsavory public displays have subjected his reputation to external assessment.

Furthering this mystical model of undying reputation, if with a slightly more menacing twist, *The Comedy of Errors*' Balthasar warns his friend Antipholus of Ephesus on the enduring afterlife of smeared repute: a “vulgar comment...Against your yet ungallèd estimation” (3.1.101, 103), he cautions, may “dwell upon your grave when you are dead” (3.1. 105). According to Balthasar, “slander lives upon succession,/ For ever housed where once it gets possession” (3.1.106-107), as a besmirched reputation possesses the troubling capacity to dwell upon a dead man's grave and ceaselessly haunt its fleshy analogue. Public repute is, for Balthasar, a ghost: an earthbound, spectral body that outlasts material existence, becoming “for ever housed” in the telluric realm of popular opinion.

As both Cassio and *The Comedy of Errors*' Balthasar suggest, reputation in Shakespeare operates as a kind of second, ethereal body that, like a ghost, circulates in mysterious and uncontrollable ways, and I'd like to suggest here that Shakespeare's staged ghosts may dramatically and visibly demonstrate what these characters rhetorically suggest: the immortality of a publicly circulating reputation. In *Hamlet*, for example, the king's ghost arrives not only to command vengeance, but to disabuse “the whole ear of Denmark” of Claudius's lies and reveal the clandestine affairs that dismantle Claudius's legacy (1.5.36). But it is in Shakespeare's most audacious employment of staged ghosts, *Richard III*, that spectral visitors most thoroughly demonstrate the potency of eternal renown; in a play notable not only for its parade of eleven ghosts but also for its close dissection of the politics of reputation, the staged ghosts of *Richard III* reveal previously concealed truths and confront a bloodthirsty tyrant with the spectral, and ultimately fatal, force of his circulating reputation. In their liminal positions twixt heaven and earth, the ghosts of *Richard III* probe the complexities of both spiritual and earthly immortality, and while critics have thoroughly examined, through a number of theological perspectives, the celestial afterlives indicated by Shakespeare's ghosts, considerably less attention has focused on the terrestrial afterlives these

haunting presences likewise signify. Recent work in memory and cognition has, however, compellingly shifted attention away from the spiritual significance of the ghost to its more human function as an agent of remembrance; as Hester Lees-Jeffries argues in her 2013 *Shakespeare and Memory*, “These ghosts are not characters, primarily, but devices to jog the memory” (81).³ I offer here that staged ghosts do not only prompt, but embody the collective memories of both characters and audiences to reveal the reputations that remain alive in the decidedly mortal arena of popular opinion, and that the staged figure of the ghost, particularly in *Richard III*, offers a stageable signifier of the eternally enduring circulation of popular opinion and public repute. These ghosts visually identify reputation, as Cassio does rhetorically, as an earthbound immortal part of the human condition.

Immortal Fame

Just as immortality in Shakespeare is less a singular spiritual belief than a diverse set of ideas about both earthly and otherworldly afterlives, Shakespeare’s staged immortal parts, in the figures of ghostly visitors, derive from a host of theological, classical, and decidedly earthy traditions. Scholars have traced in his ghosts the haunting influence of Seneca’s vengeful specters,⁴ the restless spirits of Catholic purgatory,⁵ hellish demons,⁶ and popular ghost stories lifted from ballads and folklore.⁷ To that list of ghostly influences, Stephen Greenblatt adds a “range of other fearful fantasies—witches, sorcerers, fairies, goblins, and the like” (159), derived from British folklore, the theater, and popular print. In considering the staged ghost’s ability to embody, relay, and signify the haunting capacity of earthly reputation, I’d like to suggest another source for Shakespeare’s specters to this already expansive catalogue of supernatural influences: the personified spirit of rumor in Virgil’s *Fama*.

In Book IV of *The Aeneid*, *Fama* is depicted, like Shakespeare’s ghosts and treatment of immortality more broadly, as a figure of both the celestial and terrestrial realms:

She grows quickly, and though her feet touch the ground
Her head is hidden in the clouds. The story goes

That Mother Earth, vexed with the gods, bore this
 One last child, a sister to Coeus and Enceladus. (201-204)

Notably, *Fama*'s body spans the gulf between the Earth and the heavens, mirroring her genealogy as the sister of Titans, themselves the offspring of Gaia and Uranus. Her business is the publicity of human affairs, the basis of reputation, and to that end, her body is covered in eyes, tongues, mouths, and "pricked-up ears" (208); as a menacing gossip of supernatural proportions, she sees, hears, and tells all. Like the ghost of King Hamlet or any of the eleven ghosts of *Richard III*, she haunts the night with revelations of the seemingly secret deeds done in days past:

By night, she wheels through the dark night, screeching
 And never closes her shining eyes in sleep.
 By day she perches on rooftops or towers
 Watching. (209-212)

As Leo Braudy notes in *The Frenzy of Renown*, through the character of *Fama*, Virgil directs attention to "the fame of earth" (125), even the "vulgar fame" primarily associated with misdeeds (127), as through her supernatural powers of observation, speed, and transmission, *Fama* has the ability to immortalize the momentary, to transform a single incident into an enduring, publicly known reputation that will forever haunt the person to whom it is attached. So threatening is her power that Jupiter must intercede and send winged Mercury to remind Aeneas to consider "his own fame's sake" once *Fama* spots Aeneas' tryst with Dido in the cave (264). In *Rumour and Renown: Representations of Fama in Western Literature*, Philip Hardie argues that *Fama*'s intrusions into mortals' lives signal "an experience of rumour as something beyond human control, either an inhuman force of nature, or a divine or demonic being" (84), and Jupiter's prompt, desperate petition suggests that rumor, once circulated, may prove even beyond the gods' powers to disrupt.

Shakespeare directly invokes the figure of *Fama* in his Induction to *2 Henry IV* with the personified Rumour, who boasts:

I, from the orient to the drooping west,
 Making the wind my post-horse, still unfold

The acts commenced on this ball of earth.
 Upon my tongues continual slanders ride
 The which in every language I pronounce,
 Stuffing the ears of men with false reports. (2-8)

Like its counterpart in Virgil, the supernatural Rumour is primarily concerned with the publicity and perpetuation of “acts commenced on... earth,” as both figures translate observable human affairs to an invisible realm of what Rumour calls “surmises, jealousies, conjectures” (16); each possesses the otherworldly power to bestow infinite earthly afterlives upon finite, momentary affairs. Hardie argues that Rumour’s appearance “signals a moment of daemonic energy” (489), as its intention seems primarily to meddle and misinform, while its appearance in a history otherwise invested in the realistic depiction of human events seems an obtrusive digression. But as Hardie notes, *Fama*’s roles alternate between the divine and the demonic; in Virgil, she is “As much a hardened liar as a herald of truth” (213). If Rumour is a hardened liar, Shakespeare’s revelatory ghosts in *Hamlet* and *Richard III* might then be thought to embody the latter, perhaps more threatening role by illuminating the precise truths that murderous tyrants have attempted to conceal.

Rumour, in an explicit nod to Virgil, enters the stage “painted full of tongues,” thereby aligning the personified character with a superhuman capacity for speech. Fittingly, its opening statement is a direct command to the audience to “Open your ears; for which of you will stop/ The vent of hearing when loud Rumour speaks?” (1-2), which further implies that Rumour’s preternatural propensities lie not only in its ability to speak, but to coerce listening as well. The same capacities likewise mark both the ghosts of *Richard III*, who speak with eleven tongues and enforce Richard’s hearing by confronting him in the inescapability of his dreams, and of Old Hamlet as well, who taunts the watchmen with his presence to the extent that Horatio begs it to speak nine times before Hamlet finally entreats, “Speak. I am bound to hear” (1.5.7). The ghost of King Hamlet, specifically, entices his son to hear with a distinctly gossipy prelude: “I could a tale unfold whose lightest word/ Would harrow up thy soul” (1.5.15-16), he teases, before announcing that, like *Fama*, the news he brings pertains precisely to the world of human affairs, as he is “forbid/ To tell the secrets of [his] prison house” (1.5.13-14). “List, list, O list!” (1.5.22),

he commands; “Now, Hamlet, hear” (1.5.34), he continues, before informing his son that “the whole ear of Denmark” has been abused by Claudius’s lies (1.5.36). The ghostly king has emerged not only to solicit revenge, but to correct the record of false report and illuminate the hidden truths of Claudius’s character. At the play’s conclusion, we find that the ghost’s words have outlived both the recipient of the revelations as well as the man revealed; as Hamlet and Claudius both lie dead, Horatio promises to “speak to the yet unknowing world/ How these things came about. So shall you hear” (5.2.323-324). As a “thing immortal” (1.4.48), the ghostly king’s words, too, prove immortal, as they outlast the material bodies of those described, and as Fortinbras promises to assemble an audience and listen, he assures that those words will reach Denmark’s ear.

Immortal Names

If Shakespeare’s ghosts, among their many influences, possess elements of *Fama* in their capacities to circulate news and sow the seeds of reputation, the early modern “cult of reputation,” as Lawrence Stone puts it, in turn traded in the language of the unknown, the unseen, and the otherworldly. Francis Bacon, for example, echoes Virgil when he labels fame “a monster” that men ought to strive to tame (174). But other writers take a specifically ghostly turn in their characterizations. Montaigne, citing Horace, likens honor and fame to “sprights” (321), as he also carefully delineates, in a similar manner to Cassio’s impassioned declaration, the material body from the spectral body of reputation: “There is both name, and the thing,” he writes. “The name is a voice which noteth and signifieth the thing: the name is neither part of thing nor of substance: it is a stranger-piece joynd to the thing and from it” (317). Of course, “name” in this 1603 English translation by John Florio refers not to mere nomenclature but, as in so many early modern texts, the reputation and personal history encoded therein, and here, Montaigne not only distinguishes reputation, or name, from person, but notes its lack of material “substance”; it is, like a ghost, a spectral, haunting presence, “a stranger-piece joynd” to the corporeal body. And as a haunting presence, Montaigne speculates as to the potentially menacing consequences such specters can visit upon mortal men, as he notes the power of “the

fantasticall and imaginarie life” of reputation to swallow up “the right and essential life” of the material person (323).

Citing his helplessness to helm the spectral flow of his own reputation, Montaigne claims to put little stock in “the vanitie of fantastical opinion” (323); after all, he says, “I shall have no more fastnesse to take hold on reputation, nor whereby it may either concerne or come unto mee” (321). Several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conduct manuals likewise address the extrinsic production of reputation and the means by which public repute circulates independent of the person signified. Hoby’s translation of Castiglione, for example, advises the courtier:

whan ever he hath to goe where he is straunge and not knowen, let him procure there goe first a good opinion of him, beefore he come in person . . . because that fame, which seemeth to arrise of the judgements of many, engendreth a certeine assured confidence of a mans worthinesse, which afterwarde finding mennes mindes so settled and prepared, is easily with deedes maintained. (141-142)

Though Castiglione, in his command to “procure,” assumes a measure of personal agency in the cultivation of “good opinion,” he simultaneously disperses the larger share of authority to “the judgements of many.” Here, a man’s deeds do not shape public opinion, but rather, only reaffirm that which is already thought of him, as reputation emerges from an unseen realm of “mennes mindes.” Like Montaigne, Castiglione cleaves the invisible reputational body, which must “goe first,” from the “person,” and further assigns primacy to public repute, all while mystifying the process by which one gains favorable esteem in the first place. Expanding upon Castiglione’s model, Richard Allestree explains in his 1667 treatise, *The Government of the Tongue*, “the world we know is in many instances extremely governed by Opinion, but in this ‘tis all in all: it has not only an influence upon it, but is that very thing: Reputation being nothing but a fair opinion and estimation among others” (88). For Allestree, the circulation of opinion is not the means by which reputation is established, but reputation itself: an uncontrollable phenomenon of uncertain origin, not only perpetuated, but authored in the words and thoughts of many, invisibly haunting the material person to whom it is attached.

If the origins of reputation remain unknown, its devastating potency and effects are quite certain in a number of early modern treatises. Echoing Cassio's contention that without reputation, "what remains is bestial," Henry Peacham claims in his 1634 *The Compleat Gentleman* that without "Reputation and honest fame...we are dead long before we are bureyed" (221), and Montaigne similarly laments the "perpetuall death" suffered by those who "survive their owne reputation" (323), as mortal humans are doomed to wander as hollow, soulless shells without the animating force of reputation. But Montaigne is also quick to alert his readers to the follies of what he deems a self-imposed, though eternal, fate; the earthly afterlife imposed by reputation, he says, is but "a life and continuance in other mens keeping" that "run[s] in mens mouthes" and only retains its power due to human investment in the institution (321).

Where Shakespeare invests most heavily in the institution of earthly immortality is likely the sonnets, as the poet repeatedly promises his subject eternal life through the preternatural powers of his pen. The sonnets also carefully locate the avowed sites of immortality, as does Montaigne, in the mouths of others, or, in the spirit of *Fama* more broadly, in eyes and on tongues as well. Sonnet 18 promises eternal life "So long as men can breathe and eyes can see" (13), thereby aligning immortality with the eyes and mouth; Sonnet 55 pledges, "your praise shall still find room/ Even in the eyes of all posterity" (10-11); and Sonnet 16 assures that the poet's lines "Can make you live yourself in the eyes of men" (12). Sonnet 81 offers what is perhaps one of the poet's most thorough treatises on the everlasting vitality of reputation when he declares, "Your name from hence immortal life shall have" (5). Immortality, here, resides both "in men's eyes" (8), and "Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men" (14); thus, "your memory death cannot take" (3). Here, the poet offers up his "gentle verse" as a contribution to the ongoing, multifariously authored body of the youth's reputation as he vows, "Tongues to be, your being shall rehearse" (11), acknowledging that long after the youth's body succumbs to mortal decay, his immortal part will live on, as future voices will continue to shape and craft the spectral body of his renown.

Immortal Voices and *Richard III*

Richard III provides a particularly productive case study in the spectral body of reputation and the dynamics of earthly immortality, not only in its audacious staging of eleven ghosts who each speak a personal history that refuses to remain buried, but also in the play's thorough interrogation of the signifying power of names and reputations. In its opening scene, the play directs attention to the division of name and material personhood as George, Duke of Clarence, announces that he is to be imprisoned simply, as he says, "Because my name is George" (1.1.47). Imbuing name with supernatural import, George explains that "a wizard told [King Edward] that by 'G'/ His issue disinherited should be" (1.1.56-57), and because "George begins with 'G'" (58), the king has preemptively sentenced the wrong brother to imprisonment in the Tower. Richard, Duke of Gloucester (and, indeed, the "G" of prophecy), acknowledges that "that fault is none of yours" (1.1.48), pointing to the means by which Clarence's name, as so many early modern treatises on reputation demonstrate, has taken on a significance quite removed from his own doings.

Of course, Richard seizes upon this opportunity to advance his quest to claim the throne and orders the murder of his vulnerably confined brother. But Richard understands that authority is conferred both by hierarchical structures of patrilineal descent, and thus, murders every legitimate claimant to the throne above him, as well as the ground-up support of the people's love, which remains highly dependent on his popularly traded reputation. The play offers a compelling glimpse into the trade of names and reputations in Act 2, scene 3, as the exchanges between nameless citizens redirect attention away from Richard's ceaseless scheming and onto the public that crafts and perpetuates his reputation. Here, the citizenry gather to confirm news of Edward's death, express concern at the prospect of being ruled by a child king, and issue a dire warning about Richard's role as advisor to the prince: "O full of danger is the Duke of Gloucester" (2.3.27), the Third Citizen opines, indicating that Richard has a long way to go to earn and steer the people's affections toward a place on the throne. In a bid to alter the course of circulating opinion, Richard then stages elaborate campaigns to court the populace that so distrusts him. In the mode of *Fama*, his first attempt to

do so involves the spreading of rumors among the citizens of his nephews' illegitimacy in order to smear the deceased King Edward's, and hence his heirs', reputations in a bid to boost his own. He commands Buckingham, "There, at your meetest vantage of the time,/ Infer the bastardy of Edward's children" (3.5.72-73). As Buckingham later recounts, he performed his duty with gusto, attempting to persuade his audience of the princes' illegitimate parentage while planting the seeds of Richard's revived reputation by reminding them of his lineage, noble character, and military prowess, rousingly concluding by bidding his supporters, "Cry 'God save Richard, England's royal king!'" (3.7.22). "And did they so?" Richard asks (23). "No, so God help me," Buckingham replies. "They spake not a word" (24), demonstrating to abruptly comic effect the extent to which Buckingham's mortal tongue proves no match for the free circulation of opinion in the public sphere. Public repute, here, proves a vastly more powerful entity than Richard had anticipated, with the specters of both his own fearsome reputation and the integrity accrued in the king's name looming too heavily in the public discourse to dissuade.

According to Richard, the English citizens remain "tongueless blocks" (3.7.42), who refuse to confirm and repeat the planted rumor that would shift the public's esteem from his brother to himself. As Richard and Buckingham review the failure of the rumor to move the multitude, Richard devises a plan that demonstrates his keen awareness of reputation politics. Recognizing the multifarious authorship of the second, ethereal self of reputation, Richard strategizes a way to coax his public into crafting a renown suitable to his own purposes. "An if you plead as for them/ As I can say nay to thee for myself,/ No doubt we'll bring it to a happy issue" (3.7.52-54), Richard informs Buckingham, hopeful that his reticence to assume authority will invite the public to seize authorship of his renown and confer the crown upon him. Richard's strategy here extends beyond a mere show of humility and reflects his understanding that his refusal of the crown offers a false sense of enfranchisement to his public as he manipulates them to revise his previously sullied reputation and authorize a reputation befitting the kingship. Richard then publicly rebuffs Buckingham's assertion that he is the rightful claimant to the throne only to acquiesce to popular demand and appears, as stage directions indicate, "aloft, between two bishops," while Buckingham sings his praise to the gathered internal audience. It is only when a nameless

citizen, listed only as “Another,” urges, “If you deny them, all the land will rue it” (3.7.212),⁸ that Richard relents. “Will you enforce me to a world of cares?” (213), he asks. “I am not made of stone” (214).

The performance proves successful, with Buckingham’s cry, “Long live kind Richard, England’s worthy king!” finally meeting a chorus of support (3.7.230): “Amen,” acknowledge “All but Richard” (231), as Richard maintains his display of humble reticence through its entirety. But Richard’s ascent to the throne is here achieved through decidedly unorthodox means and owes more to the dynamics of gossip, reputation, and rumor than to the rites of kingship: perpetually aware of his dubious claim to kingship through sanctioned channels, Richard opts instead to rise to power on the merits of a manipulated reputation, crafted at his coaxing through public discourse. By resisting all intimations of his legitimacy by birthright only to accede, finally, to the solicitation of “Another,” who functions as a singular stand-in for the popular voice, Richard cunningly appropriates the conventions of popular opinion by deferring authorship of his eminence to the public. His admission that he is “not made of stone” suggests the opposite: that he is, like reputation, publicly pliable.

But Richard’s eventual defeat, and the supernatural portents that foreshadow it, demonstrate the ultimate inefficacy in his attempts to self-fashion. Despite the most elaborate and calculated public relations stunts, even after seizing the authority of the throne, Richard finds that he still lacks the narrative authority to perpetuate his own reputation; his name continues to circulate outside even a king’s grasp in the uncontrollable arena of his subjects’ discourse. He awakes from his haunted dreams on the eve of battle only to note, “There is no creature loves me,/ And if I die no soul will pity me” (5.5.154-155), as he acknowledges that his carefully mounted strategies to helm the spectral flow of his reputation have proven remarkably fleeting. The bearers of this sobering realization fittingly arrive in the form of a parade of eleven ghosts, each of whom curses Richard and lends support to his adversary, Richmond.

The ghosts quickly call attention to their status as “immortal parts”: the Ghost of King Henry announces, “When I was mortal, my anointed body/ By thee was punched full of deadly holes” (5.5.78-79), distinguishing, not only to Richard but to the theatrical audience at large,

the speaking, spectral bodies on stage from their fleshly counterparts. Richard poses no threat to these immortal bodies, who are now, unlike the citizens of Richard's England, free to speak the truths Richard had attempted to conceal. In Act 3, scene 6, a scrivener who has just completed a proclamation of Hastings's guilt emerges onstage briefly to ponder, "Why, who's so gross,/ That seeth not this palpable device?/ Yet who's so blind, but says he sees it not?" (10-12). Like the glimpse into the conversations traded amongst citizens in 2.3, this scene directs attention away from Richard and into men's minds where, as Montaigne and Castiglione assert, reputation circulates; unencumbered by fear, the parade of ghosts haunts Richard with the accusations of murder and betrayal that live on, as the scrivener notes, in the eyes, if not on the tongues of the people, and thus, each ghost gives voice to an enduring reputation that has silently survived Richard's strategies of intimidation. As the ghosts prey upon Richard in the solitary vulnerability of sleep, they command him to hear with the force of eleven spectral tongues, and Richard finds that while he can silence his citizenry and kill his adversaries' bodies, he cannot halt the ghostly circulation of his own reputation.

Immediately upon waking from these visions, Richard frenetically asks himself,

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
 Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
 Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
 Then fly! What, from myself? Great reason. Why?
 Lest I revenge. Myself upon myself?
 Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
 That I myself have done unto myself?
 On no, alas, I rather hate myself
 For hateful deeds committed by myself.
 I am a villain. Yet I lie: I am not.
 Fool, of thyself speak well. – Fool, do not flatter.
 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues
 And every tongue brings in a several tale. (5.5.136-148)

Richard's near-pathological dissociation fittingly follows the parade of ghosts that have just forced him to confront his spectral second self of reputation, and thus, he confusedly alternates between "I," "Richard," and "myself" as he launches a singular dialogue with himself. He is, at this moment, a man fragmented between his mortal and immortal parts. As he desperately attempts to assert the reputation he has fashioned for himself, one in which he is loved and revered, he simultaneously hears the unshakeable voices that inform his public repute—voices that hate and fear him and speak disharmoniously "in a several tale." The impetus for his self-fragmentation is ultimately revealed through a Virgilian allusion to the "thousand several tongues" of his reputation's multifarious authorship. The "tongueless blocks" he earlier derided have spoken, named him king, and now, as authors of his ghostly renown, continue to speak, but in cacophonous, destabilizing voices, quite literally at this moment, tearing him into pieces. He hears their accusations of murder, their proclamations of his guilt, and their pitiless designation of villain, until, in recognition of his powerlessness to ward off the immortal force of his enduring reputation, Richard simply declares, "I shall despair" (5.5.154).

As Greenblatt argues, Richard is "defeated, in effect, by ghosts" (179), in a similar manner to what Montaigne deems the power of "fantasticall" reputation to consume the "essential" person, and Richard's subsequent mortal demise is presaged by the particularly potent display of the immortality of public opinion on stage. According to Greenblatt, the staged ghosts demonstrate "an eradicable, embodied, objective power. They function as the memory of the murdered, a memory registered not only in Richard's troubled psyche . . . but also in the collective consciousness of the kingdom" (180). But the ghosts do only confront Richard with the spectral body of his own reputation; they likewise, as Lees-Jeffries notes, "announce Richard's posthumous reputation [as] a guilty, bloody tyrant" to their Tudor theatrical audience (79-80). As ghosts that reaffirm, perpetuate, and, indeed, cement Richard's enduring reputation, they reveal the supernatural force of the phenomenon Richard has proven incapable of amending; just as Balthasar warns in *The Comedy of Errors*, Richard's ghostly reputation haunts him and generations of theatrical audiences from beyond the grave.

Immortal Parts

As Brian Walsh notes in his study of early modern historical dramas, “Performance gives the past a distinctive physical shape” (156), and he observes in particular how the ghosts of King Henry and Prince Edward appear on stage only in ghostly form in *Richard III*. Thus, they materialize “to speak for themselves...with their own voices and their own mutilated bodies” (156), for as much as the parade of eleven haunts Richard with his own reputation, they each arrive to declare his or her own. Free of their own mortality, these liberated specters of individual reputation defy the narratives that Richard, in his own attempts to alter the circulation of opinion, has put forth and speak of their betrayals, hardships, and undeserved death sentences. Speaking not only to Richard and Richmond but to the larger theatrical audience, they demonstrate a complicated web of immortal parts, as “part,” for Shakespeare, proves nearly as multivalent a term as is “immortal”: it is a portion, or remainder; a divide; and a theatrical role (*OED s.v. part*, n.1, 6, 12b). Shakespeare’s ghosts—whether one of Richard’s eleven, or Banquo, or Caesar—all point to the immortality of dead men’s legacies on the stage, how their continued enactment in theatrical performance perpetuates their enduring reputations in the eyes and on the tongues of audiences. Their ghostly forms signify their enduring existence, long after their corporeal bodies have succumbed to mortality, and thus, ghosts, such as those of Clarence or especially the young princes, speak popularly understood legacies, even those not borne out of historical evidence.

In Act 3, scene 1 of *Richard III*, young Prince Edward asks his uncle if it is true that Julius Caesar built the Tower of London. When Buckingham interrupts that it is true, Edward asks, “Is it upon record, or else reported/ Successively from age to age?” (3.1.72-73), as he distinguishes between documented history and the orally transmitted narratives of the public sphere. Buckingham answers that this information is “upon record” (3.1.74), to which Edward replies, “Methinks the truth should live from age to age,/ As ‘twere retailed to all posterity” (3.1.76-77), before noting that Julius Caesar “lives in fame though not in life” (3.1.88). In this exchange, young Edward privileges the histories told from generation to generation in the open forum of public discourse and celebrates the manner by which such mechanisms have immortalized

Caesar. Of course, those same mechanisms have immortalized the young princes and shaped their enduring legacies as tragic victims of Richard's bloodthirsty quest for power; when the princes return as ghosts, they provide material embodiments of histories that stay alive in the narratives that people remember and tell. As Joseph Roach says in *Cities of the Dead*, roles "gather in the memory of audiences, like ghosts" (78), and Shakespeare's play has done much to maintain the immortal parts of all the historical figures enacted therein—so much so that when Richard's remains were exhumed in 2012, numerous news articles mentioned that the skeleton, while displaying a distinct curvature of the spine, showed no signs of the withered arm described by Shakespeare.⁹ Such frequent references only underscore how deeply intertwined Shakespeare's play—amidst numerous historical chronicles and other literary histories—has become in accepted histories of Richard III. Shakespeare's Richard has become an immortal part of the history and enduring reputation of Richard III, haunting his history and even contemporary discoveries.

Notes

- ¹ All Shakespeare quotations are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, second edition.
- ² For an overview of various early modern models of the soul-body divide, see the Introduction to Sarah E. Johnson's *Staging Women and the Soul-Body Dynamic in Early Modern England*.
- ³ Marjorie Garber's *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* and Lianne Habinek's "Altered States: *Hamlet* and the Early Modern Head Trauma" both center their discussions of Hamlet's ghost around his commandment to "Remember me" (1.5.91).
- ⁴ Critics have long noted the influence of Seneca on Shakespeare's ghosts, particularly in *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. In *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, Colin Burrow devotes an entire chapter to Seneca's influence on Shakespeare, including a discussion of the ghost of Old Hamlet as a vengeful Senecan spirit. For an earlier, highly influential study, see Katharine Briggs' *The Anatomy of Puck*, which argues that Shakespeare's ghosts combine Senecan tradition with popular Elizabethan ghost stories.

- 5 In *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Greenblatt labels Hamlet's ghost as "distinctly Catholic" (240). Frances Dolan examines issues of Catholic confession rites in "Hermione's Ghost: Catholicism, the Feminine, and the Undead," and John Freeman, in "This Side of Purgatory: Ghostly Fathers and the Recusant Legacy in *Hamlet*," explores the ghost as a recusant figure trapped in "a Purgatory on earth" (224).
- 6 Both Diane Purkiss and Briggs note the Puritan belief that ghosts were actually disguised demons. In an early study, G. Wilson Knight's "The Embassy of Death" figures King Hamlet's ghost as a "demon that grips Hamlet" (42).
- 7 See Purkiss, "Shakespeare, Ghosts and Popular Folklore."
- 8 The Norton edition cites this character as "Another," as does the first quarto edition printed in 1597. Other editions, following the First Folio, attribute this line to Catesby.
- 9 For example, *Time Magazine* reported, "The bones of Richard III's exhumed body seem to prove at least that, judging by the curvature of the spine, he had scoliosis and what was likely a bent back. But there is no evidence of other deformities, like what Shakespeare dubs 'an arm . . . like a wither'd shrub'" ("Richard III's Bones").

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