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MIKE LAURA

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH REVENGE TRAGEDY

Supervisors:
Prof. Dr. Kiss Attila
Dr. Sávai-Matuska Ágnes

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Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts,
What ruins are in the realm of things.

Walter Benjamin, *Origin* 178.

Introduction

In the fifth act of *The Duchess of Malfi* the widowed protagonist, Antonio and his friend Delio walk among the desolate ruins of an abbey. They nostalgically contemplate the dismal condition of the ancient ruins, on which the Cardinal built his fortress. In doing so they are unaware that they are walking nearby the grave of the late Duchess, who was Antonio's wife, murdered at the orders of her brother, Ferdinand. But the most intriguing parts of their private conversation are echoed by a hollow, dismal voice from the Duchess' grave.

ANTONIO: I do love these ancient ruins:
We never tread upon them, but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history.
And questionless, here in this open court,
Which now lies naked to the injuries
Of stormy weather some men lie interr'd
Lov'd the church so well and gave so largely to't,
They thought it should have canopi'd their bones
Till doomsday. But all things have their end:
Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men
Must have like death that we have
ECHO: *Like death that we have.* (5.3.9-18)

The uncanny Echo, resembling the Duchess' voice, tries to warn Antonio with every sentence to "fly his fate" and avoid meeting the Cardinal, but Antonio would not listen, in fact he seems entrenched in a sort of predestination thinking where "… you'll find it impossible To fly your fate" (5.3.34). He rejects to talk to the voice from the otherworld because it is a "dead thing". Unfortunately, because listening to the voice could have saved his life.

This "dead thing" of the pre-Reformation past and its ambiguous voice to early modern English people is the subject matter of my dissertation. As I will show, it was not half as dead as we earlier thought.[1] In the pages that follow, I will investigate the memory, trauma, and

[1] The different phases and implications of the so-called "religious turn" are not elucidated here. For a Hungarian elaboration of this significant change in the humanities, see Tibor Fabiny, „Sámson haja előbb-utóbb mindig

entertainment of those who lived in the turbulent times of "the protracted and erratic" English reformation, to use Alexandra Walsham's words (Walsham 2006, 13). This scrutiny will take place through the lens of revenge tragedy, one of the most popular public entertainments by the end of the sixteenth century. The emergence of this new genre roughly coincides with Elizabeth's most paranoid years of rule, after the pope excommunicated her in 1570. I propose that the subsequent transitions from Catholic to Protestant, from Protestant to Catholic and then back to Protestant amounted to the magnitude of a collective trauma. Scholars of early modern English culture are increasingly aware of the traumatic effect of the English reformation. Steven Mullaney[2] in his recent book (*The Reformation of Emotions,* 2015) describes the English reformation as a period "of significant historical trauma […] easily overlooked by a number of twentieth-century historians" (Mullaney 8). Despite the overlapping of basics, my approach differs from his significantly: he focuses on the affective part of post-Reformation trauma, while I am more interested in modes of trauma representation. As Patrick Collinson famously wrote, "Shakespeare and countless others of his generation did not know what to believe or, if they did, could not tell when they might be called on to believe contrary things" (Collinson 2003, 219). Another concise summary of the period comes from Stephen Greenblatt.

> […] within living memory, England had gone from a highly conservative Roman Catholicism – in the 1520s Henry VIII had fiercely attacked Luther and been rewarded by the pope with the title "Defender of the Faith" – to Catholicism under the supreme headship of the king; to a wary, tentative Protestantism; to a more radical Protestantism; to a renewed and militant Roman Catholicism; and then, with Elizabeth, to Protestantism once again. In none of these regimes was there a vision of religious tolerance. Each shift was accompanied by waves of conspiracy and persecution, rack and thumbscrew, ax and fire. (Greenblatt 2004, 74)

The collective trauma I posit here was then played out, in a veiled form due to the ban on religious topics, in the public playhouse. As Mullaney writes, "Revenge plays allowed Elizabethan theatre to 'talk' about something else, including pressing and genuine social issues and contradictions – which is no small achievement" (Mullaney 84). One tenet of this "something else" is the religious trauma I argue for. This dissertation puts forward the argument

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nőni kezd", *Szcenárium* II. /Vol. 6. (September 2014). In English, see Peter Marshall's "(Re)defining the English Reformation", *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 48. No. 3 (July 2009), 564-586.

[2] Steven Mullaney gives a non-exhaustive list of scholars advocating the presence of this cultural trauma. "Natalie Davis, Peter Marshall, Patrick Collinson, Norman Jones and Michael Neill share a fundamental assumption: that the damage done to the historical consciousness in the Reformation was historical, complex and social or collective as well as individual" (Mullaney 86). I also rely on the work of these scholars in my dissertation, as it will be evident in the respective chapters and the references I provide in them, except for Norman Jones. (Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation,* Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

that revenge tragedy, with its uncanny revenants, unburied dead, mad revengers, and maimed bodies stages every major socio-cultural controversy rising in the wake of the English reformation. The focus of the dissertation is primarily collective trauma triggered by religious change, but I am aware how intricately and inextricably religion and politics were intertwined in the discussed period. As it will be shown later, the collective trauma framework facilitates the discussion of religion *and* politics simultaneously, without having to choose between questions of the affectional-doctrinal side of the English reformation, and the hidden and overt power machinations enforcing this change. Peter Lake in the introduction to his book, *Bad Queen Bess*, gives the perfect summary of how historians struggle to strike a good balance between the religious and the political in the discussion of Elizabethan post-Reformation change, oscillating between "the revisionist" stance, mostly excluding hegemonic power relations from their accounts, or the "secular group", failing to take the affective and personal tenets of religion seriously. In fact, he sees the urge to divide these two, as most detrimental to the study of early modern history, as they are clearly inseparable (Lake 2016, 13). He suggests "to pay rather more attention to the ways in which contemporaries sought to make such distinctions themselves, and then to apply them to, or indeed, embody them in their own actions and experience often deploying the resulting normative claims polemically …" (Ibid.) This is precisely what early modern drama deals with.

This especially transgressive genre has seen a heightened scholarly interest lately, being recuperated from a long exile. In spite of the immense popularity of the genre amongst its contemporaries, literary criticism neglected it for quite a long period. Annalisa Castaldo argues that these plays "have been resolutely ignored by most literary critics, who seem embarrassed by the melodramatic plots, over-the-top murders, and (for more recent critics) the apparent conservatism of the major themes" (Castaldo 49-56). Richard Posner, for example, claims that

> *Hamlet* stands to its contemporary revenge literature, in point of ambivalence as well as of quality, as the *Iliad* presumably stood to the lost heroic epics on which it built. In many Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge plays the violence and revenger's emotional excess are so grotesque that any social or ethical observation is submerged in melodrama, as in *Titus Andronicus* (Posner 106).

I will show later that the melodrama and the grotesque do *not* preclude social and ethical observations in revenge tragedy, rather amplify them. Nevertheless, this critical disdain led to a lopsided arrangement in favour of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* which was deemed to be "worthy" of studying as opposed to the other, "less successful" pieces of the era. Luckily, as the tides of literary scholarship turned more and more towards poststructuralism and a *new* form of *historicism*, bringing the religious turn on its waves, literary scholars began to be intrigued

by the transgressive[3] and extremely popular genre of revenge tragedy on early modern stage. The following account does not attempt to be exhaustive, but some outstanding works and approaches need mentioning here. Probably the first twentieth century author who systematically analysed revenge tragedy as a genre was Fredson Bowers in his *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy: 1587-1642* (1966). His book gestures towards an almost exhaustive account of revenge tragedies that were registered and staged in the mentioned period, thus it has been an important source ever since. With his seminal study he has earned himself the "revenge tragedy authority" title in a recent monograph on John Marston (Bowers, 21). Charles E. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett in their study, *The Revenger's Madness* elaborate on the main motifs of revenge tragedy (1984). More recently, Michael Neill in his *Issues of Death* (1997) showed us that revenge tragedies are eerie and gory because their main topic is the reinvention of death for early modern culture, after the post-Reformation thanatological crisis. Huston Diehl, in *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (1997) argues that revenge tragedies actively participated in the process of reforming the English population, by way of indirectly thematizing the most important and most heated religious issues such as death and dying, sacrifice, witnessing, and questions of representation contained in the Eucharist Controversies. Interestingly, a book published the very same year, with the title *The Body in Parts – Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern England,* a title holding the promise of discussing revenge tragedy, dedicates a tiny amount of two pages to this outrageously corporeal genre of the early modern stage. Steven Mullaney's relatively recent (2015) study of early modern affect in *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* has a very similar angle to mine, as he starts out from establishing a social trauma; the rupture of communal relationships due to the subsequent religious reforms. Nevertheless, his study would have greatly benefited from the collective trauma framework, which he does not seem to work with. Furthermore, Mullaney's study concerns predominantly Shakespearean plays, except for Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy,* while I examine a selection of revenge tragedies from contemporaneous playwrights, and only *Titus Andronicus* from Shakespeare. Derek Dunne's volume, *Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy and Early Modern Law* (2017) focuses on early modern jurisdictional issues, showing that the crisis of justice lies at the heart of every revenge tragedy, reflecting "in a very real sense a concurrent crisis in the legal system of early modern England" (Dunne 2). George Oppitz-Trotman's very recent book *The Origins of English Revenge Tragedy (*2019) deals with questions of figuration.

[3] For the transgressive nature of revenge tragedy see Mike Laura, „A kora modern angol bosszútragédiák határátlépései," *Határok és* határátlépések szerk. Daróczi Jakab, Hajdu Ildikó, Nyerges Csaba, Prótár Noémi (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös József Collegium, 2022), 69-83.

"To explore how those bodies are made imaginable is to begin a basically historical enquiry into the relation of those texts to dead human beings; into our relation to those dead human beings as it is mediated by those texts" (Oppitz-Trotman 11). Peter Lake in *Hamlet's Choice* (2020) diverges from his usual, overriding political focus and discusses Shakespeare's two revenge tragedies, *Titus,* and *Hamlet* in an emphatically religious framework. As he puts it, these plays deal in "issues of confessional identity and religious conflict; and theological questions about the relation between divine providence and grace and human agency…" (Lake 2020, 3). As I will show, precisely these are the religious topics that serve as traumatic focal points, or fault lines in the aftermath of the various waves of the long Reformation. Finally, and importantly, a Hungarian scholar of early modern revenge tragedy, Attila Kiss maintains that revenge tragedies served as a test-lab for emergent concepts of a new experience of subjectivity, where the fundamental crises of individuals and communities are scrutinized, and the madness of the revenger is a dramaturgical tool to investigate the religious, ontological, and epistemological issues of the Self (Kiss 2010, 25-32).

It is necessary to pin down at this point, that *revenge tragedy* is a speculative category, as Oppitz-Trotman observes (Oppitz-Trotman 21), potentially including almost every early modern tragedy.[4] This means that very similar patterns can be observed across the wide range of early modern tragedies, and, most crucially, the topos of revenge is ubiquitous.[5] Nevertheless, for practical reasons, I will apply Bowers' widely accepted distinction, in which Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* around 1587 marks the first play of the tradition, and James Shirley's *The Cardinal* from as late as 1642 marks the end of it. In what follows, some of the antecedents of revenge tragedy need to be accounted for.[6] As Douglas Broude wryly noted, such a complex genre did not "burst into being, as if by spontaneous self-generation" with Thomas Kyd's play (Broude 489). His article, written as early as 1973, focuses on a small

[4] For an exhaustive categorization of revenge tragedy see Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1587-1642,* (Princeton University Press, 1940), 62-65.

[5] Bradley J. Irish in his relatively recent article (2009) sets out to investigate the presence of the revenge theme in pre-Kydian Elizabethan drama. As he explicates, such an examination does not overlap with the research of the precursors of the genre; a question that had been addressed before. He begins his account with the influence of Seneca, and then his investigation spreads out to various kinds of stage productions. He concludes that the topic of revenge "was flexibly deployed throughout the period's early comedies, romances, histories, and hero-plays" (Irish 129), even before Kyd staged *TST* around 1587. "From within this diffuse thematic context, Kyd systematized, intensified, and refined the dramatic use of revenge – and in doing so, gave birth to a genre now recognized as 'revenge tragedy'" (Ibid).

[6] The purpose of my dissertation is not a comprehensive introduction of the precursors of revenge tragedy. Scholars before me have done justice to the challenges of this inquiry, primarily Fredson Bowers, mentioned above. Willard Farnham's *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (University of California Press, 1936), and Thomas Rist's *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (2008) deserve further mentioning here, besides the sea of literature I rely on in this present work.

body of political morality plays: John Bale's *Comedy concernynge thre lawes* (ca. 1535), an anonymous[7] Catholic play titled *Respublica* (1553), and John Pikeryng's hybrid morality, *Horestes* (1567). He considers these plays as the precursors of revenge tragedy, due to their profound investment in the topic of divine revenge. As it turns out, the earliest play of the tradition proper, *The Spanish Tragedy* is similarly invested in this central question, a link Broude does not fail to stress. What is even more interesting, these plays were instrumental in the propaganda of the Tudor government to further the Reformation (or the counter-Reformation, under Mary, with the Catholic play). Their central topic is formulated, in Broude's words, as "regeneration by divine retribution" (491) and they were "shaped by and implied the providential interpretation of history in terms of which Protestants understood the Reformation" (490). As I will show, revenge tragedy in its fully developed form departed from this initial, didactic adumbration of religious teaching, in spite of Huston Diehl stating the opposite in her otherwise convincing and insightful study.[8] Apart from the moralities shortly discussed above, two other extant plays need mentioning, as antecedents to revenge tragedy: *Cambises* (1561) and *Gorboduc* (1561). I consider Preston's *Cambises* (1561) a transitional morality, significant in this account, because of its departure from the early Senecan form.

> [The play] marks an important movement from the descriptive horrors of early Senecanism to the bloody stagecraft of revenge tragedy proper: the play stages a flaying, a heart-rending, and […] King Cambises' accidental, self-inflicted sword wound. (Irish 122)

The influence of Seneca on Elizabethan tragedy has been widely documented. The reason why I do not dedicate greater attention to this important heritage lies precisely in the *departure* of revenge tragedy from the Senecan form. Revenge tragedy dwells on the spectacular staging of bloody events, whereas Seneca did not stage the gore. The most important elaboration of this feature of Senecan tragedy can be found in T.S. Eliot's Introduction to Thomas Newton's *Seneca: His Tenne Tragedies – Translated into English 1581* (1964).

> […] the characters in a play of Seneca behave more like members of a minstrel troupe sitting in a semicircle, rising in turn each to do 'his number,' […] Meanwhile, Hercules has (contrary to the usual belief that Seneca murders all his victims in full view of the audience) despatched Lycus off-stage. […] The whole situation is inconceivable unless we assume the play to have been composed *solely for recitation*; like other of Seneca's plays, it is full of statements useful only to audience which sees nothing" (Eliot x-xi – emphasis mine).

[7]Mark Breitenberg in his article (1988) ascribes *Respublica* to Nicholas Udall (Breitenberg 196).
[8]Huston Diehl in her *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* claims that Elizabethan plays were designated to actively reform the audience: to slavishly inculcate some basic truths of Protestant doctrine, as mentioned earlier.

Another play that is generally considered as a forerunner to revenge tragedy is Thomas Norton's and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* in 1561. Not only is *Gorboduc* the first English blank verse tragedy, but "it maps a revenge motif onto a family struggle of royal inheritance" (Irish 120), thus introducing basic elements of later revenge tragedies per se. Shakespeare's great tragedies, such as *Titus, Hamlet,* or *Macbeth* will merge the revenge theme with the historical play in a similar way. It seems, that the religious traumas and upheavals of the long Reformation of England had been walking hand-in-hand with the ubiquitous theme of revenge all the while, waiting for a triggering moment that birthed a very unique dramatic genre, unmatched in its popularity.

Thus, it must be understood within these preliminaries, when I refer to the object of my dissertation as "a genre" or "the revenge tragedy tradition".[9] In this study however, only a given set of revenge tragedies will be scrutinized against the backdrop of the cultural trauma of the English reformation.

The selection of tragedies must be briefly justified in connection with their timeline. The earliest piece is the pioneer of the genre, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (circa 1587), and the latest is John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-13). All the others, namely William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1593), John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1602), and Thomas Middleton's *The Maiden's Tragedy* (1611) are in between. Thus, the corpus presented here is within a narrow span of 25 years, which is, importantly, within the scope of living memory. In my argumentation both living, or in Jan Assmann's terminology, communicative memory and cultural memory have their respective roles. This fact is significant, because although there was a change of regime in 1603 with its concomitant political changes, the religious context remained the same, and the main catalyser of crisis and trauma, i.e., the religious controversies and upheavals were still underway. Attila Kiss reaches the same conclusion in a recent chapter on early modern English drama in the new Hungarian history of English literature (Kiss 2020, 383). Furthermore, Peter Marshall has shown that historians increasingly insist on the concept of the "long-Reformation",[10] which means that the critical

[9] Further studies on revenge tragedy: Clare Janet, *Revenge Tragedies of the Renaissance* (Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2006); Wendy Griswold, *Renaissance Revivals. City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theatre, 1576-1980* (Chicago - London: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Harry Keyishian, *The Shapes of Revenge. Victimization, Vengeance and Vindictiveness in Shakespeare.* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995); Stevie Simkin, *Revenge Tragedy. Contemporary Critical Essays* (Basingstoke -New York: Palgrave, 2001); Linda Woodbridge, *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge UP, 2010).

[10] "Nonetheless, among cultural historians of the English Reformation at least, a workaday consensus seems to be emerging that circa 1640 is a useful moment at which pause and take stock" (Peter Marshall 2009, 568).

and sometimes retracted injunctions and doctrinal-practical changes, engendering the collective trauma I advocate, were present in early modern society for a very long time. In this vein, I consider it justified to analyse *Titus Andronicus* along *The Duchess of Malfi,* even if there are certain cultural features in the latter that are only relevant for Jacobean England. The observations that further substantiate my claim about the continuous presence of the cause of collective trauma are made in the respective chapters. A further point must be made regarding the selection of plays. As Mullaney argues,

> […] our most lasting and moving works of culture […] are what they are – lasting and moving – in part because they are so deeply and complexly engaged with what is at risk in the historical moment, unsettled in the collective identity, or unmoored in the cognitive and emotional communities that constitute the social body. This is especially true of theatre, one of the most social of arts. (Mullaney 5)

I would further complicate his argument by claiming that when it comes to contradictory and traumatic historical moments, the aesthetically less perfect and even flawed works of art have sometimes more to say about the collective traumas of an era than their contemporary counterparts which were found more moderate, pleasing and aesthetically balanced by later trends of criticism and canonization.

The main considerations of this dissertation are not of aesthetical nature. Thus, I am here intrigued by the less nuanced, and assumedly sensationalist tragedies, enjoying scholarly contempt or neglect for longer periods, as will be discussed later, such as *Titus Andronicus, Antonio's Revenge,* or *The Maiden's Tragedy.* In these plays I have detected an incomparable power to reflect post-Reformation collective trauma. If we consider *The Maiden's Tragedy,* for instance, Walter Benjamin's observation perfectly applies.

> … the performance of the martyr-drama does not provide enough of the trivial emotion of suspense which is the only evidence of theatricality still acknowledged by [such] spectator. The consequent disappointment has therefore assumed the language of scholarly protest, and the value of these dramas has been definitely settled in the conclusion that they are deficient in inner conflict and tragic guilt. (Benjamin 75)

I argue that the crudity and melodrama in these plays is partly down to the overall presence of trauma. As Benjamin claims earlier in his study, discussing the patterns of mourning play, "… in minor tragedies with lesser playwrights the skeleton of the form is more evident" (Benjamin 60). This trauma, in my view, is derivative of the cultural breach the English reformations brought about.

Brian Cummings et al. in their recent volume*, Memory and the English Reformation,* call the English reformation a "rupture *par excellence*" (Cummings et al. 8). The revision of the English reformation is still underway, as Peter Marshall in his seminal essay postulates. In his formulation, the study of the Reformation is in "rude good health", with some of the leading revisionist scholars, such as Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy recently "sporting the post-revisionist badge (Peter Marshall 564, 566). Let it suffice here that after a long Whiggish dominance,[11] alternative *histories* surfaced, in which English Catholicism came into a different light, due to the realization of an oppressing, political reformation brought about by the paranoid regime of the Tudors. After the pendulum of interpretation swung out to both confessional directions (Cummings et al. 10), in the most recent, post-revisionist trends a careful, cross-confessional balance is aimed at. As Marshall puts it, "… it usually implies a readiness to regard the phenomenon as a gradual yet profound cultural transformation rather than as the swift Protestant victory of traditional historiography or the long-drawn-out and remarkably successful Catholic rear-guard action portrayed by 1980s revisionism" (Peter Marshall 2009, 565). This work wishes to align itself with this latter, cross-confessional attitude, acknowledging the enormous and traumatic changes such a profound cultural transition brought, but not turning a blind eye towards the positive phenomena the English reformation engendered.

Frameworks and contexts

The relationship between a profound cultural crisis of post-Reformation England[12] on the one hand, conceptualised as collective trauma here, and revenge tragedy, on the other has already

[11] The "whig interpretation of history" was first proposed by the historian H. Butterfield in H. Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*. As Ernst May sums up Butterfield's argument in an essay, Butterfield described some English historians' approach to history as "a progressive broadening of human rights, in which good, 'forward-looking' liberals were continuously struggling with the backward-looking conservatives" (May 31).

[12] An elaborate conceptualization of the difference between crisis and trauma can be found in Piotr Sztompka's essay "The Trauma of Social Change". He articulates the difference along a chronology of reflexive awareness in the social sciences, concerning social change. In this narrative, all sort of social change was hailed as *progressive* in "the classical epoch of sociology, the nineteenth century", a period defined by concepts of evolution, growth, and development (Sztompka 156). But, in the course of the twentieth century, the "discourse of progress is slowly undermined by another perspective: the discourse of *crisis*" (Ibid). This selective focus on crisis crystallized itself in concepts like lost community, moral chaos, the iron cage of bureaucracy, decaying mass culture, and genocide (Ibid). Eventually, after the pendulum swung to both directions, a third, more balanced perspective emerged, the discourse of *trauma,* in Sztompka's account. The main difference, compared to the previous two concepts is a shifted focus towards "the destructive, shocking effects of change per se", and the realization, that "even the changes that are truly beneficial, welcome by the people, dreamed about and fought for – may turn out to be painful" (158). Later in the essay Sztompka clarifies that not any change causes trauma. The three main aggravating features can be categorized as the speed, scope, and the content of the change. Prolonged change, touching on many aspects of life, involving many actors of society, affecting

been articulated through the topos of *mourning.* It is important to overview the evolution and elements of this argumentation so that we may understand how the framework of collective trauma applied here facilitates a more nuanced comprehension of early modern vicissitudes and their artistic representations on early modern English stage. One of the earliest studies touching upon this problem is Susan Letzler Cole's *The Absent One.* Although Cole's book does not focus on revenge tragedy per se, her main argumentation about the connectedness of funerary ritual and tragedy foreshadows the historically more specific discussions of the same topic a few decades later. Cole buttresses her argumentation, besides anthropological findings, with a wide range of tragedies in an effort to prove the universality of her truth. She dedicates only one chapter to William Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* but she hastens to emphasize how emblematic this tragedy is of everything she proposes. Cole's main argument is that *Hamlet* is the tragedy of a mourner in a world which provides no context for mourning. This conclusion already contains, in an embryonic form, the whole problematics of the post-Reformation *thanatological crisis*, receiving outstanding scholarly attention by the turn of the twenty-first century, and producing a sea of literature. Michael Neill in *Issues of Death* argues that revenge tragedy deals in the most central cultural crisis of early modern England: the reinvention of death after the loss of Catholic funerary ritual (Neill 3). Stephen Greenblatt, expanding this argument, but focussing on religious controversy instead of the *ars moriendi* tradition, chooses Shakespeare's most emblematic play of death and dying for analysis. In *Hamlet in Purgatory,* he extensively elaborates on the "fable of purgatory" before turning towards the English playhouse, concluding that old Hamlet's ghost was the most purgatorial revenant that had ever treaded the English stage. This finding, in turn, leads him to ground-breaking conclusions as for the reason of Hamlet's hesitation. Margaret Owens in *Stages of Dismemberment* postulates how the fragmented bodies on the medieval and early modern stage were symptomatic of various political and religious discourses, such as legitimate state violence or the ritual body and its absence after the reformation. While her book directly does not address the topic of *mourning* as such, she does call the reformed religious ritual "eviscerated" (Owens 2005, 208), and the loss of the ritual body traumatic, thus her study seems to gesture towards the same approach. Tobias Döring in *Performances of Mourning in Shakespearean Theatre and Early Modern Culture* mainly focuses on the performativity of mourning rituals both in early modern funerals and in their theatrical representations.

universal experience of people can really engender fundamental trauma (158-60). This description is perfectly applicable to the much-debated socio-cultural change brought about by the English reformations.

What is important here is to show how introducing the conceptual framework of collective trauma, interwoven with cultural memory studies, leads to new insights compared to the scholarly framework of *mourning*. Replacing the one-sided concept of *mourning*, which only deals with absence and loss, this complex, two-component approach allows one, as it will be shown, to account for the hegemonic power relations in the process of the creation of different, contesting trauma narratives, synchronically and diachronically as well. As Brian Cummings, Alexandra Walsham and Ceri Law write in their introduction to *Memory and the English Reformation,* "The manner in which the Reformation itself entered the record as a historical event remains comparatively understudied …" (Cummings et al., 14). How was the sometimes-controversial narrative of the English reformation transmitted through different generations? Through what processes of signification and re-signification came it to be the "Morning Star", as Thomas Fuller referred to it in his *The history of the worthies of England* in 1662 (Fuller 40), as it became cemented in Whiggish history, unchallenged for such a long time? The modes and possibilities of representation and meaning making are especially important in the case of a society defined by censorship and state violence. The sanctified and legitimized violence of the state always aims at the repression of certain meanings while inculcating others. This enforced forgetting may be categorized under Paul Connerton's seven types of forgetting, where the fourth category is *repressive erasure*. "Repressive erasure can be employed to deny the fact of a historical rupture as well as to bring about a historical break" (Connerton 41). This denial of traumatic rupture formed the undercurrent to the triumphant accounts of the English reformation, emerging as early as in the beginning of the seventeenth century. As Cummings et al. write, "… as the convulsions of the 1530s, 1540s and 1550s ceased to be part of the personal experience of the English people, disputes arose about what actually happened and what this meant" (Cummings et al.13). The double framework of cultural memory studies and trauma studies foregrounds the importance of these contesting, ambivalent accounts of the English reformation, detectable in the various cultural texts.

Another crucial aspect of the collective trauma-framework is that while it acknowledges the loss inherent in fundamental social change, at the same time it allows for the merits of Protestantism in the long run and does not necessarily lead to the idea of *mourning*. As Alec Ryrie argues, English Protestantism was affectionate, pragmatic, and progressive, at least for

those who belonged to the group of "the godly" who could appropriate and live out the new faith.[13]

All in all, the reformation was an enormous socio-cultural watershed without doubt, and the proposition that it can be considered as collective trauma comes up in other scholarly works as well. Christopher Highley in his recent essay "Henry VIII's Ghost in Cromwellian England" makes the same claim, writing about ghosts. "Whether literary, folkloric or experimental, ghosts retained their cultural force in the aftermath of the collective trauma unleashed by Henry's innovation in church and state" (Highley 101). Although he applies this observation to a very different genre, to the ghost pamphlet – which he considers as "surrogate paper-stages" (99) while theatres were shut down – his finding simultaneously confirms my hypothesis underlying the discussion of revenge tragedies. The relevance of trauma studies and collective trauma will be further elaborated in the first chapter.

Structure, topics

In the first part of the dissertation, I lay down the theoretical foundations of my research, building on two conceptual pillars: one is memory studies, and the other is a socially informed theory of trauma, that is collective trauma. My entire work is fuelled by the illuminating conclusions drawn by the so-called "religious turn", which is not elaborated here but considered as a given, while its conclusions will be continuously referred to. After conceptualising the post-Reformation collective trauma, I dedicate special attention to its contents and representations in early modern culture. The first main tenet of this collective trauma is mapped out in the first subchapter: "The Thanatological Crisis". This has been widely addressed before; my proposition here is to classify it under the umbrella-concept of collective trauma, nevertheless, a historical overview of the field is necessary. In the second subchapter I discuss the basic constituents of "The Sacrificial Crisis": an ambivalence around the scaffold of the martyrs, and the crisis brought about by the changing concepts of the eucharist. In the third subchapter of the First Part, "Witnesses of Collective Trauma in Post-Reformation England" I will show a few of the different cultural representations of the assumed collective trauma: the reformed calendar and the reformed landscape. I will explicate how the entire material environment bore the marks of the enforced religious changes and upheavals of Tudor (and

[13] This statement was part of a lecture Ryrie gave in October 2022, at the Institute for Literary Studies, Budapest, ELTE, in the framework of the *Tibor Klaniczay Lecture Series.* The role of affect in Protestantism is extensively discussed in his "Cultivating the Affections", *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 17-27.

Stuart) England. In the second part of my dissertation, I will read some of the Tudor and Stuart revenge tragedies, these gory and melodramatic plays as witnesses or representations of this collective trauma. The analysis of plays will not follow the order of the contextual chapters,[14] I will discuss the ambivalence around the eucharist first, in "Eucharistic Anxiety and Cannibalism*"*. I argue that the staging of the extremely violent, repellent scenes in these plays was not (merely) for the sake of sensationalism and blood bath, but for a double purpose. They served as commemoration and caricature of corporeal ritual at the same time, hence the difficulties of neat generic categorization. While *Antonio* will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter than *Titus*, thus giving the impression of a lopsided analysis, the reason for this is because I will later return to *Titus* in the third analytical chapter. In "The Reckless Dead" I read the corpses and body parts on early modern stage within the discourse of relic veneration, a religious tradition that has strong bearings on early modern society, and which, as historiography has shown, was not relegated to the past, as of yet. In "The Pyres of Smithfield" I intend to show how Lavinia and the Duchess were very much alike the contemporary Christian martyrs. I argue that the meaning of religious executions and torture was increasingly ambivalent, and the community was torn along these dividing lines. These plays made the practice of sacred violence transparent and open for reflection and questioning, and thus, they always carried a subversive potentiality.

Part I. Theoretical and Historical Contexts

I/1 Theory, Methodology

As a point of departure, I need to establish the two basic theoretical pillars that inform this present discussion of revenge tragedy.[15] One is cultural memory studies and the other is trauma studies. After introducing briefly these two fields, I will turn to a discussion of revenge tragedy as a transgressive genre.

[14] As it became clear in the process of writing, doctrinal and practical tenets of the eucharist, rites of death and martyrdom overlap so frequently, that any attempt for a neat separation would be futile. In this vein it did not seem problematic to present the analyses of plays in a different order, rendering the Eucharist Controversies prior to the thanatological crisis.

[15] This chapter of my dissertation is partly based on my article recently published. Laura Mike, "Collective Trauma as a Conceptual Framework in the Interpretation of Tragedy", *Acta Philologica* Vol. 58 (2022). DOI: 10.7311/ACTA. 58.2022.XX, 81-91.

Cultural memory studies is a dynamic, multidisciplinary field continuously gaining momentum since its birth in the 1980s. Establishing the foundations of the discipline in the 1920s, Maurice Halbwachs first theorized "the social frameworks" for collective memory, along with his German colleague Aby Warburg, who mainly focused on the power of icons and images in transmitting cultural meaning across generations.[16] None of them, however, used the word "cultural memory". This term was later coined by Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann, who, building on these preliminaries, developed their own theory, calling it *cultural* memory, thus creating a systemic groundwork for further studies of the field. (J. Assmann 1992, A. Assmann 1999). They kept Halbwachs' precepts on "collective memory", but they broke it up into two subcategories: "communicative" and "cultural memory", including the cultural sphere, which Halbwachs excluded from his investigation of memory (J. Assmann 2008, 110). The difference between communicative and cultural memory can be best exemplified, as Jan Assmann posits, by Vansina's[17] "floating gap".

> In oral societies, as Vansina has shown, there is a gap between the informal, generational memory referring to the recent past and the formal, cultural memory which refers to the remote past. […] since this gap shifts with the succession of generations, Vansina calls it the "floating gap". [...] the *communicative* memory contains memories referring to Vansina's "recent past". These are the memories that an individual shares with his contemporaries. […] in the *cultural* memory, the past is not preserved as such, but is cast in symbols as they are represented in oral myths or in writings, performed in feasts, and as they are continually illuminating a changing present. […] Cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as "ours" – emphasis mine (Assmann 2008, 113).

The distinction between communicative and cultural memory is important, for they indicate different modes and temporalities of remembering. Cultural memory studies thus "has introduced methods to study the cultural forms and media – literature, film, monuments, photography, digital media, museums, memorial – through which memory is *produced*, *constructed* and *shared* publicly on local, national and global scales" (Kennedy 59). Out of the later developments I need to highlight Jacques le Goff and Pierre Nora's work, positing history, and memory as binaries. In their respective argumentations memory (and witnessing) is the subaltern version of history, and as such, many times contradicts the always already political and hegemonic historiography. As Nora writes,

> The acceleration of history then, confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory – social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which

[16] On Aby Warburg, see Szőnyi György Endre, *Pictura & Scriptura* (Szeged: JATEPress, 2004), 53-75.
[17] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 23.

> is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past. (Nora 8)

Nora, in his argumentation goes as far as positing that history aims at eradicating memory. This binary opposition was successfully challenged by Judith Pollmann's *Memory in Early Modern Europe*. She builds her investigation on important conclusions by James Fentress and Chris Wickham.

> Fentress and Wickham recounted an insight that scholars had only recently rediscovered: our memories, however personal and individual they feel, are shaped to large extent by the memories of the people around us and the culture in which they are being remembered. (Pollmann 3)

But Pollmann's main contribution to the research of cultural memory comes from the examination of actual pre-modern communities, an endeavour not undertaken before her (Pollmann 10). Although Reinhart Koselleck has theorized pre-modern conceptualizations of the past in his tremendously influential work, *Futures past*[18] as early as in 1968 (translated to English in 1985), the scope of his work does not reach beyond a philosophy of history. Judith Pollmann extends his insights, proving that "some knowledge of early modern memory practices is helpful in thinking about, and accounting for, many phenomena in modern memory that are currently ascribed to the coming of 'modernity'" (Ibid). Thus, in her account, history and memory are *both* reversible and are recurringly remade in response to unsettling incidents, such as the English reformation. This "unsettling memory" is the first important intersection between trauma studies and memory studies that I wish to utilize for this project. The second intersection will be representation,[19] but I will return to that later. For the clarity of the theoretical foundations, a more substantial explication of collective trauma will follow. The extremely widespread use of trauma as a concept makes this move necessary. To begin with, the approach used here is a socially informed theory of trauma, as opposed to the psychoanalytical approach[20]. As Todd Madigan argues, the different approaches to trauma can

[18] Pollmann summarizes Koselleck's work in the Introduction to her book. "In his view, pre-modern historical consciousness had two strands. First, there was the eschatological tradition, which expected a second coming of Christ and the end of time, and for which secular history was in many ways irrelevant. [...] Secondly, there was the classical notion of history as *magistra vitae* (teacher for life), examples from the past that could be reapplied one-to-one in new historical conditions. [...] Modern historical consciousness, on the other hand, is believed to hinge on the perceived difference and *distance* between past and present, and this also had implications for expectations for the future; unlike early modern culture, modern cultures expect novelty as a matter of course" (Pollmann, 10).

[19] Brian Cummings, Alexandra Walsham, Ceri Law and Bronwyn Wallace's edited volume, *Memory and the English Reformation,* mentioned earlier, has provided enormous inspiration for this part of my study. I will build on the examples and conclusions of the book throughout my whole project.

[20] I am aware that psychoanalytical theories of trauma do engage themselves with issues of society, but I do not wish to utilize the psychoanalytic explanations whatsoever in this dissertation.

engender entirely different theoretical frameworks and conclusions to such an extent that "scholars who apply the theory of cultural trauma to the social world might reach the opposite conclusions on such a foundational question as *whether cultural trauma has occurred in a particular society…"* and not because of the difference in the empirical evidence, but because of the different theoretical premises (Maddigan 47). Altogether, the main objective here is to trace down/understand representations of a collective religious trauma in early modern English society, scrutinizing artifacts of cultural memory such as memorials, cemeteries, private diaries, hagiographies, pamphlets, and the most intriguing of them all: revenge tragedy.

First and most of all, the possible pitfalls of this endeavour need mentioning, along with the main objections brought up against it. To begin with, trauma studies could be considered as a menace to formal readings of literature, as LaCapra observes,

> … some see trauma studies as a threat, either to a political focus or to some seemingly alternative paradigm, for example, formal or delimited rhetorical analysis in terms of tropes and styles. The either/or option arises when the study of trauma and its effects are made to exclude other problems, notably when it is simply conflated with history, understood in terms of individual psychology, or converted into a more or less disguised displacement of another approach, particularly a version of deconstruction that turns time and again to aporia and unreadability. (LaCapra 10)

Nevertheless, the aim is not to foreclose a textual analysis for the sake of a sweeping sociological survey, but to provide a deeper understanding of previously ignored tenets of cultural phenomena. Nor is the major purpose to focus on *the unspeakable* and *loss,* although a theory of *hauntology* can be and has been successfully applied to early modern tragedy.[21] Indeed, a basic advantage of the application of a socially informed theory of trauma is the emphasis on *representation*[22] instead of repression, and on the *communal* as opposed to

[21]Lukas Szrot, "Hamlet's Father: Hauntology and the Roots of the Modern Self." *Fast Capitalism* 16.2 (2019), 91. Edyta Lorek-Jezińska "Shakespeare, Authority and Hauntology." *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance* 17.32 (2018), 21–34.

[22] In the vein of old historicism and traditional, moral-philosophical or historical-biographical approaches to literature, one might argue that my approach posits a direct, imitative relationship between literature and the historical, social context, but this representation of trauma on the early modern stage is very far removed from a simple, direct *mirroring* of social phenomena. Fredson Bowers' sociological explanation for the revenge theme is a good case in point. As it is well known, Bowers in his most influential study of revenge tragedy argues that the topic of revenge was widespread on early modern stage because private revenge was still prevalent in Elizabethan society. It must be noted that he did not find any source to support his argument whatsoever. Later inquiry proved this a false assumption, most prominently Derek Dunne in his *Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy and Early Modern Law* (2016). As Mullaney writes, "What is most striking, in fact, is the *inverse* relationship between revenge off stage and revenge on stage in Reformation England. Bowers' question, recast in my terms – what kind of social work were these plays doing? – remains a valid one. It becomes all the more compelling once we realize that social mimesis of such a literal or thematic kind […] was not dominant mode of representation in Elizabethan amphitheater drama. It is the lack of direct relation between social structures and dramaturgical form

individual psychology in the context of cultural meaning production, and work-through. Although it is always individuals who do the remembering, the socially situated subject is always engaged in the collective memory-work of specific communities (J. Assmann 1992, 22). Furthermore, the need for representation is a basic intersection of collective trauma and cultural memory studies. As cultural memory is created and recreated not only through texts, but the material environment, so are traumatic memories. Thus, within these two research areas, the investigation will be carried out by way of a New Historicist methodology, with its extension of textuality to basically every component of material culture: reading together literature and architecture, the fine arts, early modern law, or the annual calendar. What follows, therefore, delineates how trauma theory advanced, and how it came to be applied to early modern literary analysis.

The concept of trauma has seen several metamorphoses since its conception. With Cathy Caruth publishing her ground-breaking *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* in 1996, trauma studies became a significant field within literary criticism.[23] Ever since, the notion of *trauma* made inroads into many different vocabularies, to such an extent that Jeffrey C. Alexander even created the category of "lay trauma theory" (Alexander 2), given the wide-spread use of the word in everyday language. While the concept was successfully applied to the terrors of the 20th century, such as the nightmares of the world wars, or the aftermath of genocide, there was a certain hesitation to describe events of the distant past as *traumatic*. As Colin Davis and Hannah Meretoja ask,

> … does the Holocaust serve as a paradigm of a traumatic event which can provide tools fit for analysing others, or do its very uniqueness and specificity risk giving a distorted view of atrocities and suffering in different historical times, places, and cultures? Does the Holocaust help us understand Vietnam, 9/11, colonial violence and climate catastrophe, or does it stand in the way? (Davis and Meretoja 6)

Scholars of early modern literature and history have long understood this historical period as a *crisis,* and lately the concept of trauma made inroads into early modern studies as well.

– in a certain sense, the irrelevance of revenge – that makes the genre so relevant, useful, and even necessary" (Mullaney 84).

[23] Michelle Balaev in her recent monograph summarizes Caruth's approach as such: "Early scholarship shaped the initial course of literary trauma theory by popularizing the idea of trauma as an unrepresentable event. A theoretical trend was introduced by scholars like Caruth, who pioneered a psychoanalytic post-structural approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language. This Lacanian approach crafts a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing linguistic value other than referential expression." (Balaev 1). As we will see, in the mapping and discussion of collective trauma, questions of representation are crucial and emphatic, as scholars of the socially informed trauma theory have laid down.

Therefore, it became clear that early modern literary works could be effectively investigated for traces of psychological trauma. Works like *Staging Pain, 1580-1800* or *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* or *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays*[24] show a deep conviction that the post-Reformation era was indeed a traumatizing period in every respect, in the wake of historically specific traumas. I will engage with some of these works in the analytical part of my dissertation. But the main proposal of this present work is the application of the *social* theory of trauma in the discussion of early modern crises. As a result, my critical perspective differs from the psychoanalytically informed analysis of personal trauma. As opposed to that approach, my study primarily focuses on social phenomena and representation. Nevertheless, psychological traumas of race, class and gender are just as equally relevant to revenge tragedy as are different socio-historical traumas. The different traumatic modalities are so closely intertwined in the plays that it is close to impossible to disentangle them. What is more, they reinforce the dramatic effect of each other, as in Lavinia's case who experiences profound trauma of gender, but her figure can also be associated with the Christian martyrs and the Holy Virgin. Because religious issues could not be addressed on the Elizabethan stage, so the gender-trauma in *Titus Andronicus*, paradoxically, not only enhances the dramatic effect, but also serves to conceal overt representations of religious trauma.

Roughly thirty years into Elizabeth's reign the pyres of Smithfield were kindled again. John Coffey records 189 Catholic martyrs from the 1570s up until Elizabeth's death, approximately one-third less than the number of "Bloody" Mary's victims, and most of them executed in the 1580s (Coffey 90). The constellation of the birth of the genre with Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1587, and Elizabeth's most paranoid years of rule deserves and needs further study for the conclusions to be drawn. Elizabeth Hanson in her article reports how torture was an elemental part of criminal persecution on the Continent, but it was not used in England up until V. Pius[25] issued the "Regnans in Excelsis" against Queen Elizabeth in 1570.

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[24] These works mostly revolve around trauma related to race, class, and gender. These topics are outside of the scope of my investigation. James Robert Allard and Mathew R. Martin, *Staging Pain 1580-1800. Violence and Trauma in British Theatre,* (London: Ashgate, 2009); Lisa S. Starks-Estes, *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Thomas P. Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (London: Routledge, 2006)

[25] As John Klause observes (Klause 234), Titus Andronicus shares the surname Pius (1.1.23) with the actual Pope V. Pius, who excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, thus launching a political avalanche that resulted in the systemic hunting down of Catholic priests and their sympathizers on English soil. Greenblatt considers this move a diplomatic failure, resulting in a nightmarish period for English Catholics (Greenblatt 2004, 93). In a similar vein, Titus' initial sacrifice to appease the Roman gods with the blood of Tamora's eldest son catalysed the bloodshed in Shakespeare's play.

With this papal injunction and the state paranoia in its wake, the number of incidents of torture rapidly increased (Hanson 52, 59). In a few years, with the "Act against Jesuits, Seminary Priests and such other like Disobedient Persons" passed in 1585, the immolation of Catholic priests commenced. I consider the renewal of religious executions a possible explanation for the appearance of revenge tragedy in the 1580s, and I am not the first one to make this connection. Douglas Broude (1973), for example, puts down the birth of revenge tragedy to the Reformation apparently, dating the culmination of the revenge theme to the 1580s.

> The Reformation, together with the political circumstances which occasioned and proceeded from it, led Englishmen to an intense interest in the various manifestations of divine retribution and to the conviction that theirs was an age in which God's vengeance was being turned loose on a degenerate world. Confident that they were of the elect nation, many English Protestants readily offered themselves as agents of this vengeance, persecuting "Papists" at home. […] In 1584, thousands of righteous and respectable Englishmen signed the Instrument of Association, swearing in the name of "Almighty God" to revenge any attempt on Elizabeth's life; in 1588 the flagship of the force led by Drake against the Armada was named the *Revenge* … (Broude 501-2).

Apparently, writing in 1973, Broude did not acknowledge the victims of this holy zeal: the Catholic clergy and those who supported or hid them. Thus, he did not, could not see the traumatic effect of such a political initiative, which instigates citizens of a given confessional background to hunt their own fellow citizens to death based on religious differences. But he is right in pointing out that revenge as a theme came into the limelight in those years. A more recent study by Peter Lake, *Hamlet's Choice* (2020) connects the persecution of Catholics under Elizabeth to Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (Lake 2020, 24-34). Most interestingly, Thomas P. Anderson in *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* (2006) does not acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of the English Reformation, nor the years of The Great Fear,[26] although he writes about cultural trauma. In the introductory part to his book, he claims that "*Titus Andronicus* bears witness to the lingering impact of the violent, indeed traumatic events depicted in Foxe that inspired reform 40 years before the play was first staged" (Anderson 9). He seems unaware that the discourse of martyrdom was renewed during the paranoid years when Elizabethan government started the immolation of Catholics. Shakespeare did not have to look further back into history for martyrs. In his chapter, elaborating on *Titus Andronicus* he writes that in the years "between 1580 and 1606 … the maturation of the first generation" of

[26] Stephen Greenblatt in his *Will in the World* (2004) dedicates a whole chapter to the period of state paranoia, and persecution launched by the excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570. He titles this chapter "The Great Fear" (87-117).

Protestants took place (Thomas P. Anderson 21). If we subscribe to such teleological explanations of the English Reformation, there is a chance of missing out on the real nature of collective trauma, one that was described by contemporaries as the following.

> What lamentable experience have we of the *Turnings* and *Turnings* of the *body* of this Land in point of Religion in few years? When *England* was all *Popish* under *Henry* the seventh, how esie is conversion wrought to half Papist halfe-Protestant under *Henry* the eighth? From halfe-Protestantisme halfe-Popery under *Henry* the eighth, to absolute Protestantisme under Edward the sixth: from absoluer [sic] Protestation under *Edward* the sixt to absolute Popery under Quegne *Mary,* and from absolute Popery under Quegne *Mary* (just like the Weather-cocke, with the breathe of every Prince) to absolute Protestantisme under Queene *Elizabeth.* (Williams 11-12)

The epithet "lamentable" needs no further explanation, in my view. Besides positing a teleological progress of the English reformation, P. Anderson applies the trauma framework uncritically in my view. He introduces his chapter on *Titus Andronicus* as the following: "It [the chapter] is concerned with the lingering effects of the Reformation on a generation of survivors." I find this statement problematic on at least two levels. First, considering the latest findings of a "long Reformation" of England, mentioned earlier, we can securely state that the Reformation was not quite over during Elizabeth. It was not in the past, but it was very much still in the making by the turn of the century[27]. Second, speaking of *survivors* implicates an entirely negative process which is far from the truth. As I have elaborated in the introductory part of my dissertation, we should not ignore the histories of those who could truly accommodate the new Protestant faith (page 13). This is exactly why the social framework of trauma, deployed by this work is able to illuminate this complex process better than its psychoanalytic antecedent employed by P. Anderson.

Thus, within this framework, revenge tragedies are considered as performing collective religious trauma on stage, transforming it into cultural trauma by ways of representation, while providing a safe work-through for society.[28] As Jeffrey C. Alexander elucidates in their book, although collective trauma and cultural trauma are mostly handled as interchangeable, there is

[27] See note 10.

[28] In my view, the concept of "work-through" has much correspondence with the notion of "safety valve", a mechanism operated by technologies of power in society, a concept revisited and extensively deployed by the interpretive strategies of New Historicism (See Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism,* Chicago -London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000. In Hungarian, Szőnyi György Endre, "Az 'újhistorizmus' és a mai amerikai Shakespearea-kutatás", *Helikon – Irodalomtudományi Szemle* 1998/1-2, LXIV. évfolyam, 11-33). The main difference between them, however, seems that the idea of work-through acknowledges the presence of damage both on an individual and communal level, psychological or otherwise, and entails the process of healing. The concept of the safety valve, as opposed to this, is mainly concerned about political phenomena, such as rebellion, containment, subversion and so on.

a logic to differentiating between them. Collective trauma becomes cultural by way of entering the meaning-making processes of the public sphere, it turns into narratives reconstructed by agents, who make the trauma-claims. This is when the contestation for the control of meanings begins in the institutional arenas of meaning making, at different hierarchical positions in society (Alexander 1-30). In the case of early modern religious trauma these agents of representation, channelling different trauma narratives, are the chronicles, royal injunctions, hagiographies, broadsides, ballads, pamphlets, personal correspondence, and diaries (these are extremely rare) and most importantly, the early modern plays. I claim that several aspects of this cultural practice have not yet been exposed to interpretation in the light of the complexities of trauma. In what follows, a short delineation will be attempted to chart the implications of a social theory of trauma to post-Reformation English culture and society. Afterwards, the content of this trauma will be unravelled.

This present argumentation partly builds on the work of Jeffrey C. Alexander, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Stompka, as elaborated in their volume *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity.* As for a more detailed description of the English reformation, Christopher Haigh's in-depth and, at the time of its publication, provocative work is used for historical reference. It poses a challenge to select from the plethora of brilliant reformation-histories and other works consulted,[29] but Haigh's is especially convincing, because of its admitted "inside look" of both Catholic and Protestant registers. As he puts it, he was "A childhood Methodist, a teenage Presbyterian, a briefly Catholic first marriage, ten years of determined atheism, ten more of indifference, and now a kind of Anglican agnosticism…" (Haigh vii.). Without easy analogizing, it is possible to blend what we understand as the traumas of the English reformation with a theory of collective trauma as put forward by its theoreticians. The aim of this dissertation is not to join the scholarly discourse viewing the reformation as a period of *disenchantment,*[30]

[29] It would be impossible to list here every book concerning the English reformation that I used in my research. I highlight only a few here. Brian Cummings, *Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (London-New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012); Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation* (Cambridge-London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012); Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred – Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester-New York: 2006); David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[30] It was Max Weber, in his ground-breaking work, *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (1904-5) who first interpreted the Reformation as the road to "the disenchantment of the world". As Alexandra Walsham summarizes in her essay, "In search of the origins of modern patterns of economic behaviour and organization, Weber argued that, especially in its more ascetic forms, Protestantism fostered a fundamental rejection of sacramental magic as a mechanism for aiding salvation and promoted the evolution of a transcendental and intellectualized religion in which numinous forces were removed from the sphere of everyday life" (Walsham 2008, 498). His thesis was widely applied in scholarly literature, such as in Keith Thomas' *Religion and the*

but to highlight how difficult and traumatic the transition was. As Clifford Geertz has shown us, religious crises disrupt "the complex of received cultural patterns […] one has for mapping the empirical world" (Geertz 100). The traumatic impact of such a fundamental change should not be underestimated. Thus, before going into the details of the content of collective trauma, the conceptual foundation must be laid down.

Kai Erikson, who first distinguished between individual and collective trauma in his book *Everything in Its Path*, defined collective trauma as the following: "A blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together, and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (qtd. in Caruth 187). Out of the plethora of trauma-definitions, this is the one I will employ and extend throughout my analyses. Erikson further expounds that collective trauma results in the loss of confidence in the self, loss of trust in the surrounding tissue of family and community, a loss of confidence in the structures of human government, the larger logics by which humans live, and ultimately a distrust that ensues in the ways of nature and God. This basic framework has great explanatory power in understanding early modern lives in the post-Reformation era. With the unmooring of Catholic doctrine and ritual, coupled by the destruction of the institutional framework of intercession, whole new sets of anxieties emerged concerning the fate of the dead, the eternal future of the believers, and a transition from corporeal rites to the cult of the Book. Volumes have been written on the thanatological crisis that ensued in the wake of the reformation of mourning rituals.[31] As it will be shown later, all the above-mentioned basic features of a collective trauma can be mapped onto early modern socio-cultural phenomena, many of them as a direct result of the reformation. Further expanding the scholarship of collective trauma from Erikson's initiative step, Jeffrey C. Alexander and others started to conceptualize trauma representation and its agents in society. Alexander asserts that events are not in themselves traumatic, but everything depends on ways how they are *felt,* and this in turn hinges on the way certain narratives construct these events. Thus, he introduces the *agents* of trauma representation, those cultural actors who construct these narratives within certain institutional frameworks. Then, trauma representation becomes the site of contestation between different agents of the meaning making process, positioning themselves on different hierarchical levels. A case in point is the way in which Elizabethan

Decline of Magic. The further development and complications of Weber's thesis are succinctly summarized in Walsham's essay, "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed".

[31] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001)*;* Michael Neill, *Issues of Death* (Clarendon Press, 1999)*;* Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)*;* Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1991)*;* Tobias Döring, *Performances of Mourning in Shakespearean Theatre and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

authorities painstakingly tried to represent the Marian burnings as national trauma, at the same time carefully steering away from the fact that by the end of Elizabeth's reign, an almost equal number of people were burnt at stake for their Catholic beliefs. Recent study shows that cases of martyrdom have been received with growing unease and provided plenty of occasions for ambivalence and subversion concerning the legitimacy of the state appropriating and inscribing early modern bodies (Owens 2005, 186). One of them is David K. Anderson's *Martyrs and Players in Early Modern England,* a book I will frequently refer to. So, while the scaffold of state executions was meant to represent state-power in the case of treacherous Catholics, trying to unite the community around the scapegoat's death (Girard 8), in the early modern plays allusions of martyrdom are represented differently, as something that invites pity, self-reflection of spectatorship, even conversion, and I should also point out that remarkably, martyrs in tragedies always suffer from the hands of tyrants. Consequently, it can be argued that a different trauma narrative, although indirectly, was represented on the early modern stage, by the playwrights and actors as *agents* of cultural meaning-making. In the plots there is a careful balance between open and veiled representations of religious trauma, leading to ambiguity and polysemous reading, because depicting religious issues or politically sensitive topics was punishable by torture and imprisonment. For instance, staging state executions was prohibited in the second half of Elizabeth's reign, to keep the sanctified violence of the state separate and its meaning contained. Thomas Kyd, who transgressed this prohibition in his *The Spanish Tragedy*, soon became implicated in charges of atheism, although for different reasons, nevertheless the interrogation and torture ultimately caused his untimely death (Saphiro 101). One can easily see how desperately authorities tried to contain the representations of seditious meanings by way of censorship. And while the state made every attempt to suppress the non-sanctioned trauma narratives, personal diaries testify to a fundamental shock and crisis in the wake of the subsequent injunctions of a political reformation. Writing in 1631, the antiquary John Weever recalled the reign of Edward VI when, "Under the godly pretence of reforming Religion", royal commissioners tore down and defaced tombs and funeral monuments. For Weever, this was nothing less than "a barbarous rage against the dead" (Weever 50-1). Another testimony is from Thomas Browne, the physician and philosopher who wrote in his diary: "I could scarce containe my prayers for a friend at the ringing of a bell" (qtd. in Marshall 2002, 167).

Although post-Reformation authorities did all in their power to destroy popish institutions, writing and bodies, none of these acts of suppression were especially efficient.

While only four mystery play cycles survived the destruction,[32] medieval plays of the sacrament lived on openly in the ambivalent and intriguing themes of the revenge tragedy, although in a twisted form, and the blood of the martyrs, both Catholic and Protestant,[33] became "the seed of the church" (a saying attributed to Tertullian), as a brave and good death mostly inspired scepticism and even awe, not abhorrence. The same resistance was true for post-Reformation landscape: the ruins of monasteries, shrines and decapitated crosses became touchstones for religious nostalgia and veneration. As Walsham writes,

> For several generations, absence itself was a powerful mnemonic and voids themselves became the subject of veneration. Kept alive by place names, remembrance of these missing structures migrated from the material realm into the sphere of the imagination, where it refused to be blotted out. (Walsham 2020, 139)

Thus, it seems quite clear, as Smelser has shown, that complete repression is impossible on the collective level, as private oral communication is impossible to control completely (Smelser 51). Conclusively, neither the elements of the Catholic ritual, nor the collective trauma of their loss was easy to suppress, despite the best efforts of the state officials. Historical accounts of the English reformation as a gradual process substantiate this claim, as opposed to an abrupt, shocking change on which theories of repression could be predicated. A further excellent example to prove this could be the last *recorded* Corpus Christi play, that was suppressed as late as in 1605, in Kendal (Douglas and Greenfield 17-19); and this might be only the tip of the iceberg considering the plays *not* recorded. Another relevant feature of the theory of collective trauma is the figure of the *scapegoat.* Neil J. Smelser expounds how the problems and crises of a community are projected onto one certain group of people, who in turn become the scapegoat to be punished (Smelser 52). This explanation is obviously not novel, René Girard builds an essential part of his philosophy around the ancient institution of the *scapegoat*, and his conclusions have major significance in this study as well. Most importantly, the assigning of responsibility for all the wrongs that happened can reach the extremes of a national paranoia, which is exactly what happened in Elizabethan times. After the papal excommunication of the Queen in 1570, the fear of a Catholic coup rose to paranoid extent. In 1581 another new law

[32] Theresa Coletti and Gail McMurray Gibson, in their provocative study, give historical evidence how the suppression of sacramental plays was largely ineffective; contemporary records show that many of them were secretly played on in Catholic circles. Theresa Coletti and Gail McMurray Gibson, "The Tudor Origins of Medieval Drama" in *A Companion to Tudor Literature.* Ed. Kent Cartwright, Chichester: Wiley and Blackwell (2010): 228-45

[33] For an in-depth discussion of martyrdom and its stakes in early modern lives, see Brad S. Gregory's cross-confessional and comparative study. Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake* (Cambridge, MA – London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

was passed, in which Parliament ordered Catholic priests to leave the country within 40 days. After this the hunting and burning of priests began.

In keeping with all that is discussed above, the post-Reformation era of England can be understood in terms of a collective trauma. To further prove that revenge tragedy was partly born in the wake of the cultural traumas of the Reformation, Samuel Weber's reading of Walter Benjamin's insights on writing his magnum opus, *The Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (1928) is worth scrutinizing. Weber created a synthesis of Benjamin's work and correspondence in his *Theatricality as Medium*. As he argues,

> Precisely the conflicts and discontinuities within the ensuing monotheistic era make up the not-so-hidden agenda of the German baroque *Trauerspiel* as Benjamin interprets it, and more generally of Western modernity as such. Benjamin construed both the baroque *Trauerspiel* and the modern period that followed as responses to the problematic situation of an isolated self, and its difficult relation to the community […] Because of the difficulties of this relationship, promise and prophecy can easily assume the proportions of a nightmare. (Weber 168)

Weber then goes on to write: "These problems and crises, which came to a head in the history of European Christianity in the sixteenth century, are linked to the emergence of the Reformation" (Weber 168). In the way Benjamin describes the features of the German mourning play, one can detect the basic traits of the English revenge plays, what is more, he calls *Hamlet* a great Trauerspiel (Benjamin 136). This is not to say that they are the same genre, but they are very close in their expressions and origins. I will come back to Benjamin's work later in connection with the fetish of dead bodies in the second, analytical part of my dissertation.

I/2 The Contents of Collective Trauma

In this chapter I will discuss two major tenets of the assumed collective trauma: a thanatological crisis, and a sacrificial crisis. The thanatological crisis has been widely addressed by critical literature, with changing emphases across the different divides of the humanities. In the following pages I will attempt a relatively concise overview of this vast socio-cultural crisis characterising sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. This will be a non-exhaustive account of the main milestones of this specific research, mostly relevant to England during the Tudors, although some of the sources go well beyond that.

I/2/1 The Thanatological Crisis

> For 'death' is not something that can be imagined once and for all, but an idea that has to be constantly reimagined across cultures and through time; which is to say that, like most human experiences that we think of as 'natural', it is culturally defined. (Neill 2)

What socio-cultural factors precipitated this crisis in the perception of death and dying in sixteenth century England? In the relevant chapter of his magisterial book, *The Hour of Our Death,* Philippe Aries states that the perception of death gradually started to change by the sixteenth century. After a predominance of the culture of *ars moriendi*, which revelled in the depiction of grinning skulls, creepy skeletons and startling *Danse Macabre* scenes, the actual moment of death became dethroned as a terrifying force (Aries 297). A new emphasis was placed on the whole span of life, which was meant to be a preparation for eternity. The radical English Protestant, Taylor writes the following about deathbed conversions (and about last rites, for that matter): "A deathbed repentance is like the washing and dressing of the corpse: It is cleanly and civil, but it changes nothing beneath the skin" (Taylor qtd. in Aries 304). Most intriguingly, Aries does not accord any of these changes to the religious transformation upsetting Europe in the wake of the Reformation. His secularist (?) bias is shown in the way he pinpoints the Renaissance as the main turning point but hastens to emphasize that "[f]or the distance that is now taken with respect to death does not *coincide* with the great schism that dazzled generations of historians and that is by nature theological and ecclesiastical" (Aries 297). The lack of *coincidence* can still mean causation, which he never denies outright, only neglects. Nevertheless, the citations buttressing this claim are from Erasmus, Calvin, and three English Protestant authors, next to the only Bellarmin, who was a Roman professor of theology.

This very fact betrays an intentional silence about the fundamental effects of the Reformation, and this silence seems even more salient if we juxtapose his work with others', such as Nigel Llewellyn's or Patrick J. Geary's,[34] who seem quite convinced that the Reformation *did* bring about a sea of change in the perception of death. Furthermore, the shortcomings of universal (cultural and other) histories are exposed because the English reformation was an idiosyncratic process, a phenomenon *par excellence*. It is surely not entirely consistent to posit a monolithic, cross-confessional phenomenon, as if it was unhinged from the Reformation, and then substantiate it with highly exceptional examples of English *Protestant* writers. This is not to say that the Reformation was the only source of the changing perceptions of death, but after the so-called "religious turn"[35] in the humanities it seems now impossible to neglect its impact as fundamental and ineluctable.

Another author putting forward a theory of early modern thanatological crisis is Michael Neill. His book, *Issues of Death,* has much relevance for this research since he is mainly preoccupied with sixteenth-century England, and English tragedy. He locates the main reasons of the crisis of death in the emerging concepts of an individualistic Self, the loss of Catholic purgatory, and the recurring assaults of the Black Death. His approach bears an admitted secular bias, but at the same time he assigns importance to religious phenomena as well. In the Introduction, citing Robert Watson, he supposes an opposition between "strident assertions of Christian confidence" and "a gathering anxiety about the possibility of death as eternal annihilation" (Neill 48). Relying on most recent literary and historical scholarship, I will show that both confidence and anxiety were parts of the same Christian equilibrium of Protestant England, an England that was experiencing a thoroughgoing collective trauma.

Furthermore, both the emerging conceptualisations of the Self and the perception of disease and epidemic were predisposed on religious terms. As David Cressy put it,

> Religion permeated every aspect of English society in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The pattern of the cosmos, the history and destiny of the world, and the ordering of social, political, and domestic relations were all explained in biblical and theological terms. Christianity provided a system for understanding, a

[34] Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death – Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1991).

[35] This paradigm shift was initiated by Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* in 2001 (Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), followed by Jeffrey Knapp's *Shakespeare's Tribe. Church, State and Theatre in Renaissance England* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003). Further important studies are Brian Cummings' *Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford – New York, 2002), and quite recently, David Scott Kastan's *A Will to Believe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). For a concise summary of the religious turn in humanities, see Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies", *Criticism* (Winter 2004) 46.1; 167-190. The religious turn entails and builds on the premises of the revision of the English reformation, which was mentioned earlier.

> framework for discussion, and a vocabulary for the expression of complex notions, from the governance of the self to the governance of the state, from Christian dealing in the marketplace to proper conduct on Sabbath. Public and private affairs alike were deeply infused by religion. (Cressy 1996,1)

In this vein, I consider the loss of Catholic funerary rites[36] and the concomitant soteriological anxieties as the major tenets of a thanatological crisis, only worsened by the recurring waves of the Black Death. In what follows, I will attempt to give a brief historical overview of this vast and protracted process.

In 1529, a London lawyer, Simon Fish published an anonymous tract, addressed to Henry VIII, under the title *A Supplication for the Beggars.* Fish was in hiding because of an earlier anticlerical play, in which he acted the role of Cardinal Wolsey who was held up for ridicule. In this tract, he called monks and friars "sturdy idle holy thieves" (Fish qtd. in Greenblatt 2001, 11) robbing decent people of their property by means of one single doctrine: Purgatory. The Catholic Church's most contested and quite late doctrine – Jacques Le Goff dates it to the second half of the twelfth century[37] – had already been attacked by the Lollards earlier. Tyndale writes about the monks and friars that "all they have, they have received in the name of the Purgatory … and on that foundation be all their bishoprics, abbeys, colleges, and cathedral churches built" (Tyndale qtd. in Greenblatt 13). Fish touched a sensitive nerve with his tract with Henry, who had been long aware of the "fiscal implications of intercessory institutions like chantries" (Greenblatt 30). The subsequent years saw the gradual dismantling of the system of chantry houses. Between 1536 and 1540 the suppression of some 800 religious houses took place in England and Wales.

But why was Purgatory so important? Purgatory, or the Third Place between Heaven and Hell, was reserved for those who were sinners but "not so much". It was imagined to be very similar to Hell because physical pain and torment were its main attractions, designated to purge out "venial" sin. Greenblatt points out in his book how depictions of Hell and Purgatory closely resembled each other in late Medieval representations. Due to the institution of Purgatory, the defunct received a second opportunity after dying, for the purgation of their sins. The dubious part of the doctrine was that they could only receive this second chance by

[36] For a full elaboration on purgatory and the loss thereof, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, and Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory*.

[37] "When, between the second and fourth centuries, Christianity set itself to thinking about the situation in which souls find themselves between the death of the individual and the Last Judgement, and when, in the fourth century the greatest Fathers of the Church conceived of the idea (shared with minor differences as we shall see, by Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine) that certain sinners might be saved, most probably being subjected to a trial of some sort, a new belief was born, a belief that gradually matured until in the twelfth century it became the belief in Purgatory ..." (Le Goff 3).

monetary means, paid by the living relatives to the Church. The living could only shorten the sufferings of their beloved ones in the tormenting flames by way of giving donations to the Church, and as a result, the chantry priests prayed for the deceased soul. An entire system of institutions was built around the assumed needs of the dead: the intercessory prayers, called suffrages.

It is difficult not to see the salient financial advantage the Catholic Church had from the system of suffrages. A thorn in the eye of the reformers, the fable of purgatory, as Greenblatt calls it, was purposefully built on provoking fear. On the other hand, praying for the dead and making financial sacrifice to alleviate their pain had an enormous incentive: it upheld the psychological bonds between the living and the dead. As early as in 1977, Natalie Zemon Davis already pointed out that via the doctrine of Purgatory and intercessory prayers the dead constituted a separate "age group" in the Catholic world, with their own demands for the living (Zemon Davis 95). This relationship was deeply ambivalent, in the one hand it hindered the family arrow's moving ahead in the world, gluing family members to the past and its values, on the other it kept the strong emotional bonds with beloved family members seemingly intact. In Protestant teaching, the "dead were to be done away with as an 'age group' … This ritual and devotional break with the dead seemed very cruel to Catholic observers" (Ibid). Stephen Greenblatt, almost forty years later, underlines the ambiguous nature of this doctrine in his full-fledged discussion of purgatorial ghosts and Hamlet.

> The brilliance in the doctrine of Purgatory – whatever its topographical implausibility, its scriptural belatedness, and its proneness to cynical abuse – lay both in its institutional control over ineradicable folk beliefs and its engagement with intimate, private feelings… The notion of suffrages – masses, almsgiving, fasts, and prayers – gave mourners something constructive to do with their feelings of grief … (Greenblatt 2001, 102).

Thus, the connection between the living and the dead was ultimately severed with the final abolition of Purgatory. A whole "age group" in early modern society, the dead family members, as Zemon Davis put it, was consigned to oblivion. Thomas More, the brilliant Catholic philosopher and statesman did not wait long to write an answer to Fish's pamphlet, titled *The Supplication of Souls.* More was seriously concerned about the spread of this dangerous heresy, and in his answer, he was "transformed … into an anxiously defensive spokesman for the Catholic clerical establishment" (Greenblatt 135). This shows the earnestness of the matter. More in *The Supplication of Souls* cautioned every good Christian against letting down those poor, tormented souls in the flames of Purgatory who could only count on our suffrages for

their deliverance. The "fable" of Purgatory had a very strong affective import on believers. There are many debated issues around the last will of Henry VIII, but one thing is for sure: having launched the attack on the system of post-mortem prayers, he did not want to linger in Purgatory long, and in his last will he commanded his Executors to distribute a thousand marks as alms to poor people who would, in return, pray "heartily unto God for remission of our offenses and the wealth of our soul" (qtd. in Greenblatt 2001, 23). How the ambivalent memories of Henry VIII and the dissolution of monasteries entered the English chronicles will be discussed in a later chapter discussing the representations of trauma.

In 1547, when the old King passed away, his son Edward ascended the throne, under the careful eyes of his Governor, Somerset who was a friend of Cranmer and the promoter of reform. The historical details are important here, because the ensuing iconoclasm following the 1547 bill to dissolve all remaining chantries, and to destroy the shrines, popish images, and deface the tombstones came down in later chronicles as a "barbarous rage against the dead" (Weever, 50-1). Perhaps the greatest and most apocalyptic destruction the citizens of London may have seen was the pulling down of The Pardon Churchyard of St. Paul's Chapel in the April of 1549, its cloister, the charnel house, and the surrounding monuments. In the process, more than a thousand cartloads of dry bones were conveyed from the charnel house to Finsbury Field. A generation after the event it was recalled by John Stow (qtd. in Marshall 2002, 107), showing its indelible mark on the communal memory. "The Edwardian campaign against purgatory represents a moment of rupture, perhaps the most abrupt and *traumatic* of all cultural apertures opened up in sixteenth century England" (Marshall 108).

A very important aspect of this enormous change was the post-Reformation transformation of burial rites. As Michael Neill explicates, the newly augmented size and the excessive decoration of funeral monuments displayed a "defiant secular pride criticized by contemporary moralists" (Neill 41). As Francis Bacon commented, "There never was the like number of beautiful and costly tombs and monuments erected in sundry churches in honourable memory of the dead" (Bacon qtd. in Neill 40). Similarly, John Weever complained how contemporary monuments were becoming pattern-books for latest fashion (Weever 11). The elaborate monuments, and increasingly personalized epitaphs all served the same purpose: to keep the deceased person's name in the communal memory "as long as the world standeth."[38] An ever-present fear of oblivion fuelled these practices, in lieu of the Catholic commemorative practices. Furthermore, the location of one's grave carried great importance; the more important

[38] This was a commonly used formula in Catholic wills to prescribe suffrages.

the defunct was, the closer he was buried to the altar. According to John Donne, "ambitious men never made more shift for places in court than dead men for graves in churches" (Donne 161). The obvious sarcasm in this observation of the post-Reformation funerary parade is very telling. Obviously, as Marshall explicates, erecting funerary monuments, and even bequeathing wills was "the preserve of a minority" (Marshall 2002, 290). In contrast, the burial homily, or *memoria* was somewhat more accessible to the public. To accommodate the *trauma* of losing Purgatory and its inhabitants, as Nigel Llewellyn in *The Art of Death* has put it (Llewellyn 28), the Protestant church gradually developed a different art of commemoration. Apart from the technical differences, such as the sermon's language or the question of vestment (all these details had the capacity to harm certain sensitivities), the greatest change was, that while the Catholic funeral mass directly addressed the deceased person, as if they were still present and available, the Protestant *memoria* focused on recalling the life and deeds of the defunct. This meant capitalizing on the didactic potential of virtuous lives, in the vein of the ancient aphorism: *de mortuis, nil nisi bonum* (speak nothing but good of the dead). This was a question of presence or absence: the *memoria* was predicated on the absence, while the funeral mass on the presence of the dead person. This dichotomy of the presence/absence of the dead is frequently thematized in revenge tragedies, assuming the form of stage ghosts and uncanny revenants. The revenant always served as an agent of remembrance, calling attention to the importance and obligation of commemoration both on a personal and communal level.

In 1549 the Latin mass was abolished altogether, and the Book of Common Prayer sermons officially took its place. By 1549 the only thing officially left of Purgatory was its textual traces in the *Book of Common Prayer*, amended by Cranmer later in 1552. Brian Cummings writes: "The great stages of the *Book of Common Prayer* are thus marked by paradox and even contradiction. Its first incarnation in 1549 was revolutionary, a brand-new book for an age which was self-consciously overturning the past. Yet in making this book Cranmer also preserved the vestiges of a thousand years of tradition, since much of it was translated from the Latin liturgy."[39] In the first edition of Cranmer, in 1549, there are still traces of "Popish" superstition, as its critics noted. For instance, the chapter on the Holy Communion contains the subtitle: "… the holy Communion, commonly called the Masse" (19). Furthermore, in "The Ordre for the buriall of the dead" the dead person is directly addressed, as if it was present. "I commende thy soule to God the father almighty, and thy body to the grounde, earth to earth, asshes to asshes, dust to dust, in sure and certayne hope of resurrection…" (*BOCP* 82). As

[39] *The Book of Common Prayer,* ed. Brian Cummings, Introduction, (Oxford University Press, 2013), xv. All the references will be taken from this edition, further referred to as BOCP.

opposed to this, in the 1552 edition the name "Masse" is omitted from the Holy Communion's title, and there is no more first-person address of the defunct. "We geve thee hearty thankes for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this *N.* oure brother, out of the miseries of thys synneful worlde …" (*BOCP* 174).

In 1553, in the Forty-Nine articles, which was never enforced because of the death of the young King, Purgatory was condemned, and the articles contained the injunction to extinguish the entire aggregate attached to it (bede-rolls, obit-lamps, vestments, church plates were sold out by churches, as an effort to forego confiscations). As Peter Marshall argues,

> The outright proscription of purgatory, and of the whole gamut of traditional means of assisting the repose of the souls of the dead, must rank as one of the most audacious attempts at the restructuring of beliefs and values ever attempted in England, a kind of *collective cultural de-programming.* (Marshall 2002, 100 – emphasis mine).

The extent of local resistance varied in great measures, depending on the injunctions. The second wave of dissolution, concerning the chantries in 1548 went down "not with a bang, but a whimper" (Marshall 101), and historians ever since have been guessing the reason of this silence. On the other hand, the abolition of the Mass incited serious rebellion, the so-called "Prayer Book Rising" in 1549, which means that it possibly must have struck a more sensitive nerve.

The thanatological crisis discussed above, and the concomitant collective trauma were represented on the early modern stage in several forms. These have been extensively addressed by scholarship. Firstly, there is the presence of ghosts in virtually every revenge tragedy, elaborated for instance in Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory.* The second almost[40] universal element in revenge tragedy echoing this post-Reformation trauma is the obsessive problematization of funeral rites, most extensively analysed in Michael Neill's *Issues of Death* and Tobias Döring's *Performances of Mourning in Shakespearean Theatre and Early Modern Culture.* My perspective for the analysis of this important, but already extensively addressed topic will be a double framework of the fetish and the *relic*, the third manifestation of this collective trauma on-stage. In this way, I can account for the proliferating corpses, living dead and fragmented body parts in the plays, all of them reminiscent of the lost "social class" of the dead in early modern society.

[40] As the tradition matured, during its sixty or so lifespan, the central topics changed, underwent transformation. See Fredson Bowers' classification in his *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy,* 154-56.

In what follows, another tenet of the collective trauma will be expounded: the sacrificial crisis.

I/2/2 A Sacrificial Crisis

This chapter gained much inspiration from David K. Anderson's *Martyrs and Players in Early Modern England,* where he discusses the growing ambivalence and anxiety accompanying religious executions in sixteenth century England, and how this anxiety played out on the early modern stage. My approach differs from his in two major points: the first is the re-conceptualization/revision of the topos of sacrificial crisis under the theory of collective trauma. The second difference is that I extend his argument and consider the Eucharist Controversies as another aspect of the sacrificial crisis. Thus, the two tenets of the sacrificial crisis, in my reading will be martyrdom and the English aspects of the Eucharist Controversies. These will be treated as separate entities for the clarity of the argumentation, but in fact, they merge in at least two important points. Jesus Christ's carnal body, considered the Host in the Catholic ritual, was martyred for the salvation of the world. Furthermore, suffering martyrdom was many times the final consequence of unsanctioned eucharistic convictions. One of the earliest Protestant martyrs was John Frith, who was burnt at stake for his denial and elaborate refutation of transubstantiation and purgatory (Fabiny 2022, 120-149).

Ute Frevert in her recent essay "Empathy in the Theater of Horror", elaborates on the historicity of empathy. While establishing the fact that empathy is historically determined, and modern sensibilities concerning human dignity are a very recent development, she also points out that "General opinion held that only those who could not be blamed for their own suffering were worthy of sympathy and compassion" (Frevert 83). She then shares a story from Daniel Defoes's biography, which shows how volatile and unpredictable the response of the spectators was in acts of public humiliation. This story supports my argument about the growing awareness of great minds to the blatant injustice and horrendousness of religious persecution. In 1703 Defoe was sentenced to imprisonment and standing three times in the pillory, when after one years' hiding, an informer turned him in, as a result of his publication *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* in December 1702. The pamphlet condemned the political persecution of religious dissenters in a satirical way, and had a disastrous effect on Defoe's later career, as his biographer Richetti relates (Richetti 23-5). The more interesting it all became when, as the story goes, upon implementing the penalty, the crowd walked with the writer, accompanying him from one pillory to the other, bringing him flowers and drinking to his health (Frevert 85).

Historical evidence suggests that the crowds' response at the execution of heretics was similarly volatile and unpredictable (Anderson 62-73), to the extent that the authorities had to carefully ward against its potential subversion into public testimony of faith. Prominent intellectuals, such as William Tyndale, Sebastian Castellio, John Foxe, and John Donne raised their voices against the cruelty of these executions, many of them likened the Anglican Church to its Popish antecedent in this cruel practice of sacrifice. The close examination of John Foxe's oeuvre, besides *Actes and Monuments,* shows that he considered violence per se antithetical to Christ and his followers. A good example for this is Foxe's allegorical Latin comedy, *Christus Triumphans,* written while he was in exile on the continent.[41] While even his most ardent admirers, such as J.F. Mozley do not accord too much poetic merit to this play (Mozley 53), one thing is for sure: it reveals Foxe's convictions concerning religious persecution. In his thinking, manifest in this early piece, Christ's church can never be the persecutor, it is always the Satan who resorts to violence in eliminating the righteous. The use of violence is the marked difference between the domain of the antichrist and the true followers of Christ. Foxe would voice this opinion throughout his entire career; his letters and the subsequent editions of *The Book of Martyrs* all attest this conviction.

By 1575 Foxe was a revered member and spokesman for the Protestant church, his name renown due to the subsequent English editions of his *Actes and Monuments*. Nevertheless, when the authorities detected Flemish Anabaptists in London, and sentenced to burning those five who did not want to recant, Foxe was willing to intercede on their behalf. Mozley gives a detailed account of the story, and cites Foxe's letter to the Queen, pleading for the Anabaptists sentenced to burn, expressing deep concern and disappointment:

> I defend them not: these errors should be repressed, and I rejoice that no Englishmen is infected therewith. It is the manner of their punishment that shocks me. To burn up with fiery flame, blazing with pitch and sulphur, the living bodies of wretched men who err through blindness of judgement […] And so I dare for Christ's sake beseech your majesty […] that this horror may be stopped. (qtd. in Mozley 86-7)

Sadly, although two of them were released after long delays, and one died in prison, the fires of Smithfield were lit again on 22 July 1575, and the two remaining Anabaptists were burnt (Mozley 89). As for John Foxe's hagiographical magnum opus, *Actes and Monuments,* it only serves as a point of reference in the main argumentation. Although it long had been considered as a work in the service of Elizabethan Anti-Catholic propaganda, the latest surge in Foxe

[41] "The first edition of Foxe's apocalyptic comedy of Christ triumphant was published by Oporinus in Basel in March 1556." John Hazel Smith, "Introduction", *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist,* ed. John Hazel Smith (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 1973), 31. https://archive.org//

studies has shown a more nuanced picture about both the work and the author. The main objective of this writing is not an exhaustive discussion of its subsequent editions and its assumed reception history. A fascinating synthesis of the most recent research findings is laid out by Patrick Collinson in his essay "John Foxe and National Consciousness". As Collinson points out "Foxe was not a vulgar nationalist but a man of universal vision and ecumenical conviction" (Collinson 2002, 56), as opposed to William Haller's thesis. Also, making claims about the structure and content of the book is close to impossible, as it has been expanded and substantially changed with every edition, in response to the consecutive religious changes. Thomas Betteridge goes as far as claiming that we can only speak of distinct Foxe texts (Betteridge 161-206). To further complicate the picture, recent research has found that the availability of *The Book of Martyrs* in the first decades of its publication has been largely exaggerated. Collinson shows that "We know for a fact that no more than 1350 copies of the 1596 edition were printed" (Collinson 81) and he contends that it is very unlikely that a reception history could ever be reconstructed. It is clear, that later editions of the *Actes and Monuments* depict the trauma of martyrdom from a Protestant perspective (the early Church fathers and continental examples are left out of the seriously abridged versions, which only emerged after 1589), but the personal letters of Foxe, cited above, prove that he had misgivings about burning people alive altogether. This fact betrays signs of a sacrificial crisis: the burning of religious dissenters was not unanimously praised and welcomed; fault lines emerged in society along the question of martyrs. The following citation from the 1563 edition of *Actes and Monuments* (removed from all subsequent editions[42]) further proves his disillusionment with the practice of religious persecution based on religious doctrine:

> neither is there any Article [of religion] which hath not his heresy annexed to him, as the shadow unto a body, insomuch that the matter is now come unto this point, that nothing can now be spoken of circumspectly, but that it shall tend to some snare of heresy, or at the least suspicion... (A&M [1563], 134).

To study the phenomenon of martyrdom is particularly intriguing, because this point of inquiry reveals the limitations of New Historicism. As Richard Strier writes in *Resistant Structures,* "In a deep sense, [William] Tyndale is unintelligible in Greenblatt's account. Why would any sane person have wanted to be an early Protestant?" (Strier 76). He writes that in historical analysis

[42] The extensive discussion of early modern English censorship would take the length of another dissertation. I will touch upon this topic, mostly in discussing Thomas Kyd's and John Marston's drama. For further study, there are numerous excellent studies, such as Debora Shuger's *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility – The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), or Cyndia Susan Clegg's, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

a "… sympathetic recreation of worldview, within a fully historicized context, is indispensable" (Strier 77). Thus, the projections of psychoanalytic theories of jouissance and masochism into martyrdom seem quite problematic as explanations, as it will be shown later in the subchapter "The Pyres of Smithfield". There was a difference between the legends of medieval martyrs, who indeed were represented as becoming euphoric and beyond worldly in their death and suffering, as opposed to Foxe's martyrs, who do suffer physically and manifestly, but still do not give up their faith. Religious persecution was heated up by the second half of Elizabeth's reign, so it is not a mere coincidence that the boldness and comportment of martyrs inspired the playwrights of the public playhouses just emerging, who were nevertheless banned from depicting religious topics. Thus, many of the revenge tragedies stage a not-so-veiled martyr's death, such as *Titus Andronicus, The Maiden's Tragedy,* or *The Duchess of Malfi,* providing ample possibility to indirectly question the legitimacy of state violence. This line of inquiry might warrant further study into the complexities of early modern state violence and paranoia, both well substantiated historically in the Elizabethan era, because the intimidation of society by acts of public violence is understood today in terms of *political terrorism.*[43]

Another aspect of the sacrificial crisis, in my view, is the ambivalence concerning the corporeal investment in the eucharist, and the concomitant liturgical changes in the English liturgy and parish church. Recently, critics have begun to acknowledge the overall cultural significance of this important tenet of the Reformation.[44] Following this line of inquiry, I argue that the doctrinal and liturgical changes of the eucharist (where Christ was repeatedly *sacrificed* in the Catholic liturgy[45]) can be considered as traumatic on two levels: the first is the erosive effect this heated debate had on the communal tissue. The very special, erratic ways of the English reformations[46] repeatedly disturbed the confessional boundaries, thus birthing paranoia,

[43] As LaCapra puts it, "[…] one way to define terrorism is as the systematic traumatization of a subject population through acts of violence, which may make people insecure […]" (LaCapra x).

[44] Jan Zysk's book (*Shadow and Substance,* 2017*)* is probably the most exhaustive recent study on this topic, but Thomas P. Anderson (*Performing Early Modern Trauma,* 2006*)* and Steven Mullaney (*The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare,* 2015*)* both emphasize the traumatic nature of this profound cultural change.

[45] As the Council of Trent explicated, in the sacrifice of the Mass Jesus' body is sacrificed again, and "that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner […] the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof it is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace." The sacrifice was to be offered "not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ." (See *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent,* ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), Session 22, Canon 2. Hanover Historical Project. Understandably, this element of the Mass was considered as sacrilegious by Protestants, who believed that the offering for sins was made once and for all by Jesus Christ, and there is no need for further sacrifice, let alone human intervention.

[46] Christopher Haigh, a major scholar of the revisionist, now post-revisionist thread of Reformation historiography, was the first to come up with the idea that there were successive reformations in England, and by no means is it possible to talk about one monolithic turn (Haigh, *The English Reformations*).

division and a spirit of suspicion in the various parish communities. As Bishop Jewel said of the sacraments, "The first cause why they were ordained is, that thereby one should acknowledge another, as fellows of one household, and members of one body" (I owe this citation to Jeffrey Knapp, in *Shakespeare's Tribe*, 19). Thus, if the importance of the sacraments was most of all communal, then the ebbs and flows of their change would affect the communal life most sensitively. And this very terrain is where the concept of collective trauma brings us. On a second level, the Eucharistic Controversies caused rupture in individual piety, because in the new economy of Sola Fide, without the intercessory institutions, it was very easy to feel lost and even damned. The efficacy of the eucharist now became contingent on the faith of the recipient, which led to the instability of the ritual. Individual experience then always fuels into the communal and cultural. As I will show later, I regard the loss of the Catholic ways of worship traumatic not due to the loss of corporeal rites, addressed before by Owens et al., but because of the accessibility of the divine has been made obscure in lieu of a tangible intercessory system, and this situation was only aggravated by the fear of damnation intensifying due to the Calvinist teachings of predestination. In a nutshell, the stakes were raised. In what follows, I will try to provide a short overview of the cultural significance of this basic Christian symbol, and then trace down the specifically English traits of its reformation, and its implications for revenge tragedy. Without the former, it is impossible to understand how the ambivalence around the interpretation and meaning of the eucharist imbued and inspired almost every cultural text in the sixteenth century.

The eucharist was an important and elemental Christian teaching and practice[47] from the very beginning, but in the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was refashioned and gained new prominence. As the Church struggled with the excesses of the cult of relics, one successful strategy was to elevate the Host as the most powerful and most efficacious relic of all (Owens 55), and around this sacrament was built the whole feast of Corpus Christi. Thus, the diverse legends of miracles and admiration, revolving around the relics,[48] were afterwards more likely to be transposed to the tiny, white wheaten disc that was venerated as the body of the Lord. The other immensely important aspect in the twelfth century refiguration of the eucharist was a heightening of the role of the clergy, embedded in the new symbolic economy. All this was happening in a historical era where the struggle for political power between secular and clerical

[47] As opposed to the doctrine of Purgatory, which, apart from one apocryphal text, has no scriptural foundations whatsoever, as the reformers hastened to point out.

[48] The veneration of relics assumed serious proportions, and "In 1299 Boniface VIII issued a bull prohibiting the partition of corpses in an effort to suppress 'the practice of dividing and boiling the body [which] had become accepted in Northern Europe'" (Brown 226).

authority had been intensifying. In the official interpretation (rejected vehemently by heretics) it was only and exclusively the priest, however imperfect he might be, who could perform the *sanctification* and *elevation* of the Host. Without his mediation the event came to null, there were no salvific powers, the piece of bread remained wheat and nothing more. Thus, the doctrine of transubstantiation, as manifest in the sacrament of the eucharist, enormously contributed to the authority and socio-political power of the clergy. The meaning-making process itself, and its circulation in society were all connected in the hands of the priests. This barely veiled move for more power, in turn, exposed the institution of eucharist to much criticism, which could only be silenced forcefully, by the fires of the pyre. Consequently, when this symbolic economy was upset by the Reformation, it led to both a political and an epistemological crisis. By the latter I mean the fundamental shattering of cognitive and affective systems for acquiring knowledge. The Eucharist Controversies resulted in the splitting up of Protestantism into several branches eventually, since even Luther, Zwingli and Calvin failed to reach an agreement on the issue. The significance of this universal symbol should not be underestimated. As Miri Rubin argues,

> … the eucharist possessed enormous importance; its correct understanding bespoke a host of attitudes and bestowed identities. The eucharist, thus, could never be simply reformed; … If the eucharist were to change, it had to be a dramatic change; it could either be wholly espoused – Christ, miracle, well-being – or negated and rejected. And as the world of the sixteenth century came both to realise this necessity and to undertake the new design, the eucharist became identified as a controversial object, a militant emblem of struggle unto death. There were no two ways about it, so when a crisis about its use and meaning emerged, Europe was thrown into turmoil for 150 years over it. (Rubin 347)

But before arriving at the Reformation in this short chronology, the modes of inculcating the eucharistic teaching need mentioning. This is where the discussion enters the domain of popular religion and the communal.

After establishing the sacred and mystic place of the Host in the liturgy in the twelfth century, the next two centuries saw the widespread dissemination of the sacramental meaning, in the most diverse forms of learning for both clergy and laymen. The laity were taught the importance of the sacrament, and their relation to it, in the liturgy, and outside of it (Rubin 103). One basic form of teaching was through catechisms and mass-books, such as the *Lay folks' catechism* in 1370, and the *Lay folks' mass book (LFMB),* which contains an elaboration on the eucharist, along with a ready-at-hand example, Sir John Oldcastle's trial. In 1417 he was tried and burned for denouncing the Roman Church, although he professed his belief in the

Sacrament of the Host (*LFMB,* Appendix II. – Doctrine of the Eucharist, 118-121.) He was immortalized by Shakespeare in the figure of Falstaff.

The other form of edifice was the *exempla,* collections of miraculous stories about well-being and transgression attached to the eucharist. It is important to highlight them, because these stories have great relevance to the harrowing world of revenge tragedy. Since the genre of eucharistic tales was itself not new, composers of the collections could search in the library of any monastery or cathedral school (Rubin 112). Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* or Paschasius Radbert's *De corpore et sanguine Christi* were just as good sources as Arnulf Liége's collection of 1307, translated into English in the early fifteenth century as the *Alphabet of tales* (I owe these titles to Miri Rubin 110, 112). It was the eucharistic tales that made probably the deepest impression on the mostly illiterate parishioners, painting in vivid pictures both the punishment for abuse and transgressions and the bliss that came with the sacrament's worthy reverence.

> In […] 1375 Bishop Brinton of Exeter taught that after seeing God's body no need for food would be felt, oaths would be forgiven, eyesight would not fade, sudden death would strike not one, nor would one age, and one would be protected at every step by angels. This is just one version of the ubiquitous list of *Merita missae*, the Merits of the Mass. (Rubin 63)

Such salvific powers ascribed to the eucharist were all the more remarkable because these benefits were drawn from simply *viewing* the elevation of the Host. The average people only received the eucharist once a year (Rubin 73), on Easter, due to the warnings of unworthiness, which could result in instant death. There were ample stories to exemplify how sinful people dropped dead on receiving the Host. But the main abusers of the Host were the Jews. Such an example is told by the Prioress, in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* a book which, at some point was deemed heretical (Rubin 333). It is worth summing up the main plot here because it illuminates the main patterns of the eucharistic tale.

The story is placed in Asia, and it goes about a young boy whose path to school led through the Jewish district. He learned a song about the Virgin, and vigorously sang it every time on his way home. The vicious Jews became so outraged at him that they slid his throat and threw him into the cesspit. When his mother found the boy, he began to sing the praise of the Virgin, although he was dead already.

This jewel of martyrdom and ruby bright,
Lying with carven throat and out of sight,
Began to sing *O Alma* from the ground
Till all the place was ringing with the sound.

They took the child with piteous lamentation

And he was brought, still singing out his song, […]
Towards the nearest abbey by the throng.

Still lay this innocent child upon his bier
At the high altar while a Mass was said.
The abbot and his convent then drew near
To hasten on his burial, and spread
A rain of holy water on his head;
And as they let the holy water spill
He sang *O Alma Redemptoris* still. (Chaucer 171-176)

The abbot then draws near and conjures the dead child "by virtue of the Holy Trinity", to tell his secret. The child begins to speak and tells him that although by nature he is long dead, the "sweetest mother of Christ … bade him sing" the song until his time of burial, and for this effect, she has put a grain on his tongue. He can only sing as long, as the grain is there. When the abbot took away the grain, the child "gave up the ghost peacefully". It is not difficult to see how martyrdom and the eucharistic bread, the powerful grain of life, are deeply entangled in this miraculous story, which bears basic elements of the *exempla* such as the Jews raging against the innocent, Christ-like child, whom they eventually kill, and the miracle brought about by the grain, that the Virgin placed upon the dead child's tongue. The imagery of eucharistic *exempla*, with its fixation on gory sacrifice and its perception left its indelible mark on revenge tragedy, as discussed by Margaret E. Owens in *Stages of Dismemberment* (Owens 2005, 216-20). The implications will be expounded in more detail below, when discussing the respective tragedies.

The Anglican reformed liturgy never gave up the idea of transubstantiation totally. *The Book of Common Prayer,* prescribing the proper and obligatory liturgy[49] for the Church of England, as noted earlier, reflects the idiosyncrasies of English Protestantism, known as the *middle way* of England: "Ambiguity is resurgent, a belief in the real presence of Christ in the eucharist is tolerated if not encouraged; the Prayer Book (of 1662) that would endure was once again an interpretatively permissive, complicatedly figurative text" (Read 29). This ambiguity is best illustrated if we juxtapose the subsequent editions of the *Book of Common Prayer.*

[49] Obligatory church attendance is not considered as traumatic at this point of the research, due to two reasons. First, as Keith Thomas taught us, behaviour in church was similar to that in theatre (*Religion and the Decline of Magic* 199, 191), meaning that "indecent" people did not respect the homilies or the Protestant liturgy, because they were not seriously punished for ill behaviour. Secondly, David Scott Kastan shows that failing to attend Elizabethan homilies did not result in great punitive measures either, only small fines were imposed. Nevertheless, recusancy certificates were led, and Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare for instance, was registered as recusant because regularly failing to attend the homilies (Kastan 21). The only possible traumatic effect of the compulsory homilies, or rather the lack of attendance might have been, as well documented by David Cressy in his *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford University Press, 2000), the long-term punishment of recusants: the denial of a Christian burial to them. This surely struck a vein with Elizabethans, evidence shows that letters of pledge were dispatched, and, in some cases, even illegitimate burials took place, occasionally aided by local authorities.

"The body of our Lorde Jesus Christe whiche was given for thee, preserve thy bodye and soule unto everlasting lyfe." (1549, *BOCP*)

"Take and eate this, in remembrance that Christ dyed for thee, and feede on him in thy heart by Faythe, with thanksgiving." (1552, *BOCP*)

"The body of our Lorde Jesus Christe whiche was given for thee, preserve thy bodye and soule unto everlasting lyfe. Take and eate this, in remembrance that Christ dyed for thee, and feede on him in thy heart by Faythe, with thanksgiving." (*BOCP*, 1559, 1662)

The first edition clearly has corporeal claims: "this is the body of Christ". The second edition, as opposed to this, places emphasis on the act of remembrance, and the act of eating is symbolical because it happens "in the heart, by faith". As Ian McCormack pointed out,

> Unable or unwilling to make a choice between two explicit theological statements about the nature of the Eucharist, the producers of 1559 simply put them together, and the producers of 1662 maintained the compromise. Thus today when modern Anglicans use the *Book of Common Prayer*, Catholics can take comfort in the first half of the formula – the body of Christ – and Protestants can point to remembrance and feeding by faith. […] And that one little part of the liturgy speaks volumes about the English reformations, and not a little about Anglicanism as well.[50]

Nevertheless, the mass, the daily platform to sacrifice Christ's body was abolished by Edward, with all the "Popish fables" of sanctification and elevation. In the Protestant Communion, theoretically, the locus of corporeality shifted towards the bodies of the believers, who should sacrifice themselves to God as living temples, by acts of charity and moral living in their everyday lives, or by the act of martyrdom (Waldron 25). This obviously cannot mean that the body goes radically absent in reformed rituals, pace Owen's claim that the Protestant eucharist is an eviscerated ritual, in which corporeality as such does not play a significant part (Owens 208).

A very important fact should be reiterated here, mentioned earlier: the abolition of the mass and the initiation of the Book of Common Prayer sermons incited greater revolt in England than the suppression of chantry houses ever did. The 1549 revolts: the Kett's rebellion in Norfolk, and the Prayer Book rebellion in Cornwall, in the same year, were the largest risings in Tudor England. The reasons were not solely religious. They were precipitated by a threefold crisis: a crisis in popular relations, a crisis of religion, and an economic catastrophe due to a bad harvest (Wood 21). Nevertheless, the first two of these causes stem from the English reformation: the old religion was prohibited, the new was just about to be born, and "whole

[50] I owe this citation to Tibor Fabiny, who most kindly offered me the manuscript of Professor McCormack's lecture, held in Mirfield, Fall of 2014.

parishes could be split down the middle" (29). Neighbours quickly became enemies, having discussed the vernacular Bible in the alehouse: this public discussion of the Bible later became prohibited, because of the skirmish it caused amongst common people (Wood 26). Social unrest and divided communities came in the wake of the recurring reformations of England, and all over Europe. This fact is important if we try to understand whether the transition to the new religious economy was traumatic for the different local communities, or not. As has been shown in the above paragraphs, both the thanatological and the sacrificial crisis had deep communal implications. Furthermore, these two tenets of religious life, and their respective traumas were intertwined on many levels. Thus, it is close to impossible to discuss them in a neatly separate way, as I will show in the following.

As stated earlier, there was an interdependence between the living and the dead, these two social groups together constituting the *church militant*. In the liturgy of the Holy Communion (the eucharist), suffrages were offered for the defunct as a rule, and this was attacked heavily by the reformers. As noted earlier, Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549 still contains these textual traces, as well as the black rubrics, indicating the transcendent moments of the consecration of the Host.

> We commend unto thy mercye (O Lorde) all other thy servauntes, which are departed hence from us, with the signe of faith, and nowe do reste in the slepe of peace: Graunt unto them, we beseche thee, thy mercy, and everlasting peace… (*BOCP* 30).

Thus, praying for the dead and receiving the Host were deeply intertwined moments of the Catholic mass. Another moment when these two sacraments merged was the case of death-bed visitations. Priests were obliged to visit the dying, offering them the last rites, involving the eucharist, as a final way of reconciling the soul with its Maker. These last rites before dying were extremely important for early modern people. As has been addressed by Stephen Greenblatt, the Ghost in *Hamlet* complaining that he had to depart from this life unprepared, was indeed reflecting contemporary anxieties about modes of dying, in the absence of proper funerary rites, including the reception of the Host on one's deathbed, called *houseling*.

GHOST: Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhousled, disappointed, unaneled,
Not reckoning made, but sent to my account,
With all my imperfections on my head.
Oh, horrible, oh, horrible, most horrible! (*Hamlet* 1.5.74-80)[51]

[51] All citations from William Shakespeare are from *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1974, Sixth printing).

As the above excerpt illustrates with other examples, early modern playwrights could and did draw on the abundance of religious controversy of the past few decades, be it rites of death or eucharistic symbolism, although they only could do it in an indirect way, as noted earlier. Hamlet's pondering about how the worms digest both the beggar and the king, the uncanny cannibalistic dinner in *Titus Andronicus,* or Marston's Black Mass in *Antonio's Revenge*, all appropriated elements of the transubstantiation debate, twisting them, and exposing them for doubt and questioning. Whenever a character on stage exposed the terms of their figuration, their *embodiment,* they unconsciously or consciously evoked the eucharistic debate around incarnation, questions concerning presence and absence,[52] representation and reality. Besides, in revenge tragedies the characters frequently exposed their own artifice in the most dramatical moments of the play. As opposed to this, in the Catholic mass everything strived towards the make-belief effect, the bell ringing at elevation, the special lights, and not the least the systemic inculcation of what the viewers were supposed to see. These questions of representation go to the heart of every cultural utterance. What is novel in my argumentation is that I consider these utterances on the early modern stage as repressed/expressed narratives of a collective trauma, of a society living in the whirlwind of the entire symbolic system changing around them. As Sophie Read elaborates,

> This rise of interest testifies to a growing sense that early modern disputes over the theology of the eucharist and its expression in doctrine and liturgy were a way of testing the nature of language as well as the nature of belief; critics have started to look to theologians as well as to rhetoricians for contemporary theories of figuration, which are then used to illuminate the imaginative writing of the period. (Read 5)

Read's study analyses poetical works only, but I would add that these "contemporary theories of figuration", discussed predominantly along eucharistic terms, fuelled early modern drama, and revenge tragedy per se (see above). Does the priest conjure Christ's body with his sacrosanct words? And where is Christ if he is not in the eucharist? Is language capable of conjuring presence from absence? These and similar questions intensively preoccupied early modern playgoers, and the tragedies were deeply imbued with these vexing topics. A good example is Shakespeare's *Othello,* where the final tragic outcome hinges on an "ocular proof", the handkerchief (Diehl's term, 125), but Othello does not really *know* what he sees.

[52] This was first put forward by Huston Diehl in *Staging Reform,*121.

All this boils down to important questions of trauma representation: repression, selective amnesia, and the (im)possibilities of representation. While collective trauma is undeniable, direct traces of contemporary response or resistance are very difficult to detect, apart from the few riots recorded in the histories. This is due to several reasons, one of them is censorship. Contemporary chronicles were written by loyal statesmen, such as Charles Wriothesley,[53] or Thomas Fuller (much later). If the Henrician Dissolution of Monasteries never happened in Wriothesley's chronicles, according to Harriet Lyon, it was because "… the chronicle was both an echo of and a mouthpiece for official forms of polemic … and it powerfully reflected the Henrician regime's priorities for its own legacies" (Lyon 66). As a counterpart to official records, private written testimony could witness to the presence of trauma. But here we are faced with a twofold problem: detailed personal diaries were very rare before 1640, and "… most of the early diaries which do survive are terse and impersonal affairs" (Ryrie 11). In addition, the concept of collective trauma highlights the communal aspects. Thus, my purpose here is to understand social phenomena, and not individual psychological trauma, although it is clear, that the two are intricately bound together. As noted earlier, memory and trauma are interdependent subjects. Only individuals can remember, but this remembering is always embedded into given socio-political frameworks of a given society, and historical time.

What are the witnesses of collective trauma, then? I count here the following cultural texts and artefacts: the reformed calendar, the reformed landscape, the increasingly elaborate and personalized funerary monuments, and most importantly: early modern tragedy. For tragedy in general, and revenge tragedy in particular had the enormous capacity, with its ambiguous, farcical and at the same time cathartic representations to stage every major tenet of this collective trauma.

In the following pages I will select a few of these witnesses, in order to show how the English reformation reconfigured time and space for early modern society.

I/3 Witnesses of Collective Trauma in Post-Reformation England: the Reformed Calendar and the Reformed Landscape

Literature and art are capable of reflecting trauma, individual or collective, and this fact has been widely addressed, for example by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub in their seminal book,

[53] Alnwick Castle (Northumberland), Duke of Northumbria Papers, MS 468A. Published as Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485 to 1559,* ed. William Douglas Hamilton, 2 vols., Camden Society, new ser. 2 (London, 1875-7).

Testimony – Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History. Before I would begin to show how collective trauma played out in the cultural texts of early modern England, there is an important issue that needs to be resolved. Witnesses of trauma are many times victims at the same time. This equally refers to human beings, and here, in this case, to material or abstract elements of culture. How can they speak up? How can we read them? The direct written or oral representation of collective trauma was problematic, due to the employment of *repressive erasure* (Connerton 41), the stated political intent to obliterate the Catholic past, which I have discussed earlier. These verbal narratives were forbidden and silenced, nevertheless, they clearly state the case of collective trauma. Including the proliferating recusant literature, mostly published in the exile, these verbal narratives predominantly assumed the less dangerous form of anonymous tracts, pamphlets, or manuscripts, criticising the (Protestant) ruling elite and government politics, writings such as the *Leicester's commonwealth*[54] or *The Treatise of Treasons.*[55] These narratives are termed "secret histories" by Peter Lake and have been extensively addressed by his recent book, *Bad Queen Bess* (2016). Some of them are not strictly religious in their orientation, but implicitly they are always entangled in questions of confessional identity. Most of these illicit writings gesture towards, whether overtly or in an indirect way, a possible Catholic takeover. As an answer, they were usually tackled by official counter-narratives from the regime. Such was the personal correspondence of main figures in the government, for instance William Allen's and Lord Burghley's correspondence, on the occasion of the burning of Catholic priests (qtd. in Anderson 3-5). The common feature of these secret histories is their mainly political charge, but as mentioned earlier, the political was always already religious and confessional in the Elizabethan era, and vice versa. The correspondence on the burning of Catholics indeed carries important traces of contemporary opinion, fuelling into the basic claim of my dissertation. To the more elusive, non-verbal witnesses belong the cultural texts of the reformed landscape, the reformed calendar, the maimed statues, the funerary arts, the ruined monasteries, and most importantly for my dissertation, early modern revenge tragedy. My main concern lies with them, cultural texts testifying to early modern

[54]The anonymous "*Leicester's Commonwealth"* (London: publisher not identified, 1641) is a Catholic recusant political tract against Elizabeth I's government, especially against the pro-Puritan policies of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who is portrayed as an amoral opportunist. [...] It was first printed on the continent in 1584 with the title 'The copie of a leter, wryten by a master of arte of Cambridge, to his friend in London' (STC 5742.9). Formerly attributed to Robert Parsons (who denied authorship), it is also sometimes ascribed to Thomas Morgan..." Web. *Internet Archive,* http://archive.org

[55] Anonymous, *A Treatise of Treasons Against Q. Elizabeth and the Crown of England, divided into two parts* (London, 1572), http:// oxford-shakespeare.com

religious trauma. But even the witness of drama carried its dangers if a playwright was not wary enough.

The silencing of non-sanctioned[56] trauma narratives is best illustrated with Thomas Kyd's life and death. As already mentioned, the papal bull *Regnans Excelsis* in 1570, excommunicating Elizabeth, led to overall state paranoia, culminating in the anti-Catholic legislations of 1585. The intensity of state propaganda caused by the "popish treat" is best illustrated by Norton's pamphlet, published by John Day, in an aftermath of the northern rebellion. The popish threat was ubiquitous, according to Norton.

> Cathedral churches are stuffed with them, as dens of thieves; they are in offices; the meaner sort depend upon them and, partly by example and partly by common desire to creep in to favour of their superiors, and partly also for that the great ones are loath to have other about them, are perilously infected. The very spies and promoters of Queen Mary's time, without change of their opinion, are cherished and mark men against another day. (Norton qtd. in Lake 2016, 24)

This is a very unsettling account to read, with expressions painting the *swarming* multitudes of the Other, who causes *infection*; they evoke narratives of xenophobia and genocide in later historical ages. The demonization of the Catholic Other as the scapegoat for all evil is evident here. Scapegoating is a basic method in the construction of trauma-narratives, as Neil J. Smelser has shown us, and if intense enough, it can amount to a national paranoia (Smelser 52). This is an apt description of Elizabethan England after the 1580s. To eliminate the direct threat, all moderation should be put aside, suggests Norton.[57]

According to Elizabeth Hanson, the wide-spread method of extracting the truth by torture had not been used in England previously,[58] but after 1585 incidents of coerced confessions rapidly rose. Thomas Kyd, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy* was not deterred by censorship in depicting public execution in his play, although this sort of representation was prohibited. Most remarkably, his play was one of the most popular plays, in fact it was the most staged play in the period. C.L. Barber imagines a member of the Privy Council, on viewing *The Spanish Tragedy,* thinking to himself: "How dangerous it is that this theatre goes loose!" (C. L. Barber qtd. in McAdam 40). Kyd soon became implicated in *The Dutch Church Libel*

[56] Among the sanctioned trauma-narratives counted for example the accounts of the Marian persecution.

[57] „We pray that we may see such laws provided for her highness' preservation and the same so executed, without restraint and slackness, for any respect, as the hope of papists, such as be enemies of God, the queen, and the realm, may, if they repent not, be cut off forever. We pray to live to see that none may have place, office or access into her majesty's court nor household, no, not once to her presence..." (Norton in Lake, 24.)

[58] "... torment or question which is used by the order of the civill law and custome of other countries to put malefactor to excessive pain, to make him confesse him selfe, or of his fellowes or complices, is not used in England." (I owe this citation to Hanson, "Torture and Truth in Renaissance England", 52.)

investigation because of some blasphemous writings, found in his chambers, papers he ascribed to his former roommate, Marlowe. What really happened between the two has been a mystery of literary history ever since[59] nevertheless, Kyd was interrogated by ways of the *strappado,* which was a means of torture, and was dead by next summer in the wake of his injuries (Shapiro 100). In sporting dangerous concepts and defying censorship, Kyd doubtlessly contributed to his own demise. This was the socio-political background against which playwrights tried their best to represent contemporary topics, let alone traumas. By the time William Shakespeare entered the scene, Thomas Kyd had perished already. Stephen Greenblatt, in his speculative biography of Shakespeare which provides a brilliant reading nevertheless, paints Shakespeare's coming to London in vivid colours.

> But one sight in particular would certainly have arrested Shakespeare's attention: it was a major tourist attraction, always pointed out to new arrivals. Stuck on poles on the Great Stone Gate, two arches from the Southwark side were severed heads … These were not the remains of common thieves, rapists and murderers …The heads on the bridge, visitors were duly informed, were gentlemen and nobles who suffered the fate of traitors. A foreign visitor to London in 1592 counted thirty-four of them: another in 1598 said he counted thirty. (Greenblatt 2004, 173)

As Greenblatt concludes, this spectacle must have taught a lesson to Shakespeare: his legendary privateness and inwardness. This is the reason we virtually do not have any personal trace of his identity, besides the dramas. Greenblatt aptly points out that one aspect of Shakespeare's genius was the ability to stage contemporary (political) problems, let alone cultural trauma, and still get away with it (Greenblatt 174). Jan Assmann calls artists the "specialists of cultural memory" (Assmann 2008, 114) because they facilitate and consolidate remembering. The unique economy of this remembering within the framework of the early modern playhouse will constitute the main topic of the second half of my dissertation. Before turning to the analysis of revenge tragedies, I will attempt to give a short account of the material witnesses of cultural trauma in the broader sense of cultural *text*, before turning to the analysis of revenge tragedies. I will delineate how the English reformation, this "audacious attempt to restructure belief" (Marshall 2002, 100) purported to refigure space and the perception of time in an effort to obliterate the Catholic past. In this subchapter I rely on the works of David Cressy, Alexandra Walsham, and Brian Cummings et al. Here we move within the domain of memory studies and counter-histories, and the terrain of investigation is the parish church.

[59] A detailed discussion of this literary-historical riddle can be found in Arthur Freeman, "Marlowe, Kyd and the Dutch Church Libel", *English Literary Renaissance* 3, no.1 (1973): 44-52

I/3/1 The Reformed Calendar

The annual calendar structures time and memory, and most importantly, the cultural memory of a society. As Jan Assmann has taught us, memory, time, and identity are inextricably intertwined. "Memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood (identity), both on the personal and on the collective level" (Assmann 2008, 109). The kind of "cultural deprogramming" (Marshall 2002, 100), and the subsequent reprogramming, that the English reformation aimed at, were not achievable without the restructuring of remembered and lived time, embodied in the national calendar. Consequently, its reform came quite early: it was Henry VIII, in 1536, who first effected a fundamental change in its structure, "severely limiting the observance of holy days and reducing them to a manageably number" (Cressy 1989, 4). In this new calendar only the feasts of the Apostles, the Blessed Virgin, St George, the Nativity, Easter Day, St John the Baptist, and St Michael the Archangel would be retained, along with Ascension Day, All Hallows Day, and Candlemas (Ibid 5). The motivation of the injunction was secular: it was meant to uphold, or rather reinstate the economic and moral order. The vast number of saints' days provided the opportunity for laziness and unrest.

> Forasmuch as the number of holy-days is so excessively grown, and yet daily more and more by men's devotion , yea rather superstition, was like further to increase, that the same was … not only prejudicial to the common weal, by reason that it is occasion as well of much sloth, and idleness, the very nurse of thieves, vagabonds, and of divers other unthriftiness and inconveniences, as of decay of […] arts profitable and necessary for the commonwealth, and loss of man's food (many times being clean destroyed through the superstitious observance of the said holy-days, in taking the opportunity of good and serene weather offered upon the same in time of harvest … (Henry VIII's *Proclamation Restricting the Number of Holy Days*, 73)

But legislation and enforcement were two separate things: the cult of Thomas Beckett for instance, was close to impossible to suppress. As Cressy relates, "Official observances of the feasts of Saints Luke, Mark, and Matthew, and Mary Magdalene crept back into the calendar in 1541, while other traditional holy days lived on without state encouragement" (Cressy 1989, 5). This shows the strength of local resistance to calendar reform. The "affective ties", as Assmann calls the emotional attachment individuals and communities have to memories (Assmann 114), be it personal or cultural, cannot be severed overnight. I have already mentioned how long the banned Corpus Christi plays, usually performed on Corpus Christi-day, another festive occasion, lived on in the English parish church, the last one supressed as late as in 1605, in Kendal (Douglas and Greenfield 17-19). Westminster was far away,

censorship was dependent on local authorities, and some of the injunctions took more than fifty years to take hold, as Richard Dutton posits (Dutton 291).

The story of the calendar goes on, and in 1552 the parliament of Edward VI made concessions, probably sensing that the Henrician cut-back on festivals had been too harsh. They recovered some holidays that were previously banned, and thus, there remained twenty-seven holy days, and fifty-two Sundays, when it was lawful to abstain from work, but one had to go to church instead. The Edwardian calendar then remained in the longue durée, instructing the official Christian year under Elizabeth and her successors (Cressy 1989, 7), with the authorized holidays listed and indicated in red letters in the 1559 Book of Common Prayer. Ecclesiastical courts, quite ironically, kept the conservative feasts intact, as they were important indicators of the beginning and ending of the various terms in jurisdiction, much to the resentment of the reformers.[60] In later editions of *The Book of Common Prayer* the indication of the conservative holidays reappeared, in smaller black letters. The semi-reformed calendar outraged the authors of the 1572 Admonition, who called *The Book of Common Prayer* "an unperfect book, culled and picked out of the popish dunghill, the Mass Book full of abominations" (Cressy 1989, 8).

All this boils down to one important conclusion: the festivities and holidays that were supposed to endorse unity and a shared national-religious identity, birthed confusion, division and even collision, with some wanting to celebrate the old feasts, while others scandalized by them. This breech in the fabric of the society is a main indicator of collective cultural trauma. A perfect illustration for this rupture was the feast of Maytide. Country villagers set up maypoles in many villages, usually with the permission of the local vicar, some of them right next to the church. The Maytide merriments upset some of the zealous reformers, who resented the festivities, regarding them as sinful and vain. Nevertheless, Maytide celebration was so popular that it made its way into the officially sanctioned list of holidays in the Book of Sports in 1617 and 1633 (Cressy 1989, 22), much to the distress of reformers, who regarded it as an "officially sponsored setback to the reformation" (Ibid). Another such scandal was the Candlemas procession, with candles and tapers, outright forbidden by Cranmer during Edward's rule, but this could be only enforced within London. The list of divisive festivities of this sort could be very long. The construction of national feasts, emerging by the second half of the sixteenth century, around contemporary historical events and, most of all, around the person

[60] Harrison in Cressy: "the use of the popish calendar is so much retained in the same and not the usual days of the month placed in their rooms…" Harrison goes on to decry that Trinity term in the legislative calendar was identified by the "…idolatrous and papistical feast called Corpus Christi" (Cressy 11).

of the Virgin Queen, was meant to remedy the problem of division. Crownation Day[61] or the 'queen's holy day" on 17th November comfortably coincided with St. Hughes day, providing the opportunity to interpret the bells' ringing diversely. According to Cressy this was the first secular celebration with bells, independent of the Christian calendar (Cressy 50). As Roy Strong observes, "For Catholics, the cult of the Virgin Queen enshrined in her festival day [17 November] seemed a deliberate attempt to supplant the pre-Reformation cult of the Virgin." (Strong 126). Peter McClure and Robin Headlam Wells refine this argument in their essay, saying that although the

> … deliberate calquing of the worship of the monarch upon that of the Holy Mother may to some degree have been motivated by a desire to steal the opposition's weapons … [yet] The deepest significance of the Marian cult features of the cult must be sought, not in a rivalry between the two virgins, but in their mystical kinship. (McClure and Headlam Wells 65)

This means that the appropriation of the sacred Virgin symbolism[62] allowed the poets and playwrights to ascribe a range of metaphorical positions to Queen Elizabeth, previously attached to the Holy Mother, such as the providential Saviour of the nation from the tyranny of false belief, or the miraculous Healer, whose single touch was believed to possess curative powers, and many other capacities, detailed in McClure and Headlam Wells' essay. From the perspective of cultural trauma, this was a repressive strategy of cultural reprogramming, in which the old sign of the Virgin was evacuated, and then a new referent was assigned to it in the figure of Elizabeth I. This whole process was facilitated by the enthusiastic propaganda of the poets and playwrights. Obviously, the sincerity of enthusiasm and voluntarism is difficult to assess under a violent and paranoid state, but this investigation would be the topic of a different research.

One more feature of the reformed calendar needs mentioning, or rather the lack of a special event from its pages. Peter Marshall in his very recent essay, "Nailing the Reformation" points out the intriguing English indifference towards Reformation-day commemoration, if one sticks to the imagined moment of Luther nailing his Ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church. Imagined, because, as Marshall explicates "[a]s historians have long been aware, Luther may or may not have posted the *Theses* in this way on that day. On balance, the evidence would seem to suggest that he did not. Luther never mentioned the episode"

[61]The name Crownation Day was "a corruption of coronation day, but it referred to the day of accession (and the death of the previous monarch), not to the formal installation to the throne" (Cressy 1989, 50).
[62] On the evolution of the cult of Elizabeth see Erzsébet Stróbl's illuminating new study in Hungarian. Erzsébet Stróbl, I. *Erzsébet – Egy mítosz születése* (Elizabeth I. – The birth of a myth), L'Harmattan, 2022.

(Marshall 2020, 49). It would be futile to expect from the Elizabethan English calendar to contain October 31 as Reformation-day. In Marshall's words,

> For centuries, then, most English people could have had little idea that the Reformation "began" on 31 October 1517, and indeed there seems to have been little interest in, or awareness of, the posting of the *Theses* as a seminal moment of historical change. (Marshall 52)

But why does the Elizabethan calendar not celebrate their own, very English reformation then? The answer to this question is twofold: the first one reminds us of the very ambivalent uphill struggle as Cristopher Haigh depicts it,[63] riddled with trauma and setback. The second part of the answer pertains to the fact that the English reformation was very much still in the making during Elizabeth, with the outcome being uncertain for many. As Peter Lake argues in *Bad Queen Bess?* "… not only was the triumph of Protestantism not inevitable until, at the very least, well into Elizabeth's reign, but also that contemporaries, on both sides of the confessional divide, remained very much aware of that fact." He then goes on to point out "… the extreme fragility of the Elizabethan Protestant state in the face of an unmarried queen, an unsettled succession, and the prospect of the accession of the Catholic Mary Stuart" (Lake 1).

It was not until the birth pangs of the Reformation started to cease that interpretations began to surface about what really happened. These interpretations are sometimes in stark contrast with each other. Thomas Fuller, in 1662, dubbed the Henrician and Edwardian reformations "the morning star" and "the dawning of the day", and this was an initiative moment towards the whiggish canonization of the reformation (Fuller 40). But, from a contemporary perspective, the successful dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, for instance, did not even *exist* if we insist on the term *dissolution*. As mentioned earlier, Wriothesley's contemporary chronicle is subdued to "the selective amnesia fostered by the Henrician regime in the 1530 and 1540s" (Lyon 64), neither did the event count as celebratory later, during Elizabeth. This remarkable contemporary silence becomes intriguing, if we take a look at much later opinion concerning the Henrician reform. Christopher Highley in his recent essay, "Henry VIII's Ghost in Cromwellian England" analyses the anonymous ghost-pamphlet, titled *A messenger from the dead, or, conference full of stupendious horror, heard distinctly, and by alternate voyces … Between the ghosts of Henry the 8. And Charles the First of England, in Windsore Chapel, where they were both buried. In which the whole series of the divine*

[63] This is in fact Brian Cummings' summary of Cristopher Haigh's seminal study on the English reformation. "Christopher Haigh's emphasis on Protestantism's uphill struggle to communicate its theological doctrines and the active and passive resistance with which it met along the way echoed the despondency of Elizabethan complaint literature" (Cummings, *Memory and the English Reformation,* 10).

judgements, in those infortunate ilands, it as it were by a pencil from heaven, most lively set forth from the first unto the last (Highley 98). This pamphlet came up with the startling claim that God was punishing England for Henry VIII's sins, long after his death, by launching the Civil War and the death of the king on the country. Reading Sir John Denham's "Elegy upon the Death of the Lord Hastings" (1649), Brendan O Hehir believes that Charles I was indeed obsessed with the idea that he was paying the price for Henry's sins against the church (O Hehir 86-7). This was of course not the first such opinion, there were Catholic voices earlier sounding that Henry was punished by God for sacking the monasteries (Udall qtd. in Highley 105) but I bring the ghost pamphlet here because it illustrates how long the anxieties attached to Henry's move lasted.

I/3/2 Rewriting the Catholic Landscape

Dylan Trigg writes in *The Aesthetics of Decay:*

> The ruins of contemporary society, latent on the urban landscape, are privileged spaces, which simultaneously invoke reactions of repulsion and sublimity. … these ruins are close enough to the present to mirror an alternative past/present/future. A derelict factory testifies to a failed past but also reminds us that the future may end in ruin. […] Instead of being relegated to the waste lands, literally or otherwise, the ruin proves its epistemological value as it *undermines the residue of certainty* and so forges a new criterion for knowledge. (Trigg xxvi.– emphasis mine)

This conclusion could be fittingly applied for early modern society and the ruins of Catholic worship. There is, of course, one notable difference between secular ruins and ruins of churches: the assumed presence of the transcendent. The perception of the desolate buildings and ruins bifurcated along the confessional divide: some perceived the sublime in them, while others experienced repulsion. The sacred presence was believed to linger on amongst the desolate wrecks of abbeys and chapels, and this fact had implications for the recusancy movement, as I will demonstrate later. Another aspect, adding to the emotional import of perceiving ruins is the context of their emergence, whether they were the outcome of abandonment and forgetting only, or were they the result of deliberate violence and destruction, as in the case of iconoclasm? To begin with, the recurring waves of iconoclasm in the British Isles affected the entire material environment. It was not only funerary monuments and monasteries that were destroyed in the process, but chapels, abbeys, sacred sites of pilgrimage, caves, wells, and wayside crosses as well. This rewriting of the landscape is best documented in Alexandra Walsham's book, *The Reformation of the Landscape* (2011). Walsham clearly considers the Tudor and Stuart

annihilation of Catholic culture traumatic. This becomes evident at the very beginning of her Introduction, where she calls the Edwardian iconoclasm "the holocaust of hallowed images" (Walsham 2011, 3) and "godly vandalism" (9). The actions of iconoclasm were didactic in nature: their goal was to prove that popish idols are inert objects, incapable of containing the transcendent, and they provoke the wrath of God. The castigation of idolatry was central to contemporary Protestant polemics, fuelling individual iconoclastic ventures, mimicking the destruction carried out by the authorities themselves.[64] Nevertheless, in thinking about *trauma*, I do not want to sidestep the extent to which the Reformation was done *with* the English, and not merely *on* them, as Ethan Shagan's study suggests (Shagan 25). In this respect, I follow Alexandra Walsham's lead, who posits "a lively cocktail of enthusiasm, cooperation, regret, and resistance which it [the Reformation] provoked in the people who witnessed and experienced it" (Walsham 8). This is especially true for iconoclastic movements, where the reaction of viewers widely varied from passivity to resentment or active participation. The demolished ruins, in turn, became important memorial sites for both sides of the confessional divide: first, they were considered as commemorative places for Protestant triumph over the sin of idolatry. As Bishop Joseph Hall contemplated,

> every stone hath a tongue to accuse the Superstition, Hypocrisie, Idlenesse, Luxury of the late owners. Me thinks I see it written all along, in Capitall letters upon these heapes; *A fruitfull Land maketh barren for the iniquity of them that shall dwell therein* .... No Roofe is so hye, no Wall so strong, as that sinne cannot level it with the Dust. (Hall qtd. in Walsham 148)

But this was not the only meaning attached to demolished Catholic hallowed spaces. As historical evidence shows, the vigorous recusancy movement, strengthened by the arrival of missionary priests after the 1570s, turned many of these sites into the locus of Catholic worship again (Walsham 153-232). This phenomenon was only intensified with the anti-Catholic legislations in 1585, when the burning of priests began, and new sites of martyrdom emerged, fuelling the admiration and secret veneration of church papists and recusants. Based on the plethora of contesting trauma narratives related by Walsham, only one conclusion can be drawn:

[64] An extraordinary example for this is what Walsham calls "Scotland's wonder year" in 1559. "Fired up by inflammatory preaching and united by psalm-singing, the lords of the Congregation and those who accompanied them on their destructive tour of the north and east of the country wrought havoc on the monasteries and churches that lay in their path. Within two days the houses of the Black-and Greyfriars and the Charterhouse monks in Perth were said to have been completely gutted, so that 'the walles onlie did remane of all these great edifications'... Much the same occurred in St Andrews ... Here, as in Scone, Stirling, Linlithgow, and Edinburgh, this was a contagious popular movement, which the earl of Argyll and other noblemen found it almost impossible to contain within acceptable boundaries. Knox sought to distance himself from the wild behaviour of the 'raschall multitude'" (Walsham 2011, 100).

the tissue/fabric of community was seriously damaged in the consecutive reforms of the landscape, and this breech yields the very evidence for the presence of collective trauma (Erikson 183). From the perspective of this collective trauma, two tenets of iconoclasm are crucial to mention here, with respective examples from Walsham's collection of historical narratives. First, the boiling anger on both sides of the divide bespeaks of the sweeping power of *emotions*. The destruction of popish images and sites was a central conflict in early modern society, a corrosive force defining and ruining relationships for decades. Walsham relates the telling story of the Scottish minister, Richard Murchiston, who in 1613 "… destroyed a statue of Saint Fergus, which had long stood in the burgh of Wick, to the fury of his parishioners, who drowned him in the river, in retaliation" (Walsham 121). And this was not an isolated case. Secondly, the strength and vitality of Catholic recusancy serve as an indirect proof that there were many who did not welcome heartily the new religious economy. There is plenty of evidence that hallowed places, or most often the bare ruins of them, were frequented long after their initial demolishing, such as the ruined lady chapel in Yorkshire.

> On 1 September 1614 the northern High Commission issued an order to Justices of the Peace to apprehend 'superstitious and papishlie affected persons' who flocked there under the cover of night; a week later thirty men, women, and children from Allertonshire were arrested for praying there on the eve of the Virgin's feast day. (Walsham 167)

When deserted ruins and chapels were unavailable, recusant Catholic priests appropriated hidden outdoor places that were out of the reach of authorities: they held masses and offered eucharist in the woods or even on the seashore. The names of these places testify to the truth of a hunted priesthood. The Irishman William Burke wrote in 1914,

> even if all official documents had perished, if its statutes had disappeared with the Irish Parliament itself, the history of these evil times might still be read upon the face of the land. The 'Mass Rock', the 'Old Altar', the 'Priest's Hollow', the 'Chapel of the Horn', and many a similar name in every district in the country are witnesses more abiding than parchments to a proscribed religion and a hunted priesthood. (Burke qtd. in Walsham 230)

Thus, the face of the land bears the scars of the (collective) trauma of its people. All this leads to the insight that the Catholic references of revenge tragedy must have had the capacity to stir up and unsettle supressed meanings and controversial sentiments in the audiences. Moreover, according to Peter Lake, Catholicism was not yet considered as a thing of the past in the eyes of contemporary people, in the absence of a male heir of the monarch, with the impending possibility of a Catholic marriage. Thus, we have come a full circle back to the statement by Dylan Trigg in the citation at the beginning of the subchapter, "these ruins are close enough to

the present to mirror an alternative past/present/future." In the next chapter I will investigate how revenge tragedy by staging iconoclasm, martyrdom, sacrificial crisis, and thanatological crisis reflected the ambivalence and anxiety attached to early modern religious change.

Part II. Revenge Tragedy as a Witness to Collective Trauma

II/1 Eucharistic Anxiety and Cannibalism in *Titus Andronicus* and *Antonio's Revenge*

In *The Origins of English Revenge Tragedy*, George Oppitz-Trotman posits that revenge tragedy is "preoccupied with the physical, intellectual, rhetorical labour involved in *remembering bodies*" (Oppitz-Trotman 11). It must be added, in my view, that these two discourses, memory and body studies are knit most closely together in the sacrament of the eucharist. Huston Diehl has made this observation already in 1997, in *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage* (Diehl 121). One of the main merits of her study, written around the dawn of the so-called religious turn, is the refutation of the claim that Protestantism was anti-theatrical altogether. She highlights the highly dramatic acts of reform, such as iconoclasm and the burning of heretics, moreover she cites Margot Heinemann's essay, explicating how the "best known defences of the stage were written by men with puritan sympathies" (Diehl 6). In the fourth chapter of her book, ("Rehearsing Eucharistic Controversies") Diehl very aptly argues that "Kyd, Shakespeare, and Middleton all use plays-within-plays to investigate the relation between representation of a killing and literal killing…", and then she goes on to say "… protagonists in revenge tragedies fetishize the dead" (Diehl 120-21). These basic elements of revenge tragedy, representations of real and illusory killing, and the fetishization of the dead, very clearly overlap with the competing contemporary meanings of the eucharis. These are the points of departure for this chapter.

Tracing down the marks of collective trauma in connection with the eucharist is a difficult and complex endeavour. Because of the "middle way" of the English liturgy, the ambivalence is resurgent, and there are still traces of the flesh in the concept of the Host. As Jan Zysk argues,

> Though the Church of England's Eucharistic theology ultimately departs from transubstantiation (which was still, by and large upheld as the orthodox position during the reign of Henry VIII), it nonetheless accommodates corporeality within its semiotics of spiritual reception and sacramental presence. (Zysk 35)

This ambivalence implies that there were huge differences even among individuals in the way they perceived the act of the Lord's Supper in the Book of Common Prayer worships. Due to this very fact, as Zysk points out, throughout the long Reformation of England, constant efforts were made to authorise and thereby fix the meaning of the eucharist, such as the Six Articles

by Henry VIII, or the Thirty-Nine Articles during Elizabeth I (Zysk 25). Taking the theological complexity into account, I can only lay out briefly some tenets of the Eucharist Controversies I consider as traumatic. First, the adamant and many times scurrilous attacks on the outward practices and idols of Catholicism, such as the veneration of relics, and the transubstantiation doctrine, questioned the authority of the clergy as such, and made religion *in general* a laughing matter. Given that "the resentment of priests was a sport for all" (Ryrie 2019, 20) even in medieval Europe, it is no wonder that this situation was aggravated when Catholic priests came into the crossfire. A most remarkable illustration for this mockery could be Jean Calvin himself, writing on one occasion that there is such an abundance of the relic of the Holy Mother's Milk that the quantity could scarcely have been produced even "if the holye virgyne had bene a cowe" (Calvin § 249). Attacks like this certainly did a disservice to the cause of spreading piety. On one hand, these pamphlets and tracts gave ample ideas to playwrights who wanted to stage relevant and heated topics. For conservatives, on the other hand, these scathing caricatures of sacred ritual were traumatic and worrying to hear. As the reformist program strived towards bringing about a society of believers, at the same time, as a side-effect, it also engendered disbelief, scepticism, anxiety, and, most importantly for a collective perspective, social division. As Steven Mullaney argues,

> The Reformation in early modern Europe left few communities untouched. Most if not all […] suffered their own damaged social relations among kin and kind, stranger and neighbour, the living and the dead. […] The religious crises of the Protestant Reformation fractured and transformed Western Christianity, but they also precipitated other, less well-documented crises – crises of social identity as well as religious belief, cultural cohesion as well as church doctrine, felt relations with the past and present as well as eschatologies of times to come. (Mullaney 7-8)

Although the unintended anxiety and unrest were brought about by the entire spectrum of complex religious change,[65] I discuss here only the eucharist, due to two reasons. First, as I

[65]Brad S. Gregory devotes his recent book to the full-fledged study of what he calls the unintended side-effects of the Reformation: the exclusion of God from science and philosophy, the relativizing of doctrines, the subjectivizing of morals, the birth of capitalism, and the secularizing of knowledge. (*The Unintended Reformation,* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). The embryonic form of this important argument already appears on the last page of his study on martyrs (*Salvation at Stake,* Harvard University Press, 1999). Alec Ryrie, in his *Unbelievers,* wants to do justice to this rather negative assumption about the effects of the Reformation, positing that unbelief, and even blasphemy, have been all this time around, from the very birth of the institutionalized kingdom of Christianity. While the examples he enlists to show the early existence of unbelief are convincing, one cannot help noticing that some later quotations, and even Ryrie's own sentences rather buttress Gregory's stance. He cites Calvin, saying "Protestantism had taught them (unbelievers) to 'make witty mockery of the absurdities of the papists', which in itself was a good thing, but they then proceeded to 'pour out the poison of their ungodliness in all directions, so that they fill the world with atheism'. In particular, Calvin believed, they had drunk too deeply from one intoxicating doctrine: gospel freedom, the heady claim that

have shown, lampooning the eucharist and the reverence of relics were many times at the centre of ridicule. Secondly, scepticism concerning transubstantiation has been a long-standing problem in the Catholic Church, since long before the Reformation. It had always been a contested issue, a testing point of belief. As Ryrie says, "Hence the procession of medieval miracle stories in which unbelievers suddenly saw the ritual at the altar as it 'truly was': a broken human body… "(Ryrie 21). The emergence of unbelief, anxiety and the division of community were the indirect traumatic consequences of the ambivalence and war around the eucharist on the collective level. This latter will be explicated in a different sub-chapter. Sophie Read and Jan Zysk in their respective studies deal with the implications of the huge changes taking place on the level of cultural signification, but this is beyond the scope of this work.

Before going about the analysis, I need to justify my choice of the two tragedies. Huston Diehl claims that every revenge tragedy rehearses Eucharist Controversies, because of their preoccupation with problems of representation, absence and presence, and the status of the dead. While I partly agree with her, the narrowing down of the corpus facilitates a more focused examination. Thus, I chose two revenge tragedies that are in my thinking, directly engaging the eucharistic debate. Furthermore, role-playing and experimentations with mimesis might have served the mere pleasure of the audience in many cases, as Ágnes Matuska has shown us in her essay on *Jack Juggler*, an early play that has long been suspected to have eucharistic meanings.[66] I will concentrate on two revenge tragedies because of their direct representations of the quasi sacrament: Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* and Marston's *Antonio's Revenge.* These revenge tragedies are rarely analysed as tragedies reflecting on the problematic of the eucharist, although they include the most direct allusions to (the parody of) eucharistic sacrifice. The critical neglect partly stems from the fact that both *Antonio* and *Titus* were considered sensationalist and over-the-top by critics throughout the long history of their reception, spanning over four hundred years.[67] The other feature in common is that both were immensely popular in their own days, and this is a telling indicator of universal phenomenon. In fact,

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Christians ought to be liberated from the laws and regulations of formal piety.'" And then, Ryrie's conclusion of Calvin's situation-analysis: "The Reformation had done more than simply create a fog of religious confusion in which unbelief could move relatively freely. *It was actively leading Christians away from faith*." (emphasis mine - Ryrie 43).

[66] Ágnes Matuska, "'Pretie conveyance': *Jack Juggler* and the Idea of Play". An example for the eucharistic interpretation is Beatrice Grove's article, on which Matuska's essay reflects. Beatrice Groves, "'One man at one time may be in two placys': *Jack Juggler,* Proverbial Wisdom, and Eucharistic Satire" in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England,* Vol. 27 (2014), 40-56.

[67] For a comprehensive discussion of the critical reception of *Antonio's Revenge*, see Rick Bowers, "John Marston and the 'mart of woe': the *Antonio Plays"* in *The Drama of John Marston – Critical Revisions* ed. T.F. Wharton (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 14-26.

Margaret E. Owens mentions *Antonio* in her *Stages of Dismemberment* (Owens 214), pointing out how the Black Mass staged by Marston eerily resembles eucharistic exempla. Marston's play is not even mentioned in the most extensive treatment of the connections between the eucharist and early modern drama: Jan Zysk's recent book *Shadow and Substance* (2017). Zysk takes a semiotic approach and aims at reading together early Tudor and Stuart plays in a cross-confessional way.

> *Shadow and Substance* endeavours to correct widespread misrepresentations of the Protestant Reformation as a decisive shift from the flesh to the word, the theological to the poetic, and the sacred to the secular. It sees religious reformation not as a fixed epistemological shift but rather as a constellation of diverse theological and semiotic positions asserted and interpreted over time. (Zysk 15)

I concur with his statement insofar it suggests the "long Reformation", but I would emphasize *collision* as well, not only *constellation*. If the Eucharist Controversies indeed remapped the entire semiotic field for early modern people, unmooring earlier securities of everyday practice and religion, as he extensively illustrates in his book, then the conclusion seems inevitable: it was at least a fundamental crisis, but I argue that it was a cultural trauma (see note 7). Clifford Geertz in his *Interpretation of Cultures* sees any fundamental challenge to a symbol system such as religion as deeply traumatic, able to provoke "the gravest sort of anxiety" (Geertz 100). In what follows I will show how this religious trauma was expressed on early modern stage with the analysis of two tragedies.

The similarities between *Titus Andronicus* and *Antonio's Revenge* are salient. To begin with, the generic description that Natália Pikli applies to *Titus,* calling it a "tragic farce" suits *Antonio* as well (Pikli 11). Both plays are experimental, being the first fruits of their playwrights, and both were perceived as overly and outrageously sensational and melodramatic for a long period in their reception history. Of course, some of the similarities stem from the fact that Marston was in the habit of copying his fellow playwrights. Thus, both plays stage contemporary Protestant parodies of the doctrine of transubstantiation: one the cannibalistic feast, and the other a Black Mass, plus a cannibalistic feast, respectively. I contend that these representations were not only parodies, with simple didactic purpose, but they resonated with eucharistic anxieties due to the post-Reformation collective trauma. These anxieties were a crisis of belief, soteriological anxiety, and with these, a deep division of community, because the concept of sacrifice, a unifying force, became contested. According to Cressy, the Elizabethan settlement did not settle anything (Cressy 1989, 7). At this point, the English reformation still seemed reversible, and the number of recusants and crypto-Catholics only

grew with the persecution of priesthood (Thomas 467), the latter coinciding with the rise of early modern playhouse, as I pointed out earlier. This necessarily implies, in my view, that a great number of people watched revenge plays not with cheerful irony, but resentment and maybe even fear. What if the lampooned eucharistic altar is the way to eternity and salvation? Viewing the sacrifice of Titus and Antonio must have evoked ambivalent emotions. And viewing meant participation in Catholic terminology (Rubin 63). The other important element of the two plays, and a basic constituent of revenge tragedy per se, is the revenger's madness. Neither Diehl nor Zysk seem to account for this important aspect of revenge tragedy. But the madness of Titus and Antonio does not constitute an obligatory stock-element of revenge tragedy merely; it also manifests important signs of epistemological crisis, melancholy and depression, psychological phenomena early modern society was just about to discover, mostly along religious lines.[68] Psychological illness was connected to personal religious crises, disbelief, and ultimately a fear of damnation. This has been addressed multiple times and extensively[69] in the discussion of revenge tragedy, but here I wish to argue specifically that it underlines the presence of collective trauma, a crisis of belief, and what Ryrie terms "the battle for credulity" (Ryrie 2019, 35-53). First, proceeding in a chronological order, I will explicate Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,* then I will turn my attention to John Marston's later play, *Antonio's Revenge.*

Eugene M. Waith in his essay comments on the fact how few the critics in favour of *Titus Andronicus* are (Waith 39). The same negative tendency stands for its staging history. As Harold Metz puts it in his article, "During its nearly 400-year history, *The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedy of Titus Andronicus* has almost always been amongst the least frequently produced Shakespearean plays" (Metz 154). Nevertheless, he pins down the time periods when the tragedy *was* staged frequently, reaching its most popular periods at the time of its writing, and later in the twentieth century, after 1923. Such data might be telling. What are the features of the tragedy that make it equally enjoyable and acceptable for early modern and (post)modern audiences?[70] This question would probably deserve an exhaustive investigation, but this is not the purpose of this present work. The focus of discussion is rather the intriguing popularity of

[68] See Jeremy Schmidt's study, *Melancholie and the Care of the Soul* (Ashgate, 2007), and Helen Hackett, *The Elizabethan Mind – Searching for the Self in an Age of Uncertainty* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2022).

[69] Charles A. Hallett, Elaine S. Hallett, *The Revenger's Madness* (University of Nebraska Press, 1981), J.F. Bernard, *Shakespearean Melancholy: Philosophy, Form and the Transformation of Comedy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

[70] My speculation would entail notions about a growing acceptance and enjoyment of the uncanny in the 20th century due to various reasons, one of which is an overall historical-cultural trauma in modernity and the post-modern.

Titus amongst its contemporaries, which I locate in the narration and staging of collective trauma. Metz cites Ben Jonson, who relates that "*Ieronimo* and *Andronicus* are the best playes" as of 1614 (Metz 155). Other evidence also suggests that both plays enjoyed immense popularity with early modern audiences and their quartos saw multiple editions (Ibid). In fact, *Titus* was so applauded in its own time that it was even taken to tour the Continent (Metz 156).

Molly Smith mentions *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* on the same page in her article, owing to their mutual emphasis on social spectacles of death and maimed bodies. Leaving aside the features that align *Titus Andronicus* not only with *The Spanish Tragedy* but with other revenge tragedies, I would like to point out one scene that connects *Titus Andronicus* to *Antonio's Revenge*: that is the cannibalistic feast. This theme in general does not belong to the most featured scenes of early modern plays. Although repeatedly referred to verbally, within the well-defined religious discourse of the eucharist, the cannibalistic feast does not usually *occur* on early modern stage. Let us pin down very early that Marston was in the habit of appropriating elements from other plays, in fact he was notorious for doing so, as we will see later. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that he lifted this remarkable part of an immensely popular contemporaneous play.

To begin with, Shakespeare appropriated the cannibalistic scene from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, his main inspiration for *Titus,* with some important changes. Lisa Starks-Estes claims that Shakespeare was thoroughly Ovidian in his Roman plays and poems.

> Shakespeare deploys Ovid's mythological and poetical world as a vehicle through which he explores and refigures transgressive sexualities, contradictory desires, and profound human suffering […] In his exploration of all things Roman, Shakespeare reveals a fascination with myth and ritual on multiple levels […] closely investigating the interrelationship between pagan, medieval Catholic, and Reformation cultures (Starks-Estes 3).

This present dissertation focuses exactly on this interrelationship between a Catholic past (?) and a Protestant present, while acknowledging the Classical inheritance of the play. In this vein, I argue that the scene of the cannibalistic banquet, besides its Classical roots[71], alludes to important early modern religious, social and medical controversies, thus coming down as immensely engaging for contemporary audiences. Challenging those critical voices that see *Titus* as mere distasteful carnage (Metz 154), without acknowledging the play as a

[71] The bloody banquet is patterned on Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* on Book Six, where the horrific and haunting tale of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela is told. But, besides Philomela's rape and the cannibalistic banquet there are no wide-spread parallels between the two in the storyline, so far so that Anna Swardh, discussing the precedents of the play calls *Titus Andronicus* a "source-less" play. She further elaborates on the *patterns* used from Classical literature and the dramatic *precedents,* such as Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (Swardh 78).

representation of significant early modern discourses and traumas, Margaret Owens claims that the dismembered bodies and the cannibalistic feast are symptomatic of a post-Reformation trauma. In this profound cultural crisis, the accessibility of earlier religious (Catholic) doctrines and rites, such as Purgatory, Christ's body in the eucharist, and the worship of relics were denied and altered. Thus, the repressed body returns to haunt in the form of violence and gore in the plays. "I see the revenge tragedy as staging a return of the ritual body in a nightmarish and demonic incarnation, manifestly devoid of redemptive power" (Owens 2005, 210). However, Jennifer Waldron's arguments counter Owen's notions of the "eviscerated eucharist" claiming that in the Protestant discourse the role of the body is not reduced, but rather amplified by way of the concept of "living temples of God" referring to the believers' bodies (Waldron 18). Louise Noble's insightful essay further complicates this picture, claiming that the cannibalistic feast is one means by which the civilized-barbaric binary is dismantled.

> In the same historical moment that the cannibal distinction was used to establish English cultural superiority in the New World, the English themselves participated in the well-established practice of medical cannibalism: the ingestion of human body parts, usually referred to as mummy, for healing purposes. In *Titus Andronicus,* a play that is saturated with descriptions of barbaric otherness […] the cannibal distinction against which civility is measured breaks down. […] Here Shakespeare situates himself within tradition of critics of European self-delusion, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas and Michel de Montaigne … (Noble 679)

In support of this fact, Richard Sugg's recent book, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires* comes up with ample evidence that in Renaissance Europe and Britain, the general (although by some abhorred) practice of *corpse medicine* was literal cannibalism. Although his conclusion that Renaissance people in fact tried to consume the *soul* of their fellow citizens might seem far-fetched, the implications of his study are several for *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus,* as I will show later.

J. Dover Wilson suggests that the tragedy is "like some broken-down cart, laden with bleeding corpses from an Elizabethan scaffold, and driven by an executioner from Bedlam dressed in cap and bells" (Wilson qtd. in Smith 315). I concur, with the addition that *Titus Andronicus,* in an indirect and twisted way, thematizes every major tenet of the assumed post-Reformation collective trauma. The play alludes to the cultural trauma of a thanatological crisis, because the bloodbath and butchering is launched as a consequence of a Roman funeral rite, where the human sacrifice of Tamora's son is offered, "…That so the shadows be not unappeas'd, Nor we disturbed with prodigies on earth" (1.1.100-101). The funeral rites thus performed, at the cost of the Goth's life, the sons of Titus could be laid into their tombs, to rest

"in peace and honor" (1.1.156). Thus, the first revenger's persona is born in the person of Tamora, who is the barbarous Other, but also a parent at the same time. The second tenet of the collective trauma depicted in *Titus* is the phenomenon of martyrdom, with the brutal rape and maiming of Lavinia. I will come back to this later in the chapter about martyrdom. Her ravishment also recalls early modern iconoclastic waves, as I will point out.

Most importantly, for this present chapter, the cannibalistic feast at the end of the play resonates with early modern eucharistic anxieties, a defining aspect of collective trauma. Steven Mullaney argues that the loss of eucharistic thought caused "affective and cognitive gaps" in society (Mullaney 49), a transformation that should not be underestimated. Miri Rubin goes as far as saying that the eucharist worked "to organize people's utmost feelings, thoughts and actions" (Rubin 361). If eucharistic thinking organized such basic assumptions of culture and society, only a coerced forgetting could eliminate its effects. Indeed, as Mullaney asks, "How does one forget so thoroughly something that had been so thoroughly integrated in, and integral to, one's sense of self, in all its private and public, individual and social components?" (Mullaney 104).

I argue that staging the human sacrifice celebrated by Titus, brought these anxieties to the fore. As I have shown, the centre of this trauma is difficult to pin down, and I have also argued that the dark parody of the ritual does not mean that it was a laughing matter. Nevertheless, confirmed by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215, the doctrine had been haunted by the spectre of cannibalism from the high Middle Ages onward. The acceptance of the doctrine of transubstantiation caused a crisis of faith even for Catholics, hence is the need for the eucharist *exempla,* discussed earlier. Alec Ryrie relates in his recent book how personal diaries testify for this struggle.[72] One famous example for this internal struggle of faith could be Michel de Montaigne, writing about cannibals in his *Essays.*

> I am not so anxious that we should note the horrible savagery of these acts as concerned that, whilst judging their fault so correctly, we should be so blind to our own. I consider it more barbarous to eat a man alive than to eat him dead; to tear by rack and torture a body still full of feeling, to roast it by degrees, and then give it to be trampled and eaten by dogs and swine – a practice which we have not only read about but seen within recent memory, not between ancient enemies, but between neighbours and fellow citizens and, what is worse, under the cloak of piety and religion … (Montaigne 113)

[72] "On his deathbed in 1551, John Redman, a giant of theology at Cambridge University whose long-standing Catholicism was now crumbling into doubt, wrestled openly with this subject: in his case, with more anxiety than anger. When asked to affirm his faith in transubstantiation, he replied that the doctrine as usually formulated 'was too gross and could not well be excused from the opinion of the Capernaites', who had taught that the sacrament was a form of cannibalism" (Ryrie, *Unbelievers,* 43).

Eating a "man alive" is an obvious reference to the Catholic conceptualization of the eucharist, and its parody in Protestant literature. It seems that Montaigne, the philosopher, might have had different views from Montaigne the Catholic, and he had certain misgivings about this specific doctrine of his Church. I will demonstrate in the following pages how Shakespeare, who may or may not have read Montaigne's essay, challenges the boundaries between the barbarous Other and the Roman revenger who offers a cannibalistic dinner to Tamora, with evoking different contemporary discourses of cannibalism.

Shakespeare arranges the bloody banquet in a way that it would not directly resemble the Holy Communion. Titus predicts what he was going to do, he verbally reveals the horrid details of his plan, and then he cuts the throat of Chiron and Demetrius onstage, and everyone exits. Furthermore, he leaves the innocent baby of Tamora and Aaron unharmed, revenge only spills out on the actual wrongdoers, as opposed to Marston's tragedy, where the young son of Piero becomes the blood-sacrifice for the sins of his father. In doing so, Marston "overreaches him [Shakespeare] in his own device" with Titus' words (5.2.143) thereby approximating an emphatically more tangible eucharistic impression. Shakespeare carefully avoids any close associations (under felony charges or even suspicion one might have lost his head easily under Elizabeth's reign), providing *two* sons as sacrifice, and an ancient Roman setting safely displaced both in time and space. In my view, it still must have evoked notions of "chewing the Son's body", the polemics about the cannibalistic nature of the Popish eucharist being so widespread in everyday social discourse. The officially articulated aim of Titus's banquet in the tragedy is honourable: peace, love, league and good to Rome (5.3.21-23). A unifying act in short. The Holy Supper's meaning is the following, as Beckwith puts it: "Presence is not simply about the roundness, whiteness or wholeness of bread and wine, but about a reconciled community" (Beckwith 267). In the Holy Supper, be it the Host or just a white wafer, the gathered believers are united through the sacraments and memory: they become part of Christ's body, sanctified, and cleansed from their sin by his atonement. At this point I cannot help thinking of René Girard's discussion of "Sacrificial Crisis", where the scapegoat's death does not unify the community any longer, but births discord and dissent.

> When the religious framework of a society starts to totter, it is not exclusively or immediately the physical security of the society that is threatened; rather, the whole cultural foundation of the society is put in jeopardy. […] The hidden violence of the sacrificial crisis eventually succeeds in destroying distinctions, and this destruction in turn fuels the renewed violence. In short, it seems that anything that adversely affects the institution of sacrifice will ultimately pose a threat to the very basis of the community, to the principles on which its social harmony and equilibrium depend. (Girard 49)

This is exactly what happened in the wake of the Eucharist Controversies: communities were torn along confessional lines, and people were burnt for believing or *not* believing in transubstantiation. The act of sacrifice, and the English political reformation per se, did not unify the nation, but led to long years of unrest and division. It was partly the reason why Elizabeth banned religious topics from the English stage. Nevertheless, these topics carried strong affective import; a cultural-collective trauma unfolded, that could not be silenced and had to be staged by virtually every playwright. Hence is the ubiquity and long life of revenge tragedy, thematizing religious trauma in a veiled form.

Titus Andronicus is drunk with his own honour and pride at the beginning of the tragedy.

> CAPTAIN: Romans, make way! The good Andronicus,
> Patron of virtue, Rome's best champion,
> Successful in the battles that he fights,
> With honor and with fortune is return'd. (1.1.64-67)

However triumphant and "good" he is said to be, he is not the "gracious conqueror" Tamora, the Goth queen pledges him to be. In cold blood he orders the religious butchering of Tamora's first born, "to appease the shadows" (1.1.100). For this seemingly religious and right deed Tamora then swears revenge against him. Thus, an avalanche of violence ensues, as both revengers, Tamora and Titus try to outdo each other in cruelty. Whoever gets into a power position in taking their turns, always uses it for violence. This might have served as an intriguingly exact commentary on the religious violence of the English reformation, which I will discuss later. We should never forget that the estimated time for the writing of *Titus* is around 1589, an especially bloody and disturbing period of Elizabethan era, when the persecution and burning of Catholic priests, and those who hid them, was taking place.

Titus is tossed into the (characteristic) position of the disillusioned revenger by injustice and corruption, stumbling at the periphery of society. He pursues the reinstatement of his honour by way of private revenge. In Titus' banquet there is no forgiveness or atonement: it carries only a horrible judgement for Tamora, chewing and eating his own sons' flesh. As the barbaric Other, she suffers the same punishment as the blaspheming Jews of the eucharistic exempla: the dinner she consumes, is turned into a cannibalistic feast.

The sustained ambiguity in the interpretative practice of the Holy Communion led to never-ending polemics, and at the same time gave excellent raw material for playwrights to work with. We know for sure that *Titus* was immensely popular, as mentioned earlier. And as research into the ambiguities of the early modern era progresses and cuts deeper, new evidence from all fields of research emerge, showing that the notion of cannibalism was far from

unknown in the Renaissance, and not only due to the exaggerated tropes of the religious debates. Another peculiar contemporary phenomenon needs mentioning, one that imposed an influence on the understanding of this play and is closely related to the early modern use of relics. As I have shown, these controversial religious discourses were closely intertwined, they cannot be neatly separated: relics, for example, can be discussed under the topic of the eucharist, but in the chapters about iconoclasm and martyrdom they must be discussed as well.

Richard Sugg launches his study with a macabre and at the same time comic statement: "One thing we are rarely taught at school is this: James I refused corpse medicine; Charles II made his own corpse medicine; and Charles I was *made into* corpse medicine" (Sugg 6, emphasis mine). He then goes on to explicate throughout a bulky volume how the entire Renaissance Europe and England (somewhat later) participated in the act of actual medical cannibalism. Drugs were made of virtually every part of the dead human body, with special preference for the Egyptian mummies, an expensive and less accessible form of medicine. But later in the era

> the corpses of the hanged criminals offered a new and less exotic source of human flesh. Human blood was also swallowed: sometimes fresh and hot, seconds after a beheading […] sometimes dried, powdered or distilled… (Ibid)

He substantiates his bewildering claims with all sorts of contemporary documents, journals of well-known humanist scholars (such as Francis Bacon, Paracelsus, Ficino), surgeons (Banister, Hall), laymen and poets such as John Donne. For instance, the eminent surgeon, John Hall comments on the fact that whole arms, legs were seen hanged in the apothecaries' repository "being dried as black as coal" (Sugg 32). Corpse medicine was used for the treatment of all kinds of sickness: epilepsy, headache, stomach pain, or tumours. He also lists the monarchs who are known to have used corpse medicine: Francis I, Charles II, Mary II and William III. As for Queen Elizabeth, there are no written records, only that at least two of her royal surgeons "vigorously promoted it" (Sugg 33). From these accounts it becomes quite clear that corpse medicine was on the one hand, widespread and on the other, not affordable for everyone, especially not for the masses who could hardly afford any normal food either. Sugg mentions William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* where Falstaff refers to the danger of becoming a drowned corpse: a *mummy* (MWW 3.5.18). He contemplates the fact that this joke was probably only perceived by the elite members of the audience, those who could "afford the mummy as a medicine" (Sugg 38). The scene itself certainly could have evoked some unease in those spectators (*Titus* was performed in private as well, for the highest elite), who themselves resorted to the curative powers of corpse medicine. There remains one important

question: How could practitioners of medical cannibalism align this method with their Christian faith? The answer that Sugg presents testifies to the overall acceptance of this method: Protestants and Catholics agreed, after lengthy polemics in which they compared it with the Eucharistic problematics, that "to eat flesh as medicine was a special, excusable case" (Sugg 46) because the mummy is modified by way of art (preparation such as cooking), and it does not equal with flesh anymore. Taken the ubiquity of this recycling of the human body, it is no wonder that Shakespeare employed the cannibalistic feast in *Titus Andronicus* and probably it even contributed to its popularity. Although Tamora was not cured by the pasties made of her sons, the scene itself might not have been as abhorring to contemporary audiences as for those in later times (although Sugg claims that corpse medicine persisted even until the Victorian times). Sugg's research sheds new light on Renaissance medicine and social practice. In the light of this, the cannibalistic feast, staged in *Titus Andronicus,* cannot be perceived as an exotic, distant phenomenon anymore but a socially accepted practice, disturbing the binaries of civilized-barbaric. Sugg leaves the reader with the startling images of human flesh hung up to dry at the apothecaries' and epileptic patients standing around the scaffold, waiting for fresh blood to cure them. Louise Noble's argumentation reaches beyond the pharmaceutical and medical evidence of corpse medicine, applying them to Shakespeare's play with great efficiency.

> Paradoxically, while charges of cannibalism were being levelled at the geographically distant Other, cannibalism was being practiced at home… The power of Shakespeare's play lies in its exposure of the artificial, hypocritical nature of civility… (Noble 5)

The distinction between the barbarian and the civilized evaporates, alike to those spirits who dwell in the human blood, so profusely shed in *Titus Andronicus.* Titus behaves as a knowledgeable cook and by foretelling his recipe for the *mummies* made of Demetrius and Chiron, he begins to resemble eerily the contemporary apothecaries processing their most effective medicine: the human flesh. In this moment, perceptions of the barbarous Other are seriously compromised, beginning to show uncanny similarity with the image of the civilized Romans, and in turn with those of the Elizabethan. "Rome's confrontation with, and treatment of a barbaric culture … stages issues crucial to an early modern Europe negotiating its own barbaric encounters" (Ibid). The analogy seems clear: "the irreligious piety" of the Romans might easily be a description the early modern Elizabethans, who considered themselves civilized Christians but ate their fellow humans' flesh if they were sick and did this in the framework of a society highly receptive to any kinds of violent spectacle.

Finally, there is a further important cultural reference in the "irreligious piety" of the play, one that substantiates my basic argument of sacrificial crisis (and the discourse of martyrdom), something I will elaborate on later. Nicholas Moschovakis claims that the play gestures toward a "pagan anachronism" of persecution in Christian history. If the emphatically Roman (Catholic) Andronici are barbarous in their human sacrifice, which Titus performs on two occasions, their counterparts in the play (the Protestants?) are even more so. In Moschovakis' words, "Shakespeare proposes that the bloodthirstiness attendant upon both Reformation and Counter-Reformation is tragically, anachronistically pagan" (Moschovakis 462). In what follows, I will examine John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge.*

John Marston appropriated elements of Shakespeare's immensely popular play, *Titus Andronicus.* Rick Bowers calls him "the theatrical bad boy of his time" (Rick Bowers 17), who "… filches, twists, shouts, improvises, and parodies in a constant search for *dramatic* effect" (Bowers 19). Besides, he was in the risky habit of challenging censorship, his satire *Scourge of Villanie* was burnt publicly, along with other works, in the wake of the Bishops' Ban in 1599, lending an immediate reputation to him. Moreover, he got twice in trouble by the end of his career as a playwright: in *Eastward Hoe,* a play that he co-authored with Ben Jonson and George Chapman, he ventures into "direct impersonation and ridicule of aspects of Jacobean power…" (Wharton 9), and afterwards he wrote an anti-James I play (lost) for which he was detained (Wharton 2). This is important, because, as it is true with early modern drama in general, "the censor is the unseen presence in all the plays…" (Ibid) and it has major implications for the staging of repressed narratives of trauma. Bowers argues, in touching upon the reception history of *Antonio,* that "even sensitive critics of John Marston's drama tend to avoid *Antonio's Revenge* […] The play itself is anything but sensitive. Rude, crude, and theatrically unglued, … *Antonio's Revenge* constantly overleaps boundaries of convention, expectation, taste" (Bowers 15). Interestingly, the very same epithets are used to describe *Titus,* but the description could be expanded to many more revenge tragedies. Jonathan Dollimore calls them "radical" – I argue that they are gory, outrageous, and unsettling,[73] because they represent *trauma*. Among the different traumas of early modern society, such as famine, disease and political unrest, religious trauma was the most persistent, if not the worst, and, if we think of the erratic and long Reformation of England, additionally, it was the most pervasive, because religion permeated every sphere of human life in sixteenth century England. As Cressy writes,

[73] Unsettling for us and them, but gory only for us. See spectacles of violence in Molly Smith "Spectacles of Torment in *Titus Andronicus*".

> Religion permeated every aspect of English society in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The pattern of cosmos, the history and destiny of the world, and the ordering of social, political and domestic relations were all explained in biblical and theological terms. (Cressy 1996, 1)

Thus, I put the crudities and incongruencies of *Antonio* down to the presence of the fragmenting power of this cultural trauma. This is all the same true if Marston, being an expert of his market, catered for laughing matter for his audience, integrating ludic elements, such as the Ghost of Andrugio, uttering the words: "Be gracious, Observation, to our scene; For now the plot unites his scattered limbs…" (5.1.13).

Before turning to the actual Black Mass John Marston stages in his *Antonio's Revenge,* first I need to settle a few questions. To begin with, I do not consider *Antonio's Revenge* an expressly religious drama. Rick Bowers thinks that although the play is "radical", it is at the same time gleefully ironical, embedded in "… contemporary theatrical and popular culture, not ethical consistency excavated from the classics" (Rick Bowers 14). The same pretence seems to be true for religion: religious topics, just as the Classics, are only used by Marston as "background for sight gags" (Bowers 19). But then, this interpretation is further complicated by the fact, that after his theatrical career ended in 1609, only some 8 years after *Antonio,* Marston took on holy orders. This, at least in my thinking, might as well mean that he was not totally amoral,[74] the topics and images he recycled from the turbulence of post-Reformation culture were somehow important for him. What if G. B. Harrison got it right in 1925, when he wrote, in the Introduction to Marston's *The Scourge of Villanie,* that "… for quite often your satirist is an idealist with his head in the mud" (Harrison vii). Telling is the next line from *The Scourge of Villanie II*: "Hence idle *Cave,* vengeance pricks me on, / When mart is made of faire religion" (72-3). Nevertheless, as Scott Colley argues, "we can never hope to account for the full range of Marston's oddities by positing one simple or final cause" (Colley 95). In addition, if we consider Marston's commercial intents as a major motivation for the excess in his plays, as put forward by Mitchell Macrae's recent essay, and the reckless desire to entertain, taunt and provoke the audience, his choice of topic indirectly shows that the representation of eucharistic allusions still was marketable: that is, it was able to stir deep emotions. The next question follows directly from here: how seriously are we to take the excesses of *Antonio's Revenge?* To account for the excess in *Antonio* scholars such as R. F. Foakes posited that the extreme

[74] "But it is his critics, *not* Marston, who are off balance. Marston's drama amorally undermines, theatrically mocks, and constantly 'batters the walles of the old fustie world' of conventional expectations. He is the theatrical bad boy of his time..." Bowers, 17.

self-reflexivity, the exaggerated theatricality, and the gleeful inter-textuality of the play make *Antonio* a satirical play about revenge plays (Foakes 236). Still others, such as T. F. Wharton or Jonathan Dollimore insist that Marston's intentions were "pathetic, not parodic" according to contemporary accounts (Wharton 361). It is virtually impossible now to decide this question. In my thinking, both the predominance of inter-textuality and the wildly sarcastic, or at least seemingly so, epilogue, saying that "Never more woe in lesser plot was found" (5.6.59.) seems to gesture towards satire. Nonetheless, the important question for me is whether this fact has any implications for the present claim for collective trauma. The answer is easier than it seems. In my view, the early modern stage was the main platform where the earlier discussed elements of post-Reformation collective trauma could surface, no matter if in a tragic or an ironic form. Whether they caused laughter or "Instead of claps … obtain but tears" (5.6.69), they were efficient in the fight against oblivion. The plays forged a mutual moment of remembrance.

Another important thing we need to understand is if the fact that *Antonio* was played by the child actors of St Paul's complicates the picture in any sense. Rick Bowers in his essay on the *Antonio* plays highlights how the employment of child players added to the "fantasticality" (Foakes's phrase) of the play. He imagines Pandulpho, played by a boy actor, uttering his lines, as utterly satirical and meta-theatrical:

PANDULPHO: Why, all this while I ha' but played a part,
Like to some boy that acts a tragedy,
Speaks burly words and raves out passion;
But when he thinks upon his infant weakness, he droops his eye.
I spake more than a god Yet am less than a man. (4.4.47-52.)

The self-reflexivity and even the irony of the moment is unquestionable indeed. These moments proliferate in Marston's play, and not without a purpose. Yet, I would like to follow W. Reavley Gair's lead, who argues that "The attraction of the child actors, who would be fully trained in the elaborate language or rhetorical gesture, was not in itself a whimsical or even perverse quality" (Gair 30). He goes on to elaborate how medieval and Elizabethan tradition considered children of ten already as miniature adults, unaware of "the sequential development from infancy to adulthood" (Ibid). There is a recent surge in publications about boy actors, which shows the growing interest in the early modern phenomena of child actors.[75] Nevertheless, in light of Gair's research conclusions, I do not think that this fact would impose a great influence

[75] It is worth mentioning a few of the latest publications on child actors. Harry R. McCarthy, *Boy Actors in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Edel Lamb, *Performing Childhood in the Early Modern Theatre – The Children's Playing Companies (1599-1613)* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009); Jeanne McCarthy, *The Children's Troupes and the Transformation of English Theater 1509-1608: Pedagogue, Playwrights, Playbooks, and Play-boys* (Routledge, 2017); Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

on the gravity and the reception of *Antonio's Revenge.* The other extant revenge tragedy, acted out by children, was *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (Munro 3). One decisive difference was there, to be sure. The children of St Paul could sing, and Marston heavily builds on their singing capacity for a more sensuous, aural, and visual impression in the *Antonio* plays. In this vein, the epilogue begins with Antonio calling for sad music: "Sound doleful tunes, a solemn hymn advance, / To close the last act of my vengeance… (5.6.54-55, 56). *They sing."*

With all this in mind, let us scrutinize the play's most outrageous and supposedly sensationalist part, the Black Mass performed by the revenger. As opposed to Shakespeare who highlights the moment of the banquet, the cannibalistic feast of Titus and Tamora, thus giving a more covert reference to the eucharist, Marston capitalizes on the actual sacrificing of Piero's son. It is noteworthy though, that this scene, horrifying and distasteful as it is for modern and post-modern sensitivities, could seem perfectly acceptable for early modern audiences. It was not so long ago that their fathers and grandfathers were brought up listening to eucharist exempla, such as the following.

> Two of his fellow monks expostulated with him in vain, then prayed for divine revelation and accompanied him to Mass. When the loaves were placed on the altar, it seemed to the three monks that a little Boy lay there, As the priest stretched out his hand to break the bread an angel of God came down from heaven, and stabbed the Child with a knife, catching his blood in a chalice. When the priest broke the bread into small pieces, the angel cut up the Boy's limbs. The doubting monk went forward to partake of the Sacrament, and was given bleeding flesh, whereupon he cried out, "Lord, I believe that the bread laid on the altar is Thy Body and the chalice Thy Blood." Upon these words, the flesh mercifully reassumed the semblance of bread. (Sinanoglou 491-92)

We are approximately sixty years away from the suppression of the Catholic Mass in 1549. Shakespeare's is the first generation of playwrights who were born and raised under a Protestant ruler. But the memories of Catholic culture still lingered on, what is more, they were fuelled by the recusant movement, which was reinvigorated by the persecution of priesthood after 1585. I have already discussed how the Catholic mass and the veneration of the sacred places secretly continued. I argue that the Black Mass Antonio performed, although it was not eucharist per se, had eerie Catholic undertones, mimicking and at the same time caricaturing the lost rites of the Catholic Mass (I owe this idea to Owens 2005, 215-18). As the Bishop of Exeter wrote, on ordering a series of bells ringing, "They will be initially excited by the sound of the small bell, and then in the elevation the large bell should ring thrice" (Rubin 59). The calculated theatricality of the rite of elevation is beyond any measure. This entails two things, in my thinking: first, it had a

fundamental emotional effect on people, which cannot be erased just within a few decades. Second, this gave ample reason for the attacks of the reformers, who associated the Catholic eucharist not only with cannibalism, but witchcraft, juggling and "hocus pocus" derived from the Latin consecration words "Hoc est corpus meum" (This is my body). While critics are/were sensitive to the excess in Marston's drama, paradoxically that same Marston was apparently sensitive to religious issues. Proof to that is found already in his *The Scourge of Villanie*, but it becomes more explicit in his *The Malcontent,* a later play. Janet Clare in her seminal essay, "Censure, Censorship and Free Speech" explicates Marston's incidents with the censor. She calls attention to *The Malcontent,* a play which recalls "the numerous attacks on Catholic and Puritan religious hypocrisy of the *The Scourge of Villanie"* (Clare 201). She then goes on to discuss the inconsistency of censorship in the subsequent editions. One specific line of Malevole I consider extremely telling; it may be read as a summary of the English reformation from Henry VIII to James I. Although this reference directly pitches itself against the courtiers around James I, a reading between the lines suggests a wider interpretive context. It is not by coincidence that the 1599's legislations of censorship strictly regulated the publication of *histories* as well, conditioning it on the prior consent of the Privy Council (Clare 196). I consider this as evidence for a politics of cultural repression and erasure, a symptom that the subsequent political reformations *did* cause trauma, and they were remembered as such. This line was of course excised from later editions.

> Malevole mocks members of the court for their shifting denominational allegiances. Bilioso, the foolish old marshal, has recently returned from Florence and is asked what religion he will adopt, now that the dukedom has changed hands from Pietro to Mendoza. He replies, 'Of the Duke's religion, *when I know what it is.*' (4.5.94.) (Clare 201 – emphasis mine)

Thus, Marston provided a scene with all the ambiguities and anxieties of the ongoing polemics around the eucharist, and he seasoned it with another early modern discourse, habitually connected to the charges against Papists, and that is the one of witchcraft and magic. As the bloody banquet in *Titus Andronicus* lies at the intersection of at least three early modern discourses: the barbarian Other, corpse medicine, and the Eucharist Controversies, the same is true for Marston's sacrificial scene. While recalling the Catholic Mass in its sacrificial undertones, at the same time it alludes to the superstitious practices of witches and black magicians, transcendent powers that were still feared and revered in sixteen century England. There is no safe disentangling the two sets of motifs, all the more so because Catholic ritual

was frequently likened to superstition and magic in the reformers' attacks. Although this vast discourse is beyond the scope of my dissertation, some points must be touched upon for clarity. To begin with, there was an uneasy constellation of certain Catholic practices and magic; a fact the Catholic Church was keenly aware of, and it gave ample reason for criticism on the part of reformed polemics. reason why these practices were castigated by reformers. I mention here only two of such practices: one is the veneration of relics, the other is the conjuration of the Transcendent, performed in the Mass *and* the Black Mass similarly. Alexandra Walsham in her essay "Skeletons in the Cupboard: Relics after the Reformation" points out that although the veneration of relics was reinforced by the Council of Trent in 1563, yet "… in Catholic Europe the authentication, transportation, and display of sacred remains was subjected to unprecedented regulation" (Walsham 127). The situation was especially difficult to control in England,

> … where clerical manpower was scarce … (and) … relics (were) dispersed after the Dissolution. Like the remains of St Chad which the Staffordshire yeoman Henry Hodgetts stored in his bed-head, many were now in the possession of laypeople, who sometimes employed them in a dubious, quasi-magical fashion (Ibid).

The lines between religion and magic were thus blurred in everyday practice, a phenomenon that gave reason to concern for Church authorities, at the same time provided excellent theatrical material for playwrights. Jan Zysk in his brilliant chapter "Father Faustus" observes the similarities between the Catholic missal book and the books used for magic conjuration, concluding that Faustus suffered from "priest envy": he wanted to have the same power as the Catholic priest, who is able to consecrate the host by the power of his words, thus turning it into divine presence (Zysk 120). I do not wish to speculate what the audience might have felt watching Antonio sacrificing Piero's little son, but by the logic of *viewing*[76] they thus participated in the dubious sacrifice.

Antonio enters the scene at the beginning of the Third Act, with all the props of a Catholic Mass: cornets sound, tapers are lit, and there's a "chafing-dish", an incense holder, containing perfume, which he swings around to "purify the air with odorous fume" (3.1.8). The only ironic feature of the moment is that he is in his nightgown, wearing a nightcap. But this garment might have served, in my view, as the caricature of the priestly vestment. Miri Rubin relates the remarkably dramatic setting of the elevation of the Host in the Mass. This description holds close similarities with Antonio's entrance. "At the elevation all senses were called into

[76] *Viewing* with sacred contemplation was the way in which the eucharistic benefits could be received, because regular church goers could not receive/eat the Host very frequently, only once a year in general. Thus, the powers of viewing were emphasized by the clergy, provided it happens by faith.

play. Bells pealed, incense was burnt, candles were lit, hands were clasped, supplications were mouthed. The regulations of these audio-visual effects were operated through a system of diocesan legislation" (Rubin 58). The calculatedness of the dramatic effect is worth noticing, not the least for its parallels with Marston's outright intent of sensationalism. After calling out for the tapers, "to lamp the church", Antonio performs a quasi-elevation. "Thou royal spirit of Andrugio,/ Where'er thou hover'st, airy intellect,/I heave up tapers to thee - view thy son-" (3.1.17-9). I argue that the word-choice here is intentional: this "viewing of the Son" was what actually happened in the Catholic mass, during elevation. This eucharistic allusion could not be mistaken for anything else by contemporary audiences. Soon after this, the Ghost of Andrugio enters, and relates the circumstances of his poisoning by Piero, thus inciting Antonio to revenge. He does not solicit *remembrance*, as Hamlet's father's ghost does, only revenge. The implication is that Andrugio's ghost, as opposed to old Hamlet's, is a purely demonic figure from the onset. Hamlet's father's ghost, as Stephen Greenblatt brilliantly observed in his full-fledged study of the play, *Hamlet in Purgatory,* is an intriguingly ambivalent figure: benign or evil, hard to decide, and this very undecidedness propels Hamlet's action, or to be correct, inaction. Marston operates with more direct and crude allusions to collective religious trauma: he offers a demonic Black Mass to the audience, which, at the same time, eerily resembles medieval eucharistic exempla.

Pandulpho, together with Andrugio's and Feliche's ghosts, calling out from under and above the stage, turn the innocent son, who previously wanted to shed "religious tears" for his father (3.1.22) into a raging revenger, who does not eschew from murdering the harmless little offspring of Piero. This huge transition from lamenting son to murderer is indeed unexpected. At least for modern readers/audiences. But let us recall the early modern Protestant preaching on haunting spirits and revenants. This has been extensively discussed in connection with *Hamlet,* but it is worth recalling it here. Since in the Protestant religious economy Purgatory was non-existent, and this doctrine was officially confirmed in England by 1547,[77] it was prohibited to converse with ghost or spirits of any kind, because they surely must have belonged to the demonic realm, according to the Bible and reformed homily. In this vein, anyone attempting a discussion with the dead spirits was risking madness and demonic possession, in Protestant thinking. Yet, as R. W. Scribner posits, "… Protestantism was unable to abolish

[77] According to Eamon Duffy, " […] the only permitted activity to assist the soul after death was the relief or alm to the poor" after 1547. (Duffy 505)

belief in the presence of the untimely dead, and ghosts and poltergeists plagued Protestants and Catholics with confessional indifference" (Scribner in Marshall 234).

The scene with the cruel "mangling" of Julio by the possessed protagonist, is situated in the centre of the play. As it was true for many elements in *Titus Andronicus,* discussed above, this scene is semiotically overdetermined. On closer inspection, it is possible to detect at least two early modern religious discourses, all of them strictly banned from the stage, because each one of them was controversial and divisive, or *traumatic*. Nonetheless, they could be neatly represented under the veil of the Black Mass. This might sound as over-stretching the argument, but as we have seen in relation to relics, the dispersion of magic and superstition was not an easy mission for reformers, as the two lived many times intertwined in early modern communities. Keith Thomas' by now classical study, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* is dedicated to this topic. The first obviously religious connotation of the Black Mass was the eucharistic one, as mentioned and detailed earlier. The Eucharistic Controversies birthed heated polemics, and gave rise to much division, thus its direct representation was expelled from the stage. The second allusion, in my view, is a purgatorial one, because Antonio offers his human-sacrifice for his father. Andrugio's ghost cannot "touch the banks of rest" (3.1.43) unless Antonio revenges him, but the ritualistic nature of the killing renders it something more than a revenge: it is an actual sacrifice performed over the hearse of Andrugio. "I sprinkle round this gore/And dew thy hearse with these fresh reeking drops. / Lo, thus I heave my blood-dyed hands to heaven, / Even like insatiate hell, still crying; 'More!'" (3.3.65-68). Saying Mass and sacrificing the Host, as it was believed, for the dead, was prohibited since the official erasure of purgatory in 1547. Nevertheless, given the overall presence of crypto-Catholics in Elizabethan England, the allusion might have been tangible. On the other hand, this kind of sacrifice might have sounded familiar to contemporary audience from another perspective, which leads to the discourse on witchcraft: witches and Jews were said to perform human sacrifice, where they, according to sensationalist pamphlets and broadsides, sacrificed Christian boys. But this was only the "cover-story", so to say, under which unsettling religious topics could be represented, under the censors' nose.

Interestingly, apart from Margaret E. Owens' commentary (Owens 215-16), remarks on the sorcerer, or witch-like character of the Black Mass is rather scarce. Critics unanimously comment on the horridness and crude sensationalism of the butchering of Julio, but outright discussions of the perverted Black Mass evaded me. Exposing the early modern discourse of witchcraft in this part of the play might be significant because it provoked very real fears in sixteen-seventeenth century society.

ANTONIO: Now barks the wolf against the full-cheeked moon,
Now lions' half-clammed entrails roar for food,
Now croaks the toad and night-crows screech aloud,
Fluttering 'bout casements of departing souls;
Now gapes the graves, and through their yawns let loose
Imprisoned spirits to revisit earth.
And now swart night, to swell thy hour out,
Behold I spurt warm blood in thy black eyes. (3.3.43-50)

This evocation, and impersonation of the Night would be fitting for a witch's or sorcerer's spell, except that Antonio does not verbally curse Piero, but he plans his murder. It is worth noting here, that the witches' act of casting spells is very similar to what Catholic doctrine holds to be true at the consecration of the Host: it utilizes the force of Speech Acts.[78] It evokes, or even more blasphemously *creates* (sacred) presence from absence. It is not by coincidence that reformers hastened to emphasize and castigate the parallels between Catholic ritual and sorcery. I argue that by showing off the similarities between the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and the practice of human sacrifice by illicit superstitious activity, Marston not only caricatures traditional faith, but by the excess and meta-theatricality of the play, he calls attention to the theatricality and artifice of both. This hypocrisy and feigned religion are castigated in his early work, *The Scourge of Villanie* where "Puritans and Catholics are equally lined up for opprobrium […] Neither is the Anglican Church immune, as ministers are accused of simony and the accumulation of benefices" (Clare 198).

In addition, the Scene of the Black Mass might serve as a commentary on religious violence. Although Bowers comments on the improbability of any hagiographical connection between Antonio and St Anthony (Bowers 24), there are indeed traces of the discourse of martyrdom, but in a completely different place. We can find some very telling lines in the play recalling the concept of charitable hatred (Walsham's term[79]), in other words called religious persecution.

2nd. SEN: "Blest be you all, and may your honours live
Religiously held sacred, even for ever and ever.
GALEATZO to Antonio: "Thou art another Hercules to us
In ridding huge pollution from our state." (5.6.10-11 – emphasis mine)

In these lines, I could trace down another residue of the discourse of martyrdom: *pollution* was the exact word that was used for heretics and heresy. This interpretation might be substantiated by the very fact that Antonio not only gets away with Julio's murder in the play, but he does

[78] Jan Zysk explicates this parallel in his chapter "Father Faustus" in *Shadow and Substance,* 138.
[79] Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred – Tolerance and Intolerance in England 1500-1700* (New York-Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

not lose his religious honour either. He is ready to withdraw to a religious convent at the end of the play. This stands in intriguing parallel with Marston's private life, who also took on religious orders a few years later, as Samuel Schonbaum expounded in his essay in 1952. What is more, the onstage audience of the revenge, the Senators and Galeatzo praise him for his unmatched violence with which he rid the country from pollution, holding him and his companions "religiously sacred". I cannot help but think of the purgation process here, that was the due share of heretics. As Walsham relates,

> Public executions by fire were highly symbolic occasions in which false believers were ritually expelled from the society which they had poisoned and profaned, exorcised from the body politic like a filthy disease or an evil possessing demon. (Walsham 2006, 75)

Finally, using laughter as the great antidote against anxiety, Marston in his *Antonio* mixed the grave elements of his play with ludic moments, such as Balurdo entering the scene with an oversized bass violin, just moments after Julio's ritual killing, offering to sing to Maria. These contrasting elements of the tragedy caused much vexation to its critics, but the solution is probably an amalgamation of all the intents, both tragic and ludic. As Wharton puts it, "De-centered and de-stabilizing, anarchically playful, constantly transgressing boundaries of literary convention, politics, or gender, Marston's vexing transactions with his audience always challenge us…" (Wharton 10).

In conclusion, the Black Mass, in the focus of *Antonio's Revenge*, capitalizes on eucharistic anxieties. These anxieties entailed a crisis of belief, soteriological anxiety, and with these, a deep division of community, because the concept of sacrifice was reconfigured. As mentioned earlier, at this point the English reformation still seemed reversible, and the number of recusants only grew with the persecution of priesthood. Thus, most possibly an equal number of people watched revenge plays not with cheerful irony, but resentment and anxiety. What if the ridiculed eucharistic altar is the way to eternity and salvation, nevertheless? The play forged a moment of remembrance, and while this viewing of the sacrifice was not redemptive any longer, rather horrifying, but it still turned the audience into witnesses to a lost and maybe wished-for past, helping them in processing the change. In the next chapter I will investigate three revenge tragedies in light of the underlying thanatological crisis.

II/2 The Reckless Dead – Corpses, Fetishes and Relics in *The Spanish Tragedy, The Maiden's Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi*

David Cressy, in his *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* relates the following story.

> On the twelfth day after Christmas, in January 1631, Charles Wise, the parish clerk of Holton, Oxfordshire, went to church early to ring the bells for the Epiphany service. To his surprise, he 'found the belfry door had been unbarred, and the chancel door unbarred, and a grave digged and made up again, and the table [i.e. the communion table] set upon it.' Furthermore, he told investigators, 'he hath heard that Mrs. Horseman was buried there, but who carried her to the church or buried her there he cannot depose'. (Cressy 2000, 116)

The clandestine funeral's reason was that Mrs. Horseman was an excommunicated recusant, and as such, she was not eligible for a Church funeral on consecrated ground. Cases like this one were usually sorted out on a community level, to avoid the indignities of being buried on the side of common roads, but the burial-permit was always contingent on the good favours of certain officials, and as testimonies evolved, in this case they seemed reluctant to help. To make a long story short, during the long months of investigation, the culprits were never found, and Cressy concludes that "Village opinion was with Mrs Horseman and her helpers … not with the minister or the episcopal court" (Cressy 126). Finally, the Chancellor had an idea, of what might have happened, and he summoned six persons to court, but all of them were only mildly rebuked. This intriguing story equals to a real stage drama, hinging on "questions of authority and order as well as ritual practices and Christian beliefs" (Cressy 120). Therefore, it has great significance to the argument of my dissertation. First, although being a recusant was not punishable at the time of the story (1631), but being a recusant, combined with being excommunicated was a problem. Cressy relates how the punishment of excommunication was widely used by priests to discipline the parishioners. Offences varied from not wearing a white veil to churching to wearing a hat during service time, not going to church, or undertaking physical labour on Sundays (Cressy 117). Thus, the offence did not have to be heresy or blasphemy for an individual to earn this punishment. At the same time, punishment was easily lifted in these minor cases. The point is that this threat equally loomed over everyone's head. The second aspect of the story draws closer to my point, that is the fear of the unburied corpse. Dead persons not given a proper funeral were considered a shame on the whole community, or

even worse: a menace. Unhappy souls were prone to haunt the community as malignant ghosts. As I have mentioned earlier, all the joint efforts of the reformers could not expel the belief in ghosts from early modern society.[80] The third aspect, which is extremely important, is that some recusant people, living on the periphery of community, were loved, and respected by their Protestant neighbours. And Mrs Horseman's was not an isolated case, clandestine burials happened all around England, as historical records show. Cressy, after emphasizing that the interpretations are multifarious, and cannot be pinned down with certainty, concludes like this:

> [The gravediggers] dissolved the distinction between communicant and excommunicate, Protestant and Catholic, inside and out, and reasserted their claims of common humanity […] It seems likely that the gravediggers saw themselves as unofficial servants of the community, engaged in an act of charitable and *neighbourly obligation*, and their subsequent silence a matter of decency and solidarity […] At the same time their action can be judged as sinister and transgressive […] the men who conducted the clandestine burial effectively *dramatized* divisions within the community. In solving one problem they provocatively precipitated another. They did not just bury a problematic corpse but, rather, they used Mrs Horseman's body to proclaim a message of resistance and defiance […] They disparaged the beauty of holiness and exposed the most sacred part of the church to pollution (Cressy 2000, 127 – emphasis mine).

The conclusion of this case study is very important and could be mapped on revenge tragedy perfectly. The ubiquitous presence of the dead in revenge tragedy does just the same: its ultimate meaning is difficult to circumscribe, it creates both a sense of social obligation for proper rites, and sinister division, legal authority is defied or challenged, obsessive impulses arise around them, and finally there looms the fear and respect of the dead over the entire plot.

Thus, the communal aspect of the funerary ritual was crucial to the main focus of revenge tragedy.[81] The other major ambivalence in connection with death and dying, reflecting post-Reformation trauma in my view, is the incessant thematization of the cadaver. It is not only maimed body parts that appear in every revenge tragedy, but also the corpse is in a central, elevated position (in some plays literally), in numerous performances. These plays, besides *The Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), include Chettle and Munday's *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntington* (1597-98), Chapman's *Monsieur d'Olive* (1604-5), John Marston's *Sophonisba* (1605), Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), and Massinger's *The Duke of Milan* (1621-22).

[80] See Peter Marshall's chapter, "The Disorderly Dead" in *Beliefs and the Dead,* 232-265.
[81] This has been argued before, mostly by Thomas Rist in *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (2008).

Walter Benjamin identifies the corpse as the pre-eminent emblematic property of the genre. "And the characters of the *Trauerspiel* die because it is only thus, as corpses, that they can enter into the homeland of allegory. It is not for the sake of immortality that they meet their end, but for the sake of the corpse" (Benjamin 217-18). As opposed to this, Blair Hoxby argues differently.

> Benjamin writes as if the deaths that occur in *Trauerspiele* were an unimportant preliminary to the production of inanimate stage properties. But what is more striking about these plays is their determination to make the living dwell with the dying – with those who are neither fully alive nor completely dead and forgotten … (tragedies) appropriate the forms and ceremonies of mortuary rites and funeral memorials … (Hoxby 123)

Hoxby posits a reparative spirit in the depiction of death rites, and this idea closely aligns itself with the concept of work-through from the collective trauma I suggest. The only thing eliding Hoxby's attention is that, in almost every early modern tragedy, parody *was* combined with the tragic element (see the previous chapter on the eucharist), even if this was a bitter laugh, as Pikli formulates (Pikli 15). The melancholy world of revenge tragedy carries symptoms of post-Reformation collective trauma, as Benjamin claims, (Benjamin qtd. in Weber 168) but this trauma narrativization does not preclude a satiric and didactic intent: I concur with Huston Diehl that the tragedies were actively trying to *reform* the audience. For example, the pious death of the Duchess in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, evoking martyrdom, however bleak and cruel the circumstances might have seemed, still could show the idea of *good death,* in which a soul does enter eternal bliss. This means for me, that through the veiled problematization of contemporary religious debates, the plays sought to help the process of work-through and facilitated understanding or at least brought up important questions for examination. This process was greatly helped by the power of the meta-theatrical elements, so ubiquitous in revenge tragedy, where the audience could examine their *own* potential viewing habits through the actions of the on-stage spectators.

The best way to come to terms with this obsessive preoccupation with dead bodies and remembering bodies is the concept of the fetish.[82] I will not and cannot do justice to the whole historico-linguistic spectrum covered by this somewhat general concept.[83] I will employ the

[82] As mentioned earlier, I owe this observation to Huston Diehl, which she does not elaborate further. Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform* (120-21).

[83] Most importantly, I would like pin down that the psychoanalytic development on the concept of fetish is only *one* of the possibilities, thus I will attempt to evade the sexual applications unless they are absolutely crucial to the plays at hand.

bits and pieces that William Pietz offers in his essay in trying to theorize this notion. Trying, because, as he explicates,

> [t]his method studies the history of the usage of "fetish" as a field of exemplary instances that exemplify no model or truth prior to or outside this very 'archive' itself; it views the fetish as a radically historical object that is *nothing other* than the totalized series of its particular usages. (Pietz 7)

This implies an analysis that is historically very specific, such as the medieval and early modern[84] Catholic fetish of the *relic.* Of course, this phenomenon is embedded in a wider context of the fetishization of the body in the Catholic Church, but I will try to narrow down this analysis to the fetish of *dead bodies* due to two reasons. First, corporeal studies is a vast field, and while it partly intersects with my research interest, it also largely diverts from it in its main emphases. Second, I do not wish to end up, as mentioned before, in the critical dead-end of labelling Catholicism utterly corporeal, in opposition to a purely logocentric Protestant religion, thus rendering them clear-cut binaries. Recent scholarship has proved that the picture was far more complex than this simple opposition.[85] My claim is, that the predominance of stage-corpses, the unburied dead, and maimed body parts in revenge tragedy is reminiscent of the repressed Catholic ritual, with its relics, the Host and purgatorial ghosts, *but* in these reflections, there is both nostalgia and laughter. The farcical elements cannot be overlooked, as they were the voice of a new era, where the Catholic communion can be caricatured, just as the Black Mass in *Antonio's Revenge,* or as Titus' obsessive thematization of "hands" in *Titus Andronicus,* when he is just deprived of his (Pikli 21). Since I have extensively addressed the thanatological crisis earlier, here I will focus on the phenomena of the relic. But first we need to pin down, based on Alexandra Walsham's recent study, that despite Henry VIII's legislation against the idolatrous usage of holy objects, and the iconoclast raids of the 1530s and the 40s,

> relics were a continuing presence in post-Reformation England. Some were rescued from destruction or confiscation and lovingly preserved for posterity by religious

[84] I will not detail here the recent developments in challenging the teleological distinction between medieval and early modern. I consider their continuity a given.

[85] As mentioned in the Introduction, Jennifer Waldron in her *Reformations of the Body* makes a systemic attempt to illuminate Reformed corporeality. Moreover, Ulinka Rublack in "Grapho-Relics: Lutheranism and the Materialization of the Word" refutes the claim that Reformed religion precluded the material tenets of religiosity. She discusses extensively how "the distinct Lutheran memory culture, which finds no close parallel in the reformed parts of Europe" led to an amalgamation of Protestant and Catholic forms (Rublack 152), thus fusing innovation with tradition. Hence, the respect for relics and saints was transmuted into other forms after the Reformation. She relates the intriguing ways, how Luther's grapho-relics came to be venerated after his death. "The signature in Luther's or Melanchton's or other professor's hand under a biblical quotation mediated the spiritual presence of the reformer and the authenticity of a piece of writing" (Rublack 155). This intriguing fact also shows, what others before me pointed out, that no monolithic "Protestantism" can be ever assumed, and the idiosyncrasies of either the Lutheran, or the various strands of the English branch must be accounted for.

> conservatives confident that the Catholic faith would one day be restored to its dominant status. During the short reign of Mary I, many of these temporarily came out of hiding. (Walsham 2011, 126)

But this was only one side of the coin. As Walsham further relates in this essay and elsewhere, relics were not only preserved, but in fact *reproduced* in the execution of the Catholic martyrs when the Elizabethan government started to burn the Catholic priests and their sympathizers/helpers. The fame of Catholic martyrs spread abroad, and the adorned earthly remains of the martyred Jesuits travelled as far as to Spain and Italy "supplying a thriving new trade in sacred body parts" (Walsham 129). Thus, the discourse of relics was alive and thriving around the decades *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Maiden's Tragedy* were brought to stage.

The conceptual and practical proximity of the fetish and the Catholic relic is remarkable. In what follows, I will try to illustrate this claim, with historically specific examples, because, as Pietz writes, the fetish has "no model or truth prior to or outside of the archive" (Pietz 7, cited above). To begin with, Christ's body in the Host was the most sacred relic of all, and we have already seen how closely intertwined the different religious doctrines were. Sacraments of life, death and communion were all organically connected to each other in the life of a community.

Ronald Finucane relates, that holy relics and the concomitant belief in their possible miraculous curative powers entered Christianity from pagan sources "especially during the fourth century as paganism fell to minority status and then became illegal" (Finucane 25). The reverence of relics has no scriptural basis whatsoever in the Old and New Testament. Nevertheless, from the fourth century to the Reformation, holy relics assumed a strategic position in piety and devotion.

> A paradoxical nexus of life-in death, the corporeal relic embodied the promise of triumph over death that lay at the centre of Christian faith. […] As nodal points for the intersection of the eternal and temporal realms, relics marked and produced sacred space. […] While members of the aristocracy and the religious establishment might value relics for the prestige they lent their institution, for the majority of the population the appeal of relics was above all thaumaturgic. (Owens 2005, 54)

This already thriving tradition received more impetus when in an effort to counter the dangerous heresy of the Cathars in the thirteenth century, the Church started to promote an even more embodied practice of religion. "Starting from the premise of cosmic dichotomy between spirit and matter, the Cathars rejected the doctrine of the incarnation […] and challenged the notions of resurrection of the body and purgatory" (Bynum 252). The rejection of the body with its

desires and urges was also implicit in the thinking of certain mystics. This heresy was considered so dangerous that it engendered multiple institutional and ritual changes.

> Modern historians have suggested that the formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the spread of devotion to the host as *corpus Christi,* and the church's enthusiastic encouraging of miracles in which the host turned into flesh were part of a general effort to counter heresy. (Bynum 253)

What church authorities could not foresee was the subsequent proliferation of sacred relics, which was very difficult to contain. As Owens related, by 1299 Boniface VIII had to issue a papal bull to prohibit the boiling and partition of corpses, which was a procedure to turn out relics out of the bodies of prominent persons, not to mention the industry of faking relics, decried by church authorities and the reformers alike (Owens 55). Walsham relates that in England, the relics were "early and conspicuous targets of the Henrician regime", and because they were kept in the monasteries and cathedrals, at the repression of the monasteries they were doomed for destruction (Walsham 122). This is important, because it means, that the superstitious use of images and sacred objects was virtually prohibited very early in England. The Ten Articles in 1536 formulates the requirement that the clergy should teach the laity. "…we will that our bishops and teachers diligently shall teach them, and according to this doctrine reform their abuses, for else there might fortune idolatry to ensue, which God forbid" (6th article of *The Ten Articles* in Cressy 1996, 21). When I discuss the fetishization of the dead in revenge tragedy, I mean the incessant, obsessive, and recurring staging of death, dead bodies, and bodily fragments in the plays. Underlying these representations were wildly different emotions, such as relief and anxiety, curiosity and apprehension, resentment, and laughter. In the following pages I will show how, in my view, the fetishization of death took place on the early modern stage, delineating the main features of the concept and applying them to specific revenge tragedies, in this way trying to create an organic integration of theory and application.

The first main feature of the fetish is its irreducible materiality, the way it does not *symbolize* anything, but it is *the thing itself* (Pietz 7). In this respect, the corpse in revenge tragedy is the perfect fetish, as posited earlier, because, as Attila Kiss writes, referring to Kristeva

> … in a Kristevan sense, the corpse is one of the most "powerful" signifiers, since it does not re-present, but shows, presents death in its immediacy. The corpse seems to be a form of spectacle in Renaissance tragedy which bridges the gap between signification and reality and tries to achieve perfect representation. (Kiss 2010, 69)

In this vein, it is enough to think of the fully elaborated doctrine of the eucharistic Host, making the very same claim, to understand why later Protestants called the eucharist a fetish. In this

name-calling, of course there is an implicit critique, because "The discourse of the fetish has always been a *critical* discourse about the false objective values of a culture, from which the speaker is personally distant" (Pietz 14). Thus, the proliferation of the Catholic fetish of dead bodies and body parts on a Protestant stage is at least intriguing, unless it denotes an underlying collective trauma, affecting the entire audience. I argue that the simultaneously nostalgic and lampooning intent indicates the narrativization of a trauma brought about by cultural revolution (Peter Marshall writes "cultural de-programming" Marshall 2002, 100). The unburied corpse becomes an eerie fetish that is deeply personal and, at the same time, thoroughly social.

In *The Spanish Tragedy* there are two unburied cadavers. The first one is Don Andrea's body, slain in the battle against Portugal, remaining in a questionable state for three days.

GHOST OF DON ANDREA: But churlish Charon, only boatman there,
Said that, my rites of burial not performed,
I might not sit amongst his passengers.
Ere Sol had slept three nights in Thetis' lap
And slaked his smoking chariot in her flood,
By Don Horatio, our Knight Marshal's son,
My funerals and obsequies were done. (1.1.20-26)

At the beginning of the tragedy the audience is faced with Don Andrea's ghost, recalling his ordeal in the netherworld due to the lack of burial. Don Horatio, his friend, finally buries him, but the ghost is still seeking its eternal rest, partly because Don Andrea died a violent death. Thus, the audience understands, that this makes his ghost prone to become harmful. The sentence, "my rites of burial not performed" was itself capable of evoking the entire thanatological crisis after the Reformation. But even after his burial by Don Horatio, the ghost of Don Andrea arrives at a place eerily resembling the Catholic purgatory. "Twixt these two ways I trod the middle path, which brought me to the fair Elysian green" (1.1.72). To begin with, the purgatory was called by the same name, The Third Place or the Middle Place. Furthermore, the gates of this place were not closed, just as it was the case in Purgatory, "Where dreams have passage in the silent night." (1.1.83) Thus, the ghost of Don Andrea returned to the earth, but not alone. He was in the company of the Ghost of Revenge. Thus, the corpse is buried, but the ghost still lingers around, thirsty for revenge. Besides the fact that this is perfect revenge tragedy material, one must pay attention to the underlying soteriological anxieties, a historical fact well documented by personal records.[86]

[86] Margaret E. Owens relates the curious case of Mrs. Tyre, who had her right hand cut off due to some incurable illness in 1596, hence the responsibility for the hand was transferred to the parish church. The church provided a Christian funeral to the said hand, as the extant records relate. "the said hand was by me Thomas harrydance being the parish Clarke in the presents of Thomas ponder being the sexten Buried Right before the dore within

In the new Protestant religious economy, the eternal fate of the soul was at best inscrutable. Alec Ryrie relates the different mental/spiritual conditions that we might term "unbelief", and one amongst them is "agonised indecision" (Ryrie 2019, 74), afflicting several pious people, who, to begin with, could not choose between the Catholic and the Protestant belief. A further great problem was, already within the Protestant doctrinal domain, the fear of damnation, causing depression: a contagious spiritual malady in the wake of the impossible doctrine of the double predestination.[87] Hannah Allen's diary, although published much later in 1683, clearly reflects the fear of damnation. I have already pointed out how rare personal diaries were from the earlier decades.

> One night, I said there was a great clap of Thunder like the shot of a Piece of Ordnance, came down directly over my Bed; and that same night a while after, I heard like the voice of two Young Men singing in the Yard, over against my Chamber; which I said were Devils in the likeness of Men, singing for joy that they had overcome me; and in the morning as I was going to rise, that Scripture in the 10th. of Heb. and the last words of the 26th. Verse, was suggested to me from Heaven (as I thought). *There remains no more sacrifice for sin;* And this delusion remained with me as an Oracle all along; that by this miracle of the Thunder, and the Voice and the Scripture, God revealed to me that I was Damned: When my Aunt asked me, *Do you think God would work a miracle to convince you that you are rejected? it is contrary to the manner of God's proceedings; we do not read of such a thing in all the Scripture".* (Allen, 22-3)

Rendering the knowledge of one's salvation completely unfathomable and beyond reach, constant doubting was a natural consequence. The loss of Purgatory was only one element of this huge problem, but an important one: as Michael Neill claims, death became a private apocalypse (Neill 38), a terminal nullification of the person. And this idea leads us back to *The Spanish Tragedy.* Hieronimo's son, Horatio is the second unburied corpse, but he lingers onstage for quite a long time. He is murdered by Lorenzo and Balthazar in the Second Act (2.4.52-54), and after all the events of the play, in the Fourth Act Hieronimo suddenly reveals the unburied body of his son, concealed behind a curtain. The fate of his eternal soul will be very similar to Don Andrea's, which becomes evident from his mother's Isabelle's words.

ISABELLE: Hieronimo, make haste to see thy son;
For sorrow and despair hath cited me
To hear Horatio plead with Rhadamanth (4.2.26-28)

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the Sowth churchyeard the said Wednesday […] Thus god send hir good Rest and ease or healp after the same if it be gods good will and pleasure. (*The parish records from St. Botolph without Aldgate* qtd. in Owens 202-3). This entry, verging on the farcical, reflects grave anxieties concerning the immortality of soul and body.

[87]Elizabeth Hunter writes the following: In Calvin's interpretation of the Bible "... only a minority of mankind could gain admission to Heaven ... the majority were predestined to Hell by an immutable decree of God." The authorities were so uneasy about its effect on society, that James I finally prohibited anyone below the status of bishop or dean to preach about Predestination, Election and Reprobation. (Hunter 4)

Thus, it seems that Horatio's soul in the Underworld negotiates with the very same deity, who appeared in Don Andrea's narration of his wanderings at Acheron's River. It is most peculiar, that although he is still not buried, he apparently was let right through the river, to meet the three judges, one of whom was Radamanth. I think this incongruency in the mythical plot is due to the possibility of Isabella hallucinating, because she says "sorrow and despair" made her see these things. But one thing seems sure: Hieronimo is obsessed with the corpse of his son, he is already mad in his loss, and he is unable to bury him. He intends to use the cadaver as evidence for the murder, but, since the only thing the corpse signifies is the absence of life (Kiss 69), this revelation yields little information on the murder, but much more on Hieronimo's mental state. It is worth recalling here the story of Mrs Horseman at the beginning of the chapter: burying of corpses was the bare minimum in a community. The unburied cadaver was a scandal, a sinister presence, threatening order and the safety of a community. Horatio's corpse became a *fetish* to Hieronimo, and I can support this claim with Marx's formulation of the concept, who, for that matter, liked to use religion as an analogy to illustrate his point. For Marx, the fetish was the means by which "a singular historical institution (could) fix personal consciousness in an objective illusion" (Pietz 9). In my thinking, an insightful analogy could be, if we thought of the Catholic church as this said institution and considered the doctrine of purgatory as the objective illusion in discussion, warranting the ongoing connection between the living and the dead, prior to the Reformation. The psychological advantages and importance of the Third Place have been detailed in the previous chapters. Let it suffice here, that the fetishization of the dead body by Hieronimo could be a result of the broken rites of mourning, thus staged in the form of a mourning father who is unable to bury his son. A further analogy that can be observed, saying that Horatio's death and corpse became a fetish for Hieronimo *and* the stage, is the important aspects of singularity and repetitiveness; these two are basic features in the conceptual framework of the fetish (Pietz 7). Horatio's death, as every death in fact, is in its singularity entirely unique, and, as a matter of fact, unrelatable, because Hieronimo tries to give voice to his grief, but his words fail to go through.

Shows his dead son.

HIERONIMO: See her my show, look on this spectacle! Here lay my hope, and here my hope hath end;
Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain;
Here lay my treasure, here my treasure lost;
Here lay my bliss, and here my bliss bereft;
But hope, heart, treasure, joy, and bliss,
All fled, failed, died, yea, all decayed with this. (4.4. 87-94)

After hearing this eighty lines-long lamentation and narration, and seeing Horatio's body, the King still does not understand, because he asks "Why hast thou done this undeserving deed?" (4.4.165) It seems that everybody can only perceive *his* own pain, not the others'. The repetitive claim of the fetish becomes manifest when Hieronimo, already mad of the pain, is urged to repeat the deaths, thus he multiplies the corpses at the end of the tragedy. Finally, since all his explanations failed, he chooses silence over speaking.

In *The Spanish Tragedy* the fetish of the dead body is less direct. As opposed to this, in the *The Maiden's Tragedy*[88] Middleton staged the tyrant overtly as a necromancer. Here we need to account for a historically specific, highly paradoxical situation in connection with (the fetish of) dead bodies. Necromancy was, on one hand, associated with witchcraft and sorcery, and punishable as such, but on the other, in the not so long-past practice of the Catholic Church the bodies of saints and holy virgins, the ones the Lady herself resembles, were venerated as sacred relics. A further historical fact that has close relevance to the ending scene with the Lady's corpse is King James I's well-known interest in royal effigies. Margaret E. Owens in her recent essay, "*The Revenger's Tragedy* as Trauerspiel", discusses the "effigeal semiotics" of *The Revenger's Tragedy,* unravelling an intriguing practice of James I. She claims, "… the king's investment in displaying replicas of the bodies of his royal predecessors in Westminster Abbey is nothing short of astonishing" (Owens 2015, 406). The replicas of royal bodies were designated to justify James' right for succession, but in an eerie way they also served the purpose of keeping the dead rulers amongst the people. For a more vivid impression, these were not all-stone statues, but "these figures were constructed out of a variety of materials typically a jointed framework of wood; a head and limbs of carved wood; torso and hips upholstered with fabric and hay stuffing; and facial features modelled in plaster, though later in wax, often based

[88] As Martin Wiggins writes in his 1998 edition of the play, the manuscript was submitted to Sir George Buc for censorship late in October 1611, without a title. Buc noted the following: "This second *Maiden's Tragedy,* (for it hath no name inscribed) may, with the reformations, be acted publicly" (Wiggins xxx.). As Wiggins relates, the association with Beaumont and Fletcher's play titled *The Maid's Tragedy* stuck so deeply, that "when the manuscript later came into Moseley's possession, he entered it in the Stationers' Register as '*The Maid's Tragedy, 2nd Part.'* Thus, the play has been known to scholars as *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* until recently, but as research has shown, this was due to a misunderstanding, there is no second maiden in the play, and "the play's most recent editor, in the Oxford edition of Middleton's *Complete Works,* chose to rename it *The Lady's Tragedy"* (Wiggins xxxi). Wiggins, on the other hand, retains the name Buc assigned to the play, and I will use his version. The manuscript was in the possession of the King's Men, and although there is no record of performance, the "Stage directions added to the manuscript by the playhouse prompter contain the names of two actors known to have been with the King's Men in 1611: Richard Robinson and Robert Gough" (Rasmussen 1). Rasmussen in his essay, "Shakespeare's Hand in 'The Second Maiden's Tragedy'" also conjectures that the additions to Middleton's play bear the marks of Shakespeare's intervention, who was the company's in-house dramatist by the time.

on a death mask" (Owens 407). These effigies, if we imagine them based on the above description, could have very much resembled, for the beholder, Gloriana's skull attired in festive robe, or the Lady's corpse, supplied with royal garments and jewels. The parallel must have been at least clear for contemporaries, if not startling. This train of thought is worth following. Nigel Llewellyn, Michael Neill et al. have extensively elaborated on how the great funeral monuments and effigies are considered by early modernist scholars as substitutes for the lost Catholic rites, such as the doctrine of purgatory, and the mass for the dead.[89] It is well known that the augmentation of practices and objects of *memoria* took the place of the lost connection between the living and the dead. Thus, the funeral effigies are *images* provided in the place of the absent ones.[90] Following this logic, if the corpses on the stage are further representations of the *effigy*, images of the images (the effigies), then in the logic of simulacrum we have a suspicion that there is no original signified behind the signifier, there is only absence, evacuated of meaning. This was exactly the case with the early modern dead, and, not only that, but the whole Catholic culture of remembrance. Although several other elements of the old religion survived in clandestine forms, "the hunting of purgatory to death"[91] was a success. What was left, was the empty signifier of the corpse on the stage. And revenge tragedy, with its anxious anatomizing of human existence takes this whole investigation even one step further. What if there is nothing beyond the corpse, just the abyss?

The historical background Owens elucidates in her essay, is relevant to *The Maiden's Tragedy* as well, given that the two plays are only some five years apart. As with most of the revenge tragedies, the fetish of dead bodies is highly apparent in *The Revenger's Tragedy,* nevertheless in my analysis I opted for *The Maiden's Tragedy* due to the following reasons. In *The Revenger's Tragedy* the two female victims of the tyrant, Gloriana and Antonio's wife appear as already dead. They are shown as stage props: Gloriana as a skull, and the wife as a dead body arranged in a pious pose surrounded by prayer-books (*Revenger's Tragedy* 1.4.12-16). If we take this specific play as a case in point, we cannot help agreeing with Benjamin, who writes that the characters of the mourning play (revenge tragedy) can only enter the world of allegory as corpses; the reason for their dying is not eternal bliss but becoming an emblem of death (Benjamin 217-18). His observation is perfectly applicable for *The Revenger's Tragedy*, as Owens explicates (Owens 405). Nevertheless, Benjamin only discusses *Hamlet,*

[89] A more recent Hungarian essay discussing the semiotics of post-Reformation funerals is Attila Kiss' „Koramodern retorika és a reformáció szemiotikája".
[90] Llewellyn, 54-6.
[91] This was the title of an actual anti-Catholic tract. John Veron, *The Huntyng of Purgatory to Death* (1561). I owe this title to Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead,* 124.

which he considers a "great mourning play" (Benjamin 136). If we take the very similar play of *The Maiden's Tragedy,* we will find the same fetishization of death, with a difference: the victim of the tyrant, the Lady is, to begin with, not only represented in the absence of her life, but she dies onstage around the middle of the play. Furthermore, she is not only allowed *agency* by the playwright taking her own life, but she is also allotted a soul after her suicide, while her body becomes a fetish in a most carnal and Freudian sense. Yet, she is not a mere emblem of death in the play, as opposed to Gloriana's skull. Sheetal Lodhia articulates the difference between the two plays as follows: "If *The Maiden's Tragedy* demonstrates a crisis of the body's relationship to soul, a crisis ultimately contained by the play, then *The Revenger's Tragedy* refuses this containment, to place the body alone at centre" (Lodhia 148). I argue that this is not a refusal of containment: it is a deliberate omission of the ghost/soul in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, an intentional move that might be ideological, and I see two possible ways as to how. First is the blasphemous philosophy, what Alec Ryrie terms "mortalism" (Ryrie 2019, 18-22); a philosophical trend entailing the rejection of the eternal soul and afterlife. This was not a novelty to early modern people. Although this way of thinking did not technically exclude a belief in God, but as Ryrie argues,

> Medieval and early modern Christianity was intensely focused on salvation, the last judgement, and the state of the dead. Strip that out, and while you still have a rather abstract God, you have precious little religion. In theory, mortalism is not atheism, in practice, it might as well be. (Ryrie 2019, 22)

Every now and then, records of interrogation show the recurring pattern of this rather dangerous denial, such as the bishop of Worcester's case with Thomas Semer in 1448 (Ryrie, 21). Considering scholarly claims, such as Jonathan Dollimore's, for the melancholic and disillusioned world of revenge tragedy, this is a very likely interpretation for the absence of ghosts in *The Revenger's Tragedy.* The second possible meaning, intersecting with the first, if we take historical accounts seriously[92] is that souls/ghosts are not always staged because they are assigned to oblivion in the new, Protestant religious economy. In this economy, the soul still exists after death, of course, but it is now with its Creator, it cannot appear to the living any longer.[93] This notion evokes Neill's observation, saying that after the Reformation each

[92] I have discussed earlier, based on Ryrie's book, how certain Protestant teachings, such as double predestination, enhanced and promoted scepticism.

[93] Peter Marshall observes that due to the ubiquity of the ghost lore in early modern England (and Europe) even the reformers spoke with two voices: while they proclaimed assertively that the gospel has chased away walking spirits (see the preaching of Sandy, Scot. Donne, Hoby), but, at the same time they kept complaining how ignorant people still believe in ghosts, giving credit to appearances. As Lavater, the Swiss reformer said, "... daily experience teacheth us that spirits do appear to men" (qtd. in Marshall 247).

individual death amounts to a "private apocalypse", the ties being ultimately severed between living and dead. This Protestant reading of the dead body underlines the sarcastic treatment Gloriana's skull receives, both in the diction of the play, and its later recycling as a puppet of revenge. As mentioned earlier, Reformed polemics did not refrain from vulgar caricature of the tradition of venerating the relics, and the next lines show a similar tendency for farcical depiction.

VINDICE: *(To the skull)* Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,
My study's ornament, thou shell of death,
Once the bright face of my betrothed lady (1.1.14-16)

To conclude this short comparative reading of the two plays, I would argue that the main difference between the two plays, in respect to the dead body, can be formulated as a difference in the treatment of the relic: *The Revenger's Tragedy* treats the relics of the martyred women sarcastically, and in Gloriana's case, with irreverence if we consider the recycling of the skull as stage prop. This treatment recalls the reformers' handling of traditional belief's death rites. As opposed to this, in *The Maiden's Tragedy* the relic of the Lady's body is treated with love and obsession, much alike to the Catholic reverence of the saints' bodies. In what follows I will show how the Lady's character and death evokes two very important Catholic discourses: she is first established as a martyr-saint, by her chastity and suicide, and then, her body becomes a relic, and as such, an object of veneration and desire. Although the erotic drive of the Tyrant's actions cannot be denied, I do not wish to discuss the psychoanalytic implications of the fetish here. This has been widely addressed elsewhere, in connection with the corporeal aspects of Catholicism.[94] I would argue instead that the especially Catholic resonances of the fetishization of the body are indicative of the underlying trauma of cultural reprogramming in general and suppressing traditional rites of death in particular. In my analysis I will focus on three important scenes of the play: the suicide of the Lady, and the two scenes involving her dead body and her ghost. Sheetal Lodhia in her essay points out the problematics around representing two identical versions of the Lady simultaneously, one as a corpse, and her Ghost next to the body (Lodhia 135). This, as opposed to her claim, only happens once, in the final scene, not twice. In the first appearance of the Lady's Ghost, the body is already taken away by the Tyrant. Her argumentation, which at some places contradicts itself, is that staging the Ghost along the corpse is indicative of a growing trend in Jacobean tragedy "in which the body is progressively evacuated of the spirit" (Ibid). Later in the essay she posits that the play "… anticipates

[94] Such as in Margaret E. Owens' *Stages of Dismemberment.*

Cartesian mechanistic dualism where consciousness constitutes subjectivity and where bodies can be automata" (Ibid). But a Cartesian dichotomy of soul and body goes sharply against what in fact happens in *The Maiden's Tragedy,* "where modifications to the body effect modifications to the soul" (Ibid). Albeit separated in their representations, the body and soul of the Lady are closely intertwined in this play, because even after physical death, her soul cannot rest in peace, as the rites of death are violated, her body is unearthed and taken to the chamber of the Tyrant. Thus, I disagree with Lodhia's claim that these plays (she analyses *The Revenger's Tragedy, The Maiden's Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi)* are concerned with the body only, excluding concerns about the soul (138). I will try to prove otherwise. These plays are indeed concerned with the corporeal aspects of existence, but, on the one hand, this corporeal focus might as well be a heritage of the Catholic past, never totally removed from early modern England, and on the other, the soul as the locus of consciousness is *always* implicit in revenge tragedies. To recall the doctrinal developments I discussed earlier, the corporeality of Catholic rites, or "the immanence of the divine", as Walsham formulated (Walsham 2010, 20), did *never* exclude the soul. Thomas Aquinas' philosophical formulation in the thirteenth century detailing

> the hylomorphic composition of the human person […] says that what the person *is,* the existing substance *man,* is form and matter, soul and body. To Aquinas the person *is* his body, not just a soul using a body; the resurrection of the body thus became for the first time, not merely theologically but also philosophically necessary. (Bynum 254)

This philosophy suggests an enhanced emphasis on the body, but along with its "tenant" and not apart from it. Furthermore, considering Attila Kiss' observation that revenge tragedy is the "laboratory" for the emerging concept of the early modern subject and subjectivity (Kiss 25-32), in which the interconnectedness of body and soul is scrutinized, it is simply not possible to get away with the simplifications Lodhia makes. The violent blows striking the body *are* affecting the victims' soul, and, in a wider perspective, the souls of those witnessing.[95] It is enough to think of the famous revenants of revenge tragedy, the ghost of Hamlet's father, Don Andrea's ghost, the ghost-voice of the Duchess, and the ghost of the Lady. All of them were victims to violent murder, and as a result, they did not find their rest until the revenger enacted the act of retribution. This is a traumatic genre, as stated earlier; there are victims and witnesses, and the two categories sometimes overlap. Body and soul are both deeply affected. Underlying the representations of fetishized dead corpses and fragmented body-parts, we find, among

[95] Here I handle the soul and the ghost as synonyms, although I am aware that the picture was more complicated than this. To be sure, early modern people believed ghosts to be souls, whether purgatorial, or malevolent, hence the application. I do not have the space to provide a detailed discussion of this vast topic.

others, the discourse of martyrdom, the lost rites of the relic, and a deep-seated soteriological anxiety,[96] all of them utterly corporeal *and* spiritual discourses. In *The Maiden's Tragedy* we can clearly trace the outlines of a pre-Reformation saint play, a genre in which the tyrant's fall is always precipitated by some sexual transgression. According to Stephanie Jed, sexual transgression serves as "the figural foundation in which accusations of tyranny are grounded" (Jed 28). In this respect, the main plot of the play is inspired by contemporary narratives of saints' lives and the literary appropriations thereof, such as R.B.'s *Apius and Virginia,*[97] which had its direct source in Chaucer's "Physician's Tale", which in turn retells an ancient story from Livy's history of Rome (*From the Founding of the City).* I concur with Anne Lancashire and Richard Levin that the Lady's character is very much alike the virgin martyrs in the Catholic saint play (Lancashire 277-78), apart from her conclusion, that it is a highly religious, didactic play. In my view, the disinterment and adoration/fetishization of the corpse go beyond the discourse of martyrdom, intertwining various early modern discourses, and through the topic of the relic, they also stage early modern concerns about the soul-body dichotomy. Furthermore, the play has the potential to recall the miraculous stories in which relics were able to exert curative powers on believers, although I consider Lodhia's claim (Lodhia 139) that the corpse has agency in either *The Revenger's Tragedy* or in *The Maiden's Tragedy,* too far-fetched. Most peculiarly, the topic of martyr saints became popular on the Jacobean stage again, if we only think of John Marston's *Sophonisba* in 1606, or Thomas Dekker's and Philip Massinger's play, *The Virgin Martyr* in 1622. The return of the openly Catholic elements on the early modern stage indicates two, paradoxically opposing issues: first, a nostalgia, due to the fact, that Catholicism was never really abandoned in reformation England, only repressed for a while. Second, James I's express Catholic sympathies caused a growing concern for his subjects, thus the criticism of the old faith appeared on the stage as well. To be sure, many of the religious themes, such as martyrdom and iconoclasm were valuable dramatic capital to an indirect representation of contemporary political issues. In what follows, I will shortly delineate two, diametrically opposite readings of the Lady's body and martyrdom, both having far-leading implications as to the body politic of the State. After that, I will illustrate how the Lady's body and remains can be read within the Catholic discourse of the relic, and how this analogy provides explanations that the other approaches lack.

[96] The fear of salvation is deeply interconnected with doctrines of predestination and the loss of purgatory.
[97]"Although printed in 1575, *Apius and Virginia* is believed to have been composed during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign. We know neither the identity of the author, beyond the initials R. B., nor the auspices of performance. However, certain features, such as the predominance of songs and of female characters, suggest that this was a children's play performed at court" (Owens 87).

Susan Zimmerman in her essay considers *The Maiden's Tragedy* as a direct and didactic warning against idolatry. Her main point of departure is the "anti-materialistic" nature of Protestantism, arguing that Middleton "… ostensibly adopted the official iconoclastic stance of the Protestant establishment. Vetted and approved by the Master of the Revels, the play borrowed from medieval Catholic legend to satirize Catholic practices" (Zimmerman 224). Given the central position of the Lady's suicide and the sacrilege committed against her body, I argue that to classify this play as a saint-play would be more appropriate than her calling it a "tragicomedy". Zimmerman grounds her analysis on the (assumed?) gynophobia of the reformers, in combination with the castigation of idolatry. Reading these together leads her to the observation that the concept of the idol was gendered, and it was female, and this is where her analysis of the play starts. With this move, she directly projects the content of the homilies onto the stage. While these claims were preached from the pulpits indeed, and there was a commerce between the stage and the pulpit, lately it has been disproved that the early modern stage would slavishly echo the pulpit.[98] Huston Diehl's observation, that the early modern stage was a *reforming* platform, can only be accepted with reservations and with special complications (Diehl 1). One of these complicating factors is the omnipresence of a Catholic nostalgia, recently addressed by Todd Borlik in his essay "Catholic nostalgia in *The Duchess of Malfi"* (2011). As for the Lady's body, this former train of thought of idolatry, iconoclasm and gynophobia leads Zimmerman to surprising conclusions. The beginning of the play, and the suicide scene firmly establishes the Lady as a chaste and virtuous woman, recognizably alike to the virgin martyrs. And although the saints' life was a Catholic genre, her preparations for death make her a very much Protestant heroine.

LADY: But 'twas not for thy fear I put death by.
I had forgot a chief and worthy business
Whose strange neglect would have made me forgotten
Where I desire to be remembered most.
I will be ready straight, sir.
[*She kneels in prayer]*

Here the Lady expresses her wish to be remembered in heaven, not on the earth. This upward pointing last will, which does not want earthly remembrance, recalls a Protestant soteriology,[99] in which believers' souls, once evacuated from the body, have nothing to do with earthly affairs.

[98] A main study assuming this somewhat didactic position is Martha Tuck Rozett's, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton University Press, 1984). The most illuminating complication of this thesis comes from Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe,* mentioned earlier.
[99] See Peter Marshall's chapter "Remembering the Dead: Commemoration and Memory in Protestant Culture", in *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

The polysemy and ambivalence of the play are indicative of an era fraught with religious upheaval and controversy. In her miraculous, almost Christ-like (Lancashire 272) return as a revenant, and the treatment of her corpse as an adored fetish we find traces of the Catholic doctrines of afterlife, as we will see later in this chapter. Thus, independent of confessional identity, based on the literary tradition, the Lady was most likely perceived as a martyr-like figure. As opposed to this, Zimmerman places her as an accomplice to the crime that befell her body. "But if Govianus is implicated in the unholy desire of the Tyrant, it is the saintly Lady herself who stokes their passion by establishing her dead body as a kind of trophy" (Zimmerman 228). This comes very close to what is today called "victim blaming" in cases of rape, an entirely unacceptable and untenable position. Zimmerman further posits that the Lady's corpse, due to the artificial decoration of jewels and paint, comes to resemble the strumpet, arguing that the play intentionally blurs the boundaries between saint and strumpet. It is most interesting to recall here John Bale's, the former Carmelite friar's preaching, who called relic worship "the whoredom of the spirit" (Bale in Walsham, 124). This meaning could be implied as well, but less emphatically, compared to the Lady-saint image. In my view, the resurrection-like appearance of the Lady, wearing a great crucifix, tilts the meaning of her body towards the sacred relic. After all, the multiple religious layers of the play clash, until it becomes perfectly undecided and ambiguous. Zimmerman herself admits in her conclusion, that "the ideological confusions of *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* foreclosed the possibility of doctrinal orthodoxy despite the play's ostensible condemnation of idolatry" (Zimmerman 235). This "ostensible condemnation of idolatry" needs a closer inspection. The concept of the "idol" is already ideological, implicating the entire anti-theatricality debate, but if we replace it with the concept of the relic, things will become more nuanced and historically correct. If we consider the Lady's corpse as an idol, the evil worship will be explicable, but not the Ghost's pledge, because idols were dead, without anima. In this approach, there is no explanation for the "desperation with which the Lady's spirit seeks to rescue this corpse" (227). Only if we regard her a *purgatorial* spirit, which, of course, adds to the "ideological confusion" (Ibid) of the play. But if we consider the Lady's body a relic, the entire Catholic discourse of corporeality becomes open for discussion, entailing the belief that the relic contained the sacred spirit, or persona of the dead saint, in its every detail (see Marika Rasanen below, page 91). It does not make the Tyrant less vile, but a bit more Catholic. Hence, the Ghost-corpse dichotomy becomes suddenly explicable. Therefore, in my view, the Lady's body should be considered within the discourse of the relic, as it will be shown. The concept of the "idol" is ideologically fraught, while the use of the notion of "relic" offers a historically more objective analysis of a complex phenomenon.

Another intriguing perspective for reading the Lady's body is based on Jennifer Waldron's analysis of Thomas Dekker's *Virgin Martyr,* although the problematic of the corpse is not discussed here, only the virgin saint - tyrant opposition. What makes Waldron's argumentation so notable is the deconstruction of the myth about the non-materiality of Protestantism. In fact, her entire book, *Reformations of the Body – Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theatre* is dedicated to this topic. By relocating the locus of worship and sacrifice into the bodies of believers, instead of the Host and the Mass, through the image of the "living temple", which is a biblical reference,[100] Protestant believers are to imitate Christ daily, in acts of charity and a chaste life. Her argumentation details, with convincing power, the great difference between Thomas Dekkers' earlier works, and his later saint play, *The Virgin Martyr,* in 1622. This latter is important here for a comparative purpose on the topic of martyr-saint plays. Waldron in this chapter elucidates, how virginity and chastity were symbolic discourses within which the body politic of Queen and country were understood during Elizabeth.

> Within the Elizabethan symbolic traditions that were formative for Dekker, who received his first payment from Henslowe in 1598, images of chaste female bodies largely contributed to a unifying English Protestant mythology. This specifically political resonance complicates the question of whether Dorothea's virginity is necessarily a Catholic effect. In addition to literary and visual portraits of the Virgin Queen in various guises, countless public and private entertainments allegorized chastity as national virtue [...] chastity figured Reformed truth, standing against the "whoredom" and tyranny of Roman Catholicism. (Waldron 181-82)

Given that the topos of chastity is so characteristic of the martyr-saint play, and Elizabethan culture alike, Zimmerman's claim, that the strumpet could be blurred with the saint in a saint play, seems entirely untenable. The binary of a chaste-Protestant England and a corrupt, whorish Catholic foreign state was common parlance. But with James I's ascension to the throne the whole political situation has changed. Instead of aligning himself with his Protestant subjects, as Waldron related, James took pains to express his explicit demand for uncurbed and unlimited power. When he ceremoniously entered the city of London, on 15th March 1604, the city welcomed him with a city pageant, cowritten by Dekker and Ben Jonson. "Dekker's description of the event was entitled *The Magnificent Entertainment Given to King James* and was printed soon afterward in three contemporaneous quarto editions" (Waldron 183). Out of the seven archways, where the King was stopped to listen to the ceremonious speeches, three were designed by Dekker. He constructed a metaphor, in which London was a bride to James I. This marital metaphor, as Waldron relates, enabled the City with both rights and duties, but

[100] 1Corinthians 6,19-20

first of all, it entailed the importance of *consent,* similarly to early modern marital legislation. Nevertheless, after the "marriage", the consent of the bride was never asked again. James I had other intentions, and as he wrote in his *Basilikon Doron* "Your selves haue chosen him unto you, thereby renounceing *for ever all priviledges*, by your willing consent out your hands" – emphasis mine (James I, 69). Thus, James I soon disappointed his bride, and Dekker's change of tone in his later works is ostensible. In *The Virgin Martyr* (1622)*,* for instance, the figure of the Tyrant bears striking similarities with the King, "approaching saying the unsayable about James" (Waldron 196). What is even more remarkable in the play, as Waldron elucidates, is that the *locus of the sacred* is not in the person of the Ruler; a prerogative James demanded for himself as a quasi-Christ like ruler, but in the person of an ordinary citizen. The chastity of Dorothea, as Waldron claims, becomes a metaphor for political resistance to tyranny. With this historically specific context in mind, what should we make of Owens' claim that "The theatrical body of post-Reformation drama was, arguably, a desacralized body, its status uncertain and unfixed, and hence open to new semiotic configurations" (Owens 87)? Considering Waldron's conclusions as to the corporeal investments of Protestantism in everyday life and theatre, the term desacralization does not seem to apply. Now one question remains: can we extend some of the implications of Waldron's analysis to *The Maiden's Tragedy?* In my estimation the answer is yes. The two plays are only eleven years apart, both were written during the same regime, and within the same genre of the saint play. If chastity and virginity were the Elizabethan symbols for the Protestant nation of England, and the rather feminine Tyrant[101] who does not really harm anyone, evokes the figure of James I, than *The Maiden's Tragedy* very likely carries a similar, wary critique of the regime as *The Virgin Martyr* does. Yet, we still cannot account for the very special, necrophiliac scenes, which are probably unmatched in the extant early modern plays. In my view, the concept of the relic offers a viable explanation for that. In what follows, I will concentrate on the relic-like nature and treatment of the Lady's body and the concomitant implications.

Keith Thomas postulates that "[i]n England the medieval stories of sufferers cured by relics and images had not been forgotten. They were still the subject of popular literature and commemorated in the sculpture and carvings of many village churches" (Thomas 466). Even more importantly, the campaign against popish priests after 1586 only increased their attraction amongst lay folks. "In the compass of half a year" contemporary sources relate, "no fewer […]

[101] For an elaboration of this idea see Kevin Crawford's article, "'All his intents are contrary to man': Softened Masculinity and Staging in Middleton's 'The Lady's Tragedy", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England,* 2003, Vol. 16 (2003), 101-129.

were by that means reconciled to the Church of Rome, than five hundred persons: some have said three or four thousand" (Thomas 467). As Thomas expounds, the failure of the Protestant clergy to perform miracles jeopardized their prestige as men of God and led to a nostalgia for traditional belief. I believe, this Catholic nostalgia is tangible in Jacobean plays. The anti-Catholic legislation of Elizabeth and the burning of priests had another very significant consequence: as Walsham elucidates in her study, it helped to "produce" new relics, an "ever expanding reservoir of new relics engendered by the executions of priests and laypeople who sheltered them" (Walsham 2011, 127). The gruesome tortures, dismembering and disembowelling these "traitors" were subjected to, "only fuelled the spontaneous canonization of these priests as saints and fostered the enthusiastic pursuit of their relics" (128). All this boils down to the important conclusion that the veneration of relics was not part of a long-forgotten Catholic past, but it was a topic still relevant and stirring emotions as of 1611. Another peculiarity of the English landscape of relics is their uncontained nature. Although the integrity of a certain relic was normally decided by long procedures of canonization,[102] through the authority of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, this was impossible in England due to the shortage of Catholic priests. Thus, the unruly relic was transgressing the boundaries of the church, sometimes to be found in laymen's private possession. As Walsham relates, "A significant side-effect of the Reformation was to transfer relics from the custodianship of monasteries and churches into private hands and domestic settings" (Walsham 2010, 126). And this has definite implications to the play in discussion here. The Lady was a virgin saint, who rather killed herself, than accept the Tyrant's love. The Tyrant, in a mad fit, which he calls "a new joy" visiting him in spite of death (4.2.33) decides to steal her body from the grave. Everyone around him has misgivings about robbing a grave, Memphonius even assumes that "His soul has got a very dreadful leader" (4.3.1), implicating demonic possession, but the soldiers are subjected to his tyranny so he can go through with his plan. But even this theft has specific antecedents in church history, which makes it worth a short excursion. Patrick J. Geary in his *Furta Sacra* elaborates on the medieval custom of *translation* of a saint's relics: this meant the stealing of the highly valued relics of a saint from one monastery or chapel and relocating it in another. His book discusses ninth-tenth century phenomena, historically far removed from the sixteenth, nevertheless an interesting piece of information was striking enough to make a link with this present study: accounts of these *translations* many times mention Englishmen as the thieves.

[102] In lieu of martyrs, kings' and rulers' remains could have been canonized as sacred relics, hence is Hamlet's remark referring to his father's "canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death, [Have] burst their cerements" (*Hamlet* 1.4.47-9).

There was a logical explanation for this, because in England there was both a shortage of saints around the tenth century, and a great demand for relics. These facts lead Geary to conclude, that "enough Anglo-Saxons must have been combing Northern Europe for relics that hagiographers could introduce them into their accounts to explain how relics had been acquired…" (Geary 51). Based on this, the presence of the wide variety of Roman and Southern-European relics in English churches and monasteries were not always the result of legal commerce, but the handiwork of professional relic-thieves. Relic theft was a fruitful and rewarding business in the ninth century, as Geary explains (52). But what could be the purpose of these relocations? As mentioned earlier, the presence of the earthly remains of a saint was imbued with special powers in religious imagination. As Marika Rasanen claims,

> According to the commonly shared theological concept, a saint, from the moment of the death, continued to live *both in heaven and on earth* in his or her corpse and every piece of it. The relic was the material representation of the Saints' presence in the place where it was located. (Rasanen 10 – emphasis mine)

She goes on to expound that the presence of the saint had a material, and an allegorical aspect as well. This conceptualization could account for the seeming contradiction between presence and absence in the play: if the Lady lived on both in heaven and on the earth, then it is obvious that the disturbance around her body caused her pain in eternity. This explanation only works within a Catholic logic, of course, but as Thomas has shown to us, this way of thinking was not at all forgotten. Furthermore, the veneration of relics had very strong emotional, quasi-erotic[103] import which makes this analogy perfectly fitting here. The Lady's corpse in its materiality was able to inspire affection and desire; Middleton here depicts disturbingly real carnal drives on the part of the Tyrant. As Rasanen relates, the relic could perform all the miracles that the living saint had been able to (Ibid). Considering the allegorical aspect, we can see that her relics ultimately cured the community, paradoxically, by killing the Tyrant with a poisoned kiss. But this was only possible not by the agency of the corpse, as Lodhia states (Lodhia 148), but by the appropriation of the corpse as a puppet, manipulated by her husband. In this respect the Lady's Ghost, being immaterial, is quite helpless, all she could do was warning Govianus of the abuse of her dead body. In the final scenes, both men try to exploit the relic for their own purposes: the Tyrant makes sexual advances on her, while Govianus employs the body as a

[103]I do not wish to reiterate the already proliferating literature on the psychoanalytical reading of Medieval Catholic corporeality, and especially the experience of the mystics. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1991) or David Hillman, *Shakespeare's Entrails – Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

murderous tool in killing the Tyrant. The Lady's Ghost is, nevertheless, appeased with the outcome.

LADY'S GHOST: My truest love,
Live ever honoured here, and blessed above. [*Exit the Lady's Ghost] (*5.2.154-55)

The Tyrant is dead by the poisonous kiss, and Govianus is returned to the throne. The final scene brings about political restoration, by the bodily sacrifice of the Lady, even if her corpse – her relic – was manipulated into a means of revenge. In this reading, the curative powers of the relic are not denied in this play, maybe they are even implicitly emphasized. But there is a critique offered as well: the Tyrant and Govianus, in their manipulations of the Lady's body are shown in a grotesque, unflattering light, which eventually renders them alike.

Manipulations of relics were not unknown to early modern people: in fact, this was a recurring element in the reformers' tirades against this popish custom. And the manipulation of relics is the exact idea which leads us toward an analysis of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi.* Oppitz Trotman writes that "The decaying or dying body has a tyrannous presence on Webster's stage" (Oppitz-Trotman 164). The play itself was considered melodramatic, and its playwright aberrant by most of its critics, as D. C. Gunby relates in his summary of critical reception (Gunby 18-20). T.S. Eliot wrote that "Webster was much possessed by death/And saw the skull beneath the skin/And breastless creatures underground /Leaned backwards with a lipless grin" (T.S. Eliot 53-4). Luckily, later criticism began to acknowledge Webster as one of the greatest playwrights of his era.[104] Amongst them is Todd Borlik, arguing that Webster's play manifests an express Catholic nostalgia.

> But beneath the recurrent Catholic-baiting in his Italian tragedies, I would argue that the playwright caters to contemporary nostalgia for these outlawed rituals and sought to appease that sentiment in part by devising elaborate theatrical spectacles. (Borlik 149)

I concur with him, with the addition, that this nostalgia is an aftermath of collective trauma, which does not eliminate the possibility of *caricaturing* the institutional trappings of the veneration of relics, nevertheless. These two effects walk hand in hand, to engender a disturbingly familiar world of the uncanny. To begin with, we need to be reminded of what the relic/fetish meant to its worshippers. Afterwards we will try to unravel the importance of the eerie fetish of dead bodies and body-parts in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Were they really unhinged

[104] See David Gunby "The Critical Backstory" in *The Duchess of Malfi – A Critical Guide* ed. Christina Luckyj (Continuum International Publishing, 2011), 14-42.

from their sacred meaning, as Owen assumes, serving as free-floating signifiers, "open to new semiotic configurations" (Owens 2005, 87)? For this, I will need to scrutinize further tenets of the conceptual framework of the fetish. Two important features of the fetish, ordering the usage of the relic as well, are singularity and repetition.

> Second, and equally important, is the theme of singularity and repetition. The fetish has an ordering power derived from its status as the fixation or inscription of a unique originating event... The heterogenous components appropriated into an identity by a fetish are not only material elements; desires and beliefs and narrative structures establishing a practice are also fixed by the fetish, whose power is precisely the power to repeat its originating act of forging an identity… (Pietz 7).

This description is quite applicable to the use of the relic: One can consider the originating event in the saint's saintly, physical life, and in turn, by the rule of repetition her/his body parts, after the saint's death, were expected to enact miracles on behalf of the believers. The desires and beliefs of the worshippers, which were inscribed on the surface of the relic, created the whole tradition, to begin with, in lieu of a biblical basis, establishing a practice which then was institutionally fixed and reinforced by the Church's new agenda to reinforce the corporeal aspects of religion. Based on Keith Thomas' and Alexandra Walsham's research, cited previously in this work, I argue that the maimed body parts in revenge tragedies in general, and in *The Duchess of Malfi* in particular, were able to evoke the discourse of relic-worship in early modern audiences. In keeping with all this, the potential questions to be asked are: What kind of relics/fetishes are there in *The Duchess of Malfi,* and what is their role, to what effect are they staged in the play? What impact might they have had on the onstage onlookers, and on the offstage ones? In the order of appearance, first I would like to enumerate mentioning of relics, as a proof that they indeed were active part of the imagery of the play. The first one comes relatively late in the play, but it is the most direct one: the Duchess, who is a young widow, objects to being treated like a sacred object, enshrined, and shut away from everyday life. Her brothers vehemently object the idea of her marrying again, which she plans to do.

DUCHESS: Why should only I,
Of all the other princes of the world
Be cas'd up, like a holy relic? I have youth,
And a little beauty. (3.2.138-40)

The next mentioning of relics is again rather direct: if refers to kissing a skull. As a threatening omen of mishaps, the Duchess feels the parting kiss of Antonio too chilly.

DUCHESS: … your kiss is colder
Than I have seen an holy anchorite
Give to a dead man's skull. (3.5.85-7)

A third religious association too deserves mentioning, in which the Duchess refuses the idea of being treated like a dead idol, demanding agency to order her own fate.

DUCHESS: This is flesh, and blood, sir
'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man,
I do here put off all vain ceremony (1.2.372-75)

This latter excerpt is very significant for two reasons. First, because by rejecting the ceremony of holy matrimony in this scene, the Duchess is positioned in direct opposition to Catholic cleric authority. Second, she refuses to be read as the passive *body* of the virgin martyrs, idolized, silenced and possibly dead, but she struggles for her own liberty and agency. In her character, Webster created an outstanding female character, rather matchless in contemporaneous drama.

Antonio and the oldest son flee to Milan, to avoid the murderous intents of the Duchess' brothers. What comes afterwards is the most "sensationalist"[105] part of the play according to critics: Ferdinand devises various psychic and mental tortures, to "despair" his sister. The Fourth Act of the play has the most explicit resonances with relic worship, in which first a dead man's hand features, under the cloak of darkness, and then, the wax figures of the Duchess' family are mistaken for the real ones. The concept of the relic is very important here, because, according to Marika Rasanen's definition, quoted previously, in this *thing* life and death were enmeshed: the relic transgressed these boundaries in its liminality. And this is exactly what Webster's drama, and revenge tragedy per se, represented. According to Oppitz-Trotman,

> Webster's tragedies seem […] to show how the post-Reformation *inability* fully *to delete* the premise that there were interpenetrating communities of living and dead resulted in a threat to the distinction between life and death insofar as it could be represented in secular tragedy. (Oppitz-Trotman 165 – emphasis mine)

I have already shown that revenge tragedy is less secular than he surmised. The first object in the Fourth Act, which I consider relic-like, is the dead hand offered to the Duchess as a token of reconciliation with her brother. Literary scholarship has long considered the severed hand in *The Duchess of Malfi* as a trace of the discourse of witchcraft, and an obvious reference is made by the Duchess herself. "What witchcraft doth he practise, that he hath left/ A dead man's hand here?" (4.1.54) But the most possible source of this scene has long remained obscure, up until Albert H. Tricomi's essay, in which he introduces a very likely French source containing the elements of the severed hand, witchcraft, and lycanthropy as well. In my view, the discourse of witchcraft does not cancel out the possible relic-like resonances, on the contrary, they are able

[105] Linda Woodbridge makes the following claim: "there is no point denying that England's golden age of revenge drama [...] luxuriated in sensationalism." Woodbridge, *English Revenge Drama*, 167.

to amplify each other's effect, for a more ambiguous impression. As Thomas has shown in his *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, the early modern line dividing religion and magic was sometimes incredibly fine (Thomas 46). Ferdinand carefully instructs Bosola that the meeting should take place in darkness, according to his vow to never see the Duchess again. Kissing the dead hand entails the believers' naiveté on the Duchess' part, still believing in the possibility of an appeasement, and cynicism and cruelty on Ferdinand's part. The Duchess takes the hand for something that it is not: it is not the sign of life and healing for her, but the sign of further ruin and death. It resembles an unruly Catholic relic, which, taken out of its sacred context of curative power, becomes a malleable tool of evil manipulation. As Keith Thomas and Alexandra Walsham relate, this was a very common situation: the relics of the Church had to be closed off very carefully, lest they would be stolen and used for obnoxious magic rituals (Thomas 50). In this respect, the otherwise supposedly Catholic figure of Ferdinand eerily resembles a practitioner of Black Magic: a witch. Out of the repertoire of body fragments, severed hands are especially grizzly: they signify the absence of agency, the deprivation and impairment of the victim.[106] Furthermore, the hand in the darkness is offered for veneration and kissing, and this again makes it quite unmistakably relic-like. But in this case, the dead hand with Ferdinand's ring was just a prelude to a more horrifying spectacle: when the Duchess asks for light, she is faced with the wax imitations of the dead bodies of her husband and children, which she perceives as the real bodies. Although the Duchess does not know about their artificial nature, she nevertheless recalls a certain practice of witchcraft, in which an image of body is pinched with needles, to engender pain and sickness in the real person.

DUCHESS: … it wastes me more,
Than were't my picture, fashion'd out of wax,
Stuck with a magical needle, and then buried
In some foul dunghill (4.1.62-4)

Webster's reliance on contemporary sources was extensive, "even for a Jacobean" as Gunby put it (Gunby 16), and in his description of witchcraft practices he most possibly relied on contemporary witchcraft trials. Tricomi in his essay recalls the famous Lancashire witch trials, which took place in the same year Webster had begun writing *The Duchess* in 1612.

> All the witchcraft practices that the Duchess names in her distraught response to Ferdinand's mad revenge – the clay or wax images, the consuming or wasting away of the victim, and the victim's picture stuck with a needle or a pin – also appear in this account, and repeatedly during the Lancashire witch trials of 1612. (Tricomi, 353)

[106] For an extensive discussion of the "dead hand" motive, see Katherine Rowe, *Dead Hands – Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

To my knowledge, the relic-like resonance of this specific scene did hitherto evade the attention of scholarly commentary, but it is highly feasible and conforms to the *ars moriendi* atmosphere of the play. The effigy-like artificial corpses, as Oppitz-Trotman relates, were most possibly enacted by the actors of the real characters (Oppitz-Trotman 175) although the art of wax figures was also becoming more and more elaborate due to their role in funerary arts. In this former case, only the reader has the upper hand by reading stage directions: the live audience would only have perceived the artifice of this scene, when Ferdinand related it verbally a few dozen lines later. But the Duchess, who was not in the know, became indeed "plagued in art". In her deepest despair, realizing her complete helplessness, she utters these lines:

DUCHESS: I account this world a tedious theatre,
For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will. (4.1.83-4)

As we will see in the next chapter, her despair does *not* lead to a denial of divine providence, as Dollimore posited about revenge tragedy universally,[107] because in the end, she dies a good death, as a quasi-Protestant martyr, at the hands of her Catholic brothers' henchman. This outcry, in my view, is rather the final realization, that she cannot claim agency for herself. Unwittingly she likens her life to those wax puppets who are made to *play* a part in her demise. The only thing she can choose is now, *how* to die, because from this point she wants to die, and soon. Dying well is the only prerogative left from her heritage of Dukedom, which was appropriated by the Pope. This denouement leads her to even question the essence of her existence, to which the only answer from Bosola is an ekphrasis-like description of the mortality of humans. Bosola, before murdering the Duchess, turns a blind eye to her social position, lest he should have pity on her, as later he indeed resents his deed.

DUCHESS: Who am I?
BOSOLA: Thou art a box of worm seed, at best, but a salvatory of green mummy: what's this flesh? a little crudded milk, fantastical puff-paste: our bodies are weaker than those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in: more contemptible; since ours is to preserve earth-worms: didst thou ever see a lark in a cage? such is the soul in the body… (4.2.123-27)

[107] Dollimore's whole study is based on the precepts of ideology criticism, the presupposition that in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama the foundations of religious and political ideology are exposed, as being in the process of crumbling away. Although epistemological crisis and subversion are essential concepts in discussing early modern drama, and part of Dollimore's theory still bears great explanatory power, lately the picture has been complicated. More recent research refutes the "disenchanted" theatre theory, showing that certain playwrights of early modern theatre indeed had reforming intentions in carrying out Protestant ideas, and there was a real discursive commerce between the pulpit and the stage as David Kastan, Jeffrey Knapp, Alec Ryrie, Deborah Shruger, Jennifer Waldron, et al. has shown us. (For more details on the respective works see Bibliography)

This description is best understood within the very common contemporary discourse of the contemplation of death, which was a recommended activity for early modern people.

> The English Church, both before and after the Reformation, placed great stress on spiritual preparation. This was to be undertaken as much by the living as by the dying: all were to hold themselves in daily expectation of their own demise. These devotional exercises were assisted by an extraordinary range of visual artefacts of the *memento mori* type, together with moralising texts, such as 'Erthe upon Erthe'... (Llewellyn 19).

The contemplation of death and mortality, inspired by paintings, prayer book illustrations and artifacts of all kinds was supposed to evoke piety and religious inclinations in the believers, a readiness to die in faith. Nigel Llewellyn argues, that "The Reformist laws seem to have given an impetus to images of the *memento mori* type, just when the state was actively discouraging about icons in their traditional Roman role as means to intercession" (Llewellyn 19). He then continues to illuminate the very important early modern principle of the two bodies of a person. Human beings were not considered a unity, neither in life, nor death, but they were supposed to possess a social body and a natural body. "In the process of dying, the death of the natural body was followed by efforts to preserve the social body as an element in the collective memory" (Ibid 47). This paradigm sheds light on the tradition of the *transi* tomb: the custom of putting up funerary monuments, which immortalise the dead person both in their social body, and another version of them, as a corpse in decaying, with worms, snails and toads in the skull (Llewellyn 46). Bosola's description here exactly confirms to the description of such a *transi* tomb. To this mental picture, however, the Duchess answers by twice reinforcing her social position, or the social body, which she will preserve even in death.

DUCHESS: Am not I thy Duchess? (4.2.133)
DUCHESS: I am Duchess of Malfi still. (4.2.141)

Interestingly, this conversation between later victim and executioner contains one more, this time comic reference to contemporaneous funerary art. In an exchange, which almost sounds as a friendly teasing each other, Bosola refers to a new fashion of depicting dead princes.

DUCHESS: Why, do we grow fantastical in our death-bed?
Do we affect fashion in the grave?
BOSOLA: Most ambitiously. Princes' images on their tombs
Do not lie as they were wont, seeming to pray
Up to Heaven: but with their hands under their cheeks,
As if they died of the tooth-ache… (4.2.153-58)

This was a novel, contemporary posture for Protestant funeral sculptures, which became prominent after Archbishop Matthew Hutton was first immortalized in this reclining pose on

his funeral effigy in 1606. This stiff bodily posture had the advantage of allowing the sculptor to place a Bible (or a book, but it was *the* book, most likely) in the hand of the figure.[108] This comic reference, which might have provoked laughter in the audience, buttresses Oppitz-Trotman's claim that revenge tragedy, mostly by the second phase of the tradition,[109] had "inside-jokes". I do not regard the murder scene comic, but here and there we find traces of sarcasm, which substantiate his claim that it is "common wisdom that revenge tragedy borders continually on the laughable…" (Oppitz-Trotman 166), which we have already seen with Marston's *Antonio's Revenge.*

Ferdinand, by the presentation of forged dead bodies, succeeded in intimidating the Duchess into the acceptance of this fate. Watching the Duchess staring at the (assumedly) dead bodies of her beloved family must have produced an intense theatrical experience of identification. This scene also emphasizes that forged and real relics were almost indistinguishable, and they could produce the very same effect, because they worked by faith. Moreover, the play excels in the confusion of living and dead bodies: the seeming corpses were exposed as wax-imitations, and the strangled corpse of the Duchess, in Act four, is revived by Webster, for a few seconds, only to learn that her family is alive and well. It is as if Ferdinand and Webster alike experimented with the most feasible possibilities of representing death on stage, touching on and recalling various cultural texts in the process, such as funeral monuments and effigies. The ultimate effect amounts to a vast multimedial (and intertextual) tableau of death. As Attila Kiss puts it,

> …the violence of rhetoric (or, the rhetoric of violence), and the violated, abjected body are used in Renaissance drama as a representational technique, as a semiotic attempt, in order to surpass the limitations of language, to involve the spectator in

[108] I owe this information to Peter Sherlock, "Monuments and the Reformation" in *Memory and the English Reformation* eds. Cummings et al. (Cambridge, 2020), 168-184.

[109] Bowers classifies early and late revenge tragedies, I do not agree with his moral judgement, but still the distinction has good explanatory value concerning the evolution of the genre. "The differences between *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* on the one hand and *Hoffmann* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* on the other, show that forces were at work which were to change the technique and spirit of tragedy. […] The older Elizabethan drama of revenge was highly moral in that it raised (although infrequently attempted to solve) certain problems concerning man's life. The hero was set in a position which, as in *Hamlet,* wrenched his whole moral outlook. In *The Spanish Tragedy, Titus Andronicus,* and to an extent in *Antonio's Revenge,* tragedy came into the life of the hero with sufficient intensity to warp his character, drive him to insanity, and eventually to deal him ruin in victory. […] For the subject matter of the new drama, themes were chosen in which the interest lay in violent, far-fetched, and surprising situations. […] The earlier tragedy had had its share of horrible incidents but had used it as a background material, as attesting ground for the human spirit. The violence of these new plays is portrayed for its own sake. […] since the horror itself is all-important, the reaction of the spirit is neglected and the characters on the stage are too frequently inadequate for the situation." (Bowers 154-5) I have only two comments on this classification. It has been recently noted that later revenge tragedy provides a caricature of the earlier pieces of the genre, thus the excess and over-the top violence, such as in *Antonio's Revenge* might have served a function of satirical commentary. Moreover, it would be very difficult to see the Duchess of *The Duchess of Malfi* as an "inadequate" character.

a theatrical experience which overcomes the insufficiency of representation. (Kiss 2010, 118).

II/3 The Pyres of Smithfield – Martyrdom in Two Revenge Tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* and *The Duchess of Malfi*

In 1570 Pope Pius V issued the bull *Regnans in Excelsis,* which excommunicated Queen Elizabeth and deprived her of her right to rule. As Greenblatt put it, this was an invitation for English Catholics to rebel, made even more explicit when Pope Gregory "proclaimed that the assassination of England's heretic queen would not be mortal sin" (Greenblatt 2004, 79). This was the provocation that led to the anti-Catholic legislations beginning from 1581. "By 1585 it was treason to *be* a Catholic priest, and by law it was illegal (and after 1585 a capital offense) to harbour priests or, knowingly to give a priest aid or comfort" (Ibid 80). The upcoming years were the most dangerous and paranoid years under Queen Elizabeth's rule. Communities divided, families torn apart, friendships broken, with frequent raids on suspect recusant houses. And when clandestine operations, let alone priests in hiding[110] were detected, the punishment was extremely severe.

> That a man like Edmund Campion had been racked, dragged to Tyburn on a hurdle, hanged by the neck, mutilated, eviscerated while still alive and then drawn and quartered was just, necessary and even, given the threat Campion's mission posed, moderate. Such man, Burghley asserted, represented the tip of the Roman spear. (Anderson 3)

As David K. Anderson demonstrates throughout his book, the death of pious Catholics was predominantly perceived as martyrdom and birthed a sacrificial crisis in Elizabethan England. I argue that the heightened religious violence of the era contributed to the emergence of the genre of revenge tragedy, which is steeped in "sacrificial violence" (Anderson 6). The historical events of the 1580s cannot account for the entire revenge tradition, which spans well over into the next century, but I see a commerce of the two scaffolds here (i.e., the stage and the place of

[110]Jesuit priests would hide in safe houses of Catholic supporters. These safe houses had so called "Priest Holes" built-in in case there was a raid. "Priest holes were built in fireplaces, attics and staircases and were largely constructed between the 1550s and the Catholic-led Gunpowder plot in 1605. Sometimes other building alterations would be made at the same time as the priest's holes so as not to arouse suspicion. Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire was a safe house for Catholic priests and home of the Jesuit priest Henry Garnet for almost 14 years. It boasts several priest holes built by Nicholas Owen, a lay brother of the Jesuits and a skilled carpenter. [...] He was instrumental in creating a network of safe-houses for priests during the early 1590s and for engineering the escape of the Jesuit Father John Gerard from the Tower of London in 1597. Shortly after the failure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, Owen was arrested at Hindlip Hall and then tortured to death in the Tower of London in 1606." Ben Johnson, "Priest Holes", history-uk.com Retrieved: 21st January, 2023. See also John Gerard, Fr. *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest* (Ignatius Press, 2012).

execution), at its moment of taking off, a mutual borrowing that has already been addressed by scholarship.[111]

The death and conviction of martyrs cannot be understood, nor interpreted outside the discourse of martyrdom. Tibor Fabiny argues in a similar vein, writing that Christian hagiography can only be understood within the logic of *biblical typology* (Fabiny 2022, 110). All the other efforts risk crude misinterpretation. This discourse has a great tradition both in medieval England, and in continental Europe.

> The collective dynamic of martyrdom helped shape the character of early modern Christianity. [...] Rather, martyrs intensified every other disagreement. [...] Bound to the stake or standing at the scaffold, martyrs were the living embodiment of what they believed and practiced as members of religious communities. (Gregory 2001, 6)

The first element of this discourse is the proto-type of martyrdom: Jesus Christ, and his *passion*. He was followed by the second element of this discourse: the martyr saints of the early church, killed by Rome. According to Gregory's formerly cited extensive study, *Salvation at Stake,* in medieval Europe, due to the dominance of the Catholic church, there was no need for martyrs. "As non-Christian enemies disappeared, so did opportunities for Christian martyrdom. […] Between 1254 and 1481, popes canonized not a single person who had died a violent death" (Gregory 30). The third basic tenet of the discourse of martyrdom is the culture of *ars moriendi*, which overarches the medieval and the early modern period. The Church had its own doctrines for inculcating perseverance in suffering, and to teach what Good Death looked like. Contemplating mortality, as mentioned earlier, was an advisable everyday practice, partly as a method to fend off sudden death, which was a universal horror to early modern people. It is crucial to consider this whole discursive background in order to avoid misinterpretations. I selected one such misfired reading to illustrate my point, carried out by Cynthia Marshall. Her reading is untenable due to the crude generalisation and the over-imposition of psychoanalytic explanation.

Cynthia Marshall in *The Shattering of the Self* posits a psychoanalytic reading, saying that John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* must be examined for its motivation to appeal for a jouissance, a sadistic and masochistic readerly pleasure in the torments of martyrs. She proposes a "scandalous pleasure" in reading Foxe's martyrology. Introducing her discussion solely with Gardiner's martyrdom in Spain, a story depicted in grisly details indeed, she sidesteps the fact

[111] Molly Smith, "The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *The Spanish Tragedy";* James Shapiro, "'Tragedies naturally performed': Kyd's representation of violence," *Staging the Renaissance: Representations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama,* ed. David Scott Kastan (New York: Routledge, 1991), 99-113.

obvious for careful readers, that most of Foxe's accounts are about conversion stories, reports of preaching and doctrine, as well as general accounts of life-events, all too boring for assumedly blood-thirsty readers. *Actes and Monuments* was immensely popular, nevertheless. An additional move, that is in my view untenable and stems from a superimposition of given theories, is that she admittedly attempts to analyse Foxe's writings independent of their institutional and discursive context, saying that she "means to direct attention past its institutional moorings" (Cynthia Marshall 88). Taken out of their discursive embeddedness (that is, the discourse of martyrdom) these stories can be brought to mean anything. Brad S. Gregory refutes such reductionist and presentist understandings of early modern religious phenomenon in the *Introduction* to his book, *Salvation at Stake.*

In what follows, I will delineate the various meanings present at the execution of religious dissenters. To begin with, we know for a fact that religious executions were very difficult to contain and control. There were at least three perspectives from which the martyrs' death was open for interpretation. First of all, there was the aspect of the authorities there: as Alexandra Walsham elucidates, the punishment of heresy was motivated by a *charitable hatred*, considered as the sacro-saint obligation of authorities, ever since Augustinus laid down its doctrinal foundations in the 5th century (Walsham 2006, 2, 5). In the eyes of the ruling Church, heretics were deemed as contamination, a stain on the fabric of society that only can be purged by coercion and fire. David K. Anderson elucidates in his book that even John Calvin was not exempt from this thinking: Michael Servetus, who angered Catholics and Protestants alike with his printed attacks on the Trinity and child baptism, was eventually burned by Calvin's Geneva. "For many Catholics and Lutherans, it may have simply been a point of irony that these Swiss sacramentarians had finally found someone too radical even for their outlandish tastes" (Anderson 38). The point is, that the executions were initially carried out in good conscience on the part of the authorities. This was in stark contradiction with the martyrs' perception of their own death. Religious convicts very often spoke up in their dying moments, glorifying their faith and commitment. Thus, redefining the nature of their death as a sacrifice for faith, many times they could control and subvert the meaning of the execution. Religious executions could be "appropriated and subverted by the very individual they were designed to annihilate..." (Walsham 2006, 79). Were they heretics or martyrs? This was a basic dilemma, contingent upon the perspective of the beholder. The sacrificial meaning was underlined by the victim's comport in the face of death: if the martyr underwent the torturous death with boldness, or even transcendent joy, it was taken as a proof that God was on their side, strengthening them, in a

Christ-like martyrdom. In what follows I shortly outline possible meanings and reactions that could emerge in the crowd watching the religious executions.

The reactions of the onlookers showed a great variety. As Walsham relates,

> Those who saw Catholic priests hung, drawn and quartered in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I were also often not content to be passive spectators. People shouted 'a devil, a devil' [...] A common porter placed his foot on the throat on the recusant gentleman John Rigby to stop calling upon Jesus to receive his soul. At Gloucester in 1586, Stephen Rowsham was assailed by 'a graceless company of apprentices and youths' who pelted the martyr with excrement collected from the local dunghill. (Walsham 112)

But then, there was the other party, who shared the convictions of the victims. They were the ones mourning and weeping at the scaffold, and in the case of Catholics trying to get hold of relics from the executions' sites, such as pieces of clothing, or even parts of the body (Walsham 128). But the third category of onlookers was the largest: the volatile crowd. Anderson writes about "the genuinely interesting fact that the crowds attending the burning of a martyr tended to be neither uniformly sympathetic nor uniformly unsympathetic to the victim, but instead were notably diverse. [...] The crowd was mixed, unstable and vulnerable to appeals from either side" (Anderson 66).

Although Walsham, at the beginning of her book *Charitable Hatred,* seems intent on reconciling us with the idea that religious persecution was a "logical, rational and legitimate" (Walsham 1) attitude, only odd and repugnant to modern sensibilities, by the second half of her book she relates different facts. The records of executions show a growing tendency for a need of concealment on the part of the authorities, and, as Anderson argues, by the end of the sixteenth century the death of martyrs was surrounded by growing sympathy. It was not rare for onlookers to convert to the victim's confessional side. It is clear from Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* that the use of coercion rather undermined, than gained support to the Marian government.

> ... religious execution had become an even less reliable tool by the time the Elizabethan government began hanging and mutilating Jesuits and priests, a strategy that had to be used with care, and a fair degree of dissembling. (Anderson 67)

A good example for the counter-productivity of religious executions is the case of Catholic dissenters. The old faith was not uprooted by the burning of Catholic priests and those who hid them, but it helped to revive Catholicism, even producing new believers (Thomas 403, cited earlier).

All this supports my argument that the ambivalence around the martyrs' death was indeed part of a collective religious trauma. The body of the martyrs became an ideological battleground, within which the forces of emerging and residual ideology clashed, reproducing the cultural trauma. We are faced now with the question: What does revenge tragedy have to do with acts of martyrdom? Based on Anderson's formulation of the Girardian idea of "sacrificial crisis" (Anderson 9), the term he employs to describe the growing ambivalence around the martyrs' death, I argue that revenge tragedy stages this specific tenet of collective religious trauma. Margaret E. Owens writes in her investigation of theatrical execution scenes, that they are "symptomatic of the uneasy haunting of the post-Reformation stage by the hagiographic paradigms of earlier theatrical traditions" (Owens, 141). It needs to be added that after 1585 hagiography does not only appear as an "uneasy haunting", but it was an actual, everyday event, as I have already extensively shown, in the ardent persecution of Catholic priests.

On a topical level, there is another, more direct link between the discourse of martyrdom and the genre of revenge tragedy. Revenge tragedy is immensely preoccupied with questions of the Law,[112] jurisdiction, divine and human justice. A precondition to martyrdom was a relatively passive attitude, a Stoic acceptance of the punishment meted out by the state, and a deep-seated belief that it is God who will take retribution on the sinners. The martyrs give over the right for revenge to the Absolute, who will pay back to sinners in due time and in his own unfathomable ways. But the concept of divine retribution made the legitimacy of the state's right to enforcement questionable: how could the State be the hand of God in punishment, if it strikes the seemingly righteous?[113] This was a dangerous and subversive idea, and it is not by coincidence that martyr-like figures usually die by the hands of pagan (as in *Titus Andronicus)* or seemingly Catholic (as in *The Duchess of Malfi)* rulers. Besides, it was strictly forbidden and sanctioned to stage executions resembling the official executions of the State, such as hanging.

[112] As has been mentioned, Derek Dunne convincingly elucidates the interconnectedness of early modern legislative change in England and the emergence of revenge tragedy in *Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy and Early Modern La*w.

[113] Girard conceptualizes the sacrosanct workings of Law as public vengeance. This was obviously understood as the God-given prerogative of the State in early modern society. "We owe our good fortune to one of our social institutions above all: our judicial system which serves to deflect the menace of vengeance. The system does not suppress vengeance; rather it effectively limits it to a single act of reprisal, enacted by the sovereign authority specializing in this particular function. The decisions of the judiciary are invariably presented as the final word on vengeance. […] Once the concept of interminable revenge has been formally rejected, it is referred to as private vengeance. The term implies the existence of a public vengeance, a counterpart never made explicit. […] Thus, public vengeance is the exclusive property of well-policed societies, and our society calls it the judicial system." Renée Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* 15. This aptly underlines Dunne's argumentation that revenge tragedy most of the time deals in questions of private and public justice.

A good illustration for this could be Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy,* the play pioneering the entire revenge genre (apart from the earlier, but lost Ur-Hamlet). In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the Knight Marshal of Spain, Hieronimo, is chasing justice for the murder of his son, but he finds only injustice, which eventually drives him mad. Hieronimo quotes the Bible, *Vindicta Mihi* ("Vengence is mine", 3.13.1), while he is holding Seneca's *Agamemnon* in his hands – demanding legal justice for the murder of his only son. This first utterance, as evident for contemporary spectators, amounts to blasphemy, as Hieronimo appropriates God's retributive position, when the starts to plot the killing of the culprits in the high elite. But the object of the investigation here is not Kyd's popular play, but two other pieces of the revenge tradition, William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1592) and *The Duchess of Malfi* written by John Webster (1613). To illustrate how pervasive the allusions of martyrdom were in revenge tragedy, I should mention here Middleton's *The Maiden's Tragedy* as well, but I do not wish to analyse it now for two reasons. The play has been extensively examined in a previous chapter, moreover, the Lady commits suicide, which was another road to martyrdom, as the maiming and death of Lavinia and the Duchess. Furthermore, I need to pin down that I do not consider these scenes as direct representations of religious execution: this would have been far too dangerous an endeavour. As James Shapiro extensively elucidates in his article, to depict the sacred workings of the state's punitive system was strictly forbidden (Shapiro 100). Thus, the resonances of martyrdom on early modern stage were indirect; these were thinly veiled allusions, nevertheless recognizable ones, in my view. There were always other cultural discourses, woven together with these banned representations, such as the Senecan rhetorical tradition, or the Ovidian mythology as in the case of *Titus Andronicus.* Thus, under these pretexts sensitive issues could be staged as well. First, I will discuss *Titus Andronicus,* and the reasons why I read Lavinia's brutal victimization as martyrdom, and then I will examine *The Duchess of Malfi* in a similar manner.

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge the textual-cultural overdetermination of the victimization of Lavinia. I will touch upon the most important ones, omitting those that have no close relevancy for this work.[114] The most salient element in this respect is the overt Ovidianism of the play. The silenced and mutilated Lavinia, to help her father and uncle unravel the crime that was committed against her, brings Ovid's *Metamorphosis* physically on-stage and begins to page it frenetically. Finding the tale of Philomela, in this intense moment of

[114]The play also draws from various other Roman texts, including Virgil, Seneca, Plutarch, and Livy. (Jonathan Bate qtd. in Cora Fox, 108)

intertextuality, it becomes clear, that the poets have already "patterned" what befell her. In Titus' words,

TITUS: Ay, such a place there is where we did hunt –
O, had we never, never hunted there! –
Patterned by that the poet here describes,
By nature made for murders and for rapes. (4.1.57-8)

From the plethora of scholarly literature discussing the Ovidian sources of *Titus,* I consulted Cora Fox's recent book, *Ovid and the Politics of Emotion in Elizabethan England.* Fox elucidates that the "Ovidianism" of the play cuts deeper than previously observed, reaching beyond the fact that Lavinia's rape and mutilation are patterned on Philomela's demise. "Ovid's text models how subjects can seize agency in moments of extreme grief" (Fox 119). In this way, "the most important cultural work Ovidian intertextuality performed in the period was to define certain kinds of emotional experience as politically legitimate and central to an individual's construction of his or her autonomous self" (Fox 4).

The second, significant early modern discourse the victimization of Lavinia participates in, is the notion of the body politic in general, and that of the tongue in particular. Carla Mazzio, in her essay "Sins of the Tongue" recalls the numerous early modern homilies, preached about the sins of the tongue, amongst them Thomas Adam's *The Taming of the Tongue* (1619). While castigating the poisonous effects of unruly speech, Adams simultaneously acknowledges the necessity and importance of "venting". "How many hearts would burst, if thou had not given them vent!" (Adams qtd. in Mazzio, 55) This is exactly the concern of Lavinia's family: that thus silenced she could not express her grief and would go mad. Titus, her father considers the silent grief so detrimental, that he even suggests, Lavinia should kill herself.

TITUS: Thou map of woe, that thus dost talk in signs!
When thy poor heart beats with outrageous beating,
Thou canst not strike it thus to make it still.
Wound it with sighing, girl, kill it with groans;
Or get some little knife between thy teeth,
And just against thy heart make thou a hole… (3.2.12-7)
MARCUS: Fie, brother, fie, teach her not thus to lay
Such violent hands upon her tender life. (3.2.21-2)

The subsequent lines underline Natália Pikli's observation that the possible genre of the play is tragic farce. She observes that in these lines Titus frenetically repeats the words "hands"; the accumulative effect of it might have easily verged on the farcical (Pikli 21). As it will turn out, Lavinia would not opt for the traditional and patriarchal "solution" to the shame of deflowerment: suicide. She finds her agency otherwise, although I consider Fox's statement, that Lavinia becomes a revenger herself (Fox 112), a bit of an exaggeration.

Cutting out the tongue was a recurring element in revenge tragedies,[115] as a way of depriving a person of its agency, and by way of silencing subjectivity, even. Based on the premise that we construct ourselves and the world around us in linguistic means, it follows that deprivation of speech directly amounts to deprivation of subjectivity. Mazzio describes the tongue, as

> the member that gives vent to voice and subjectivity, that bridges the individual and the collective, [it] is also imagined to be a potentially autonomous and separate part of the self, a member that is always already dismembered. (Mazzio 55)

Such was the nervousness about the agency of the tongue in medieval Europe, that gossip was disproportionately severely punished by the Gossip's Bridle, a torturous and humiliating device placed on the head of the mostly female offenders. Feminist scholarship has extensively addressed the topic of Lavinia's mutilation,[116] let it suffice here, that the argument goes about the violent silencing of female voice by patriarchal society. This feminist reading is nevertheless complicated with invaluable insights by Cora Fox, who argues that due to the impotent rage the Andronicis experience in the face of horrible oppression, revenge is feminized in *Titus Andronicus,* a point she repeatedly emphasizes in her study. "When Titus is pushed to the limits of human suffering, he joins Hecuba and Philomela in the feminized role of the impotent victim who is transformed through a mysterious internal process into a revenger" (Fox 119). This *metamorphosis* is in fact the crux of the play.

I argue that there is a third early modern discourse relevant to *Titus Andronicus,* that of martyrdom. This is acknowledged by multiple scholars, one of the earliest is Cynthia Marshall, although her psychoanalytical explanation of martyrdom is crudely ahistorical, as mentioned earlier (see page 108). In the Fourth Chapter of her *The Shattering of the Self* (2002) Marshall applies a psychoanalytical theory on the spectacle of the mutilated Lavinia, while acknowledging the hagiographic tradition into which it is embedded (Cynthia Marshall 106-137). She reads the well-known explanations of masochism-joussaince-voyeurism into her victimization, completed with the assumption of pornographic intents of the play. I have multiple problems with her explanation, but I will only elucidate two of them. The first is a general one. Provided that psychoanalysis is a materialist school of inquiry, the explanation of

[115] Hieronimo bites out his own tongue in *The Spanish Tragedy* (4.4.192) and the revengers pluck out Piero's tongue in *Antonio's Revenge* (5.5.33), according to stage directions.

[116] A comparative reading of the two silent daughters, Lavinia and Cordelia, might yield interesting insights. Both of them are the apple of their father's eyes, both of them are relatively mute, and both of them have been said to show Christ-like features in their respective plays. For the description of Cordelia's "silence" see for example Judit Mudriczki's „Rhetorical and Poetical Conventions: Shakespeare's Arte of Poesy in the Love Contest and the Mock Trial Scene" in *Shakespeare's Art of Poesy in King Lear* (L'Harmattan, 2020)

theologically informed discourses, such as martyrdom, is simply outside of its expertise, even if it involves corporeality. Margaret E. Owens calls attention to the dangers of ahistoricism and essentialism in this critical thread, despite the lure of its compelling explanations (Owens 81). Furthermore, Alec Ryrie writes of Protestant - Christian experience as such.

> At the heart of the Protestant experience was this 'sense of contact with something other'. They spoke of engaging with – […] – a presence quite distinct from themselves, which could surprise, disturb, unnerve, frighten, comfort, or exalt. It is of course entirely appropriate for the historian to ask how those experiences were culturally constructed […] But if we do not at least permit the possibility that those experiences were authentic, we run the risk of belittling the experiences themselves, and of allowing the modern world's stunted spirituality be the yardstick by which we measure the past. […] *We must take their sense of contact with God seriously.* To evade it does violence not only to our sources, but to the men and women whose lives we are presuming to study. (Ryrie 2013, 14 – emphasis mine)

It was a divine presence, unfathomable for the materialist's eye, that compelled the martyrs, and not murky sexual drives. The second problem with Marshall's argument is the forced imposition of an Italian example on the English play. She claims that Lavinia's maimed body can be deemed as a sexually attractive spectacle because of the Italian saying, cited from Montaigne, "he does not know Venus in her perfect sweetness who has not lain with a cripple" (Montaigne in Marshall, 109). This is a crude generalization of a highly idiosyncratic phenomenon in my view. The Italians and their Catholic customs were considered as stinking popist tradition, one that repels a godly Protestant nation, not something worthy to be followed. One does not have to look further than the tyrants in the revenge tragedies, their sexual customs and appetites are always repellent: incest, necrophilia, and the likes. Lisa S. Starks-Estes follows the same line of argumentation in her subchapter "The Masochist as Christian Martyr", in *Violence, Trauma and Virtus.*

> In the narrative of Christian masochism, the spiritual is fused with the erotic, especially in scenarios involving extreme physical pain and traumatic mental anguish. These physical and mental torments lie at the heart of the erotic fantasies underlying Christian martyrdom… (Starkes-Estes 50)

In keeping with this idea, she interprets Lavinia's martyred signs in terms of a "sadomasochistic fantasy of the mutilated or tortured body of the martyr on display" (92). As opposed to this, Francis Barker takes a different tack, arguing that the shocking brutality of Shakespeare's Romans only serves as a distraction from the crimes of the English state which

> In defence of property and the establishes social order ... killed huge numbers of the people of England. [...] the sheer number of them estimable, men, women, and children in 'Shakespeare's England' were strung up on permanent or makeshift gallows by a hempen noose. Sometimes the spinal cord was snapped at once; or

> they hung by their necks until they suffocated or drowned; until their brains died of hypoxeia, or until the shock killed them. [...] Bleeding from their eyes. Thinking. Or they were crushed under slabs of stone and iron. (Barker 190)

If hanging sounds horrendous for modern sensibilities, then the punishment meted out for heresy, as exemplified by Campion's gruesome death cited above, was even more horrible. Dülmen relates in his book that each and every offence had its equivalent punishment, and quartering was the punishment meted out for treason (Dülmen 114). And being a Catholic *was* treason after 1585 in England. Thus, I argue, in reverse to what Barker wrote above, that *Titus Andronicus* does *not* distract attention from the workings of general state violence, but criticizes it in a very wary, implicit way, while gesturing at a very specific kind of execution: that is the butchering of religious dissenters, murdered innocently for their faith.

Because, for all the similarities between Philomela and Lavinia, there is one great difference, that is Shakespeare's invention: Lavinia has her hands chopped off, to prevent her from any creative way of telling the truth, as Philomela did in Ovid. I believe, the horrid sight of the mutilated bodies might be due to the commerce of meanings between the two scaffolds: the theatre and the place of execution. And while Lavinia cannot be considered as a martyr, in the most direct sense the Lady of *The Maiden's Tragedy* or the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi* are, but her maiming eerily recalls spectacles of the ritual dismemberment and torture the Catholic priests underwent after the 1580s, a treatment reserved for criminals up until then. Defiance of authority and censorship was not Shakespeare's thing: thus, the direct representations of religious topics, such as martyrdom were out of the question. Still, the play has abundant references to martyrdom, building up a discourse of martyrdom around the tortured figure of Lavinia. In what follows, I will try to shortly touch upon each of these allusions in the play. Jan Zysk observes, how Lavinia's body recalls the imagery of martyrdom, most prominently in the ways she resembles Christ in the Passion.

> Lavinia's 'martyred signs' also recall the wounded body of Christ as represented in biblical drama, particularly plays of the Passion and Resurrection. […] Like Christ, Lavinia is represented as a collection of wet wounds, gaping flesh, and broken bones; like his body, hers evokes shock and pity in those who gaze on it. (Zysk 5)

He further compares Lavinia's condition to the Towneley *Crucifixion'*s Christ, who identifies himself as a martyr,[117] with the exception that "Unlike the lamenting Christ, however, Lavinia

[117] „To whome now may I make my mone/When thay thus martyr me,/And sakles wille me slone/And bete me bloode and bone?" *(Crucifixio*, in *The Towneley Cycle: A Facsimile of Huntington MS HM 1*, ed. A.C. Cawley and Stanley Ellis (Leeds Texts and Monographs, 1976), fol. 87r. – qtd. in Zysk 5)

cannot speak" (Zysk 5). But her numbness only makes Lavinia even more Christ-like, because, as it is clear from the gospels, Christ did *not* lament at all. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53,7 – KJV).

I would like to point out a further metaphor concerning Lavinia's body, that evokes the (Catholic) imagery of Christ's passion. Titus, Lavinia, Marcus and young Lucius are sitting at the table eating, and Titus urges everyone to eat, so that they could sustain their physical strength for the sake of revenge. In this scene, Titus addresses his daughter as "Thou map of woe" (3.2.12). This is a very close allusion, in my view, to the well-known sacrificial motif of the *Charter of Christ*. As Miri Rubin relates, the usage of the image of the charter as a legal document, inscribed on a parchment, vouchsafing certain rights/goods to the beneficiaries, the Charter of Christ "establishes an exchange of Christ's sacrificed body which brought the hope of redemption […] Christ's skin is the parchment, the wounds, its letters, the blood, the sealing wax…" (Rubin 306-7). In my view, Lavinia, as the "map of woe" reflects a very similar imagery, in which the wounded body is represented as a map, suitable for deciphering its meaning, to understand its woe. This hermeneutical process, in which the human body is the text to be deciphered in lieu of words, assumes the form of the emerging medical science, with a very special antecedent to it: early modern anatomy.[118]

Apart from this, the transitive verb "to martyr someone", comes up three times in connection with Lavinia. But the first reference to the discourse of martyrdom, as I see, is Titus' mentioning of "faggots" in 3.1.69. This word could be considered neutral, were it not followed by the recurring mentioning of "martyrdom". A few lines later Lucius asks Lavinia, "Who hath martyred thee?" (3.1.81), and later the same question comes from Titus (3.1.107.). The third mention of the word is found in the previously discussed banket scene, in the Third Act, when Titus claims to interpret Lavinia's "martyred signs" (3.2.36). Moreover, what I consider as a further reference to martyrdom is the Clown's mentioning of Saint Steven to Tamora in 4.4.42. "God and Saint Steven give you godden." Saint Steven was the first Christian martyr in the New Testament, the killing of whom was witnessed by no less but the Apostle Paul, in his former Hebrew name Saul. Interestingly, Titus calls the butchering of Chiron and Demetrius

[118] Michael Neill writes extensively on early modern anatomical practices and theatre in *Issues of Death.* My interest mostly resides in those studies that pursue a joint elaboration of early modern anatomies, law enforcement, and religion. A few readings with similar scope: Elizabeth T. Hurren, *Dissecting the Criminal Corpse – Staging Post-Execution Punishment in Early Modern England* (Palgrave MacMillan 2016); Floris Tomasini, *Remembering and Disremembering the Dead – Posthumus Punishment, Harm and Redemption over Time* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2017); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned – Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (Routledge 1996).

"martyring" as well (5.2.184), this usage of the word means an exception from my argumentation, here the word is used simply as a synonym for "killing", without the necessary precondition of martyrdom: the lack of evident crime. All the other occurrences of the word are connected to Lavinia. It is most peculiar, how the reactions of the on-stage audience of Lavinia's torture resonate the possible two responses the crowd could give under the scaffold of Catholic priests, according to contemporary records: there were the mockers, and the mourners, just as in Christ's passion. In this way, viewing the disfigured person of Lavinia, and her on-stage spectators, the off-stage audience could reflect on their own habits of viewing violent spectacles.

I do not claim that Lavinia would be an explicitly Christian, or Catholic martyr. But I argue that the rather frequent references to the discourse of martyrdom are not coincidental, their accumulative force is significant and indicative of a collective trauma, one that was generated by the burning of priests by the Elizabethan government. Peter Lake, in *Hamlet's Choice,* argues for the same (Lake 2020, 26-29). "The associations established through such phraseology between Lavinia's fate and that visited upon many Catholics under Elizabeth is, in fact, confirmed at several other points in the action…" (28). And as Girard formulates, if the distinction between good and bad violence is blurred, the society falls into mayhem and a proliferation of violence ensues.

> The sacrificial crisis [...] coincides with the disappearance of the difference between impure violence and purifying violence. When this difference has been effaced, purification is no longer possible, and impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community. (Girard 49)

The death of martyrs was not acceptable as good and curative violence in the eyes of many, as I have shown earlier, and it engendered a sacrificial crisis. The sacrificial crisis in *Titus* was an indirect depiction of this crisis. In my view, Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus* verges on saying the unsayable. As Nicholas R. Moschovakis argues, "Shakespeare's glances at contemporary religious conflict in *Titus* question the legitimacy of violence as a means of establishing and preserving Christianity" (Moschovakis 460).

In what follows, I will further analyse the discourse of martyrdom in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi,* and its implications for the interpretation of the play. First of all, it should be established, that *The Duchess of Malfi* lends itself most easily to a feminist reading. In fact, as Dympna Callaghan argues, "the feminist perspective on the play has become so pervasive that almost every essay published in the last decade assumes it" (Callaghan 67). The reason for this

is that *The Duchess of Malfi* simultaneously bears the marks of contemporary antagonisms in connection with gender, and traces of religious trauma. Obviously, this present study focuses on the latter.

There are a few possible historical persons inspiring the main plot. David K. Anderson likens the main character of the Duchess to Lady Jane Grey, executed by Mary (Anderson 133). Other studies find the possible source of inspiration in the historical person of Arbella Stuart, a cousin to James I. She married William Seymour against James' will, and consequently was imprisoned in the Tower, where she eventually starved to death (Luckyj 7). Recent and accumulating research on the gender relations of early modern England in general, and the study of the lives of widowed women in particular led to numerous excellent and nuanced publications. This present dissertation, however, follows a very different lead. In what follows, I will discuss the possibilities of how *The Duchess of Malfi* could provide reflections on martyrdom and the sacrificial crisis for early modern audiences. For this I need to read together the chronicles of religious intolerance and the conclusions of Webster scholars on this particular play.

The first and most salient feature of the Duchess in Webster's tragedy is her potent agency. This she manifests even in her quasi-martyrdom although for a superficial look she is rendered into the passive role of the victim.

DUCHESS: What death?
BOSOLA: Strangling: here are your executioners.
DUCHESS: I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o'the' lungs
Would do as much as they do.
BOSOLA: Doth not death fright you?
DUCHESS: Who would be afraid on't?
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In th' other world. (4.2.206-213)

DUCHESS: Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength
Must pull down heaven upon me:
Yet stay, heaven gates are not so highly arched
As princes' palaces: they that enter there
Must go upon their knees. Come, violent death, (*kneels).* (4.2.230-234)

I find the resonances of this scene with contemporary religious executions especially articulate here. The Duchess, alike a martyr, controlled and subverted the meaning of the events: she interprets her own sacrifice (it is heavenly bliss waiting for her, not damnation, as Ferdinand in an earlier scene foreshadowed), moreover she instructs the executioner „to pull strongly", which is an obvious move of taking control over her own death. As I cited Walsham earlier, subverting and controlling the meaning of the execution was an outright intention of martyrs, and their

witness birthed new converts on numerous occasions. John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* thrives on these moments of sacred subversion. Thus, religious executions proved to be increasingly counter-productive as the sixteenth century vaned off, its purpose of unifying the community around the scapegoat's death remained unfulfilled. There was a growing tendency of early morning executions to avoid large and dissenting crowds (Walsham 77). As René Girard elucidates in his seminal study, when the institution of sacrificial system is in crisis, the scapegoat's death becomes ineffective, or even counterproductive: instead of unity and concord it produces ambivalence, discord, and dissent (Girard 49).

Although according to contemporary Law and gender standards, the Duchess could be deemed guilty in not obeying her patriarchal superiors, that is her brothers, but the overt Catholicism of the brothers places her into a different discourse, with religious overtones. The persona of the evil Catholic conspirator, that of the Machiavel, was not unfamiliar for early modern audiences. Ferdinand and the Cardinal, enlisted by the play as vile, and raging-mad characters, antagonize the spectators by persecuting their own sister.

The language Ferdinand uses very clearly evokes the burning of heretics, with which the audience was so familiar.

FERDINAND: I would have their bodies
Burnt in a coal-pit, with the ventage stopp'd,
That their curs'd smoke might not ascend to Heaven:
Or dip the sheets they lie in, in pitch or sulphur,
Wrap them in't, and then light them like a match (2.5.67-71)

This image was not alien to early modern people. Ferdinand evokes the persona of the Catholic oppressor, driven by his own hybris, persecuting the righteous. The Duchess, on the contrary, in her death recalls the discourse of martyrdom, as she dies a good and pious death, while forgiving her executioners. In forgiving her executioners, she becomes an almost Christ-like figure (4.2.208). As the gospel of Luke relates, Christ uttered similar words on the cross. „Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" Luke 23:34 (KJV). Forgiveness became a basic constituent of the execution ritual: Richard van Dülmen in his *Theatre of Horror* elucidates that the symbolic force of public execution was always contingent on proper ritual. One such ritualistic element was the executioner asking the victim's forgiveness. The situation was slightly modified in the case of religious martyrs, who were many times willing to utter words of forgiveness without any urging to do so, following the example of Jesus.

In this logic, she could be indirectly ranked among a mirror of Protestant martyrdom, killed by the Catholic tyrant. But such an easy analogy, with assumptions of Protestant

didacticism are obstructed by other elements of the play. We must pinpoint the basic *indecisiveness* of the entire genre from a confessional perspective. As it was noted, both a castigation of the Catholic Church *and* a "pervasive nostalgia" (I owe this notion to Todd Borlik, cited earlier) for the old religion are recurring elements in revenge tragedy, and as such, in *The Duchess of Malfi.* Luckyj considers the Duchess a kind of "living relic" (Luckyj 8), when after her death, she returns to warn and protect her husband in the form of an echo (or a ghost), which lives among the ruined walls of an old abbey. But it was only the Catholic martyr saints whose earthly remains could be transformed into protective relics (see previous chapter), or purgatorial ghosts, warning their loved ones. In this respect, she would be more of a Catholic martyr. I have extensively discussed the interconnectedness of martyrdom, and holy relics in the previous chapter. The remains of martyrs were imbued with miraculous powers in the Catholic religious thinking. Thus, the Duchess was a likely member of the heavenly saints' company on both sides of the confessional divide. A further scene which obfuscates the confessional divide in the play is the Duchess' pilgrimage to the Loreto shrine. The shrines of the Virgin Mother were demolished by Henry VIII.

Thus, the confessional identity of the Duchess is blurred, but not because the play is indifferent to religious topics: I put it down to the inherent ambivalence in the idiosyncrasies of the English Church, and the collective trauma of the past few decades' cultural reprogramming. One thing is clear, nevertheless: the Duchess becomes a paragon of martyrdom, an example of Good Death, whose innocent perishing is mourned and pitied by the on-stage audience: her maid, the pilgrims, even Bosola pity her.

Last, but not least the figure of Bosola needs mentioning again. He is a henchman to the evil powers, a criminal and executioner, a Vice-like central character[119] on whom the major turns of the play hinge. At the same time, he is the only person who undergoes the most profound *anagnorisis* in the play. Having witnessed the Duchess' brave and innocent death, Bosola is inspired to a conversion of some sort. Based on the next few lines, recent criticism found that the character of Bosola best exemplified how early modern thinking went about the doctrine of double predestination, how a "damned" person, unable to repent, would have looked like.

BOSOLA: What would I do, were this to do again?
I would not change my peace of conscience
For all the wealth of Europe. She stirs; here's life.
Return, fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine

[119]For an extensive study of the early theatrical tradition of the Vice and its corollaries on early modern stage see Ágnes Matuska, *The Vice-Device– Iago and Lear's Fool as Agents of Representational Crisis* (Szeged: JATEPress, 2011.) The chapter on metadrama is especially illuminating in connection with Bosola's character.

Out of this sensible hell. (4.2.337-341)

BOSOLA: O, she's gone again: there the cords of life broke.
O sacred innocence, that sweetly sleeps
On turtles' feathers: whilst a guilty conscience
Is a black register, where is writ
All our good deeds and bad; a perspective
That shows us hell! That we cannot be suffer'd
To do good when we have a mind to it!
(4.2.353-358)

Bosola's character enacts the under-the-scaffold conversion; he is so impressed by the boldness and piety of the Duchess' death, that he immediately turns his ways. There were numerous such cases, as hagiographies relate. John Foxe, in the 1583 edition of his *Actes and Monuments* thus relates the events of George Tankerfield's death:

> there was great concourse of people to see and hear the prisoner, among the which multitude some were sorry to see so godly a man brought to be burned, others praised God for his constancy and perseverance in the truth. Contrarivise some there were which said it was pity he did stand in such opinions, and others, both old women and men cried against him one called him heretic, and said it was pity that he lived. But George Tankerfield did speak unto them so effectually out of the word of God, in lamenting of their ignorance, and protesting unto them his unspotted conscience, and that God did mollify their hardened hearts insomuch that some of them departed out of the chamber with weeping eyes. (Foxe qtd. in Duffy 131)

Bosola is a mischievous murderer and criminal throughout the play, who had the Duchess strangled without blinking an eye. But immediately after her death his bad conscience started to weigh upon him. The picture is further complicated by the fact that his conversion only happens *after* having learned that his crime remains without financial compensation. This chronology renders his conversion somewhat suspicious. But even this rendering of events seems intentional on Webster's part, because Bosola will be the scourge of God, who kills the brothers by the end of the play, and this action would be quite impossible was he a humble Christian convert. The dynamics of revenge is such that the avenger must die in the act of fulfilling the justice, and Bosola is killed in the struggle with the Aragonian brethren. In his dying words he explains that he was an "actor in the main of all."

RODERIGO: How comes this?
BOSOLA: Revenge, for the Duchess of Malfi, murdered
By th' Aragonian brethren; for Antonio,
Slain by this hand; for lustful Julia,
Poison'd by this man; and lastly, for myself,
That was *an actor in the main of all,*
Much 'gainst mine own good nature, yet i'th' end
Neglected. (5.5.80-6. – emphasis mine)

There is a peculiar parallel between Bosola and the Duchess, manifest in these words: their metatheatrical remarks. The Duchess earlier says that she played a part against her own will in this "tedious theatre" of the world (4.1.83-4). Both characters reveal the "artifice" of their playing shortly before death. Both characters are the playthings of Ferdinand and the Cardinal, for sure, but this is not the only implication of this utterance. The Duchess' major problem is the "will", her deprivation of agency, and Bosola's problem is his "good nature", supposedly corrupted by others. These most self-reflexive characters of the play are in the centre, underlining Oppitz-Trotman's claim, that revenge tragedy is mainly preoccupied with "the poetics of figuration" (Oppitz-Trotman 3). Besides, the metatheatrical lines reinforce Bosola's character as the Vice of the play, mentioned earlier.

By the end of the sixteenth century there is a growing consensus amongst humanist thinkers that religious violence renders all the persecutors alike, whether they are Catholic or Protestant. The only distinction there is between the murderers and the victims. We are still very far from the idea of religious tolerance, as Benjamin J. Kaplan has shown us, debunking the text-book myth about the religious tolerance of the Enlightenment era: "religious warfare, persecution, and popular violence continued in many parts of Europe far into the eighteenth century" (Kaplan 336). Yet, the seeds are there, dormant as they are in the works of contemporary intellectuals such as Sebastian Castellio, John Foxe, and later John Locke.

Based on the previous analysis we can draw the following conclusion: the genre of early modern revenge tragedy gradually started to level criticism against acts of sacred violence. What Margaret E. Owens claims about stage executions in general, is relevant for acts of martyrdom as well.

> The most conspicuous feature that emerges from this catalogue is the pervasive "othering" of mutilation, the tendency to associate this type of violence with regimes situated at a profound geographical or temporal remove from Elizabethan England. […] The punitive infliction of amputation is rendered so remote and exotic in the drama as to almost belie the entrenchment of equivalent practices within the penal rituals of sixteenth and seventeenth century England. (Owens 177)

At the very moment the state's "tyranny of the body" (Owens' term, 185) becomes explicit on early modern stage, it becomes open for criticism. It might even lead to questioning the state's legitimacy to inscribe early modern bodies.

Conclusion

Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* was probably one of the last plays of its kind before the ban of religious topics.[120] Edward Whigtman was the last person in England, burnt for heresy in 1612 (Ryrie 2019, 114). The Civil War was the last war fought for religion. Shirley's *The Cardinal* (1641) was the last extant play in the revenge tradition (Fredson Bowers 228). These and similar landmark events signal important turning points in the shared history of revenge tragedy and the long Reformation of England. As I have shown, the two were deeply and inseparably intertwined. Religious reform remained a recurring and unsettling issue during the *Interregnum* as well. In lieu of stage plays, one popular form to interrogate the changes of the past decades (or the whole century) was the genre of the ghost pamphlet. Such was the anonymous sixteen-page quarto published in 1658, titled, *A messenger from the dead, or, conference full of stupendious horror, heard distinctly, and by alternative voyces … Between the ghost of Henry the 8. and Charles the First of England, in Windsor-Chappel, where they were both buried. In which the whole series of the divine judgements, in those infortunate ilands, it as it were by a pencil from heaven, most lively set forth from the first unto the last* (Highly 98). The *Messenger* offers a highly provocative narrative about the cause of Britain's civil wars and regicide. In his discussion with Charles, Henry confesses his crimes.

> To satisfy his avarice, he destroyed the land's religious houses and seized the church's wealth; in his lust, he cast away his lawful wife for 'Anne Bollen an incontinent woman'; and in his cruelty […] he 'made a great slaughter of all ages, sexes, and orders'. (Highly 104)

The conclusion comes as no surprise: the recent calamities of the nation are part of God's retribution for Henry's crimes. "Furthermore, Henry describes Elizabeth's 'unparalleled cruelties' as the continuation of his own 'tyrannies'…" (Ibid 111). Such pamphlets were published by the dozen. This proves, that the process of interpretation and re-interpretation of the English reformations was a long-term work of cultural memory.

I have shown in my dissertation how the subsequent waves of the English reformation caused a collective-cultural trauma. The cumulative effect of the long years' conclusions of the revision of the Reformation led to a crystallization of crisis, rupture, cultural deprogramming and trauma into the theoretical concept of *collective trauma*. The conceptual framework of collective trauma, elaborated by Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., as opposed to the psychoanalytical

[120] Dollimore posits this, obviously only as a speculative truth. Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* 119.

one, allows for representation, instead of repression, not-knowing and silence. Furthermore, it concentrates on the communal, instead of the individual, and in doing so, it has a major interest in mapping the hegemonical power relations in the representation of different, contesting trauma narratives (14-17). Thus, building on the conceptual frameworks of memory studies and a socially informed trauma theory, it became clear that the "erratic" process of the English reformation (Walsham 2006, 13) caused considerable anxiety and uprooted every basic tenet of society. While the merits of this religious change cannot and should not be denied for the lives of the godly, who whole-heartedly accepted the changes, nevertheless, there were casualties to this battle. As Alec Ryrie and Brad S. Gregory recently have shown, the rise of scepticism and fear of damnation were unintended side-effects of the new doctrines. Although Ryrie sets out to prove that atheism had always been an issue, and it did not emerge with the Reformation necessarily, he also makes strong claims that underline the traumatic narrative. "… the Protestant Reformation, … deliberately turned angry unbelief into a weapon of mass theological destruction, and in the process stirred up anxious unbelief like never before" (Ryrie 2019, 11). "The Reformation had done more than simply create a fog of religious confusion in which unbelief could move relatively freely. It was actively leading Christians away from faith" (43). In this vein, it seems justified that through the framework of collective trauma, we can acknowledge the long-term merits of Protestantism while, at the same time, admit the immensely unsettling effects of this fundamental crisis.

The main contents of this cultural trauma are considered here as the crisis of death and dying, as I posited in the first chapter, and a thoroughgoing crisis of sacrifice, which became evident in the Eucharist Controversies, and the ambivalence around the scaffold of the martyrs. A protracted period, with not the slightest shadow of religious tolerance, left its mark on the material environment as well. As the attention of memory studies has recently turned toward the built and natural environment as carriers of cultural memories and trauma, many invaluable studies have emerged, such as Alexandra Walsham's *The Reformation of the Landscape* in 2011. This book served as a basic source for my entire work, with its illuminating insights into the post-Reformation landscape of Britain. The desolate ruins of the Catholic abbeys and monasteries, the romantic caves and sea sides, where the persecuted priests were compelled to perform clandestine masses, have many resonances on the early modern stage. It is enough to think of the scene at the ruined Cloister in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* or Shakespeare's Poor Tom in *King Lear,* eerily resembling a disguised, persecuted Jesuit. Compared to the novelty of the dual approach of trauma studies and memory studies in the study of the English reformation, the way the Reformation reconstructed the flow of time, and its perception came

relatively early into the focus of scholarly attention. The changes of the calendar tellingly reflect the trauma of religious change. One good example here is the considerable amount of civil unrest around the dismantling of the Maypoles.

But the most significant representation of collective religious trauma took place, as I argued, on the early modern stage. In the first subchapter discussing the Eucharistic Controversies of England, as part of the sacrificial crisis, I analysed two direct representations of the quasi-eucharist: first the cannibalistic dinner in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and afterwards the Black Mass in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge.* I have reached the conclusion that both the cannibalistic dinner and the Black Mass capitalize on eucharistic anxieties, even if they assume the form of caricature many times. These anxieties entailed a crisis of belief, soteriological anxiety, and along these lines, a deep division of community, because the concept of sacrifice was refigured. At this point, the English reformation still seemed reversible, and the number of recusants only grew with the persecution of priesthood. Thus, most possibly a great number of people watched revenge plays not with cheerful irony, but resentment and anxiety. What if the ridiculed eucharistic altar is the way to eternity and salvation, nevertheless? The play forged a moment of remembrance, and while this *viewing* of the sacrifice was not redemptive any longer, rather horrifying, but it still transformed the audience into witnesses to a lost and maybe wished-for past, helping them in processing the change.

I had the most severe difficulties with the second subchapter, dealing with the thanatological crisis as a main element of this collective trauma, due to the abundant scholarly literature already existing on this topic. Finally, I could grasp the essence of the phenomenon of stage corpses along the lines of "fetishization" and the Catholic tradition of relic-veneration, which, as historiography has proved, although prohibited by Henry VIII early on, was not quite dead in Elizabethan times. What is more, it even gained momentum with the burning of the Jesuit priests. Alexandra Walsham addressed this intriguing topic in her volume *Past and Present Supplement – Relics and Remains.* With this historical background in mind, it was not difficult to see how the discourse of relics could imbue with meaning the dead bodies lingering on-stage in most revenge tragedy. I have chosen *The Spanish Tragedy,* because Hieronimo verges on the sacred veneration of his dead son's body, preserving the cadaver in a hidden seclusion of the stage up until the final scene. *The Maiden's Tragedy* was opted for because of its open staging of necrophilia, a social taboo, which, nevertheless, vividly resonates the Catholic adoration of the saints' bodies in medieval times. Finally, *The Duchess of Malfi* stages wax imitations of dead bodies, calling attention to the power of representation, and at the same time investigating the difference between real and fake relics.

Finally, in the last subchapter of my dissertation I focused on the ambivalence around the scaffold of the martyrs, which I consider as a second, important constituent of the sacrificial crisis. René Girard's seminal study, *Violence and the Sacred* still has great explanatory power to this most unsettling corollary of the religious reform. After establishing the historical context, it could be safely posited, that with the kindling of the pyres of Smithfield anew, Elizabethans could witness the gruesome death of almost two hundred Catholic priests, which was not hailed with obvious cheer, as in the case of criminals. While it is very difficult to trace down contemporary responses, one thing seems sure: the crowds were volatile, and there were conversions happening all around the religious executions. For this part of my research, Brad S. Gregory's seminal book was the greatest resource. The sacrificial crisis was manifest in the fact, that scapegoat's death could not unify the audience, but it birthed dissent and subversion. The result of religious coercion was not an enforced unity, but rather the opposite. As Brad S. Gregory most succinctly concludes,

> By adamantly rejecting religious pluralism, they (the martyrs) helped make religious pluralism a prerequisite for the stable ordering of society. By insisting that religious truth was more important than all temporal concerns, they helped render all religious considerations irrelevant to the secular preoccupations of the modern state. Through their willingness to die for contrary doctrines, which they understood as the very expression of God's will, they helped to render problematic the knowability of his will and to call into question the value of religion. Incompatible, deeply held, concretely expressed religious convictions paved a path to a secular society. (Gregory 352)

Lavinia and the Duchess of Malfi were considered as quasi martyrs in my analysis, evoking the figure of virgin martyrs of medieval drama. Lavinia's victimization is interpreted by her uncle and her father as martyrdom, which they verbally reiterate multiple times. The Duchess becomes the paragon of good death in *The Duchess of Malfi,* when she accepts the cruel execution at the behest of her Catholic brothers with comport, praying and forgiving to her executioners. The attempted conversion of Bosola further recalls contemporary anxieties born of the doctrine of predestination, the fear of damnation, and conversion stories around the executions' site.

As it turned out to me while writing this dissertation, diverse doctrines and their respective changes are organically intertwined: it is virtually impossible to write about the Mass or the eucharist and omit mentioning purgatory. It is impossible to write about the martyrs, and neglect the prototype of martyrs, Christ, who was embodied in the Catholic Host. The veneration of relics, which I discussed in the subchapter on the thanatological crisis, culminated in the worship of the most sacred relics of all: the Host, and thus, we have come a full circle

back the eucharist. Besides, I selected five tragedies which are very rich in religious allusions, and this resulted in a repetition of the primaries along the different chapters. For this reason, I had to omit certain tragedies I originally wanted to integrate into this study. It would be worth extending this analysis to other pieces of the genre, such as the anonymous *Arden of Faversham, The Atheist's Tragedy* by Cyril Tourneur, or John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Although religion is only present in *The Atheist's Tragedy* explicitly, I find *Arden* intriguing for Oppitz-Trotman's remark (Oppitz-Trotman 204-5) that this is the "quintessential revenge play *sans* revenger", the *only* revenge tragedy where God's revenge prevails. Ford's tragedy would merit closer inspection for its revolting misogyny, which, at its most sensationalist and gory moment, is mapped onto Catholic sacrificial imagery. Another research direction, intriguing me for quite a few years now, is the concept of religious violence and terror, and the possibilities of their applicability to early modern phenomena. As Peter Sherlock recently wrote (Sherlock 168), observing the commemorative plaque of English martyrs in Westminster Abbey, more and more of us wrestle with the idea of the "willingness to kill" for doctrinal differences (Gregory 74). There is a recent surge of publication in this field, which indicates a growing scholarly interest in this heated topic.[121] The parallels of twenty-first century religious violence with its antecedents in Christian Europe are striking.

[121] Mark Juergensmeyer, *When God Stops Fighting: How Religious Violence Ends* (University of California Press, 2022); *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* ed. Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, Michael Jerryson (Oxford University Pressm 2015); Steve Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence* (Wiley Blackwell, 2014); Richard A. Burridge, Jonathan Sacks eds. *Confronting Religious Violence* (Baylor University Press, 2018).

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