

Spring 2022

# The Funeral's the Thing: Unification Through the Burial Rite in Hamlet

Ferrell J. Mowell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Mowell, Ferrell J., "The Funeral's the Thing: Unification Through the Burial Rite in Hamlet" (2022). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2399.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/2399>

This thesis (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

THE FUNERAL'S THE THING: UNIFICATION THROUGH THE BURIAL RITE IN  
*HAMLET*

by

FERRELL MOWELL

(Under the Direction of Mary Villeponteaux)

ABSTRACT

The funeral service is an ancient custom that is deeply cultural, and Shakespeare uses it prominently in *Hamlet*. The play's ending with Fortinbras commanding a military-like tribute for Hamlet is somewhat surprising because Hamlet was never a soldier, and he has breached the etiquette of funeral rites in the cases of Polonius, by withholding the remains immediately after the death, and Ophelia by making a spectacle with Laertes in her grave. Additionally, he has arranged for the execution before the observance of confessional rites in the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet's dead march is an example of how a funeral ceremony can determine a lasting legacy. It follows the formula of other Renaissance tragedies including many of Shakespeare's own; a funeral service in a tragedy is a form of tribute. The capacity of the funeral service to be a political event as well as a heraldic event is exemplified in the ostentatious funeral of Sir Phillip Sydney which helped enhance his legacy as an English historical figure. Fortinbras similarly enhances Hamlet's legacy by recognizing him not as a soldier but as a king, not what he has been, but what he was meant to be. Hamlet's embarrassing behavior in Ophelia's grave transforms him, and it is not held against him. His body will be revered in the tradition of European kings, embalmed and interred, much differently than the treatment given to the bodies of Polonius and Ophelia. Through Fortinbras' order, Hamlet becomes a king for a moment at the end of the play making him a king in our minds for the rest of time. The funeral is the vehicle through which Hamlet the Prince is acknowledged as Hamlet the King.

INDEX WORDS: Funeral rite, Burial rite, Hamlet, William Shakespeare, Revenge tragedy, Sir Philip Sidney's funeral, Elizabethan Protestantism, Decomposition, Disposition, Embalming, Polonius, Ophelia, Memory, Legacy

THE FUNERAL'S THE THING: UNIFICATION THROUGH THE BURIAL RITE IN  
*HAMLET*

by

FERRELL MOWELL

B. A. Georgia Southern, 1992

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

2022

FERRELL MOWELL

All Rights Reserved

THE FUNERAL'S THE THING: UNIFICATION THROUGH THE BURIAL RITE IN  
*HAMLET*

by

FERRELL MOWELL

Major Professor: Mary Villeponteaux  
Committee: Richard Flynn  
Julia Griffin

Electronic Version Approved:  
May 2022

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sandra Rabitsch ignited my desire to pursue the depths of literature as a way of life. From her, I learned to think critically and to value specificity.

Dr. Fred Richter nurtured me through my undergraduate studies, then helped open the door 30 years later to my entrance into graduate school. From him, I learned the value of genuine authenticity and contentment.

Jeff Seiple, who worked with me on the faculty at my lone teaching position also helped open the door to my entrance into graduate school. From him, I learned the value of loyalty.

Dr. Dustin Anderson, who encouraged me to pursue this topic, welcomed me enthusiastically into GSU and provided a foundation of literary education that escaped me as an undergraduate. From him, I learned the value of the scrutiny of Literary Theory.

Dr. Mary Villeponteaux coaxed and guided my writing to the point where my ideas became clearer to me through her comments. From her, I learned the value of patience.

C. J. and Faye Mowell, my parents, provided the means for me to chase my dream. From them, I learned to never give up.

Susan, my wife, endured my commitment to my studies that altered my psychology and my sleeping habits. From her, I learned the value of feeling accepted.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....                            | 2    |
| CHAPTER  |      |
| 1 INTRODUCTION .....                             | 4    |
| 2 DRAMATURGICAL FORMULA .....                    | 12   |
| 3 FORMULATING PUBLIC TRIBUTE .....               | 18   |
| 4 DISPOSITION BEFORE DECOMPOSITION .....         | 23   |
| 5 THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF THE CHAMBERLAIN ..... | 30   |
| 6 THE FUNERAL'S THE THING .....                  | 38   |
| ENDNOTES .....                                   | 44   |
| WORKS CITED .....                                | 46   |



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“What we remember, / You are.”<sup>1</sup>

Every funeral conjoins a general and a specific function, a personal and a public, a historic and a prophetic. Most simply and completely, people assemble, perform a ceremony, administer disposition<sup>2</sup>, and construct a memorial marker. This series of exercises meets needs that are 1) emotional, creating a setting where grief is acceptable; 2) spiritual, acknowledging a difference between the body and the soul; 3) physical, disposing of the decomposing remains, and 4) historical, uniting with the past through traditions intended to be repeated. Words and/or songs and/or performance comprise the principal elements of the event, and whether secular or religious, large or small, sooner or later, people come together – gravitate to one another – for moments of disciplined remembering. With roots in prehistoric time, an event that uniquely offers personal and public solace, an event that has survived, the funeral service may be the smallest common denominator uniting all of human history.

From an individual perspective, the funeral service provides the unique setting in which six specific functions of mourning<sup>3</sup> can be achieved. 1. Acknowledge the reality of death, 2. Embrace the pain of the loss, 3. Remember the person who died, 4. Develop a new self-identity, 5. Search for meaning, 6. Receive ongoing support from others (Wolfelt). Therefore, the funeral endures as a ceremony because comfort is delivered to the survivors; it provides security – security of the inviolability of the body, and security of known, repeatable ceremonies; the decedent is cared for and presented as best as conditions and resources allow, and survivors assemble with an individual and a collective purpose of respect.

A funeral ceremony serves both private and public purposes, in that the welfare of the immediate survivors, as well as that of the community at large, are met. The routine of reverence a family applies to the burial or cremation of their dead is repeated over time to establish a

tradition that expands throughout the community to unify the entire group as a common culture. Like bricks, the funeral rites create a cultural foundation, a pattern of behavior that becomes accepted and expected; it's what Antigone wants for Polyneices, what Priam wants for Hector. Through ancient western literary history, the funeral rite serves as a prominent plot sequence in classics from *The Iliad*, to *The Aeneid*, to *Beowulf*. Consider Aeneas before leaving Thrace, reviving the memory of Polydorus through elaborate funeral rites, including a restored tomb, professional mourners, food offerings, blood offerings, and an audible, military "shout of farewell" (*The Aeneid*, Bk III: l. 62). Aeneas also witnesses his countrymen honoring with more intense elaboration their recently fallen brother-in-arms, Misenus:

First they raised a huge pyre, heavy with cut oak and pine,  
weaving the sides with dark foliage, set funereal cypress in front,  
and decorated it above with shining weapons.

Some heated water, making the cauldrons boil on the flames,  
and washed and anointed the chill corpse. They made lament.

Then, having wept, they placed his limbs on the couch,  
and threw purple robes over them, his usual dress.

Some raised the great bier, a sad duty,  
and, with averted faces, set a torch below,  
in ancestral fashion. Gifts were heaped on the flames,  
of incense, foodstuffs, bowls brimming with olive-oil.

When the ashes collapsed, and the blaze died, they washed  
the remains of the parched bones in wine, and Coryaneus,  
collecting the fragments, closed them in a bronze urn.

Also, he circled his comrades three times with pure water

to purify them, sprinkling fine dew from the full olive branch,  
 and spoke the words of parting. And virtuous Aeneas  
 heaped up a great mound for his tomb, with the hero's  
 own weapons, his trumpet and oar, beneath a high mountain  
 which is called Misenus now after him, and preserves  
 his ever-living name throughout the ages.

*(The Aeneid Bk VI, ll. 215-283)*

Duty and focus characterize the care upon the corpse of Misenus, and time is allotted to mourn his passing. His survivors hew “heavy” timber adorned with evergreen, wood that will burn intensely for hours. The dead soldier's weaponry is displayed to acknowledge his role as a warrior. After being washed, the remains are audibly mourned over and placed on a receiving “couch” for repose. The mourners regally dress the body and perform the “sad duty” of raising the couch to a height suitable for cremation. The bearers “with averted faces,” suggesting both revulsion and deep reverence, in “ancestral fashion” light the fire below the corpse. Just as “warm milk” was included in Polydorus' tomb suggesting immediate consumption by the eternal spirit of the deceased, food offerings are cast upon the flame under Misenus, its distinctive odiferous smoke, cocooning his corpse as it is eventually dehydrated and reduced by the heat of the fire, until only a skeleton remains. “When the ashes collapsed and the blaze died,” (a waiting of 24 – 36 hours in the making<sup>4</sup>), the cooled bones were collected and bathed in wine, ridding them of unwanted dust while perfuming and creating a luxurious sugary seal over the osseous tissue. An identified soldier places the bones in an urn. More purification takes place over the bearers using the dew from nearby branches, and “words of parting” are offered before interment. Concluding the ceremony, Aeneas and company build a massive barrow, interring his urn and his prized possessions within it at the base of a mountain given his name, a natural gigantic eternal tombstone. Misenus' name and legend are now available to future historians through his grave

marker and his funeral in song, propelling him into an eternal state of honor.

In contrast, denying funeral rites to the deceased violates the intrinsic sanctity of the remains and likewise, casts an element of insult and dishonor on to the related survivors. By intentionally denying a dignified disposition of the body, by refusing to secure its inviolability by allowing nature to publicly run its course of malodorous and colorful decomposition, the image of the rotting corpse is integrated into the eternal legacy of the decedent. Therefore, securing the inviolability of the remains through body preparation and controlled disposition, likewise secures in the survivor a sense of met obligation, a duty upheld, a promise kept, genuine consolation. The exercise of the funeral rite, performed upon an inanimate corpse, evokes prophetic visions of the reanimated spirit, as recited in the ritual performed by the survivors. At least for a moment, a collective vision is shared by all present, a memory in itself.

This inherent link between funeral and memory helps to explain the funeral's enduring power. The ceremony can encapsulate the foundational tenets of a culture, and perhaps no work of literature explores the significant nature of the funeral ceremony more deeply and famously than Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Neill asserts, "No play is more obsessively concerned with funeral proprieties than *Hamlet*" (300) and further observes, "As *Hamlet* amply testifies, the infamy of degrading burial could cause more pain than the death itself, however disgraceful that might have been" (281). The play explores the ceremony through its presence / absence as a pillar that supports civilized society, while the aberrations of the ceremony represent aberrations of the society in Denmark. McCoy claims, "From beginning to end, this is a play obsessed with getting a decent burial, and nobody seems to get one" (122). The King's funeral marks the beginning and Hamlet's marks the end, with those of Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern between. The capacity of the funeral rite to conjoin the living with the dead, the private with the public, the past with the present and future, justifies its presence in the play as a plot sequence upon which the drama progresses and depends. The presence/absence of the funeral rite looms

on and off stage as obsequies initiate, propel, and close the action: the funeral of the king is absorbed by Gertrude's wedding to Claudius; Polonius is covertly buried, denied any funeral rite; Ophelia's funeral, performed onstage, is riddled with religious and legal complications and disrupted by Hamlet; and Hamlet's corpse receives an "incongruous soldier's funeral" (McCoy, 122)<sup>5</sup>. In each case, the preeminence of funerals in the cultural consciousness of the audience is vital for evaluating Shakespeare's intentions. In a play destabilized by interruptions and delays, the funeral ceremony as a recurring event creates a base of familiarity. Yet when a play includes funeral rites, the state's laws also had to be considered.

In 16th century England, dramatizing religious rites onstage was frowned upon and subject to Elizabethan censorship. A royal charter in 1557 was granted to the Stationer's Company, delineating its authority to monitor all publications, in effect, monopolizing the printing trade. Censors investigated violations of "scandal, malice, schism, and heresy" as well as, and possibly with more vigor, violations of publication piracy to protect authors (Hattaway 91). Elizabeth tightened the control in 1559, ordering an injunction that allowed the archbishops and the university chancellors to preview works before being submitted to the Stationer's Company. In 1572, the Queen's Privy Council ordered the leaders to publish "such plays, enterludes, commedies, & tragedies as maye tende to repressse vyce & extol vertwe" (Beauregard, 20). By most accounts, the censorship was broad and vague, so the playwrights conditioned themselves to be just as broad and vague in presentation of liturgy onstage. Performing liturgical ceremonies, especially funeral rites, could not realistically be avoided in revenge tragedy so Shakespeare would have to be cautious in all performances to avoid censorship, and as seen, a dead march is vague and adaptable.

At the end of *Hamlet*, amidst the multiple dead bodies strewn about, victorious Fortinbras of Norway gives the closing lines of the play. He arrives from his victory over the neighboring Poland, utilizing Denmark as his path to and from victory, and his commands contain specific

instructions on how Hamlet's corpse should be treated differently than the others:

Let four captains

Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;

For he was likely, had he been put on,

To have proved most royally: and for his passage,

The soldiers' music and the rites of war

Speak loudly for him.

Take up the bodies: such a sight as this

Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.

Go, bid the soldiers shoot. (V. ii, 395-403)

[A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.]

Thus, *Hamlet* ends with a broken line and a bang.

Fortinbras claims special interest in the final moment, and his command initiates legacy rites for Hamlet, absent any priest or cleric, and in ignorance of Hamlet's recent behavior<sup>6</sup>. He claims he owns "rights of memory," indicating that in the memories of some of the Danish he still possesses authority over his father's lost territory; but when he speaks the words, some of the audience will hear "rites of memory" indicating a connection between the rituals of the dead and the legacy they leave behind (V, ii, 389-90). Additionally, rites indicate a ceremony or performance, for which Fortinbras commands Hamlet's corpse be borne to "the stage." Could this be a catafalque? a bier? an altar of sorts? The Globe? How is it that Hamlet merits the regal treatment of *his* corpse? From the strewn bodies of the royal family at the feet of Fortinbras, Hamlet's is separated and elevated. Why?

The funerary procession and salute are perplexing for multiple reasons. In the first place,

Hamlet's bloody corpse is borne by captains, the highest-ranking officers available, of a military to which he never belonged. In addition, Hamlet, keenly sensitive to funeral etiquette, has during the course of the play propelled three characters into the grave, all denied their funeral rites; and thirdly, he acts out an embarrassing display in the open grave of Ophelia's corpse. Shakespeare appears to be applying a magnanimous salute to Hamlet in light of his record of violating funeral etiquette over the course of the play; his dead march is either misplaced or highly symbolic because his identity as a student and his recent unbecoming behavior would seem to preclude him from receiving such a heraldic funeral rite.

Shakespeare, however, convincingly eternalizes Hamlet as a hero by his triumphant exit from the stage, and because Hamlet is a protagonist, the military salute might be initially and mistakenly accepted by the audience as simply a dramatic gesture to elevate the protagonist. But Hamlet's body has not been prepared for burial, no time has been spent arranging a funeral; and when Fortinbras commands his highest ranking officers to separate Hamlet's bloody body from the battlefield-like scene and carry the corpse to the sound of military gunfire in salute, he brings to mind the other funeral rites within the play, especially the physical treatment of the human remains: Old Hamlet's appear as a commander in battle, consistent with his appearance at his funeral; Polonius' have been neglected and interred with no ceremony and with no family present; Ophelia's have been identified as suffering "maimed rites;" and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been slyly slain and buried on foreign soil with no acknowledged funeral rites. Death and reference to ritual abound.

Hamlet's funeral serves to remind the audience of the marred or missing funerals that punctuate this play. The final, seemingly undeserved rite serves several purposes. Though the audience is reminded of Hamlet's role in violating the funerals of others, the preparations for his own royal funeral suggest that he has undergone a transformation: he is not the man he was earlier in the play. Young Hamlet and Old Hamlet are unified by the royal treatment afforded the

corpse. Fortinbras's orders, following closely on Hamlet's plea that Horatio should "tell his story," also establish the power of a funeral to create a lasting legacy, even a legacy unmerited by the life of the deceased. The final funeral rite unifies the themes of remembrance and responsibility in *Hamlet*, ultimately satisfying Old Hamlet's command that he be remembered. The beat of music and blast of artillery seem to serve as Shakespeare's sign that Hamlet is redeemed, and his identity as a king is finally recognized. In contrast to our universe exploding from the inside out – from the center of space and time – Hamlet's funeral salute, through military music and gunfire, creates an event through which *Hamlet's* varied funerary rituals finalize into a rhetorical theme. With his final command, Fortinbras achieves several objectives: he adheres to current dramaturgical formula; he formulates Hamlet's public tribute; he acknowledges the need to move the dead bleeding bodies towards immediate disposition; he assumes immediate control over the rite with only Hamlet's lineage in mind, his recent disregard of funeral rites be damned and forgotten; he usurps any presumed authority claimed by the local state or church, and he asserts his own politically by commanding that Hamlet be elevated above the others - clear acknowledgement of a king by a king.



## CHAPTER 2 DRAMATURGICAL FORMULA

Revenge tragedies, and early modern tragedies in general, characteristically include throughout and often conclude with funerary activity, so perhaps Fortinbras' final lines are simply conventional. Kermode explains, "It seems likely that a vogue for Revenge Plays grew up around 1599, when Maston's *Antonio's Revenge* was played by a boys' company; this would explain the decision of Shakespeare's company to revive *Hamlet* in a modernized form" (1136). Shakespeare, however, deliberately blurs the lines of the dramatic formula with Hamlet's extremity of wit and deep psychological issues. Are the revenge tragedy generic conventions so strong as to support the magnanimous funerary salute to one who violated funeral etiquette on multiple occasions? By what code of ethics or virtue can Hamlet be deemed a "hero?" To find the answer, one must look to Shakespeare's popular contemporaries, Kyd and Marlowe, who regularly utilized funeral rites to close their tragedies. The audience would see in the finale of *Hamlet* that it follows the dramatic norm, and it should be accepted accordingly.

Thomas Kyd, the likely author of Shakespeare's "lost model," the supposed *Ur-Hamlet*, opens his Senecan drama, *The Spanish Tragedy*<sup>7</sup>, with the acknowledgement of funeral rites. The first speaker onstage is the ghost of the valiant Don Andrea, whose passage to the afterlife is delayed until his funeral rites will be performed. Later, Horatio's corpse receives a spoken dirge because the grief over his murder is too depressing for song. The corpse of the traitorous Pedringano is denied burial as a penalty for his offense. Hieronimo, in an effort to console himself if he is given no rite, proclaims "Heaven covereth him that hath no burial" (III, xiii, 19), acknowledging Divine authority over the rite of proper interment. The play ends with the funeral wishes of the Viceroy of Portugal; he is to be cast upon a vessel into the Mediterranean with the corpse of his son, set adrift to die and remain in a mutually shared eternity.

The Viceroy's valiant request for disposition via the sea recalls that of Shield from England's first epic poem, *Beowulf*:

Shield was still thriving when his time came  
 and he crossed over into the Lord's keeping.  
 His warrior band did what he bade them  
 when he laid down the law among the Danes:  
 they shouldered him out to the sea's flood,  
 the chief they revered who had long ruled them" (26-31).

As with Aeneas's men, the mourners over their 'beloved' place foods, his armory, and his wealth, presumably for the afterlife, and send him on his craft adrift at the mercy of the wind (Beowulf I, ll. 26-52). Honor is demonstrated reciprocally between the court and its king by following his wishes for his own disposal. In the most ancient literature, the funeral unites the past with the present with the future, it unites the survivors with the deceased, and it unites the survivors collectively.

In drama, the funeral unites the cast with the audience. Kyd's contemporary, Marlowe, dramatizes funeral rites as well, in *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I*. A play that glorifies imperial violence also acknowledges valor in the suicide of an imperial opponent. Techelles and Usumcasane witness and respond to Agydas' words and actions:

And let Agydas by Agydas die,

And with this stab slumber eternally.

[Stabs himself.]

TEHELLES. Usumcasane, see, how right the man

Hath hit the meaning of my lord the king!

USUMCASANE. Faith, and, Techelles, it was manly done;

And, since he was so wise and honourable,

Let us afford him now the bearing hence,

And crave his triple-worthy burial.

TECHELLES. Agreed, Casane; we will honour him.

[Exeunt, bearing out the body.] (III, ii, 130-143)

Wisdom, masculinity, and honor are cited as reasons to grant his corpse an exaggerated disposition and funeral rite – three times what would be expected – and Usumcasane and Techelles bear the body themselves, not leaving the duty to lesser officers – lesser men. The audience recognizes that their willingness to bear the corpse signifies the highest form of respect they can give the body, and to an enemy, no less. The respect in this dramatic moment is palpable.

The play maintains a similar pattern of violence and treachery, elucidating the presence and/or absence of a proper funeral rite. At one point, dead virgins “on Damascus' walls / Have hoisted up their slaughter'd carcasses" visually affirm Tamburlaine's terror (V, ii, 80-81). Purity is mocked by cruelty. Decomposition is animalistic, as Tamburlaine recognizes in giving his slaves the ultimatum that resistance will lead to an unacknowledged death: “If not, then die like beasts, and fit for naught / But perches for the black and fatal ravens. (Tamburlaine Part 2, IV, iii, 23). Hungry ravens that have pecked their bones dry. The necessity of removing the remains from public access is to limit exposure to foul odor and the grotesque disfigurement that microorganisms, critters, scavengers, and uncontrolled gasses create; and the primary purpose of embalming is disinfection.

In contrast, Turkish King Balthazar, and his wife, Zubina are treated very differently. Here, Marlowe follows Kyd's formula for the funeral rite to end a revenge tragedy. Tamburlaine, the highest-ranking character onstage, speaking to Zenocrate and her father, the Soldan of Egypt, declares over the corpses of the King and Queen of Arabia:

Thy first betrothed love, Arabia,  
Shall we with honour, as beseems, entomb  
With this great Turk and his fair empress.

Then, after all these solemn exequies,

We will our rites of marriage solemnize. (V, I, 558-562).

The royal decedents are to be given a reverent funeral, fitting their social standing, which might take a while. When the mourning period ends, Tamburlaine and Zenocrate will wed, setting the stage for *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II*, in which Zenocrate's embalming is described in detail, and her preserved remains are brought on stage in the final scene: "Now fetch the hearse of fair Zenocrate; / Let it be placed by this my fatal chair, / And serve as parcel of my funeral" (V, iii, 257-259). Tamburlaine's awareness of his own impending funeral conjoins with the awareness of his deepest love to produce a visual moment he, and all who are present, will carry into eternity, ending the play, ending his life, with a funeral at hand.

As a timeless rite of unification, the funerals in the plot sequence help to stabilize the play: "the processional endings of tragedy answer to the alternative sense of time as an ineluctable linear process ... the final procession became a re-enactment in little of the plot's remorseless progress to the grave" (Neill, 284). In effect, the ceremony helps to define the play as a tragedy. The funeral march follows the formula as well as providing a natural cue for the audience to experience finality. As the life ends, so does the play, therefore, the play eternally memorializes the life of the fictional character. To close the performance with the performance of an irreligious dead march, that the audience recognizes as a last rite of sorts, dignifies the character with a recognition of being worthy of respectful burial exercises, unifying all participants, cast and audience, in a spirit of respect, without crossing Elizabeth's liturgical line in the sand.

Because of the participatory nature and immediate familiarity with funeral ceremony in each individual audience member, dramatized funerary activity elicits personal responses. A dead march at any point in the play unites the audience with the cast, and when staged at the end, also grants to each a sense of finale. Shakespeare, similarly to Kyd and Marlowe, characteristically

concludes his tragedies and histories with a variation of a dead march, as in *Hamlet*, with funerary instructions. *Richard III*, *The First Part of Henry the Fourth*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Titus Andronicus*, all written before *Hamlet*, close with funerary language, primarily burial instructions. *I Henry VI* (scene i), *Richard III* (scene ii) and *Titus Andronicus* (scene i) also contain funeral rites in Act I, to initiate the plot<sup>8</sup>. Shakespeare repeats the pattern in his later tragedies, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon of Athens*<sup>9</sup>, enforcing the generic style of closing tragedies with funerary sound, language, or activity – activity that immediately invites the audience to participate through acknowledgement, and brings esteem to the deceased character, no matter the cause or manner of death.

But is a literary convention strong enough to hold the connotations of funerary commands of Fortinbras? Does Hamlet receive a hero's funeral simply because he is a protagonist in a "villain-hero" play (Neill, 266)? What code of ethics, beyond that of a literary convention, can forgive, forget, and forestall any judgment upon one who willfully desecrates human remains? In what ethic of virtue can this behavior be tolerated, nay celebrated? Hamlet, while succeeding at killing Claudius, dies a death in an occluded plot clumsily executed that leaves all unfortunate participants dead; his weapon, a rapier, was a weapon of gentlemen, not warriors; in ordinary circumstances, the wound would not be fatal; no family members are left to grieve his death. Under these circumstances, it might be usually surmised that Hamlet receives the tribute because the heraldic funeral belongs to tragedy, and no other qualifications are needed; but, no, Hamlet's final words, Horatio's benediction, and Fortinbras' orders reach beyond the conventions of tragedy.

While closing the tragedies with funerary activity is one way Shakespeare affirms to the audience the customary value of the ritual, staging a funeral that is interrupted, distracted, redirected, or abrogated dialectically affirms the unstable environment outside of the funeral in which the characters are also embroiled. *I Henry VI* opens with a funeral cortege, but the dialog

is reduced to officers verbally jockeying for political position. In the second scene of the opening act, *Richard III* portrays the funeral of Henry VI during which no rites are performed, but instead, Gloucester propositions Lady Anne. *Titus Andronicus* opens with a funeral cortege of Titus' sons with Titus serving as the officiant. The ceremony is interrupted by Lucius bragging over his dismemberment of Alarbus, and the ceremony later deteriorates into a murder scene in which Titus kills another of his sons. A marred dramatic funeral translates as a symbol of a marred society; rituals intended to unify deteriorate into chaos. When Shakespeare dramatizes irregular funerals, irregularity heightens the drama while simultaneously exposing the irregularity of the other events and relationships onstage – a point proven in the smothered, denied, and abbreviated rites continuing to be referenced throughout the play. The marred or absent funeral rites that occur throughout *Hamlet* indicate a Denmark where “something is rotten,” but since Hamlet himself often disrupts or withholds the rites of others, these “maimed rites” are also a sign of Hamlet's flawed character and attitude. By the end of the play, as I will show, Hamlet has experienced a transformation that is indicated by the generous funeral prepared for him.

## CHAPTER 3 FORMULATING PUBLIC TRIBUTE

Hamlet's dead march concludes the litany of funerals already integral to the plot. Through the stage direction, the play invites the audience to become participants in his ceremony, likening the experience to heraldic funerals of the Renaissance. Such funerals not only honored the status and reputation of the deceased, but also had the capacity to create an exalted reputation where none existed before. Shakespeare's use of funerals in *Hamlet* indicates his awareness that funerals have this power to shape the legacy of the deceased. The preparations for Hamlet's funeral at the end of the play suggest that the Danish prince may be generously remembered for what he might have been, rather than for what he was.

In the scope of Renaissance funeral practice, "properties of [the] funeral are at least as important to the living as they are to the dead. The proper performance of such ceremonies has, that is to say, an essential social role" (Neill, 266). Funerals conveyed affirmations of social standing, and the procession was a verifiable symbol of "heraldic biography" (272). State funerals in the Elizabethan era were arranged by the College of Heralds, a council that ordered the cortege of banners, servants, gentry, the decedent, mourners, horsemen, etc. "inside an unassailable social order" (269). For instance, Mary, Queen of Scots, though executed by the state, received a state funeral, and the College of Heralds recorded a cortege numbering over 300 individuals preceding the corpse in procession: "since funeral pageantry belonged to the public language of power, its splendours were vigorously promoted by the state" (279). The idea that public ceremony conjures a collective power to unite its participants helps us to comprehend the power that the funeral can have to establish an eternal reputation.

Elizabeth's edict may have contributed to the modified forms in which Shakespeare dramatized funerals, but the actual funerals of his day influenced his vision of their power. One funeral in which the survivors attempted to define, or rather re-define, the man – a funeral Shakespeare would have possibly attended – was that of Sir Philip Sidney. It's possible that the

hyperbolic nature of Sidney's cortege – in relation to his social standing – provided the basis for the Hamlet scene.

Sidney had gained an international reputation that exceeded his local standing, and his funeral was an attempt to establish his identity as one step away from royalty. Thomas Lant, an extended family member of Sidney's, participated in the funeral and created a written account of the activities with sketched drawings of the cortege. His account, *Sequitur celebritas et pompa funebris*, was published in 1588 and the drawings were immortalized in a 30-plate series of engravings spanning three meters by Derick Theodor de Bry. Lant contended in his notes that the route taken by the cortege was “so thronged with people, that ye mourners had scarcely room to pass” (Goldring, 202). The engraved metallic plates depict fewer than 400 of the 700 that reportedly marched in the procession. The casket (plate 16) was led by the 32 poor servants, “a number of the years of his life in which Sidney died,” and followed by soldiers (his brothers-in - arms). Next came the family colours and extended members of his household, then friends “in order of importance” (43). Immediately behind the casket, borne by dignified relatives, marched the chief mourner, his brother Sir Robert Sidney, with his six assistant mourners, followed by dignified relatives on horseback, who were trailed by Dutch statesmen,<sup>10</sup> signifying the international breadth of Sidney's influence: “Performance was political at Sidney's funeral, and the politics were performance” (200). Aristocratic funerals were in a state of reduction in the 1580's, so the “unprecedented lavishness of Sidney's funeral,” almost to a point of regality was an aberration from the social trend (204). The Great Banner, for instance, was borne alongside Sidney's pennon, a presumptive breach of funeral etiquette because the Great Banner was a royal emblem belonging to a group to which Sidney did not belong; to display his pennon alongside it was to impose an association upon him which was more embellishment than fact. The presence of trumpets also typically suggested funerals of royals, and his cortege contained a disproportionate number of fifes and drums. The display



overtook the man's legacy.

Sidney's funeral was also a display of Protestant allegiance and influence. It's possible that the nobility from the region who appear on the frieze were added to the procession late and with political purpose because they were staunch Protestants<sup>11</sup> The frieze produced by de Bry was a virtual duplication of Hendrick Holtzius's 1584 series of engravings depicting the funeral of William of Orange, a Protestant martyr<sup>12</sup>. By similarly illustrating his grand funeral cortege, de Bry likens Sidney historically with Orange. Although the funeral occurred four months after Sidney's death, its final stages of planning were accelerated to capitalize on the presence of the Dutch statesmen at hand and to ride the momentum of Mary Queen of Scots' execution eight days before: "Whatever the case, Sidney's family and his political allies seem to have been able to use the occasion of his death and funeral to glorify the cause of militant Protestantism, and, in the process, to shape Sidney's own image for posterity" (210). Sidney was a friend to the court, but he was not royal; however, his royal funeral presented him as such, enriching his reputation for eternity.

As noted above, Shakespeare was possibly among the "throng"<sup>13</sup> (knowledgeable of it anyway) and would have been aware of the hyperbolic nature of the procession given that Sidney, a courtier, was not entitled to a funeral fit for a monarch. The political, religious, memorial, and societal dynamics of Sidney's funeral exemplify heraldry taken to its extreme; the funeral was organized to memorialize Sidney as a more influential man than his immediate reputation and social standing would suggest.

Much as Sidney's funeral serves to revise and augment his legacy, Hamlet's, by order of Fortinbras, serves a similar purpose. Fortinbras claims, "For he is likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal" (ll. 397-398) opening the door to supposition. Rather than being honored/remembered/celebrated for his actual influence and accomplishments, Hamlet is revered in a fashion that satisfies Fortinbras' projection. The memory that Fortinbras voices into reality is

the memory of his four captains carrying the corpse. As Techelles and Usumcasane agree to bear the body of Agydas in order to honor him, as Misenus' bearers turn their respectful faces, the four captains, Fortinbras' highest-ranking officers, satisfy Fortinbras' intention of revering Hamlet on the highest level; as Fortinbras recognizes Hamlet, so shall the world.

The military bearing and salute given to Hamlet appear to violate the rules of funeral etiquette. Hamlet is a student at Wittenburg, an academic institution not a military one, yet his body is shouldered and marched to the "stage" which initially constitutes the world at large. With his theater named "The Globe," the audience understands that they are witnesses to the most immediate "stage", intuitively perceiving that the first movement of the body will be to exit "stage" right or left, in a ritualistic act of which they are also willing participants through observation. The metaphor of "the stage" is echoed in Horatio's comments on the scene, "You ... / give order that these bodies / High on a stage be placed to the view, / And let me speak to [th'] unknowing world / How these things came about" (ll. 361-365). Horatio's role as Hamlet's historian is manifested in the moments as he is dying. Ensuingly, Fortinbras gives his order, and the theatricality of life and death is cemented in the metaphor of "the stage." The care of Hamlet's corpse, like that of Misenus', like that of Sidney's, proves the funeral to be "the stage" on which he will be celebrated. The catafalque, or bier, or altar, or couch that supports the corpse are all accepted as a stage upon which Hamlet will repose. Another "stage" is the theater in which the play itself stands as his ultimate monument, carrying the legacy of a king's tribute with him into the afterlife, remembered repeatedly by the viewing / hearing publics and casts alike. Much as Sidney received exaggerated rites, the final judgment rendered upon Hamlet via Fortinbras' funerary dictation supersedes his individual reputation. Hamlet's character flaws, and the spite with which he withheld Polonius' corpse, might be reason to withhold reverence for Hamlet, but Fortinbras is unaware of Hamlet's late behavior; his decision stems from his "rights of memory," rights that are rooted in rites. Both funerals, of Sidney and Hamlet, serve as a metaphorical protective canopy over which the transgressions of Hamlet and limitations of Sidney are

discounted.

In Fortinbras' funerary command, Hamlet's past and future are conjoined on the basis of what Fortinbras calls "likely." The two characters never meet, so how can Fortinbras deem Hamlet deserving? Is the tribute a sign of Hamlet's redemption? Perhaps because his words and behavior shortly before and during the final scene indicate his new understanding of those transgressions and his culpability. The funeral preparations at the end of the play will allow the audience to remember the Hamlet who might have been, rather than the Hamlet who was.

## CHAPTER 4 DISPOSITION BEFORE DECOMPOSITION

When the captains are told to lift his corpse, we see that Hamlet will be treated with maximum affordable respect, which would most likely include embalming. An ancient tradition<sup>14</sup>, European countries continued through the centuries to prepare the remains for viewing and disposition. Preservation tactics were superficial in nature, absent yet the recognition of principles such as ‘arterial circulation’ and ‘normal flora.’ Undoubtedly, Shakespeare possessed an Elizabethan understanding of the physical and chemical changes that occur during decomposition, an intimate understanding that we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century do not possess because of the timeliness with which hygienic treatments are applied, and the cultural shifts toward alternative methods of disposal, namely, direct (unattended) cremation. 21<sup>st</sup>-century audiences live with knowledge of bacteria and cold storage, the Globe audience did not; today’s audience could identify stages of decomposition that creates malodorous compounds, while the Globe audience just knew the inevitable physical changes in color and odor. The specific year or period isn’t designated in the play; however, the armor and description of battles suggest a relative modern history to the Renaissance audience. Hoisting young Hamlet with captains suggests expediency and priority of care. He will most likely be returned to the palace where his body will be prepared to the extent of local custom for regals, in the tradition of his father. The fact that the original audience would have understood the elaborate rites, including embalming, that were normally afforded the bodies of the noble and the royal suggests how shocking they would have found Hamlet’s treatment of Polonius’s body, as well as his hasty and secret burial.

In the “ancestral fashion” of his father, young Hamlet’s royal remains will be taken back to the castle to be embalmed. Embalming practices had not advanced since ancient times, and the Renaissance physicians would recognize the process. In a modern account, the Countess of Hautekerken was embalmed by Dutch physician Petrus Forestus in 1582. He reported on the procedure in the following log entry:

I personally was bidden to embalm the Countess of Hauterken, who was a daughter of a nobleman of Egmont (Holland) and who died of childbirth on January 9, 1582 at the Hague (Holland) before Johannes Heurinius (1543 – 1604), my good friend, and professor at Leyden in Holland was asked. Preceding all things before the embalmmment was begun, there was made the following preparation ... I took 2 ½ lbs. aloes; myrrh, 1 ½ lbs; ordinary wermut, seven hands-full; rosemary, four handsfull; pumice, 1 ½ lbs.; marjoran, 4 lbs.; storacis calamata, 2 loht; the zestlinalipta muscata, ½ loht. Mix all and reduce to a powder. Lay open the trunk of the body, remove all the viscera, afterwards take such sponges which were previously immersed in cold fresh water, afterwards dipped in aqua vita, and wash out the interior of the body by hand with sponge. This having been done, fill the cavities (of the body) with a layer of cotton moistened in aqua vita; sprinkle over it a layer of the previously mentioned powders; place another layer of the moistened cotton and a layer of powder one over the other until the abdomen together with the chest is entirely full. Afterwards sew the above (abdominal walls) again together. Wrap around the body with waxed cloth and other things. Now having heard this you understand this embalmmment was performed by me, the aforementioned Heurnius and Arnold the Surgeon on January 10, 1562, in the dwelling of the wellborn Count and Countess Von Wassenaer in the Hague. (Mayer, 19).<sup>15</sup>

First the balm is mixed, then the trunk cavity is surgically opened, and the easily corruptible viscera, consisting primarily of watery cells and molecular foundations for decomposition and decay, are removed. The open ribcage and abdominal cavity are reconstituted with cotton, moisturizers, and perfuming agents. After suturing the incision, the positioning of the limbs is controlled with a wrap. Dehydrated, perfumed, contained, and dignified all become new characteristics of the decaying corpse. Horatio identifies the ghost's "fair and warlike form / In which the majesty of buried Denmark / Did sometimes march" (I, I, 47-49). One cannot bury majesty except in the form of a preserved corpse. An unembalmed King would constitute another transgression against him.

The Norse legend of Hamlet, first printed in the twelfth century, would be subject to "Early Modern" interpretations, and the rituals of the day would shape the thinking of the audience. But, as were the embalming techniques, traditional rituals were slow to change. In Borkowska's study, she captures the color and custom of Royal European kings from 1370 – 1734. She asserts, "these funerals showed features in common use in central, and in part in western, Europe, too" (516). Borkowska confirms my earlier point that the funeral reflects the culture of a community: "Apart from the coronation, the funeral rites of European monarchs were the most developed ceremonies aimed at emphasizing royal majesty" (514). At the funeral of Casimir the Great, who died October 5, 1370, "we find already the characteristic division between the act of burying the king's body and the ceremonial exequies" (514). Casimir's corpse was buried on the third day after his death. His ceremonies, however, were delayed within the kingdom until they could be performed in conjunction with the coronation of the new king, Louis of Anjou, on October 19. The biers and banners of the funeral cortege were paraded in procession through as many as three churches. The intricate clothwork that covered the "[n]umerous biers" would later be hung in a church or monastery, a gift from the estate<sup>16</sup> (515). On June 18, 1434 the funeral of Ladislaus Jagiellon was held and the events were recorded by a nineteen-year-old

student, John Dlugosz. The funeral mass occurred with the body present, and as was the custom in *Beowulf* and other much older works, food and drink were made as offerings onto the altar during the mass, after which the body was moved to a marble tomb. On October 11, 1506, King Alexander was buried in Wilno, the capital of Lithuania, but the ceremonies continued for three more days. Processions and prayers continued through “as many as five churches” (519). The account of the ceremonies was written down by a young prince, who died a King of Poland himself in 1548, Sigismund I Jagiellon. To assure the rubrics of the mass were properly and historically observed, a Catholic manual for funerals was written, *Ordo pompae funebris serenissimi Sigismundi Regis Poloniae*, in effort to preserve the rite for the next generation. The work chronicled the exercises of the funeral mass, both in the present, for Jagiellon, and for earlier royal funerals already described above. According to Borkowska, “[t]he sources enable us to see clearly the successive stages of the rite in 1548: the preparation of the king’s body for public display, its reposal in a viewing chamber, the funeral procession, the burial, the processions around the churches of Cracow and the ceremonies on the third day” (520). A funeral was not only a family ritual, it was an event to be shared by the kingdom, which requires time to plan.

In the first stage of the planned ritual, the body must be prepared for viewing. Jagiellon’s corpse “was washed and embalmed” in effort to retard the rate of decomposition (520). Hygienic practices, perfuming agents, and dehydrating compounds aid to hide the malodorous condition of the decaying tissue, internal and external, so the public at large can comfortably approach and pay respect to the remains.

Next, the bishop of Cracow, Samuel Maciejowski, the man in charge of arranging the funeral ceremony, personally dressed the king; prayers, hymns, and bells accompanied him and his aides during the ritual, one in which “clothing the king (not only in imitation regalia but possibly sacerdotal robes) went back at least to the fourteenth century” (522). The garments used

for repose were the same garments the king wore at his coronation, “an alb of gold, a dalmatic and a priestly stole,”<sup>17</sup> a veritable priest in image at the opening and closing of his royal reign. The music, the prayers, and the ecclesiastical poetry produce the atmosphere of a divine presence.

Continuing to outfit the king, “they put on his feet golden sandals with spurs attached, brassards on his arms and on his hands silk gloves with iron gloves over them; then the king was clothed in the bishop’s mantle (pluviale) of brocade. Finally, they put the crown on his head and placed a scepter, orb, and sword in his hands” (520-1). The visual display of the king in his attire was a memory to last in the minds of all who were present; in this way his royalty will endure. The body of the king was then placed on a throne draped in gold, where it reposed for two days before it was buried. The display of the past confronting the future amidst a golden regal setting of an adapted throne serves to exemplify the reverence reserved for the dead human remains. As one lives, so shall he die; in the minds of the kingdom, he still exhibits royalty.

On the third day, the body was placed in a coffin and set in a castle room that was adapted to function as a chapel. It “was set on the catafalque covered with black velvet, surrounded by candles, in a chamber transformed into a chapel. Walls and floor were covered with funeral palls. Over the coffin were placed the royal insignia themselves” (521). The catafalque, a “stage” in itself supporting the coffin covered in black velvet, and walls in a candlelit room recall the image of a tomb in torchlight, his next and eternal destination. Family and friends alike passed by his body reciting prayers for his soul, and “[f]uneral rites were performed throughout the country” (522). The procession to the grave resembled that of Sidney’s in that “the order of precedence and the attire of the participants reflected their status and place in the hierarchy of the community” (522). The casket upon a portable bier was “covered with purple cloth with a veil of black and gold. A hundred courtiers in black hoods surrounded the bier, and a throng of others with candles and torches accompanied the



procession on either side” (523). The body, encased and embellished by the finest of material and attended to by the most devoted of subjects, continued to be adored until the moment of entombment. Following the mass, Jagiellon was entombed and the ropes that lowered his casket were passed on as sacred vestiges to the incoming regime.

The casket bier continued to be used the following day as the platform for the king’s regalia; it was taken into four churches and received masses recited by bishops and food offerings upon it. The third day, the bier with the regalia upon it was taken finally to the presbytery cathedral at Warwel. “[T]he stage for the last act had now been prepared and decorated in the presbytery of the cathedral on the Warwel, where coronations took place. Stalls and floor were covered with black velvet; the picture over the high altar was veiled in black velvet adorned with a golden cross; a pall covered the royal throne and the canopy over it. On the walls were painted coats-of-arms; black candles stood all about” (524). Religious iconography once again identifies the king as a religious leader. The Funeral Mass will terminate his reign in the same cathedral that hosted his coronation. The familiar black imagery lit with candles recalls the inevitability of the tomb; the black veils in *I Henry VI* and the black clothing worn by Hamlet to enter the stage, all serve to accentuate the mourning customs of the time period. Hamlet, like his father, would most likely be embalmed according to the practices of the day. Through Fortinbras’ dictum, Hamlet’s corpse is receiving royal honor as the audience applauds the play’s conclusion. The practice and pageantry of the European Kings’ funeral was mimicked on stage by Shakespeare’s contemporaries, Marlowe and Kyd as well.

A prime example of embalming within a revenge tragedy occurs in *Tamburlaine the Great II* when Tamburlaine decrees how Zenocrate’s corpse is to be treated:

Where’er her soul be, thou [To the body] shalt stay with me,  
 Embalm’d with cassia, ambergris, and myrrh,

Not lapt in lead, but in a sheet of gold,  
 And, till I die, thou shalt not be interr'd.  
 Then in as rich a tomb as Mausolus'  
 We both will rest, and have one epitaph  
 Writ in as many several languages  
 As I have conquer'd kingdoms with my sword.  
 This cursed town will I consume with fire,  
 Because this place bereft me of my love;  
 The houses, burnt, will look as if they mourn'd;  
 And here will I set up her statue,  
 And march about it with my mourning camp,  
 Drooping and pining for Zenocrate"  
 (Tamburlaine the Great, Part 2, II, iv, ll. 130-143).

The preparation given to Zenocrate's body is a physical effort to enhance his own sepulchral legacy by including her in his tomb. Her gilded corpse sharing this monument of secure containment, will endure through language to reach every nation of the known world.

Tamburlaine's sovereignty determines his eternity. We can be sure that the sovereignty of Fortinbras is with him onstage, a sovereignty that allows him to recognize Hamlet, not the "named" king, Claudius. The audience witnesses, reacts, and ultimately applauds in participation in the ritual of the play. The play stands as the ultimate monument to the man.

## CHAPTER 5 THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF THE CHAMBERLAIN

Hamlet's funeral rites are not subject to the jurisdiction of Claudius, but Ophelia's and Polonius' are. Thus, Hamlet and Claudius share responsibility for the conduct of these inadequate and disrupted rites. At Ophelia's burial, what does Hamlet see when determining the "maimed rites" of the minimal cortege approaching the grave (V, i, 219)? The stage directions call for "King, Queen, Laertes, and (a DOCTOR of DIVINITY following) the corse, [with Lords attending]. Ophelia's corpse would have been given the minimum treatment required for a swift, sanitary burial, and likely, nothing more. The refusal to provide full rites by the "churlish priest," his refusal to pray for her, the lack of priestly aides present, all preclude any idea that her death is acceptable in his judgment: "She should in ground unsanctified been lodg'd / Till the last trumpet, for charitable prayers, / [Shards,] flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her" (V, i, 229-231). Hamlet acutely acknowledges the hierarchy of ritual performances as her body is brought to burial:

But soft awhile, here comes the King,  
The Queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?  
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken  
The corse they follow did with desp'rate hand  
Foredo its own life. 'Twas of some estate"  
(V, i, 217-221).

The association of the royals with the small group and uncasketed remains immediately strikes Hamlet as incongruous; in fact, he also immediately perceives that the body is a suicide case who came from a wealthy family, all at first glance. His sensitivity to funeral customs is evident here, as it is when he insists on clothing himself in mourning attire. His keen awareness also suggests his arrogance in knowingly withholding Polonius' dead body. In his evaluation of Ophelia's

cemetery procession, she may have been prepared for burial for sanitary reasons, in effort to keep odors down, but she most assuredly did not receive the royal treatment. Her remains, however, were at least attended to, contained, and disposed of almost immediately in comparison to her father's.

The Elizabethan audience would not yet possess the vocabulary necessary to describe the molecular process of decomposition in today's terms, for bacteria weren't discovered under a lens until 1683, but the common uneducated gravedigger clown is most certainly familiar with the progression of the signs of decomposition: color, odor, gasses, desquamation (skin blistering and tearing), and purge.

Ham: How long will a man lie i' th' earth ere he rot?

1Clo: Faith if 'a be not rotten before 'a die – as

we have many pocky corses that will scarce hold the

laying in – 'a will last you some eight year or nine year.

A tanner will last you nine year.

Ham: Why he more than another?

1 Clo: why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his trade

that 'a will keep out water a great while, and your

water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body.

(V, I, ll. 163 – 172).

The tanner – Shakespeare's father was one – knew to preserve animal skin through dehydration; the gravedigger proves his knowledge of hydrolysis (destroying cells through the excessive intrusion of water): as the body decays, the abundance of water in the cells is released, creating a condition of moisture, blisters, and desquamation that serves to accelerate the process. While the language may be primitive, the imagery is vivid, just as Hamlet's in the case of decaying Polonius.

Hamlet exclaims upon discovery of the slain Polonius, “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!” (III, iv, l 31), the only address the body receives upon the parting of its soul. After dismissively blaming Polonius for causing his own death, Hamlet abruptly transitions to continue his scolding of Gertrude in complete disregard for the bloody corpse between them. He flippantly acknowledges the corpse 141 lines later, and from his perspective, relieving himself of any guilt from the murder, “I will bestow him, and will answer well the death I gave him” (ll. 176-7); and finally, 40 lines after his scolding of his mother in her closet complete, he claims he will now “lug the guts,” which suggests a strenuous messy affair (l. 212). Hamlet’s removal of the bloody, flaccid remains from the place of death is not easy, and he possibly loosens the viscera through the lacerations. So, upon a murder for which Hamlet shows no contrition, he grants the body of Polonius an exclamatory eulogy of satire, then lifts and carries a wounded corpse away instead of calling a priest. Inevitably, decomposition begins at the moment of death.

Hamlet knows that by denying the family the body, he is denying them the opportunity to practice the customs of a hygienic bath, vigil, eulogy, hymns, and Christian committal at grave, while he has nothing to gain – inexcusable behavior in a respectable member of society. Consider Priam in *The Iliad* risking his life to entreat Achilles for the abused remains of Hector; or remember Antigone risking her own life to provide respect to her brother’s otherwise rejected remains. Hamlet finally tells a persistent Claudius, “If indeed you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby” (IV, iii, 36-37). Hamlet’s comments regarding Polonius being at supper with the worms, and his reluctance to reveal his location leaves the audience with a final image of Polonius as a decaying corpse. The microscopic processes of decomposition had not been discovered yet by Renaissance physicians, and the attempt to conceptualize them emboldened adventurous anatomical observations. In 1543 *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1555=second edition) written by Flemish physician Andreas Vesalius (1514 – 1564) was a landmark publication and set the standard for

clinical discourse on anatomical dissection: “The *Fabrica* is acknowledged as one of the founding masterpieces of modern Western medicine, but as critics have increasingly begun to recognize, it is also a key document in the larger cultural history of its period” (Neill, 104). Public dissections became events that might be scheduled in accordance with other festivals: “A Renaissance public dissection, then, was at least as much a piece of drama, a species of didactic tragedy, as it was a scientific event; and as with other kinds of tragedy, its dramatization of the human encounter with death was not confined to the simple moralization of imperfection” (119). The performance gave rise to the idea that mental or spiritual injuries could be physically observed, in that “the mysteries it contained were not merely physiological, but moral ontological, and psychological. In a fashion ambiguously poised between the metaphoric and the literal, the interior of the body was imagined as inscribed with the occult truths of the inner self” (123). It was believed that the body was a ‘container of secrets’ (124): Elizabeth’s maid of honor, Margaret Ratcliffe, died in a state of emotional depression, and Elizabeth had her corpse opened and examined in an attempt to expose her broken heart. Neill quotes Sir Philip Sidney on catharsis; he relates internal injury to psychological or emotional trouble. Sidney describes Tragedy and Anatomy as related in that Tragedy opens “the greatest wounds that showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue” which led to the “perception that tragedy and anatomy, through their common preoccupation with unveiling, opening, and discovery, were not merely analytic but (in the most literal sense) apocalyptic arts” (qtd 121). The human body became an exhibition-case for the human spirit, as reflected in the studies and drawings of Italian Renaissance anatomist, Leonardo da Vinci, and other scientific texts.<sup>18</sup> As the internal anatomical organs and systems were discovered and documented, advancements in knowledge brought humanity closer to the old Delphic injunction, “know thyself” (p. 44). The parallel between anatomy and tragedy is that each is anchored in revelation of mortality.

By not revering the sanctity of Polonius body, and by preventing, at least initially, proper

hygienic treatment or embalming, Hamlet has left us with an image (or memory) of a rotting corpse. Upon Claudius' initial question into the whereabouts, Hamlet replies that Polonius is "At supper ... Not where he eats, but where 'a is eaten; a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him" (IV, iii, 17 – 20). Hamlet's satire produces the image of maggots and worms feeding upon Polonius, therefore creating a "rotten" legacy for him, reflective of Hamlet's overall disdain for him. As stated above, the deceased is characteristically portrayed at a funeral in the best possible light, but Polonius never receives that respect, and his survivors never receive that support.

A lamenting Ophelia symbolically bequeaths her father the hymns, flowers, and eulogy – the public funeral – he never received, her instinct for mourning uncontainable. Whether or not she attended his interment is questionable as she recalls it in her dream-like state, but she describes him with dismal imagery as "dead and gone ... [laid] i' the cold ground" ... barefaced on the bier ... (IV, v, 30, 69-70, 165). Claudius alludes to the sociological wounds to which the surviving family is subjected: "the people muddied, / Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers / For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly / In hugger-mugger to inter him;" (IV, v, ll. 81 – 84). The disgrace the family suffers through the improper burial is a subject of gossip. "Greenly" suggests not only inexperienced and clumsy, but also the discoloration of a decomposing body and the possible sign of nausea in the sextons attending the decayed remains. By denying the inclusion of a public funeral during mourning, the survivors lose out on the therapeutic nature of a ceremony, and they suffer an embarrassing mode of grief.

Hamlet has defiled the remains by "tugging" and "lug[ging]" the bleeding body to the next room, then later coyly avoids answering interrogations on its location; but perhaps the greater moral violation occurs in Claudius' actions. He identifies himself and the Queen as the ones to properly assume responsibility, "It will be laid to us" for disposition and resolution of Polonius's murder (IV, I, 16-17). Rather than send for Laertes and arrange proper services,

Claudius determines that haste is his best path and foregoes all formality ... He hopes to “bear all smooth and even” by sending Hamlet, the killer, away and burying Polonius quietly (IV.iii.7). Once Claudius gained control of the corpse, “it is he who has interred Polonius ‘hugger-mugger’ and left him without a proper funeral rite” (Beauregard, 63). Claudius, therefore, bears responsibility, with Hamlet, for Polonius being denied religious rites – a responsibility he also bears upon the death of Polonius’ suicidal daughter.

Principals of law and religion were at odds in determining the case of the ‘self-murderer,’ Ophelia, and MacDonald provides the results of his study of the suicide rate in England during the Renaissance. He describes the dual process of legal/religious verdicts upon self-murderers. The coroner makes his legal judgment, and the priest will make his judgment alone, but it “normally reflected the commonly held view of the parishioners” (71). The priest had to balance his decision between the heirs and the courts, and traditionally, his opinion was more respected than the coroner if a dispute occurred. A jury would determine if the “crime” was committed by a person who was declared *felo de se*, a sane individual, committing a felony to the self, or *non compos mentis*, not put together mentally, therefore innocent of a crime. Apparently without authoritative, governmental prompting, juries overwhelmingly decided upon *felo de se*, revealing the true pulse of the religiously-convicted community. Only 1.6 % of all suicides filed in the courts between 1487 and 1660 were determined to be committed *non compos mentis*. If the case is decided *non compos mentis*, forgiveness could be extended, the deceased would receive judicial absolution and a Christian burial rite, and the estate could be retained by the family.

However, the estate of the one of the 98+% of “self-murderers” (Clare)<sup>19</sup> found to be *felo de se*, was “forfeited to the crown, and the corpse was buried profanely, interred at night in a public highway with a stake driven through it” (310). According to MacDonald’s research, suicides that were tried in the genteel community were decided *non compos mentis* approximately 10% of the time, 5 times the rate of the common citizen. Compound that figure



with evidence that “men and women of quality” only accounted for less than 1% of all suicides investigated years 1485 – 1660, which according to modern-day historians would most likely account for 4-5% of the entire population, a figure clearly skewed in effort to favor the well-to-do (313).

Concurrently across Europe, suicide victims in Sweden were taken out of the community to the woods and burned instead of being allowed burial in a cemetery; in Geneva, bodies were buried behind the shooting range or the potter’s graves for plague victims; and in France, bodies of self-murderers were buried North/South (instead of facing the East anticipating Christ’s foretold second coming) and face-down. The cultural stigma attached to a “self-murder” would drive survivors to argue that the death occurred accidentally – especially a drowning, as these were recorded as the primary cause of death in women’s suicide – rather than risk the plea for *non compos mentis* because the verdict was so rare. Furthermore, we must remember that these cases are not decided upon by “government officials”, but by juries – panels of local landowners – that MacDonald describes as “tribunals of ordinary men of humble social rank who shared the common people’s belief that self-murder was literally diabolical” (311). The “churlish” priest references additional public disgrace normally given to decedents determined to be *felo de se*; “Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her” (V, I, 231). According to studies by Clare and Holleran, the list of forfeited rites of self-murderers consisted of a church service including a sermon, hymns/psalms, a procession to the grave, prayers over the grave, and burial in blessed soil. Whether the state or the church rendered its judgment, the stain of suicide clearly cost Ophelia her full rites. Holleran suggests that Shakespeare presents the distorted ceremonies that accompany Ophelia’s burial as his acquiescence to the law against staging religious ceremonies, and that he also gains dramatic effect because distorted ceremonies are more exciting and dramatic than ordinary ones. The emotional tug that Ophelia’s cortege applies to Hamlet, in fact, pulls him into his transformation from princely to kingly.

Ophelia's funeral cortege arrives at the cemetery as Hamlet banters with the clown on the philosophical nature of life and death. The bones seem to be the only lasting evidence of man's existence, until the familiar sight of a funeral intrudes upon and halts the conversation. At that point, the importance of tradition supersedes the tangible, visible grave remnants before him. Here, Hamlet loses his intellect and responds with his heart, daring to challenge the vindictiveness of a noble Laertes in an effort to prove his love. "I loved Ophelia," he proclaims. "Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum" (V.i.269-71). In the grave over a shrouded Ophelia, Hamlet earns his glory; he mourns passionately within the boundaries of a funeral, after which he rises from the grave to release his passion and recognize his need for Laertes' forgiveness. His obsession with his own torturous debate on whether it is better to live or die is forgotten in the throes of grief – in a setting that allows it. This is a moment of transformation for Hamlet. The self-knowledge, the identity, that Hamlet has been searching for in vengeance is found in grief – at a funeral – for it is in his humility that he truly understands wholeness.

The capacity of the funeral rite can indeed be cavernous; for within Ophelia's, the politics of Claudius, the influence of the church, the violation of Laertes' rights, and the transformation of Hamlet all converge. The rites accorded Ophelia and Polonius suggest that Denmark is rotten, and Hamlet's abuse of Polonius's body and disruption of Ophelia's funeral signal his own character flaws, painting him as arrogant and disrespectful. But the rite also allows itself to be curated under the influence of true human impulse, an instrument of tradition to standardize human emotion. Hamlet's generous rites, then, accorded to him at the end of the play are only legitimate because he merits them. He is a changed person as a result of Ophelia's marred burial rite.

## CHAPTER 6 THE FUNERAL'S THE THING

The “rights of memory” claimed by Fortinbras authorize him to grant a heroic funeral to Hamlet, the troubled protagonist, could be heard ambiguously by Shakespeare’s audience as his “rites of memory,” recalling the funeral masses of the past, including that of his own father (king of Norway)<sup>20</sup> and Hamlet’s father. The royal attention given to Hamlet’s corpse supports Greenblatt’s assertion that King Hamlet’s ghost removes himself for the last time from the stage and subliminally infuses himself into the body of young Hamlet. He contends that the statements of the prince as he is dying, “I am dead” are manifestations of the ghost King inhabiting Hamlet’s body, “as if the spirit of Hamlet’s father has not disappeared; it has been incorporated by his son (229). Greenblatt traces the path of the Ghost from beginning, in which he is visible to the general public, to his last appearance in Gertrude’s closet, in which he is invisible to her and only visible to Hamlet. This serves as a culmination of development of the Ghost from harbinger to Barnardo and Francisco, to obsession and inhabitant of Hamlet, melding his past and present. If Greenblatt is correct, then Fortinbras’ command to honor the body of Prince Hamlet, in effect, honors the body of his Father, the King. In acting as such, Fortinbras, a minor character, serves a major role: He remembers the King, fulfilling the wish of the Ghost, resolving a major theme in the play.

Fortinbras enters the stage briefly in Act IV, speaks one line, as he is just passing through, and appears once more in the final scene, yet his influence can be felt from the play’s opening scene. His name means “strong arm”<sup>21</sup> and the feud between his father and Hamlet’s father is contained within identity of the Ghost at the outset:

Marcellus: Is it not like the King?

Horatio: As thou art to thyself.

Such was the very armor he had on

When he the ambitious Norway combated (I, i, 58-61).

The combat between the monarchs resulted in the death of “Norway” and the assumption of part of his domain by the conquering “Denmark.” In a parallel subplot within the play, Fortinbras, like Hamlet, seeks to restore the legacy of his father and to reclaim what Old Fortinbras has lost; vindication is his only apparent motivation. Similarly, Hamlet declares he will “wipe away” from his “table” of books and distractions – everything – only to focus upon the mission given to him by the Ghost, his father, his King (I, v, 98). Ironically, young Fortinbras, like Hamlet, is a crown prince who is a subject to the brother of his slain father. His movement against Claudius to reclaim the land looms large in the opening of the play; his anticipated encroachment is the very reason for the guard posts appointed to Barnardo, Francisco, Horatio, and Marcellus. Claudius dismisses him, appealing to the Norway’s king, the convalescing uncle, to curb the aggression of the nephew and his militia: “So much for him” (I, ii, 25). By Act II, the emissaries appear to also dismiss Fortinbras; they assure Claudius that the aggression of young Fortinbras is in fact directed against the Poles, and if he will allow Fortinbras to pass, he will remain in accordance with the truce between the two of them. Since Act I, scene I, young Fortinbras has managed to build a reputation for himself through other people’s accounts; he’s regarded as fierce, yet immature, the spectral opposite of procrastinating, dour Prince Hamlet.

In Act IV, appearing on stage for the first time, Fortinbras’ message to Claudius is that he has arrived for the “promised march / Over his kingdom” (IV, iv, 4). The implication is that Fortinbras is just passing through, but by beginning a new line with a capitalized letter within a sentence, the poetic structure ambiguously suggests that “Over” may also mean Fortinbras is in Denmark as a usurping monarch. Here, Fortinbras narrowly misses crossing paths with Hamlet who addresses a trailing captain:

*Fortinbras: Go softly on. [Exeunt all but the Captain]*

*Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN*

*Hamlet: Good sir, whose powers are these?*

The two are going in opposite directions, Fortinbras, enacting power as a leader of men, Hamlet stagnant, literally pondering ‘the powers that be,’ and each taking his own path to his own relationship with forgiveness. Hamlet realizes that the spirited army will fight valiantly for a “little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name” (IV, iv, 18-19); simultaneously, he also realizes the weakness of his indecision against Fortinbras’ pursuit of “the name.”

A moment of transition strikes Hamlet as he speculates upon the determined nature of the group, betraying earlier descriptions of Fortinbras. Rather than refer to him by his “strong hand” as in Act I, Hamlet spies the army “of such mass and charge, / Led by a delicate and tender prince.” (IV, iv, 1147-28). Fortinbras humanizes the mob. The brutal force suggested in the “mass” and “charge” is offset by the wisdom and control of its “delicate and tender” leader; he is idealized. Seeing Fortinbras as the epitome of purpose, Hamlet mimics him, compelled to dwell in his own parallel “bloody thoughts” (66) in his mission upon Claudius, and finally considering Fortinbras not just as a mere distraction, but an inspiration.

By the time Fortinbras has redeemed himself in Poland and appears to conclude the play, Hamlet has met Laertes on a mutual platform of forgiveness. As Hamlet is dying, he hears the entrance of Fortinbras and acknowledges his authority; he entreats Horatio to do the same by commissioning his dying voice, the voice that will order the magnanimous salute. As noted above, McCoy classifies Hamlet’s funerary march as an “incongruous soldier’s funeral,” but he focuses on the military character of Fortinbras, not his royal character: “Fortinbras has the last word, but who leaves the play thinking of him?” (138). Frankly, Hamlet for one; in addressing Horatio “report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied ... tell my story” (V, ii, 339, 349) he directs Horatio to do so to Fortinbras:

HAM: O, I die, Horatio,

The potent poison quite o'er crows my spirit.

I cannot live to hear the news from England,

But I do prophesy th' election lights

On Fortinbras, he has my dying voice.

So tell him, with th' occurrences more and less

Which have solicited – the rest is silence. [Dies.] (V, ii, 352-358).

In his final utterance, he prophetically anoints Fortinbras and establishes a union with him: Hamlet, through Horatio, lays his legacy at the feet of the young Norwegian monarch. As if Fortinbras sublimely understands, he gives Virgil's "sad duty" of bearing the corpse to his highest officers. The moment recalls Techelles and Usumcasane choosing to triple the social funeral rites by bearing the noble body of Agydas themselves, and Aufidius bearing the body of Martius with "three of the chiefest soldiers." The bearing of the corpse shows a sharing of honor between the body and its bearers. Captains converge upon the corpse of Hamlet and bear him, indicating the immediate future includes complete care of his body: embalming, Catholic mass, and royal interment followed by feasting and fellowship. Shakespeare, within the formula of tragedy, honors the body of the fallen; yet Hamlet's assignment of Fortinbras, "he has my dying voice," and Fortinbras' using his voice to command his captains, justifies Hamlet's assignment. The world will remember Hamlet as Fortinbras remembers Hamlet, and Fortinbras remembers him, not as a soldier, but as a king.

The clownish gravedigger ushers the topic of the physical reality of decomposition to its end in his exchange with Hamlet, bringing into focus the futility of earthly existence at all. The skulls of the previous inhabitants of the grave are all that is left of their previous humanity, and no remnant of any accomplishment or acquisition can endure the grave. As a king's remains can pass through a beggar's entrails, or be used to plug a barrel, so are the dreams of each person,

bound for a future in earth-bound oblivion. With the tangible evidence of complete physical decomposition in their hands, Hamlet's wordplay with the clown marks his wit, and the two sound convincing to each other, and the audience, that life is basically pointless, ... until Ophelia's tawdry funeral incites Hamlet's emotions. In his most spontaneous moment, Hamlet erupts in a display of blind love, a display that insults Laertes, but can not be suppressed. In the intellectual process of settling his mind to the finality of the dirt, his emotions reflex to uncontrollable mourning. Ophelia's meager funeral stirred Hamlet. Finally. He says his grief can control the stars, when only a moment ago he was positing the uselessness of life. Ophelia's funeral prompts Hamlet to act instinctively, and while the reverence of her grave may have been violated by the grappling men, it was also the site of Hamlet's emergence from selflessness. He cannot control his emotion in the moment, yet he apologizes for his outburst later to Horatio and to Laertes, consummating his evolution as a kingly hero.

"Why what a King is this?" asks Horatio to Hamlet's unfolding of the plot of conspiracy and execution about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (V, ii, 62). The question could be asked about Claudius and his insidious plot to kill Hamlet through the conspiracy of his two friends; but it is also applicable in the moment to Hamlet, celebrating his cunning escape. Claudius has been the only King recognized onstage, until Horatio's address. Finally, Hamlet bears the title of his father and his imminent royal dead march will reflect as much. An ancient tradition of kings is continued in practice upon Hamlet, and in his elevation, the memory of his father is recalled, yes remembered, just as the ghost commands. Fortinbras' political line is also duly opened through the royal mantra, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King" as he assumes control uniting a kingdom. The audience as witnesses, and indirect participants in the burial rite, likewise unite in triumph and applause.

Old Hamlet's death and funeral (which brought Horatio to Denmark) led to Hamlet killing Polonius. Polonius' death and non-funeral led to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's trip to

England, and, more importantly, to Ophelia's madness and suicide. Ophelia's funeral swings Hamlet to a true moment of mindlessness, then to a true moment of regal contrition. His funeral that follows serves to confirm his transfiguration. Neill concludes, "The rites of funeral ... are perhaps the most conspicuous form through which memory is performed (or suppressed) in the *Hamlet* world." (261). Hamlet's seemingly undeserved royal rites at the end of the play will memorialize Hamlet not as he was, but as he might have been. Any questions on Hamlet's true nature are answered in his royal dead march, which not only signals that he has undergone a transformation, but which also serve to create a legacy, just as Sidney's heraldic funeral did. Hamlet will be remembered as a king.

Funerals unify. If one trait can be traced through each funeral rite in *Hamlet* it can be that of unification, yet the reach and strength of the union varies. The gathering for the feasts for King Hamlet's funeral is forgotten into the feasts for Gertrude's marriage; the gathering for Polonius' offstage interment, is barren of private or public condolences; Ophelia's cortege is a conflicted social display of religious and political tension; and finally, there is Hamlet's, a group assembled under command of the play's final monarch, marching in unison to music and artillery fire, celebrating the end of the royal line of "Denmark's majesty." In each case, people come together; and in each case the characteristics of the group declare the character's legacy. Hamlet may have lived in a troubled state of mind, but his troubled state of mind was indicative of the troubled state of Denmark. His royalty is downplayed in the drama to allow Claudius to appear authoritative, but the Old Hamlet's blood proves too strong to be ultimately forgotten. Hamlet's funerary moment clearly conforms to the style of tragedy, yet it also contains great victory; a King is united with the Kings before him through ritual; the private is united with the public; history with prophecy, the audience with the cast. Fortinbras, like the churlish priest, like Hamlet, like the audience, comprehends that funerals can last forever.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Randall Jarrell, "A Survivor Among Graves," lines 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> "Disposition" is a general governmental term. Specifically, the body will be buried or cremated.

<sup>3</sup> Mourning is an activity and grief is a state of mind.

<sup>4</sup> Modern cremations which occur in a kiln-like chamber of controlled heat and gasses that optimally operates within temperatures of 1600° F - 1800° F. The cremation process inside the chamber typically occurs in four hours, and the skeletal remains must cool for four more before safe handling can be administered. The funeral pyre of Misenus may have reached similar temperatures, but the surrounding smoldering coals would also maintain dangerous heat levels for days. If water was used to extinguish and cool the funeral pyre, it would likely have been recorded as so.

<sup>5</sup> McCoy cites a military relation which would not apply to Hamlet; Neill calls the dead march "an unqualified tribute" (p. 247); However, when applying Hamlet's royal lineage to his remains, it would be expected that his body would be carried by the royal army. Fortinbras was directing royal funeral rites upon Hamlet, honoring the tradition of the Kings.

<sup>6</sup> Friedman equates Fortinbras' role to that of a surrogate priest offering an "inappropriate homage" (71).

<sup>7</sup> "Henslowe's commissioning of Jonson to revamp *The Spanish Tragedy* in the wake of *Hamlet's* early success is a reminder that this play, in which Kyd had single-handedly reinvented Senecan revenge tragedy for the English stage, was not simply one of Shakespeare's 'influences': it remained part of the competition, something against which *Hamlet* was written" (Neill, 216).

<sup>8</sup> *Henry VI* Act I, scene i begins with the stage directions, "Dead march. Enter the Funeral of King Henry the Fifth..." Act I, scene ii of *Richard III* begins with stage direction, "Enter the corse of Henry VI ..." In Act I, scene i of *Titus Andronicus*, the coffins of his two sons of Titus Andronicus are borne onstage and carried to their shared tomb.

<sup>9</sup> The stage direction to end *King Lear*: "Exeunt with a dead march." following Albany's command to "Bear them from hence" directing Lear's and Cordelia's bodies offstage (V, iii, 319). *Antony and Cleopatra* ends with Caesar's closing statement, "Our army shall / in solemn show attend this funeral, / And then to Rome. Come Dolabella, see / High order in this great solemnity" and a final stage direction, "Exeunt onmes" (V, ii, 363-366). *Coriolanus* closes by Aufidius directing the bearing of Coriolanus: "Take him up. / Help, three a' th' chiefest soldiers; I'll be one. / Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully; / Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he / Hath widowed and unchilded many a one, / Which to this hour bewail the injury, / Yet he shall have a noble memory. / Assist." and stage direction, "Exeunt, bearing the body of Martius. A dead march sounded. *Timon of Athens*" concludes with the reading of Timon's epitaph and a drum beat.

<sup>10</sup> Zouch: "The States of Holland earnestly petitioned to have the honour of burying [Sidney's] body at the national expense;" Whetstone: in *Sir Philip Sidney, his Honorable Life, his Valiant Death, and True Virtues*; Greville: "After his death the state of Zealand became suitors or her majesty, & his noble friends, that they might have the honour of burying his body at the public expence of their Government." Ultimately, Queen Elizabeth would reply that his value to England merited a funeral and interment in England. (Bos, Lange-Myers, Six, 49).

<sup>11</sup> A "herald," Richard Lee, is credited with providing a list of participants on Sidney's cortege which is similar in nature to Lant's, differing only in the listing of a few participants. The differences suggest that Lee's list was a draft of those expected to march, and Lant's account lists those that actually did, indicating the noblemen were late additions.

<sup>12</sup> Derick Theodor de Brys was a Dutch artist who would have known Goltzius's plates, entitled *Haec pompa funebris spectate fuit Bataurorum Delphis*. Both friezes portray a funeral cortege moving from right to left along a road devoid

of any geographic landmarks, spectators. Both privilege image over text, and both list the names of the participants in numbered groups on foot and horseback with the casket at the relative center of the procession (Goldring, p.210)

<sup>13</sup> The “route was so thronged with people that the mourners scarcely had room to pass” (Golkrin, 202).

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 50:2: “And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.” Genesis 50:26: “So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.”

<sup>15</sup> **myrrh**: used topically for hemorrhoids, bedsores, wounds, abrasions, and boils, as an astringent; **wormwood**: detoxifying and dehydrating agent; **rosemary**: perfuming agent; **pumice**: gentle abrasive/consistency additive, **marjoram**: perfuming herb, aka oregano, **storacis calamata**, **2 loht**: 30 grams of olive oil, perfuming agent, **zestlinalipta muscata ½ loht**: 7.5 grams of crushed flower petals, perfuming agent, **aqua vita** [vitae] ethanol and water solution – astringent/ dehydrating agent

<sup>16</sup> “Numerous biers were carried in the procession, and the cloths which covered them were destined as gifts for monasteries and churches” (Borkawa 515); “Once upon a time pallbearers were not honorary; they actually bore the cloth which was laid over the coffin during the services. Indeed, the pall was often their gift, rich in texture and design and, according to the common custom, it was converted into church vestments after the ceremony” (Grant, 539); “the coffin was also often carried by hand as a tribute to the person who had died. During the course of this process, the funeral pall was a symbolic object used for its beauty and ritual value. At the churchyard, the blanked, which might belong to local families or other parishes, would be taken off before the burial took place to then be stored away, in order to be used again and again” (Nordström, 145).

<sup>17</sup> alb – priestly robe; dalmatic – wide sleeved garment to be worn over the alb.

<sup>18</sup> e. g. *DeHumani Corporis Fabrica*

<sup>19</sup> Janet Clare’s “Buried in the Open Fields”: Early Modern Suicide and the Case of Ophelia” explains that the term “suicide” did not occur until the mid-seventeenth century. In Shakespeare’s time, the audience would know the term, “self-murder.”

<sup>20</sup> The death of Old Fortinbras is reported, but the report makes no reference to his obsequies.

<sup>21</sup> According to Horatio, Fortinbras is presently in an attempt “[b]ut to recover us, by strong hand” (I, i, 102). The French origin of his name is translated as meaning “strong in arm.”

## WORKS CITED

Beauregard, David N. *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare's Plays*. University of Delaware Press. 2008.

*Beowulf: An Anglo-Saxon Epic Poem*, Translated from the Heyne-Socin Text by Lesslie Hall. The Project Gutenberg EBook of Beowulf, [www.gutenberg.org/files/16328/16328-h/16328-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16328/16328-h/16328-h.htm). Accessed June 19, 2020.

Borkowska, Urszula. "The Funeral Ceremonies of the Polish Kings from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 36, no. 4, October 1985 pp. 513-534.

Bos, Sander; Lange-Meyers, Marianne; Six, Jeanine. "Sidney's Funeral Portrayed." *Sir Philip Sidney: 1586 and the Creation of a Legend*. Brill Academic Publishers; Leiden UP for Sir Thomas Browne Inst.; 1986.

Clare, Janet. "Buried in the Open Fields: Early Modern Suicide and the Case of Ofelia." *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, no. 13, 2010, pp. 241-252.

Friedman, Alan W. "Narrative is to Death as Death is to the Dying: Funeral and Stories." *Mosaic*, vol. xv, no. 1, 2002, pp. 65-76.

Goldring, Elizabeth. "The Funeral of Sir Philip Sidney and the Politics of Elizabethan Festival." *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics, and Performance* edited by Mulryne, J. R. and Goldring, Elizabeth. Ashgate Publishing Co., 2002, pp. 199-224.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

Holleran, James V. "Maimed Funeral Rites in Hamlet." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 19, no. 1, Winter 1989, pp. 65-93.

Jarrell, Randall. "The Survivor Among Graves." *Randall Jarrell, 1914-1965: The Complete Poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969, pp. 206-207.

Kyd, Thomas. *The Spanish Tragedie*, 1587. Printed by Edward Allde, for Edward White. The Project Gutenberg Ebook of The Spanish Tragedie by Thomas Kyd, [www.gutenberg.org/files/6043/6043-h/6043-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6043/6043-h/6043-h.htm). Accessed June 20, 2020.

MacDonald, Michael. "Ophelia's Maimed Rites." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol.37, no. 3, Autumn 1986, pp. 309-317.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I* edited by Rev. Alexander Dyce. Project Gutenberg's Tamburlaine the Great, Part I, [www.gutenberg.org/files/1094/1094-h/1094-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1094/1094-h/1094-h.htm), Accessed June 21, 2020.

---. *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II* edited by Rev. Alexander Dyce. Project Gutenberg's Tamburlaine the Great, Part II, [www.gutenberg.org/files/1589/1589-h/1589-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1589/1589-h/1589-h.htm). Accessed June 22, 2020.

Mayer, Robert G. *Embalming: History, Theory, and Practice*, 5th Edition. McGraw-Hill Medical, 2011.

McCoy, Richard C. "A Wedding and Four Funerals: Conjunction and Commemoration in *Hamlet*." *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 42, 2001, pp. 122-139.

Neill, Michael. *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

Brigitta. "Dressing the Body." *Approaching Religion*, vol. 6, no. 2, December 2016, pp. 143-155.

Shakespeare, William. *The First Part of Henry the Fourth*. 1598. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 847-881.

---. *The Life of Timon of Athens*. 1623. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 1445-1474.

- . *The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra*, 1623. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 1347-1386.
- . *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, 1607-8. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 1396-1437.
- . *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. 1607. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 1141-186.
- . *The Tragedy of King Lear*, 1607. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 1255-1295.
- . *The Tragedy of Richard the Third*. 1598. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 712-754.
- . *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*. 1594. *Riverside Shakespeare* edited by G. Blakemore Evans, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974, pp. 1023-1050.
- Virgil. *The Aeneid*, translated by A. S. Kline. Poetry in Translation, [www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/VirgilAeneidVI.php](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/VirgilAeneidVI.php). Accessed June 19, 2020.
- Wolfelt, Dr. Alan. "The Six Needs of Mourning." [www.centerforloss.com/grief/six-needs-mourning/](http://www.centerforloss.com/grief/six-needs-mourning/). Accessed July 16, 2019.