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Actions that a (Hu)man Might Play: a Cognitive Study of Gesture in Shakespeare's
Plays

Thesis submitted by Laura Seymour for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Birkbeck, University of London.

Declaration

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signed:

Acknowledgements

In the seventeenth century, the word ‘cognition’ could mean ‘acknowledgement of gratitude’. In the words of John Evelyn in 1655, ‘I must justifie...with infinite cognition, the benefit I have received’ most of all from my incredibly wise and generous supervisors Laura Salisbury and Gillian Woods; there is no way I could have written this thesis without their encouragement and the way that they illuminated Shakespeare’s plays and ideas of representation and cognition. I am hugely grateful to Adam Smyth and Michael Dobson for their supervision in the earlier stages of the thesis, to Isabel Davis and Susan Wiseman and everyone else who helped me at Birkbeck, to Sarah Cain for encouraging me in my studies before I arrived here, and to Amy Cook, Rhonda Blair, Raphael Lyne, Peter Garratt, Guillemette Bolens, Tim Chesters and Kathryn Banks, and the other members of the Cognitive Futures in the Humanities network. Also I would like to say thanks a million to all of my friends and loved ones for their help and support, especially Sandy Steel for his constant kindness and for keeping my motivation and morale up, Sophie Zadeh for chatting to me about violence and society, Amrita Dhar for filling my times in the RSC archives with her clever ideas and laughter, and my family for supporting me throughout the whole of my studies.

Abstract

This thesis uses cognitive theory to examine gesture in William Shakespeare's plays. Cognition involves both thoughts and emotions, and cognitive theory examines thought which is rooted both in the body and its gestures and in the gesturer's environment. Based on recent neuroscientific findings and laboratory studies into gesture and speech, cognitive theory is a developing discipline that tends to focus on the relationship between gesture, speech, and thought. This was also a preoccupation of early modern writers: theologians, philosophers, and both opponents and defenders of the theatre attempted to understand how gestures could shape as well as be shaped by thought. This thesis examines the similarities and differences between the ways in which Shakespeare and cognitive theory approached these issues. It establishes the ways in which Shakespeare's plays suggest new ideas for cognitive theorists to study, as well as the ways in which cognitive theory can generate new readings of Shakespeare's plays.

The research for this thesis is based on a database that I made of all the gestures mentioned in Shakespeare's plays, from the earliest quartos to the fourth folio. From this database, I selected the five most common types of gesture and devoted a chapter to each. The chapters examine handclasps, kneeling, kissing, refusals to gesture (or stillness) and striking.

Examining these four gestures and the refusal to gesture shows that being performed on stage gives gesture a particularly complex and rich cognitive quality. Gestures acted out on stage are deliberately performed by an actor, but are often designed to be seen as involuntary or unconscious acts on the character's part. Gestures performed on the Shakespearean stage are thus sites where the thoughts and feelings of the actor and those of the character are intriguingly blurred, making Shakespearean gestures a rich topic for cognitive analysis.

Contents

Introduction	7
Why cognitive theory?	12
The database: defining Shakespearean gestures	16
Why Shakespeare?	20
Structure of the thesis	23
Chapter 1: ‘Lend me thy hand’: Taking hands in <i>Titus Andronicus</i>	
Introduction	25
Cognising with hands	32
The destruction of the handclasp and the non-human	47
Cognition and exchange	52
The severed hand as a phantom of cognition	57
Performance and cognition	61
Conclusions	66
Chapter 2: ‘Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?’ Kneeling in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	
Introduction	68
Kneeling in Shakespeare’s works	90
Kneeling in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	95
Performance, plasticity, and hypocrisy	103
Conclusions	113
Chapter 3: ‘I’ll smell it on the tree’: Kissing in <i>Othello</i>	
Introduction	115
Renaissance and Shakespearean kisses: affecting souls through olfaction	129
Disgust and enjoyment as moral and olfactory qualities	138
Performance	148
Conclusions	151
Chapter 4: ‘Her silence flouts me’: restraint, and the refusal to gesture in <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>	
Introduction	153
Findings from the database: Shakespeare’s wider interest in stillness	154
Performing stillness: what does this mean cognitively?	170

Staging audience attention: cognitive theories of fascination	185
Conclusions	192
Chapter 5: ‘Actions that a man might play’: <i>Hamlet</i> and simulated stage violence	
Introduction	194
Striking in Shakespeare’s plays	207
Violence in <i>Hamlet</i> as an experiment	212
Conclusions	226
Conclusion	228
Bibliography	233

Introduction

What does it mean to enact gesture on stage? When Hamlet acknowledges that his mournful behaviours are ‘actions that a man might play’ (*Hamlet* 1.2.84), he draws on an early modern anxiety about, and interest in, the fraught and often blurred boundary between representation and reality.¹ Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century antitheatricalist writers, theologians, and defenders of the theatre all gravitated towards the question: what does acting out a gesture, representing it, do to a person’s thoughts and emotions? The bishop of Winchester Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626) argued that, of itself, ‘our outward gesture may stir up our souls to their duty’, claiming that gestures like kneeling and bowing are enough to shape a person’s thoughts to devotion and humility.² Meanwhile, the clergyman Stephen Gosson (1554-1624), a hotter Protestant than Andrewes, took up the debate from a different perspective. In Gosson’s view of performing gestures, actors ‘reape no profit’ from repeatedly performing the gestures of noble or honest people; actors’ minds remain particularly impervious to chaste, honest thoughts, he emphasises.³ Cognitive theorists are currently working on the same questions, typically using neuroscience to examine how gesture shapes, as well as being shaped by, thought in everyday life.

When gestures are performed on stage, a further dimension is added to the cognitive picture. On stage, gestures are consciously represented by actors as part of a scripted story rather than arising spontaneously during conversation as they often do in ‘real life’. Gestures performed on stage can challenge the boundary between representation and reality. On the one hand, stage weddings, for instance, dislocate the entrenched, normative meanings of handclasps and kisses as performative gestures that bring about as well as represent a loving union. A couple who ‘marry’, kiss and take hands, on stage are not ‘really’ married; the context of the theatre prevents the performative language of marriage from having effect in the real world. At the same time, however, the inherently powerful and significant gestures of kissing and taking

¹ The Riverside edition is cited from throughout the thesis unless another edition is specified. William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. Herschel Baker, Harry Levin, and Ann Barton, 2nd edn (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

² Lancelot Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at Large* (London: Roger Norton, 1650), Ee1^r.

³ Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London: for Thomas Gosson, 1582), C7^v.

hands, even on stage, can be assumed to change the thoughts and emotions of the person performing them. Shakespeare often thematises the inherent power of certain gestures by depicting characters who attempt to perform a meaningful and culturally-significant gesture ironically or jokingly, and who end up profoundly altered by the gestures they have performed. For example, in *Julius Caesar*, the conspirators kneel in a gesture of submission to Caesar before they murder him. Some of the conspirators (like Cassius, whose acerbic remarks about having to ‘bend his body’ (1.2.116-8) to Caesar are discussed in chapter 2) may perform this gesture ironically, mocking the tyrant they plan to kill and submissive gestures he demanded of them. Others (such as Brutus, who states as he kneels, ‘I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery Caesar’ (3.1.52)) may kneel in what is to some extent genuine deference. However, by the end of the play the conspirators are all utterly vanquished by Caesar’s ghost. It is as if their kneeling gesture, no matter how hypocritically performed, has had a real effect on their minds, their characters, and their positions within society. Kneeling of course is not the sole reason for the conspirators’ downfall, but it connects with a pattern of language in the play that relates a person’s social position to the vertical position of their body.

Deploying neuroscientific research in conjunction with close readings of Shakespeare’s texts and the analysis of the material conditions of performance provides a new scientifically-led understanding of the mechanisms behind performed gestures. As well as supplying a rigorous body of evidence about the relationship between gesture and thought, neuroscience provides new metaphors and frameworks for describing cognition. These help to generate illuminating readings of Shakespeare’s plays, such as one which places the conspirators’ kneeling gesture at the heart of *Julius Caesar* and understands this gesture as a significant force that shapes the later action of the play.

Based on recent—and ongoing—neuroscientific findings about the workings of the embodied brain, cognitive theory has a wide remit. The notion of ‘cognition’ employed in cognitive literary studies covers conscious thought, sensation, perception, affect, emotion, and unconscious and involuntary thought processes. These concerns are present at the roots of cognitive studies, in works like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999) or their *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The key existing studies of Shakespeare and cognition tend to focus on rhetoric and language, or the plays’ effect on the audience. Raphael Lyne’s

Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition (2011) relates particularly dense, convoluted grammar to dense, convoluted thought, arguing that ‘Shakespeare’s characters’ mental strains and stretches...must be conveyed in the strains and stretches of language: in the tropes of rhetoric’.⁴ Mary Crane’s *Shakespeare’s Brain* (2000) examines the structure of language in Shakespeare’s plays for clues about authorial thought; Crane claims that linguistic features of his plays (like patterns of similarly-themed words) map Shakespeare’s thought processes. Focusing on the materials and mechanisms of performance (from prompt books to rehearsal schedules) Evelyn Tribble’s *Cognition in the Globe* (2011) uses modern cognitive theories to sharpen previous historical accounts of rehearsal and performance practices in the Globe. Amy Cook’s *Shakespearean Neuroplay* (2010) again centres on a cognitive analysis of the language of Shakespeare’s plays, thinking particularly about ‘conceptual blends’ (the cognitive theoretical term for the process whereby two distinct categories of things are mentally combined). In *The Oxford Handbook of Situated Cognition* (2009) Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede state that ‘the embodiment thesis’, i.e. that ‘cognition depends not just on the brain but also on the body’, is the first principle of cognitive theory,⁵ Teenie Matlock’s “Abstract Motion is No Longer Abstract,” (2010), provides experimental evidence for the idea that humans conceptualise abstract ideas of motion as physical, visible motion.⁶

As well as playing an essential role in developing the field of cognitive literary studies, critical works like these have cast new light on long-standing questions in Shakespeare studies about the relationship between how characters’ thoughts are represented and the representation of their words and actions. By drawing on scientific evidence for the idea that language tracks a person’s thoughts—the neurolinguists Susan Goldin-Meadow’s *Hearing Gesture* (2003) and David McNeill’s *Gesture and Thought* (2005) are particular influences for Cook’s work for instance—

⁴ Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3.

⁵ Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede, “A Short Primer on Situated Cognition,” in Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

⁶ Teenie Matlock’s “Abstract Motion is No Longer Abstract,” *Language and Cognition* 2(2) (2010), 243-60, provides experimental evidence for the idea that humans conceptualise abstract ideas of motion as physical, visible motion.

these studies encourage us to analyse Shakespeare's language closely, to seek traces of his own thought, or representations of his characters' thoughts, in the shifts and twists of his texts. These literary cognitive studies also provide rich new theses about the role of the audience's and actors' thoughts and emotions in bearing and developing meaning in the theatre. Cook uses the theory of mirror neurons: the neuroscientific finding that when we are watching someone perform an action, the neurons that we would use to perform that action fire in our own brains. She proposes a tight link between actors' words and gestures and audience affect.

There has not yet been a cognitive study focussing solely on gesture in Shakespeare's works as a whole, though studies of movement in single plays are beginning to crop up. In 2014, for instance, Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski published an exciting reading of *The Winter's Tale*, arguing that movement is essential to aesthetic enjoyment. She argues that this effect is created in particular by the 'vitality' we feel when actors move from stillness to action. She concludes that 'Shakespeare was a visual and sensory-motor artist, as much as a verbal one'.⁷ Despite a relative (but thankfully ever-diminishing) scarcity of cognitive studies on the theme of Shakespearean gesture, bodily movement was an integral part both of early modern performances and of Renaissance notions of language and meaning. The physician John Bulwer's mid-seventeenth-century works *Chironomia* and *Chirologia*, for instance, are founded on the idea that gestures are essential methods of communication. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, monarchs, church leaders and lay people debated about which gestures should be permitted in church. These theological debates are one of the key sources for showing that in the early modern era gestures were seen as dangerously replete with meanings, with the power to change both social rituals and the individual gesturer's thoughts and feelings. A cognitive focus on gesture thus illuminates an important area of Shakespearean drama and early modern thought that complements the existing body of critical texts devoted to rhetoric and language.

Thinking beyond the cognitive focus, gesture has historically received less attention than language in Shakespeare studies as a whole. Editions of Shakespeare's plays will provide glossaries of difficult words, but rarely provide explanations of

⁷ Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski, "Statues that Move: Vitality Effects in *The Winter's Tale*," *Literature and Theology* 28(3) (2014), 300.

what the various gestures in his plays might signify. This may be due to editors focusing on the play-text as something to be studied for, and understood through, its written language alone rather than a combination of language and gesture in performance. However, at certain points in Shakespeare's plays, gesture can be as, if not more, crucial to conveying meaning than language. As I suggested above, for example, the conspirators' kneeling gesture before Caesar in *Julius Caesar*, rarely if ever remarked on in discussions of the play, helps to make sense of their subsequent defeat. The Riverside edition used here does not provide a discussion of this crucial kneeling gesture, nor of the other gestures discussed in this thesis unless they also coincide with a textual crux, and the same is true of Arden and Cambridge editions of Shakespeare. The privileging of discussions and glosses of language over gesture in editions of Shakespeare's plays overlooks the fact that gestural meanings, like linguistic meanings, may have changed over time. Several gestures in Shakespeare's plays draw on a complex and wide-ranging network of normative significances that have been lost or altered over the centuries. A handclasp, for example was thought in early modern England to be able not only to make visible but also to create feelings and relationships of friendship, love, and feudal allegiance, as well as potentially having the power to heal physical and spiritual ailments. Though many of these significances persist into the present day, several do not; the use of the handclasp as a gesture of feudal allegiance is not part of modern culture, whilst Bulwer speaks of hands literally containing potions ('philtres') that affect the minds of the gesturers in a handclasp and this too is not something that is commonly thought today.⁸

This thesis shows that some of the most important ways in which Shakespeare's plays bear signs and meanings are through the gestures of actors and their characters. Meanings are created and transmitted in the theatre not just by the words that audiences hear, but also by the gestures that they see performed on stage. Gestures can be recovered from actors' manuals, eyewitness accounts, early modern discussions of gesture like Bulwer's, and historical studies of gesture. Examining gesture as the site where questions of what belongs to a character, what belongs to an actor, and how plays affect their audiences come to the fore brings a new perspective to long-standing critical discussions of the relationship between the Shakespearean actor, audience, and character.

⁸ John Bulwer, "Chirologia," in *Chirologia...Chironomia* (London: Thomas Harper, 1644), 13^r.

Why cognitive theory?

A currently-developing field, cognitive theory provides exciting new ways of reading literary texts. In particular, cognitive theorists have shown how thought and emotion in the theatre are both embodied and ‘distributed’. According to cognitive studies, thought and emotion, as well as language, are embodied in several ways. Cognitive practitioners such as the actor and cognitive scholar Rhonda Blair, and cognitive theorists such as Tribble, have traced how gesture provides an anchor for thought, helping with the process of memorising lines: the movements of the body become sites where thoughts and words are stored to be later released. Moving becomes integral to speaking, as particular gestures prompt actors to say particular words. Gesture is also vital for conveying thoughts and feelings; theorists such as Amy Cook show that when actors perform certain gestures (kneeling, for example), they prompt affective reactions in the bodies as well as the minds of audiences. In sum, cognitive studies of gesture are establishing that, in many different ways, gesture is not simply an external representation of thought. Rather, gesture can shape, express, transmit, and record thought, as well as impede thought and send it off track. Tribble deploys the idea that cognition in the theatre is ‘distributed’. This means that an actor or audience member’s thoughts and emotions are not contained solely by their mind, or even by their body. Rather, thought can be recorded in, extended to, and transmitted and affected by, their whole environment: prompt books, props, the architecture of the theatre and the bodies of (other) actors or (other) audience members.⁹ John Lutterbie describes theatre as a ‘dynamic system’ made up of bodies, texts, spaces, and objects; each of the elements in this system has the ability to affect and be affected by the others.¹⁰ By paying attention to the embodiment and distribution of thought, cognitive

⁹ Tribble explains that because it does not just involve the brain and body but is extended into the environment, this is ‘a genuinely extended (rather than a merely embodied) practice’, Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011), 2, 101, 20.

¹⁰ ‘Dynamic systems theory’ originated in mathematics and extends to physics and neuroscience; according to ‘DST’, ‘a “system” is generally defined as elements that function together to create a complete whole; and a “dynamic system” is one that exists in a constant state of disequilibrium, responding to perturbations (disturbances) that further destabilise the whole’, John Lutterbie, *Toward a General Theory of Acting: Cognitive Science and Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2, 25.

theory enables Shakespeare scholars to re-evaluate the relationship between the play-text and its performance. One way in which this relationship is manifested is in the way that an actor's gestures shape as well as are shaped by the play-text: their body does not just passively represent the meaning of the words, but brings its own meaning to the play.

Margaret Kidnie argues that, because play-texts have the potential to be interpreted in radically different ways in performance, the examination of performance is integral to understanding Shakespearean drama. She contends that because the text of any given Shakespearean play will have gone through several states (from manuscripts rewritten and edited several times to various differing printed texts), the text cannot be appealed to as a stable, authoritative entity that is superior and prior to performance. Rather, the Shakespearean play is an ongoing 'process' comprised of slightly different but intrinsically-related texts and numerous performances. Moreover, she argues that productions will influence our understanding of the play, and thus influence the way that subsequent editions are produced and discussed. Kidnie encourages scholars 'to resist the dominant inclination to regard past histories as foundational to editorial labour' and 'to insist on the realization that textual no less than theatrical efforts to recover what happened can only be pursued alongside efforts to shape what *is* happening' in the present day.¹¹ The Shakespearean play-text is in a continual state of flux, and so it is important to look at both the play-text and a range of performances. In recent times, some productions have aimed to follow early modern rehearsal and performance practices and thereby aim to approximate the ways Shakespearean productions would have originally appeared on stage. Looking at the prompt books, props lists and other written material associated with such performances can be useful for seeing how historical research into early modern rehearsal and staging practices can inform the staging of modern day Shakespeare. Prior to 2006, some productions at the Globe Theatre, for instance, used original practices, deploying historical research into the play's original staging to inform several aspects of the performance including costume, setting, and props.¹²

¹¹ Margaret Kidnie, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 7-8.

¹² The production team for the Globe's 2003 *The Taming of the Shrew*, for instance, created a section of the production notes entitled 'Authentic Brief' for the wedding scene; this historical briefing lists authentic materials that could be used for drinking-vessels and details early modern bridal customs (e.g. 'sprigs of rosemary...were tied to the arm at a wedding'). Production Meeting Notes, *The Taming*

Examining gestures in Shakespeare's plays involves an awareness of this complex stage-history, where the meanings of gestures are partly recaptured and partly masked as stage practices change over the ages. In the case of the conspirators kneeling in *Julius Caesar*, modern audiences are not as sensitive as early modern audiences will have been to kneeling's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century connotations as a gesture of feudal allegiance and as a site where both Catholic and Protestant ways of worship could uneasily coexist. Whilst these connotations of the gesture have been somewhat lost over time, and it is up to the scholar to recover them, one modern production brought audiences close to the ways that the conspirators play with perspective in the original text. As chapter 2 discusses, in 2012, Phyllida Lloyd used cameras to recreate the ambiguous perspectives involved in the conspirators' kneeling gesture, enabling audiences to empathise with Caesar and with the conspirators simultaneously, by allowing audience members physically to experience both Caesar's and the conspirators' viewpoints at the same time.

Cognitive theory enables literary critics to recapture ways of understanding and interpreting Shakespeare's plays that bring us closer to early modern thought. Gestures were given key significance in the early modern era, not least on the English Renaissance stage, as a means of communicating thoughts and feelings. Take, for example, the gesture of kissing, which is central to so many Shakespearean love stories (from Beatrice and Benedick to Romeo and Juliet) and which also occurs in

of the Shrew, by William Shakespeare, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, June 20 2003, 1 leaf, Globe Theatre Archive. Often, a search for an ultimately elusive authenticity is shaped by present-day concepts and practices; in the same production, 'the Pedant (Ms. Kettle) requires ...something on his luggage to signify that he is from Mantua (i.e. the authentic equivilant [sic] of an "I love Mantua" sticker!)', whilst Christopher Sly attends what is recognisably an early-modern version of a present-day 'stag party' with an 'authentic stripper', Rehearsal Note 21, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, Globe Theatre, London, 2003, 1 leaf, Globe Theatre Archive. Since the late nineteenth century, 'Elizabethanist' productions have allowed contemporary culture to intersect creatively with their desire for historical accuracy, see Joe Falocco, *Reimagining Shakespeare's Playhouses: Early Modern Staging Conventions in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010). As Alan Dessen writes, the successful combination of period costume and music with updated features such as mixed gender casting or the use of the yard (in the Globe) as a storytelling and acting space in such productions demonstrates that a 'major reflex that conflicts with "historical" findings at the Globe and comparable sites can be summed up as: "If you have it, use it."', "'Original Practices": A Theatre Historian's View", in *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Christie Carson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46-8.

several notable death scenes: Othello, Romeo and Juliet and Cleopatra all die on a kiss. Kissing brings not only the movements of the body to bear on thought and emotion, but also the touch, the feeling of the skin. Moreover, the relatively new field of cognitive studies of olfaction suggests that the olfactory element of kissing, the chemical dimension to touch and cognition, helps to unlock the significance of this gesture. Paying attention to the olfactory element of kissing uncovers a rich set of early modern discourses (particularly in religious and courtly or romantic texts) that tend to connect kissing and olfaction, and the olfactory disgust or delight involved in the kiss with moral disgust or delight. Chapter 3 demonstrates how early modern ideas about the power of olfaction to change people's minds are recaptured in cognitive discussions of olfaction and taste. In so doing, this chapter casts new light on olfactory vocabulary in *Othello*, a thematic pattern that is usually sidelined by literary critics in favour of discussions of eyes and seeing.

Cognitive theory's ability to uncover and shed light on important themes in early modern thought is not limited to olfaction. Chapter 5, for instance, explores how cognitive analyses of the effects of violent media on viewers' minds are part of a tradition stretching back to the early modern antitheatricalists. By reading Shakespeare's plays alongside cognitive theory, each chapter of the thesis brings early modern texts into a sharper historicised focus whilst also providing new readings of these plays based on recent findings about the embodied brain. Though cognitive literary theory is a new discipline, one that is developing now, its interests in olfaction, touch, the effect of spectacle on audiences, and the relationship between gesture and thought lead us to seek, and find, the same interests in early modern texts and in Shakespeare's plays.

Cognitive theory is itself embedded in its own historical moment. This thesis contextualises theories of cognition in terms of the philosophical movements that helped to shape them, especially the phenomenological works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-61), a philosopher who was influenced by the neuroscientific work of Kurt Goldstein. The thesis also traces the history of key metaphors that have emerged from cognitive-theoretical texts. Cognitive theorists often use theatrical metaphors and methodologies; metaphors of scripts and performances, and techniques of rehearsal and impersonation are integral to many cognitive studies. As chapter 5 explains, cognitive studies of thought, emotion and gesture often favour studying subjects in a circumscribed environment, where fictional scenarios are carefully

created and controlled and specific emotions are deliberately provoked and observed. The theatre provides the tools for creating such an environment and for provoking and isolating emotions. Thus it is no wonder that, when they come to experiment with cognition, cognitive theorists (like Leonard Berkowitz, discussed in chapter 5) often use the ready-made tools that theatre provides.

Cognitive theorists also frequently double back on themselves in a self-reflective fashion, examining and pondering the metaphors that they use for cognition. This is something that Shakespeare's characters are also prone to do. For instance, touch and olfaction have long been metaphors for cognition: we speak (like Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* 2.3.159) of 'smelling out' an answer to a problem, or 'grasping' the meaning of a word. When they study touch and olfaction, then, cognitive theorists examine not only material cognitive processes in humans, but also age-old metaphors for the process of cognition itself.

In summary, the thesis comprises a two-way dialogue between Shakespeare and cognitive theory. It looks at what cognitive theory tells us about Shakespeare, but it also looks at what Shakespeare can tell us about cognitive theory. Examining how gestures are performed on stage, analysing early modern discourses about performance and tracing the roots of theories of olfactory cognition and gestural cognition back to the Renaissance helps to cast light on the new and emerging critical methodology that is cognitive theory. Chapter 1, for example, demonstrates how an early modern belief that touching another's skin produce feelings of affection adds a rich set of new ideas to cognitive theory's tendency, up until recently, to ignore the tactile and to concentrate instead on the visual aspect of hand gestures. All of the chapters address the similarities and differences between gestures that are performed on stage and those that are studied cognitively in the laboratory. I propose ways that cognitive theory, much of which has been developed in laboratory studies of gesture and language, might be adapted to better suit the specific context of Shakespearean drama, as well as highlighting ways that it is already well adapted for this purpose.

The database: defining Shakespearean gestures

The research for this thesis is grounded in a database I made, comprising all the gestures in all editions of Shakespeare's plays from the first quartos to the Fourth Folio of 1685. Only the plays now attributed wholly or mostly to Shakespeare in modern scholarly editions have been included in the database. So *The Yorkshire*

Tragedy and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which appear apocryphally in the Third Folio, are not included in the database, though the former is discussed in chapter 4 as an analogue to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

This set of texts was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the early quartos often constitute interesting variations on the folios when it comes to the gestures discussed in this thesis, so it was important to include them in the database. For example, it was useful in chapter 2, which deals with kneeling, to know that only Q1 of *Hamlet* provides the stage direction ‘he kneeles’ when Claudius attempts to pray. Moreover, *Pericles*, now generally attributed (at least for the most part) to Shakespeare, did not appear in folio editions of his complete works until the Third Folio (1663). The Fourth Folio, though it does not include any substantial differences from the earlier folios regarding the gestures discussed in this thesis, was included in the research for database because it was the basis for editions of Shakespeare’s works in the eighteenth century, and eighteenth-century interpretations of Shakespeare are important for the historical discussion in chapters 1, 3 and 4 of the thesis. Later editions of Shakespeare’s plays are based on some combination of the quartos and the first four folios, so it would have been superfluous to include any more editions of Shakespeare’s works in the database.

The database is included here in the attached CD. To my knowledge no database of this kind has been made publicly available before. Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson created a *Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* which discusses Shakespeare alongside other playwrights. However, while this dictionary provides entries for every category of stage direction, it does not record every single extant stage direction, and does not include implied stage directions. My database catalogues every time a gesture is mentioned or implied, whether in something a character says or in a stage direction. For the purposes of creating a comprehensive database, I defined a gesture as any movement of the body; later, when it came to writing up the findings, I used this raw material to create a much more fine-tuned definition of Shakespearean gesture. When in *Julius Caesar* Antony says, ‘Let each man render me his bloody hand’ (3.1.184), this is listed in the database, as Antony is clearly referring to the gesture of taking hands. When, as in the example above, the stage direction states ‘he kneels’, this is listed, as the actor is being prompted to perform a kneeling gesture. The database takes the 1623 First Folio (F1) as its basis, and if at any point a quarto or another folio gives a variant reading to

F1, this is noted in the database beside the entry for F1. When quartos or other folios mention gestures that are not in F1, these are listed as separate entries in the database. Stage directions are marked ‘SD’;¹³ all other entries in the database come from characters’ lines within the text. Though actors might interpret the gestures in the database in different ways (moments of refusal to gesture in particular are, historically, moments that have been interpreted in very different ways), the raw material in the database helps to highlight which gestures are particularly significant in performance.

The database provides a comprehensive picture of the types of gestures in which Shakespeare was interested in his plays. This is useful in two main ways. Firstly, it reveals which gestures are most common in Shakespeare’s dramatic works. Felicitously, five clear, most common groups of gesture emerged in the database. The database is colour-coded to mark out these five types of gesture (the remaining entries are left uncoloured). These are: taking hands (lilac), kneeling (blue), kissing (orange), striking (yellow), and stillness or the refusal to gesture (pink). The last is not a gesture as such, but the fact that Shakespeare’s plays are permeated with marked moments of stillness or refusals to gesture reflects a preoccupation that Shakespeare seems to have had with pushing the boundaries of gesture and in exploring its limits, inverting its significance. In addition to chapter 4, which is devoted to stillness in Shakespeare’s works, the chapters on taking hands and striking in this thesis show just how important refusals to gesture, or the restraining of gesture, are to Shakespearean drama. Moments of stillness or restraint in plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Hamlet* are fraught with multiplying meaning. They are also moments when the boundary between the actor’s intentions and the character’s intentions becomes both most visible and most ambiguous.

Secondly, analysing the way in which gestures crop up throughout the whole of Shakespeare’s dramatic corpus provides the basis for the development of an idea of how Shakespeare used gesture. The gestures called for by the Shakespearean play-text often involve the touch (kissing and taking hands are two of the most common gestures in Shakespeare’s plays), for example, and they can be moments where the

¹³ Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson argue that stage directions, which are probably ‘authorial in origin’ were a ‘language shared’ by ‘theatrical professionals’ and are a useful source of information given the paucity and lack of helpful content in eyewitness accounts and other documents, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), viii-x.

thoughts of an actor and their character can overlap, or radically differ. Because it focuses only on Shakespeare and not on other playwrights, the database cannot be used to explain how unique to Shakespeare various uses of gesture are, but it can show (whether or not he was the only person to do so), the types of gesture Shakespeare was interested in and how he used these gestures to create meaningful, shocking, or intriguing moments in his plays.

Understanding the way in which Shakespeare uses gesture is invaluable for developing a concept of gesture that is designed to apply specifically to Shakespeare's plays. There are several existing (cognitive) definitions of gesture, though these do not always match up completely with the way that Shakespeare, and other early modern writers, used the body's movements to convey, prompt, or disguise thoughts and feelings on stage. In his influential work *Gesture* (2004), Adam Kendon stresses that gestures should be deliberate and conscious.¹⁴ Following Kendon's wider discussion, Goldin-Meadow defines gesture as an act which is not functional and (ideally) does not involve skin contact; on this definition, whilst miming opening a jar is a gesture, actually opening a jar is not.¹⁵ However, I decided to define gesture in a more symbiotic way, looking first at how particular types of bodily movements appear and bear meaning in Shakespeare's plays rather than imposing a rigid definition on them from outside. Many of the most interesting gestures in Shakespeare's plays are not intended to be read as deliberate acts on the character's part; precisely because they are involuntary, they reveal important things about that character. Rosalind fainting whilst disguised as a man and thus potentially involuntarily revealing to the other characters that she is a woman in *As You Like It* is one example. In instances like these, there is an interesting gap between the gesture as it belongs to the character and the same gesture as it belongs to the actor; an actor is deliberately performing a character's involuntary gesture. Kendon's definition of gesture here applies to the actor but not to the character, one way in which the specifics of gesture in Shakespearean performance differs from key existing cognitive notions of what a gesture is. Moreover, some of the most powerful kinaesthetic

¹⁴ Adam Kendon argues that only movements that are manifestly 'deliberate, conscious, governed by an intention to say something or to communicate' can be classed as gestures, *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8-11.

¹⁵ Susan Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture: How Our Hands Help Us Think* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6-8.

moments in Shakespeare's plays, from the kisses in *Othello* to the gestures of grabbing severed hands in *Titus Andronicus*, involve significant, provocative levels of skin contact. And as the chapter on striking gestures shows, it is important to note that Shakespearean gestures can be functional in a specifically theatrical way, in that they can be carefully calibrated to serve the purpose of creating a believable performance.

Part of this calibration involves absorbing the gestures of actors into a fictional plot, ensuring that the actors' movements do not puncture the fictional world but rather help to consolidate it. When it comes to stage violence (as the chapter on striking discusses), there is a gap between the actors' need to stop short of actually harming each other, and the characters' desire to harm each other as much as possible. Here, there is the potential for a noticeable gap between the actors' restrained gestures and the characters' bloody, all-out violent gestures. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare gets around this problem by having Laertes emphasise how lightly he needs to touch Hamlet with his poisoned sword in order to kill him. This means that both actors and characters engage in only light, restrained touches as Hamlet and Laertes fight; thus, the disparity between the characters' gestures and those of the actors is minimal. It is not just in violent scenes that the gap between actors' gestures and characters' intention is minimalised in Shakespeare's plays. In *As You Like It* 5.4.68-9, for instance, Touchstone says to his wife, 'bear your body more seeming Audrey'; Juliet Dusinberre suggests that this line may be intended to enable the older actor playing Touchstone to remind the young apprentice playing Audrey to keep paying attention and stop slouching during this long scene in which he has little to do or say.¹⁶ Touchstone's admonition to the character of Audrey to perform her femininity 'seeming[ly]' segues seamlessly into the actor's admonition to his colleague to perform Audrey's femininity well. The word 'seeming' here both masks and draws attention to the fact that Audrey's femininity is something that 'seems' rather than 'is', as it is acted on stage.

Why Shakespeare?

Shakespeare's play-texts are often concerned with the limits of gestures, and several plays seek to represent what happens when gestures are pushed to those limits. In

¹⁶ Juliet Dusinberre, "Introduction," in Juliet Dusinberre, ed., *As You Like It*, by William Shakespeare (London: Arden, 2006), 35.

Titus Andronicus, the handshake, the classic gesture of sociable, amiable skin contact, involves the uncanny touch of a severed hand. In *Othello*, the traditionally amicable kiss becomes a gesture of betrayal. Several other Renaissance playwrights explored the limits and reverse sides of gesture; Katherine's stillness and silence in *The Taming of the Shrew* is echoed in the silence of the character Honoria in another shrew-taming play, *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (first published 1662; written up to 63 years earlier), for example. However, Shakespeare's popularity on stage from the early modern era to the present day means that it is especially possible with Shakespeare to track the way in which particular gestures have been performed on stage in a given play throughout the ages, by looking at evidence like archival film and video, prompt books, eyewitness accounts, and photographs. The importance of gesture for bearing, altering, and transmitting meaning in a play means that performance evidence—which enables the researcher to study bodily movements as well as the words on the page—is particularly vital for a cognitive study of gesture. Concentrating on Shakespeare enables the cognitive theorist to examine the different ways in which gestures on stage have been shaped by the various material cultures in which they were embedded across their performance history.

The ability to track the performance history of Shakespeare's plays is also important because, as well as exploring gestures' boundaries in terms of subverting their meanings, Shakespeare thematises the fact that gestures can be performed and pretended. He repeatedly explores how gestures can be staged, and tests the ways in which performing a gesture on stage can provide opportunities for giving that gesture new meanings. Chapter 5 establishes how, in the final duel in *Hamlet*, the characters' fatal striking gestures become almost gentle, protective ones between the actors as Shakespeare closes the gap between the light touches of the actors and the light touches of the characters. This thesis shows that in some ways, Shakespeare shared these interests with other early modern playwrights, especially Kyd and Webster. Indeed, his interest in gesture often stems from a seeming desire to play around with and subvert existing early modern ideas about handshakes, kneeling, kisses, moments of stillness, and violent gestures. Further cognitive research into early modern gesture might look at how a particular theatrical company, or playwrights other than Shakespeare, used gestures in their work. Shakespeare seemed very interested in making a single gesture the focal point of a play, exploring the different possibilities of that gesture again and again, and enmeshing it in a web of related linguistic

patterns. *Titus Andronicus* is a key example of this: handshakes are given in friendship, then subverted with the grasping of severed hands, whilst a wave of hand-related vocabulary builds up and up as the play progresses and Titus jokes about ‘handl[ing]’ a ‘theme’ and ‘lay[ing] hands on’ his enemies (*Titus Andronicus* 3.2.29, 5.2.158).

Shakespeare’s interest in gesture makes his plays ripe for analysis using cognitive theory. At the same time, it is important to avoid de-historicising Shakespeare, and to avoid assuming that Shakespeare’s plays can unproblematically be read alongside modern cognitive-theoretical texts as though there were no important differences between the two. The book *The Bard on the Brain: Understanding the Mind Through the Art of Shakespeare and the Science of Brain Imaging* (2003) by Paul Matthews and Jeffrey McQuain falls at this hurdle. This book juxtaposes quotations from Shakespeare about (for instance) smell with quotations from scientific studies on the same topic. The assumption is that Shakespeare’s works contain timeless truths that can be equated with the timeless truths of neuroscience.

This thesis espouses the more reliable historicised approach taken by scholars like Tribble and Steven Connor, which understands that both Shakespeare’s works and cognitive theory have been shaped by, as well as helped to shape, the historicised material cultures in which they were embedded. This means that Shakespeare and theories of cognition enter into a much more nuanced relationship than that envisaged by Matthews and McQuain. Though there are suggestive similarities between (for instance) cognitive theories of how olfaction influences our moral judgements about a person and early modern theological texts linking sin to bad smells, the differences between these historical approaches to olfaction are just as suggestive. Understanding the difference between a cognitive and an early modern account of olfaction’s influence over the mind means that the places where the norms and values of Shakespeare’s sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cultural context differ from those of modern cognitive theory are brought into sharper focus.

Scrutinising the historical context of Shakespeare’s plays also enables me to suggest moments where early modern thought can supplement cognitive theory, by providing imaginative ways of conceptualising gesture that seem to have been somewhat lost to us in the centuries following Shakespeare’s death. Shakespeare’s interest in touch in *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, highlights the fact that cognitive theories of hand gestures have tended to exclude ideas about skin contact, prompting

me to turn cognitive theory in the direction of haptics (the word ‘haptic’ comes from the Greek word *haptikos* (‘able to touch’), and haptics is the study of touch, tactile sensation and proprioception).¹⁷ Situating Shakespeare criticism historically as well, moreover, enables a discussion of how the modern advances of neuroscience can supplement and alter previous critical responses to the plays which were developed when theories of cognitive underload, offline cognition, kinaesthetic memory, and cognitive ecology had not yet been developed.

At the same time, the thesis is alert to the fact that in some ways Shakespeare’s plays and cognitive theory are both part of the same continuous tradition. Shakespeare’s plays are imbued with influences from early modern English culture from Elizabethan debates on kneeling (chapter 2) to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playhouse practices of staging highly realistic fights (chapter 5). His plays provide particularly rich portals through which to examine and understand this cultural moment. Shakespearean drama also helped to shape early modern language, thought, and stage practice. *Hamlet*, for instance, as chapter 5 shows, was responsible for bringing into being two new uses of the term ‘contagion’; an important word both for ideas of touch and of olfaction. Cognitive theory often has roots and resonances in early modern culture; in particular, gesture’s power to shape thought, whether in religious ceremonies or playhouse rehearsals, is emphasised both in cognitive theory and in early modern texts. In *Gesture*, Kendon traces a continuous intertextual history of gesture from the classical period, through early modern times, up to the present day work of cognitive theorists. To study Shakespeare and his culture, then, is to study a cultural moment that is important for understanding the historicity of cognitive theory. To study cognitive theory and Shakespeare together is to study two offshoots of a particular early modern cultural moment.

Structure of the thesis

Each chapter of the thesis concentrates on one of the five most common Shakespearean gestures identified in the database: taking hands, kneeling, kissing,

¹⁷ When the severed hand’s status as a pervasive visual emblem in early modern culture is taken into account, an analysis of the gesture of taking hands that focuses on touch can be combined with a visual one. Farah Karim-Cooper explains for instance that ‘faithfulness was often emblemized as two right hands touching, usually in a clasp as the many images of faithful unions in contemporary emblem books show’, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 56.

stillness, and striking. Chapter 1 examines taking hands in *Titus Andronicus*, looking particularly at the ways in which this gesture is subverted and restrained. This chapter shows that, when gestures fail to signify in the way that they are expected to, ideas about the difference between gestures that are ‘real’ and gestures that are ironically or theatrically performed come to the fore. The second chapter builds on this discussion of subverting gestures and examines kneeling in *Julius Caesar*. This chapter focuses on the conspirators coupling their attempts to subvert Caesar’s authority with a traditional gesture of submission. Adding nuance to the findings about theatrical representation in the first chapter, this chapter argues that *Julius Caesar* dramatises the profound effect that gestures (particularly habitual gestures) have on the mind, making it difficult to perform gestures purely ironically. The gesture of kissing in *Othello* is the focus of chapter 3. This chapter expands on the ideas of touching and skin contact in chapter 1 and adds an olfactory dimension to this discussion. Chapter 4 builds on chapter 1’s ideas of restraint and failed gestures more fully; by examining stillness and the refusal to gesture in *The Taming of the Shrew*, this chapter shows that the idea of ‘character’ necessarily involves that of ‘actor’, and that moments of stillness are moments that highlight the complex relationship between actor and character. Chapter 5, which examines the gesture of striking in *Hamlet* draws together all the strands of the thesis. By thinking about stage violence as violence that is cut short and stopped, it reflects on ideas of stillness and restraint, and in particular in how they shape the relationship between actor and character. This final chapter also returns to the idea of the touch on the Shakespearean stage, and explores how on stage touches have the potential to blur the boundary between appearance and reality.

The plays chosen for discussion in each chapter were selected because they are plays in which Shakespeare particularly explores, and tests, the significances of one of the five gestures: taking hands, kneeling, kissing, stillness and striking. In *Titus Andronicus*, for example, focusing on severed hands provides a way for Shakespeare to examine the limits of contemporary ideas that handclasps produced friendship, and helps him to dramatisise the drastic effects that occur when this simple social gesture is subverted or abrogated. Throughout his works, Shakespeare dramatises the very real effects of performed or dramatic gestures on the gesturer’s thoughts and emotions, as well as the destabilising effect that performance can have on gestural norms; Shakespeare’s plays thus suggest that the theatre continues to be a fascinating place for the cognitive theorist to go.

Chapter 1

‘Lend me thy hand’: taking hands in *Titus Andronicus*

Introduction

In one of the most arresting moments in *Titus Andronicus* (first performed 1594), Titus asks Aaron to help him cut off his hand so that he can exchange it for his sons’ lives. Titus’ words at this point, ‘Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine’ (3.1.187), play on the more usual idea of ‘lending’ or ‘giving’ someone one’s hand as a figurative term for a handshake whilst also emphasising that Titus’ hand will literally be given as an object of exchange. Lavinia’s entrance, with ‘her hands cut off and her tongue cut out’ (SD before 4.1.1), is another moment in *Titus Andronicus* where the severed hand is made the focus of the action. Directors have taken great care to draw the audience’s attention to the ways in which the severed hands in this play are performed, using a variety of visual effects to this purpose that range from the heavily stylised to the gruesomely realistic.

Vivien Leigh’s Lavinia in Peter Brook’s production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1955 elicited gasps from the audience as she appeared in an exquisite gown with red ribbons streaming from her wrists. According to the actress Janet Suzman, these audiences were shocked not because the scene was so gory but ‘because [Leigh] was so beautiful’.¹⁸ Her glamorous appearance created such an iconic image that other productions deploying this ribbon-device tend to be seen as referencing or echoing Brook’s definitive use of it.¹⁹ In 2006 at the Globe, director Lucy Bailey concentrated on making the scenes of severed hands as horrifying as possible by using realistic dummy hands filled with false blood and tubes hidden in actors’ sleeves which spurted constant and copious supplies of even more false blood.²⁰ Fainting or walking out of Bailey’s production (both in 2006 and in its 2014

¹⁸ Gregory Doran and Anthony Sher, *Woza Shakespeare: Titus Andronicus in South Africa* (London: Methuen, 1996), 218.

¹⁹ One such later production was Yukio Ninagawa’s (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 2006).

²⁰ For instance, when Titus’ hand was severed, he laid his hand on a chopping block then hid it in his sleeve, and a false hand filled with blood popped up from inside the block which Aaron then hacked at. “Fight Notes 2,” *Titus Andronicus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Lucy Bailey, Globe Theatre, 2006, Globe Theatre Archive. Prompt Book, *Titus Andronicus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Lucy Bailey, Globe Theatre, 2006, Globe Theatre Archive.

revival) became almost *de rigueur* for audiences (a fact showcased by reviewers) and extra first aiders were called in to help. Dominic Dromgoole's Artistic Director's speech at the end of the 2006 run mentioned this spate of faintings as a highlight of the season, the successful creation of a lasting image of the hand offered and severed.²¹

These dismemberments are shocking in performance not only because of the extreme violence they represent, emphasised as directors compete with each other to terrify audiences with their bold stage effects in a phenomenon Pascale Aebischer refers to as 'Shakesploitation'.²² Over and above this visual shock factor, the severed hands in *Titus Andronicus* are powerful because they bring to the fore, only to subvert, a rich web of metaphors that are sustained by the living hand. In a seminal body of work for cognitive theory, first published in the 1980s and 1990s, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson show how mental processes are rooted in bodily gestures, and hand gestures in particular: we 'grasp' an idea, for instance.²³ Lakoff and Johnson establish that this embodied metaphor is at the heart of our thought: the way in which we grasp ideas, and the way in which we think about ourselves grasping ideas, is shaped by the grasping movement of the hand. The idea that metaphor is embodied entails that the gestures of the body are essential to creating and shaping thoughts. *Titus Andronicus* demonstrates the importance of cognitive processes to the metaphors embodied by the gesture of taking hands. A handclasp allows the participants to affect each other cognitively by transmitting knowledge and shaping each others' thought and emotions. This dynamic cognitive interaction keeps numerous metaphors in play; the touch, grasp, and exchange of hands enables metaphors of touching, grasping, and exchanging thoughts and emotions. *Titus Andronicus* shows that when hands are severed, this interaction is halted, and the potential for a versatile metaphorical play is reduced to a single metaphor: that of the

²¹ E.g. Rashid Razaq, "Theatre-goers Passing Out Over Gory Scenes at the Globe," *Evening Standard*, May 5 2006; Richard Stott spoke of 'first aiders and wheelchairs' being brought in to help people who fainted, "It's No Holds Bard," *Sunday Mirror*, 11 June 2006. Dominic Dromgoole, "Artistic Director's Speech," 2006, Globe Theatre Archive, London.

²² Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24.

²³ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 3ff.

exchange of objects. As such, the severed hand shows how important cognitive processes, over and above the physical structure of the hand, are to creating and sustaining metaphors.

In the early modern era, the hand, alongside the face, was thought to be the main body part for bearing signs and meanings. This idea persists in present day cognitive theory; colleagues Goldin-Meadow and McNeill describe hand gestures as the repositories, communicators, and creators of various abstract and concrete ideas, from ‘I love you’ to ‘he’s running away’. Unlike Lakoff, Johnson, Goldin-Meadow and McNeill, early modern writers focused not only on the hand’s shapes and movements but also on its capacity to touch, thereby linking handshakes with an even richer set of metaphors. Early modern texts relate handclasps to exchange, and to ideas of love, reconciliation, and bargaining, emphasising that it is the touch of the skin that conveys and creates these ideas.

My database shows that the gesture of taking hands occurs at pivotal moments in Shakespeare’s plays, helping to alter, create, or consolidate friendship, kinship, allegiance, and identity. By enabling the two participants to share and shape thoughts and feelings, the handclasp constitutes them as human subjects with a social relationship to each other. Hands are most often given and taken in the plays at times of pledges to marry (as with Ferdinand and Miranda, or Claudio and Hero),²⁴ and of reconciliation (like Capulet and Montague at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*).²⁵ These are moments when characters’ identities change, or are affirmed in relation to, the other: as friend, spouse, subject, or participant in a promise. A living, moving, feeling hand is needed to engage both participants, in order to ensure that promises are kept,

²⁴ Giving of hands is explicitly referred to in pledges of marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda (*The Tempest* 3.1.89-90), Julia and Proteus (*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* 5.4.116), Claudio and Hero (*Much Ado About Nothing* 5.4.56-8), Bertram and Helen (*All’s Well that Ends Well* 2.3.173-6), Orsino and Viola (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.272), Viola and Sebastian (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.157) and Perdita and Florizel (*The Winter’s Tale* 4.4.154). Additionally, Romeo and Juliet’s ‘hands do touch...palm to palm’ (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.5.99-100), and Paulina promises Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* 5.3.88-9, as he is confronted with his long-lost wife, ‘I’ll make the statue...descend and take you by the hand... present your hand’. A comprehensive list of examples for all gestures discussed can be found in the database.

²⁵ The newly-reconciled Capulet and Montague take hands at the end of *Romeo and Juliet* (5.3.296). Stephano’s words to Trinculo are another example of this, ‘Give me thy hand, I am sorry I beat thee’ (*The Tempest* 3.2.111), as are those of the Host to Evans and Caius after they argue, ‘Give me thy hand’ (*The Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.1.105-6).

marriages are valid, and friends stay friends. With a severed and unfeeling hand, the handshake's essential ability to keep multiple different meanings in play is lost. In many productions of *Titus Andronicus*, the handshake is performed using a dummy hand: such hands are 'dead' in the sense of being incapable of movement or haptic perception. *Titus Andronicus* depicts how, when the handshake is turned into an unfeeling clasp with a dead hand, the living hand that had kept these metaphors in complex, nuanced, changing play turns into an overly literal metaphor: an object rather than an agent of exchange.

As we will see, Katherine Rowe's notion of the 'dead hand' in literature reattributes an uncanny agency to severed and unfeeling hands. Reflecting on the dead hands Rowe describes, which move with a mischievous and sinister purpose, helps to add complexity to our understanding of handshakes in *Titus Andronicus*. Using Rowe's analysis of the severed hand in literature, we can see that the severed hands in *Titus Andronicus*, though broadly reduced to the status of mere objects of exchange, nevertheless exert agency over the play's central characters.

Because they are central to marrying, creating friendships, and communicating, handclasps are integral to society, (literally) holding societies together by embodying relationships of trust, dependency, and exchange. *Titus Andronicus* reflects this, as, in this play, handshakes broken by dismemberment signal and produce the breakup of social bonds. Examining Titus' literalisation of this metaphor as a purely economic exchange of objects helps us to understand justice and Roman civilisation in *Titus Andronicus* as sustained and subverted by embodied metaphor. Ralph Berry has argued that (the metaphor of) dismemberment is essential to justice in this play; a cognitive and phenomenological approach pinpoints how, specifically, justice is sustained and challenged through the social bonds created by the touch of the living, feeling hand or destroyed by the unresponsive severed hand. At the start of *Titus Andronicus*, Titus and his family believe that according to law Alarbus must be dismembered to appease the ghosts of Titus' dead sons (1.1.96-100); Titus' remaining sons emphasise the specifically Roman nature of this rite, 'we have perform'd| Our Roman rites. Alarbus' limbs are lopp'd' (1.1.142-3). The Roman state itself is a giant body, the dismemberment of which is the cause of civil unrest; Marcus asks Titus to run for Emperor so that he can 'help to set a head on headless Rome' (1.1.186).

Berry argues persuasively that by exploring this kind of ritualized violence, *Titus Andronicus* evokes the human sacrifices from which the tragic genre itself sprung, ‘the ceremonies of *Titus Andronicus* lead toward a giant myth of cleansing, the eradication of evil from Roman society’.²⁶ This enables Berry to situate *Titus Andronicus* within Shakespeare’s body of work as definitively setting the tone for later explorations of corporeality and the Roman state. He describes it as, ‘the first of the Roman plays’, as it depicts a move towards a more civilized Rome, culminating in Marcus’ final promise to re-member the state, ‘to knit again...These broken limbs into one body’ (5.3.70-2), foreshadowing later evocations of the body politic in *Coriolanus*.²⁷ In his later adaptation of the play, *Titus Andronicus, or, The Rape of Lavinia*, Edward Ravenscroft (1687) prefigures Berry’s idea of Shakespeare’s Rome as a state which is dismembered and then rebuilt, extending it outwards to a criticism of the Shakespearean text itself. Ravenscroft describes Shakespeare’s original play as a structure that had broken and needed to be put back together, ‘’tis the most incorrect and indigested piece in all his Works; It seems rather a heap of Rubbish then a Structure’, he writes, adding, ‘However as if some great Building had been design’d, in the removal we found many Large and Square Stones both usefull and Ornamental to the Fabrick, as new Modell’d’.²⁸

Rather than using actual Roman legal texts such as the Theodosian Code, Gaius’ Institutes, or Justinian’s Digest and Institutes (many of which would have been nearly impossible to source in the early modern era) to inform his depiction of Roman justice in *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare turned to literary sources for his depiction of Rome, and particularly Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* which emphasises animal transformation and dismemberment in narratives of crime and punishment. *Titus Andronicus* sets itself up in direct competition to Ovid in terms of dismembered bodies: Titus says to Chiron and Demetrius, ‘worse than Philomel you us’d my daughter| And worse than Progne I will be reveng’d’ (5.2.194-5). Ovid’s Philomel had her hands cut off, but Lavinia also has her tongue cut out; Ovid’s Tereus was punished by eating his son, and Tamora is punished in similar fashion but here two sons are dismembered and eaten and several other people are killed at the dinner

²⁶ Ralph Berry, *Tragic Instance: The Sequence of Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1999), 29-30.

²⁷ Berry, *Tragic Instance*, 41.

²⁸ Edward Ravenscroft, *Titus Andronicus, or, The Rape of Lavinia* (London: J.B., 1687), A2^r.

table. Shakespeare's choice of this particular literary source for a play about Roman justice underscores how integral ideas of the dismembered and re-membered body are to his notion of the breakup and renewal of the Roman state. A cognitive reading of the handclasp also takes this reading of the dismembered bodies in the play further and insists that Lavinia represents not just an allegory but a human individual. The early modern hand's status as a symbol of wider human agency enables Shakespeare to reinforce the agency of Titus and Lavinia after their hands have been severed. As this chapter goes on to discuss, Titus pointedly uses variations on the word 'hand' to emphasise that, though he and Lavinia have lost their physical hands, they can still 'handle' ideas and projects and 'lay hands on' their enemies through revenge.

Berry's work helps to place Titus' dead handshake as a destructive literalisation of usual metaphors of 'exchanging hands'—'lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine'—within a wider framework of ideas about justice and society. Conversely, paying attention to metaphor in *Titus Andronicus* enables us to re-think just how useful the metaphor of society as a giant body is to the characters in this play. Rather than a moment when two people cognitively affect each other through the touch, the 'exchange' of hands in *Titus Andronicus* becomes a literal exchange of dead flesh. And it is partly because of this that the broken body politic is, at the end of the play, literally made up of dead and broken bodies. The centrality of embodied cognition to Roman society in *Titus Andronicus* ultimately limits the state's ability to be transformed through purely rhetorical ideas of the body politic. This is because at the end of the play, once the bodies that made up that society are dead, they are no longer able to embody dynamic, interactive cognitive processes. Marcus' decorous image of Rome as a body being 'knit' together like 'scattered corn into one mutual sheaf' (5.3.71), delivered when he is surrounded by literal broken limbs, is undermined by the impossibility of literally putting the Andronici's very dead bodies back together and having them interact again as socialised humans. Marcus' words emphasise the centrality of dynamically-embodied metaphor to *Titus Andronicus*. When hands become mere objects, rather than the living creators of multiple metaphors that facilitate cognitive exchange (exchanging friendship, 'touching' the soul, 'grasping' a thought or another person's heart), they pose an obtrusively literal obstruction to metaphorical and literal transformation.

To touch the other's hand with one's own is to know and be known, to recognise oneself as, and to become, part of society and to help others become so too.

The severed hand, which cannot participate in a communicative touch, is the embodiment, the result, and the cause, of a Roman society where human relationships break up and become destructive and hateful rather than cohesive, sharing, and empathetic. Thus as much as *Titus Andronicus* is about shocking performances of dismemberment, it is also about metaphor, and how metaphor is created by cognitive processes that are enabled by the body. Analyses of Shakespearean performances, particularly Bailey's, Gregory Doran's stage version and Julie Taymor's film version, are crucial to my argument as they help to illustrate ways in which metaphors are embodied physically in this play. Analysing these historic performances demonstrates how actors' living bodies build brief, suggestive stage directions ('Enter Lavinia, her hands cut off and her tongue cut out', for instance) into richly metaphorical moments that are crucial to the play's concern with justice and society. Though within the world of the play Marcus' suggestion that he can revivify Rome by 'knitting' its dismembered limbs back to life does not seem entirely plausible, paying attention to the actors' bodies makes his claim ring, in some sense, true. The actors will arise at the end of the play and the next performance will bring the characters back to life to be dismembered and scattered anew, creating a cyclic ritual of cleansing and renewal not too far from what Berry describes as being central to the tragic genre.

Titus Andronicus and cognitive theorists share a concern with embodied metaphors: exchanging thoughts with hands and 'handling' an idea. Thus, cognitive theory can recover an emphasis on touching and grasping as sites of knowledge in *Titus Andronicus*, which had slipped out of view in the centuries intervening between the early modern era and the present day. Cognitive theory also throws back into the spotlight an early modern assumption that handclasps are a fundamental cause of states of mind like promising, bargaining, and allegiance because experiencing the touch of each other's skin has a practical cognitive effect on each of the participants, shaping their thoughts to make them feel more amicable, loyal, or obliged to each other. Early modern texts also provide a rich set of ideas about feeling, persuading, healing, and worshipping through the touch which can augment cognitive theory's current tendency to focus on the hand gesture as a purely visual sign.²⁹ *Titus Andronicus* brings these issues to the fore by exploring the alterations in Titus' and

²⁹ A notable exception is Raphael Lyne, "The Shakespearean Grasp", *Cambridge Quarterly* 2013 42(1), 38-61, a cognitive study that like this chapter discusses John Bulwer's work.

Lavinia's ways of being in the world when their hands are cut off. When they lose their hands, Titus and Lavinia relinquish those parts of their body that are most crucial for pledging allegiance to authority, a lover, or friend, and persuading, communicating, knowing, and being known. With the offhand phrases 'lend me thy hand and I will give thee mine', and 'give his majesty my hand' (3.1.187, 194), Titus alludes to this normative backdrop of the handclasp even as he explores its limits and its potential to be disrupted and subverted.

Cognising with hands

As we have seen, the idea of Roman justice in *Titus Andronicus* is not just expressed through metaphors of the body, but also literally created and sustained, as well as destroyed, by bodily gestures, especially the handclasp. Both cognitive theory and early modern thought recognise the ability of the handclasp not only to represent particular states of mind such as amity, allegiance, and love, but also to produce these states of mind, shaping and altering cognition. The hand becomes a particularly salient case of the wider power of gesture to both represent and shape thought, because both early modern discourses and cognitive studies present the hand as the main instrument of thought and the main gesturing part of the body³⁰. In *Titus Andronicus*, hands are related in particular to ideas of exchange and of political agency by committing crimes, bearing the brunt of crimes, and meting out justice and revenge. In her book *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency*, Katherine Rowe establishes a tradition of hands as symbols of consent and agency, particularly within the context of labour and 'political rights and authority', running from the early modern era (*Titus Andronicus* is one of her first examples) to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

³⁰ As discussed below, John Bulwer describes gesture as 'the only speech and generall language of Humane Nature', and by gesture (as the focus of his book shows), he means, specifically, hand gesture, *Chirologia... Chironomia*, A7^v. Early modern authors often quoted Aristotle's idea of the hand as the 'instrument of instruments', i.e. the part of the body best suited for expressing the mind and carrying out a person's plans. In his discussion of 'Invention', knowledge and rationality in *The Advancement of Learning*, for example, Francis Bacon writes, 'the hand is the Instrument of Instruments', *The Two Bookes of Francis Bacon* (London: for Henrie Tomes, 1605), Mm4^r. This chapter goes on to discuss the way that Aristotle and Quintilian privileged the hand as the best body part for representing and carrying out thought in their writing on gesture and rhetoric, and the influence that their ideas had on early modern writers such as John Bulwer and Abraham Fraunce.

Anglo-American literature.³¹ Kendon's *Gesture* situates cognitive, linguistic, and neuroscientific depictions of the hand within a tradition, beginning in the classical period, of depicting the hand as the paradigmatic gesturing body part.³² Later twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Anglo-American cognitive and neuroscientific studies continue this tradition, presenting the hand as almost the sole focus of gesture. Part of Goldin-Meadow's definition of gesture is that 'gestures come out of the hand'.³³ McNeill writes that, '[g]esticulation...is made chiefly with the arms and hands but is not restricted to those body parts—the head can take over as a kind of third hand if the anatomical hands are immobilised or otherwise engaged'.³⁴ McNeill's description of the gesturing head as 'a kind of third hand' shows how central the hand is to theories of gesture: any body part that gestures is a kind of hand. Neuroscientific studies tend to focus on hand movements when they are looking for paradigmatic gestures of intent.³⁵ Though, as subsequent chapters show, gestures such as kneeling, and deliberate refusals to gesture, have their own sets of political significances in Shakespeare's plays, *Titus Andronicus* is firmly situated within this tradition of seeing the hand gesture as a paradigmatic expression of political and social agency.

In the Renaissance, the idea of the hand as the main instrument of thought derived largely from Aristotle's description in the fourth century B.C.E. of the hand as 'the tool of tools', and his statement that, 'the possession of these hands is the cause of man being of all animals the most intelligent'.³⁶ This idea pervaded early modern discourses on gesture and rhetorical treatises (the latter were heavily influenced by Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*), and it is likely that the many speeches of rhetorical persuasion in *Titus Andronicus* (such as Lavinia pleading with Tamora not to harm

³¹ Katherine Rowe, *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency Renaissance to Modern* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 11, passim.

³² Kendon, *Gesture*, 17-83.

³³ Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture*, 201.

³⁴ David McNeill, *Gesture and Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 5.

³⁵ For instance work on the mirror neuron system governing empathic understanding of the other's intent overwhelmingly relies on experiments involving hand gestures, Roy Mukamel et al, "Single-Neuron Responses in Humans during Execution and Observation of Actions," *Current Biology* 20 (2010), 750–756.

³⁶ Aristotle, "On the Soul" III 8.432a, "On the Parts of Animals" IV.10.687a, in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

her, or the opening speeches of the two candidates for emperor) will have followed the Renaissance tradition of using plenty of hand gestures to emphasise the words spoken. Aristotle embedded his discussion of the human hand's superior ability to make signs, use tools, and bear meaning, within a wider conceptualisation of the human being as more rational than other animals. This link between the anatomical capacity of the hand and humans' rational superiority over other animals remained strong into the nineteenth century. For instance, the anatomist Charles Bell argues in his treatise *The Hand: Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments – As Evincing Design* (1833) that the human hand is a God-given sign of humankind's 'superior mental capacities', and status as 'ruler over animate and inanimate nature'.³⁷

Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (first century C.E.), which focuses throughout (though not exclusively) on hands underpins much early modern and Enlightenment thinking on rhetoric, either explicitly (as in the works of the actor and drama theorist Thomas Betterton)³⁸ or implicitly (as in the works of the rhetorician Abraham Fraunce).³⁹ In Book 11 chapter 3 of *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian notes that hands are able to perform a plethora of movements, 'it is scarcely possible to tell how many motions the hand, without which oration would be lacking and weak, can perform'. He argues that hands are so superior to all other parts of the body when it comes to

³⁷ Charles Bell, *The Hand: Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments – As Evincing Design* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Blanchard, 1833), 157, 26. This book is one of "The Bridgewater Treatises", a collection of scientific works designed to glorify God by showing how the patterns found in anatomy, chemistry, and other sciences provide evidence that the world was designed by a divine intelligence. Thus, Bell is careful to state that possessing and using hands does not itself make humans superior to other animals; rather, humans were given hands because God had already created their minds more rational and ingenious than other animals'; Bell's assumption that hands do little to alter our already-superior state of mind makes him different from most of the other cognitive and early modern texts discussed in this chapter, which present the hand as vital for shaping humans' superiority over animals. For histories of the hand's association with human intelligence and superiority see Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2008), 149ff. and Raymond Tallis, *The Hand: A Philosophical Inquiry into Human Being* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

³⁸ Thomas Betterton, William Oldys, and Edmund Curll, *History of the English Stage* (London: for E. Curll, 1741), base their description of 'speaking with the hands' on stage (F2^v-F3^v) on Quintilian's *Institutes*.

³⁹ The section on gesture in Abraham Fraunce's *The Arcadian Rhetorike* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1588), is mostly devoted to the hand, because, Fraunce attests, 'Without the hand the gesture is nothing' (K2^r). This book has absorbed Quintilian's general ideas, but does not discuss them explicitly.

making signs that they even approximate the power of speech itself, ‘whilst other body parts help speech, the hands may be said to speak themselves’. His list of the main things that hand gestures can do includes expressing the speaker’s emotions such as ‘joy, sadness, and doubt’, creating certain effects in others such as ‘summoning, dismissing, threatening, or asking for something’, and logically organising the world by ‘signifying measure, quantity, number, and time’. Hands can also, he notes, perform a function at once deictic and grammatical, ‘by pointing out places and people the hands act like adverbs and pronouns’.⁴⁰

One of the key messages that writers on rhetoric in later centuries took from the Renaissance material was the hand’s superiority to all other body parts when it comes to conveying meaning. The private school teacher Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806), a book which Adam Kendon calls ‘a summation of the post-Renaissance rhetorical tradition of gesture study’,⁴¹ is heavily influenced by Quintilian. Austin states that he uses the term ‘chironomia’ (which literally means ‘rules of the hand’) ‘in the extended sense... of the whole art of gesture and delivery’, yet he focuses almost exclusively on the hand; for him hand gestures are ‘the whole art of gesture and delivery’.⁴²

So, there is a long tradition of describing the hand as the body part which is best able to express thought. This tradition manifested itself in the Renaissance, not only through the continued popularity of Quintilian but also in the writings of authors like John Bulwer and Giovanni Bonifacio who saw the hand as a body part particularly adapted for communicating and shaping thought. Bulwer writes that gesture is ‘the only speech and generall language of Humane Nature’, explaining that the head and the hand are privileged above all other body parts thanks to their unique and superior relationships with cognition, ‘these two comprise the best part of the expressions of Humane Nature’.⁴³ As such a privileged agent of thought, the hand has a certain metaphoricity: to possess a hand in both cognitive and early modern texts is to possess a wider ability to understand, plan, and use and affect the world. Rowe shows that the severed hand problematises this idea of the hand as a straightforward

⁴⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, ed. Donald Russell (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1920), 11.3.85 [Latin, my translation].

⁴¹ Kendon, *Gesture*, 86.

⁴² Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1806), xii.

⁴³ Bulwer, *Chirologia...Chironomia*, A7^v.

symbol of political and economic agency. Dead hands appear in literature, she notes, as entities which can both be employed by others like objects (the burglar's magically-illuminating and stiffly-moving hand of glory is a central example), but they also gain the status of an uncanny subject like the crawling severed hands of Gothic fiction. Rowe shows that this fearful, uncanny quality arises from the dead hand's residue of agency, displayed through its movements or its use as an instrument in sinister plots. This is a subversive shadow of the Aristotelian paradigm of the hand as the ultimate instrument, and embodiment, of rational agency.

Though they do not crawl around as they might in a Gothic novel, Titus and Lavinia's severed hands do have a residual agency. This agency, however, is not that of the hands' original owners, Titus and Lavinia, but of their enemies. The violators (Tamora, Chiron, Demetrius and Aaron) variously use Titus and Lavinia's severed hands as tools for their own purposes. As early as Act 1 Scene 1, soon after Titus has ignored her entreaties and killed her son, Tamora states her mind in an aside to Saturninus:

I'll find a day to massacre them all
And raze their faction and their family,
The cruel father and his traitorous sons,
To whom I sued for my dear son's life,
And make them know what 'tis to let a queen
Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain (1.1.500-5).

Berry sees Saturninus as 'the animating spirit of the play',⁴⁴ and this is true when we consider that almost every character in the play seems to share Saturninus' violent, vengeful personality. However, it is surely the violators who control most of the plots and schemes in the play, and it is Tamora who controls Saturninus himself. Focusing on severed hands in particular, it is because of the violators' desire for revenge that they are severed in the first place. And it is Aaron, Tamora, and her sons who subsequently 'animate' these severed hands, controlling what they mean and how they are circulated in society. Tamora makes clear that she wants revenge for Alarbus, 'her dear son's life' (1.1.453), and Titus, Lavinia's, Quintus' and Martius' severed hands,

⁴⁴ Berry, *Tragic Instance*, 35-6.

tongue, and heads become her revenge in kind for Alarbus' dismembered limbs.
When she has captured Lavinia, Tamora makes this clear,

Remember, boys, I pour'd forth tears in vain
To save your brother from the sacrifice.
But fierce Andronicus would not relent.
Therefore away with her, and use her as you will;
The worse for her, the better lov'd of me (2.3.163-7).

Chiron and Demetrius interpret Tamora's broad command to 'use her as you will' and decide to cut off Lavinia's hands and tongue. Later, though Titus may think he is the one deciding to cut off his hand, willingly sacrificing it and displaying his agency by tricking Lucius and Marcus into leaving him alone to get it done (3.1.184-5), in fact it is the plot to revenge Tamora's son—carried out this time by Aaron—that is controlling Titus' situation and the decision placed before him (either to let his sons die or cut off his hand and get his sons back). The violators also control the outcome of Titus' decision to sever his hand; when Titus' sons are returned to him as dismembered corpses this reflects not what Titus wants, but what Tamora wants. Titus' severed hand is like a puppet, ultimately uncannily controlled by Tamora's agency.

Berry's metaphor of an 'animating spirit' is very suggestive, conjuring up an image of a dead body brought to, or sustained in, life by a quasi-autonomous agent rather like Rowe's Gothic severed hands. Berry explains that he describes Saturninus in this way because for him Saturninus 'is Roman justice and retribution',⁴⁵ reflecting his description of Roman justice at the end of the play as the reassembling of a 'scattered', 'broken' set of limbs with Rome becoming a kind of re-animated corpse. This useful framework can be shifted, and used to understand how Tamora turns Rome into a collection of scattered, broken (limbs of) citizens controlled by her, and how her method of justice or retribution is powered by severed limbs that live on uncannily in her mind. Narrowly, Alarbus' limbs exert agency as the source of Tamora's revenge. In a more general way, hands in *Titus Andronicus* are embedded within a wider backdrop of metaphorical associations; to 'handle' is to know and

⁴⁵ Berry, *Tragic Instance*, 35-6.

affect the world, to ‘grasp’ is to possess an idea, to ‘touch’ is to affect the emotions of another person. Hands to essential metaphorical work which holds society together; without this work, society becomes at most a dead corpse, artificially animated rather than a flourishing body politic. However, even when the hand is severed it lives on in the mind as an embodied metaphor for agency and knowledge.

In the early modern era, as today, the union of two hands not only represented but also helped to shape more abstract types of union: unity of thoughts, of lives, of goals, of fortunes. Goldin-Meadow and McNeill call these types of gesture, which physically embody abstract concepts, ‘metaphoric’. A specific instance of the more broader ability of the hand to bear embodied metaphors, ‘*Metaphoric gestures...display an image, either of a shape or of movement...that represents or stands for some abstract concept*’.⁴⁶ Metaphoric gestures do not just represent this abstract concept, but also often help to bring it into being. This technical vocabulary of metaphoric gestures helps to describe in cognitive terms the ways in which early modern people used handclasps to marry, swear allegiance, and make promises. Here, the abstract union of two loves, two minds, and two souls, is embodied in the physical union of hands. Again, then, over and above the pure shock factor of the dismembered body, Titus’ subversion of the handclasp as a friendly gesture (as he parodies an amicable exchange of minds and hearts, making it an exchange of dead flesh) turns a whole raft of early modern social interactions on their heads.

Early modern texts pervasively acknowledge the handclasp’s ability to embody abstract emotions, relationships, and states of mind (such as reconciliation). The most sustained early modern treatment of the hand and the handclasp is a volume by the physician John Bulwer, which contains two linked treatises analysing all the gestures of the hand, *Chirologia* and *Chironomia* (1644). Bulwer states that the gesture of taking hands was used to persuade, recommend, lead, assist, thank, welcome, reconcile, love, wish well, and bid farewell. He testifies that the gesture of taking hands expresses unity of fortunes, love, and minds. It is,

*An expression usuall between those who desire to incorporate
completely or grow into one, and make a perfect joynt....since they who*

⁴⁶ Kendon, *Gesture*, 100. C.f. Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture*, 7. This categorisation of gesture ultimately derives from McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, 39.

thus professe communion of good while they willingly embrace each others hand signifie that they are both content that their works shall be common.⁴⁷

In the marriage ceremony in the Book of Common Prayer (the richest source of information about the early modern marriage ceremony, which remained unchanged in the editions between 1549-1662 and has altered very little since then) the handclasp between spouses as they make their vows is described as the way in which ‘either geve their trowth to other’.⁴⁸ Early modern marriage treatises emphasised that this union of hands was part of a metaphysical union of minds. For instance, in *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons* (1577) Heinrich Bullinger states, ‘First let the good liking of their consenting mindes be ioyned in one, whom the open profession of mutuall consent & outwarde handfasting must afterward couple together.’⁴⁹

However, stressing the variety and multivalence of early modern marriages, Frances Dolan cautions that the rhetorical tropes associated with marriage in the seventeenth century did not always reflect the reality of early modern married life. For instance, pervasive references to consummation as a kind of exchange, ‘the conjugal debt’, masked the reality that many couples waited to consummate a marriage, or never consummated it at all.⁵⁰ The ‘reality’ Dolan describes is one where human interaction is capable of enabling many different metaphors at once, without being completely defined by them. For instance, though the idea of a ‘conjugal debt’ might arise from the exchange of hands, the metaphorical meaning of the handclasp does not end there. The married couple are, in reality, agents able to embody a variety of metaphors, and to interact in a variety of ways, through their handclasps. Dead hands, however, create the very situation that Dolan deplors, where human social interaction becomes trapped by economic metaphors of exchange that fail to encapsulate the full ethical potential of human relationships. Shakespeare is certainly not trying to uphold a perfect, uncomplicated ideal of marriage in *Titus Andronicus*;

⁴⁷ Bulwer, *Chirologia*, H7^{r-v}.

⁴⁸ Thomas Cranmer et al, *The Book of the Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments* (London: Edward Whitchurch, 1549), [unsigned] fols 29^r-33^v.

⁴⁹ Heinrich Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons* (London: Henry Middleton, 1577), Pii^r.

⁵⁰ Frances Dolan, “Shakespeare and Marriage: An Open Question”, *Literature Compass* 8/9 (2011), 625.

Titus gives Lavinia away to the emperor for political ends, for instance, and as soon as Saturninus feels he has secured Lavinia's hand, he instantly starts wishing he could marry Tamora instead. Dolan argues that metaphors for marriage (such as exchange and payment) cannot encapsulate the meaning of this social relationship between two people. This illustrates how cognitive interactions, shaped and sustained through the mutual touch, are crucial for ensuring that metaphors remain dynamic, multiply meaningful, and powerful social bonds rooted beneficially in the body. As *Titus Andronicus* shows, once the touch is stopped and subverted, the gap between metaphor and flesh widens.

The idea that handclasps can shape and create, as well as represent, abstract concepts and states of mind is common to both early modern and cognitive texts. As Carla Mazzio explains, 'to touch' in the Renaissance was at once to physically sense the world with one's skin and to have thoughts and emotions that were shaped by the material cultures of this world.⁵¹ Bulwer wrote of the handclasp's ability to change a person's state of mind (for instance, by persuading one or both participants to change their minds, or creating relations of amity between two subjects) by suggesting that there were certain powerful physical properties present in the touch. He describes the hand as possessing a 'virtue' or power akin to, or consisting in, a magic potion; he uses the word 'philtre', which can be read both as a metaphorical assertion that the handclasp's effect on the mind is like a drug and as a literal assumption that there is a chemical substance contained in the hand that affects anyone it touches. Bulwer explains, 'Hence Physitians the subtile and diligent observers of nature, thinke that there is in the *Hand* a certaine secret and hidden vertue, and a convenient force or philtre to procure *affection*'.⁵²

Bulwer describes the handclasp as a fundamentally interactive gesture, involving the bodies and minds of two people. Cognitive theorists often turn to phenomenological theory, and particularly the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to help them describe the interactive nature of gesture, the ways in which the touch both affects and is affected by the world, and shapes as well as being shaped by a person's

⁵¹ 'To feel was, in the Renaissance, a verb used interchangeably with "to touch", and both verbs implied physical as well as emotional sensation', 'To have "tact" is to have just the right touch, a manifest sensitivity to one's linguistic and social surrounds', Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2009), 180, 214.

⁵² Bulwer, *Chirologia*, I2^v-I3^f.

thoughts. For McNeill, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that gesture can not only be a representation of a thought that has happened, but can also constitute the act of cognition itself, 'a way of cognitively being'. From this McNeill deduces that, by observing a person's gestures we can make deductions about their cognitive state at that very moment, 'when we see a gesture we see part of the speaker's current cognitive being, her very mental existence, at the moment it occurs'; by gesturing, a person is both manifesting and 'updating' their cognitive state.⁵³ McNeill's analysis fits in well with what we understand of early modern marriage, helping us to articulate how taking hands in marriage shapes each spouse's being as an embodied cognitive subject; the handclasp tracks, and produces, a trajectory of changes in the participants' thoughts and feelings, as well as in their legal status. Early modern writers stressed that this gesture fundamentally altered the couple's identities, creating, as Bishop Edmund Bonner wrote in 1555 in the tract *A Profitable and Necessary Doctrine*, 'an indiuiduall or vnseperable bonde or knotte of lyuyng, whereby eyther to other muste do as that vocation requyreth'.⁵⁴ Fulfilling their marriage vows meant embodying new roles which involved theoretically at least love, loyalty, and sharing their lives with each other, and, for the wife, obeying the husband. Where there is no touch, vital social and legal institutions, like marriage, and the promises that go with them, come unstuck.

Throughout this history of the handclasp, the hand's power to 'update' or change a person's cognitive state has been seen to reside in the touch of bare skin on skin. The idea of the 'naked' hand has historically been linked closely to the notion that a person's mind is also bared to the other during a handclasp. Bare hands are often explicitly called for in making oaths as a guarantee of the sincerity and effectiveness of the oath. In Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* (1614), the naked hand is the precondition for the 'naked' (sincere) bargain,

When the Earle of *Caesarea* saw that the *Caliph* gaue his hand, neither willingly nor bare, hee told him roundly thus much in effect.

SIR, *Truth* needs no holes to hide it selfe; Princes, that will hold

⁵³ McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, 91-2.

⁵⁴ Edmund Bonner, *A Profitable and Necessary Doctrine* (London: John Cawood, 1555), Bbi^v. This work is based on the 1543 King's Book of Christian doctrine prepared for Henry VIII.

couenant, must deale openly, nakedly, and sincerely; Giue vs therefore your bare hand, if you meane that we shall trust you, for we will make no bargaines with your Gloue.⁵⁵

Raleigh plays upon the connotations of the word ‘naked’, which meant not only unclothed, but also unconcealed, exposed, sincere, and undisguised.⁵⁶ The idea that only a person’s ‘naked’ skin could enable genuine contact with their mind has persisted through to the present day. In a work on gesture first published in 1807, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, the actor Henry Siddons wrote that it had long been thought rude to shake hands with one’s gloves on, as the covered hand is entangled with discourses of (dis)honesty, ‘Persons to this day apologise when they shake hands with their gloves on, and sometimes conclude with this elegant witticism: “Excuse my glove, perhaps it is the more honest skin of the two”’.⁵⁷ Etiquette guides continue to state today that, unless absolutely necessary, gloves must always be removed before shaking hands with someone.⁵⁸ In the early modern era bare skin is also deemed to be curative whereas the covered hand is not. In his 1680 report of the Duke of Monmouth’s ability to cure the ‘King’s Evil’ (scrofula) with his touch, Henry Clerk testifies that Elizabeth Parcet was not cured when she touched the Duke’s gloved hand with her own, but was cured when she removed his glove and managed to touch his bare wrist, ‘her mind was, she must touch some part of his bare skin’.⁵⁹ Traces of a similar idea are detectable today in the practice of using bare hands for faith healing or curative practices such as Reiki. The mutual touch is thus fundamental to cognitively affecting the other in the contexts of meeting, persuading, healing, bargaining, promising, marrying, and making friends. Titus’ subverted ‘handclasp’ with Aaron can thus perhaps also be read as a sign of mistrust. Titus might understandably be reticent about touching the evil Aaron’s bare

⁵⁵ Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*, 2nd edn (London: William Stansby, 1617), Fff2^r.

⁵⁶ O.E.D., ‘naked’, *n*.

⁵⁷ Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to the English Drama from a Work on the Subject by M Engel*, 2nd edn. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1822), 164.

⁵⁸ Sue Fox, *Etiquette for Dummies* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011), 150.

⁵⁹ Henry Clerk, *His Grace the Duke of Monmouth Honoured in his Progress in the West of England* (London: for Benjamin Harris, 1680), single leaf, ^rv.

skin with his own, thereby instituting, whether he wants to or not, a bond between them. But, instead of just keeping his gloves on, Titus (in keeping with the extravagantly violent spirit of the whole play) goes one further and cuts off all his nerves.

Merleau-Ponty's writings suggest the mutuality of the touch –the fact that both participants in the handclasp are at once touching and being touched by the other– is crucial to the ways in which a handclasp forges relationships between two people. In both *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964), Merleau-Ponty presents the touch of the hand as a core case of understanding the world through the body. For Merleau-Ponty, we do not touch things and subsequently think about them consciously; rather, touching is in itself a way of cognising the world and other people.⁶⁰ He attests that a mutual touch does not just involve forming thoughts about the other, it also means shaping their thoughts, and allowing them to shape ours. Merleau-Ponty states in *Phenomenology of Perception* that when my hand touches another hand there exists ‘an ambiguous set up in which both hands can alternate the roles of “touching” and being “touched”’. This is because in one sense, when I take hands with another person, my hand is the object of another’s touch: it is perceived by the other to be a passive and thing-like ‘bundle of bones and muscles’. In another sense, however, my hand is a perceiving subject ‘alive and mobile, which I thrust towards things in order to explore them’: one of these ‘things’ is the other’s hand.⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty’s main example here is of one person pressing both their hands together and experiencing themselves to be alternately a subject and object of their own touch. However it is not crucial to his argument that both hands belong to the same person, and thus his ideas can be applied without substantive loss to a gesture of taking hands between two different people. Following Merleau-Ponty, a handclasp between two people can be described as having the following chiastic structure. In its capacity as a subject, the other’s ‘alive and mobile’ hand perceives my hand to have the role of an object comprising ‘bundle of bones and muscles’. However, in *its* capacity as a subject, my ‘alive and mobile’ hand experiences the other’s hand as an object comprising a ‘bundle of bones and muscles’. As Merleau-Ponty wrote when he

⁶⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1989), 316.

⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 93.

revisited this topic in *The Visible and the Invisible*, this ability ambiguously to embrace the roles of both subject and object means that the human body, both perceived by and perceiving (other people in) the world, is the site where the world both shapes and is shaped by our thought. In making this assertion, he deploys a description of the body ‘overlapping’ with the world, becoming porous to it, ‘between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things’.⁶²

But, this emphasis on the immediacy of the touch and the genuineness of the effect it has on others is problematised when these phenomenological theories are applied to touches that are deliberately performed on stage; here, characters’ reactions to touches are scripted rather than truly spontaneous. By tracing the results of a ‘dead’ handclasp, and weaving together the various dismemberments in the play into a wider early modern framework of ideas about touches as social ‘glue’, *Titus Andronicus* is a study in the move from subject to object. Reading Goldin-Meadow and McNeill alongside Merleau-Ponty suggests that the hand’s ability to perform a ‘metaphoric gesture’ relies on its ability to be both subject and object of the touch. In *Titus Andronicus*, a severed hand does have a certain agency that can enable it to shock people and influence their lives. But, this agency informing the severed hand is eerie, uncanny, and zombie-like rather than beneficial to society. Severed hands can certainly be alive with meaning; later on in this chapter I will discuss how they can be ambiguous symbols of both law and lawlessness, for instance. But, despite its agency and ability to make and bear meaning, the severed hand is, significantly, not the subject of a touch. Though severed hands in early modern drama and (as Rowe discusses) emblem books may move and gesture, there is no person attached to them that is able to feel these gestures. Despite exhibiting lively movements and quick influences over people’s lives, severed hands are, crucially, deadened to the touch.

It was arguably the touch that meant that early modern handclasps did not just function in the *abstract* sense of ‘uniting two minds’. Taking a cue from Bulwer, whose image of ‘philtres’ seems to be meant as a literal description of how hands physically create bonds between people and bodies, it is important explicitly to

⁶² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Toronto: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 123.

recognise the physical, literal effects that were thought to result from the touch of the hand. Here, Goldin-Meadow and McNeill's idea of 'iconic' gestures can help to define how early modern handclasps were thought very physically to entwine two people's hearts. 'Iconic' gestures are not like metaphoric gestures, which embody an abstract concept or state of mind. Rather, iconic gestures are physical representations of some other physical entity or action.⁶³ For instance, if I am describing someone running, I can wiggle my fingers to represent the movement of their legs: this is an iconic gesture, as the physical movement of my fingers is representing not something abstract but the physical movement of another body. The same wiggling motion would become a metaphoric gesture, though, if I used it to represent a more abstract concept like 'taking an idea and running wild with it'.

The gesture of taking hands was often described as representing, and physically bringing about, the contiguity of two hearts. As well as an instrument of thought, hands were believed to be a physical conduit of the heart. The widely-used Sarum marriage rite, on which the *Book of Common Prayer* is closely based, states that the husband should put the wedding ring on the wife's fourth finger because there was a vein running from there right to the heart and touching the sonorous silver ring would thus (via this nerve, with a kind of vibration-effect) remind her at the core of her being of her duty to love the husband ('Ibique dimittat annulum. Quia in medico est quaedam vena procedens vsque ad cor et in sonoritate argenti designator interna dilecto, quae semper inter eos debet esse recens').⁶⁴ The *Book of Common Prayer* therefore states that the ring should be placed on 'the fowerth finger of the womans left hande'.⁶⁵ Thus, when Henry VI asks Warwick and Clarence to 'join your hands, and with your hands your hearts' (*3 Henry VI* 4.6.39) or Miranda offers Ferdinand her hand in betrothal 'with my heart in it' (*The Tempest* 3.1.89-90) they are not speaking purely metaphorically. This early modern idea of literally joining both hands and hearts at once is almost unheard of in the present day, when handclasps tend to be thought of as a purely metaphorical union of hearts. With their emphasis on the physical union of hearts, early modern texts thus provide us with a new way of

⁶³ Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture*, 6-7. C.f. Kendon, *Gesture*, 100.

⁶⁴ Clement Maydeston, ed., *Ordinale Sarum* [facsimile] (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1508), 27.

⁶⁵ Cranmer et al, *The Book of the Common Prayer*, 30^f.

understanding handclasps, which can readily be absorbed into cognitive notions of the 'iconic' gesture.

Titus Andronicus both explicitly draws on, and disrupts, the idea of the handclasp as an iconic exchange of hearts. Titus states that he gives Aaron his severed hand 'with all my heart' (*Titus Andronicus* 3.1.160). In one sense, this is simply an expression of his willingness to cut off his hand; the phrase 'with all my heart' just meaning 'I really want to do this'. In a second sense, in terms of an early modern understanding of the phrase, Titus is literally giving away an important conduit to his heart. This alludes subversively to the usual way in which hands and hearts are said to be 'given'. *Titus Andronicus* is an early play, so with it Shakespeare presents a subverted version of the handclasp before he followed this up with a series of more normative, loving handclasps in plays like *The Tempest* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Rather than (as Warwick and Clarence in *3 Henry VI* or Miranda in *The Tempest*), 'giving' his heart with a handclasp that enables Aaron to come into contact with the living vein that runs from the hand to the heart, Titus gives Aaron a severed, deadened part of this link to the heart. This is part of the wider way in which *Titus Andronicus* performs a destructive literalisation of the abstract and metaphoric elements of the gesture of taking hands. This, again, makes explicit the way in which the dead handclasp Titus offers Aaron is a refusal to participate in a loving social bond, and turns what ought to be a dynamic cognitive exchange into an exchange of objects.

The iconicity of the handclasp and the ability for the hand to represent the tactile and physical properties of other body parts (not only hearts but many others, such as the legs in the example at the beginning of this section), demonstrate that the handclasp can be a symbol of the tactile properties of the human body as a whole. Tamora, obsessed with revenging herself by removing Titus' ability to clasp hands, makes it clear that she is interested in 'touching' him in the wider sense of harming the core of his being in a more total way than just his hand. Titus' hand, severed as a result of Tamora's plots, both literally and symbolically cuts him off from society. 'Titus, I have touch'd thee to the quick' (4.4.35), Tamora gloats as she arrives to revel in his ultimate grief-stricken madness; here the word 'touch' suggests a general harm that extends far beyond the wound at Titus' wrist to encompass (as she thinks at least) damage done to his sanity, his family, and his standing within society. Tamora's use of the word 'touch' here, combined with her earlier plot to sever Titus' hand

illustrates how, as a particularly culturally-significant and common form of touch, the handclasp is a test-case for the ways in which the body senses and engages with the world and other people in general. Deploying the word ‘touch’ to mean ‘harm’, and using it to destroy society rather than build bonds, Tamora perverts the empathetic, mutual cognitive exchanges that the touch can usually achieve.

The hand’s ability to stand in for other body parts qua tactile is central to Merleau-Ponty’s description of the handclasp. He stresses that the entire body, both its outer surface and its interior, has the ability to touch and to be touched. Thus, though localised in the hand, the touch is not in principle confined to the hand, but expresses the tactile abilities of the whole body.⁶⁶ As Merleau-Ponty writes, ‘The body is borne towards tactile experience by all its surfaces and all its organs simultaneously, and carries with it a certain typical structure of the tactile “world”’.⁶⁷ As two people take hands, they cognise themselves and each other as beings that can be touched in general. Merleau-Ponty’s work shows both that the handclasp is synonymous with ‘the touch’, and that all bodily touches are phenomenologically significant. For Shakespeare the kiss or embrace is another significant form of human touching, and chapter 3 will extrapolate the arguments in this chapter to examine what happens when we add an olfactory dimension to the touch.

The destruction of the handclasp and the non-human

As we have seen, hand gestures are integral to Aristotle’s definition of the human as a rational animal who, as a maker and interpreter of signs, is superior to other animals. This idea permeated Renaissance discourses on the hand, and in the present day we have seen that hand gestures remain closely tied to ideas of abstract thought, iconic representation, and the ability to make metaphors. On a practical level, handclasps enabled, and still enable, people to participate in key rituals of human society, such as marriage, bargaining, and making friends or business contacts. These rituals help to form human subjects, as both agents shaping others and objects constituted by the other’s touch. In early modern culture, the gesture of taking hands was intimately allied with the notion of the human as intelligent, deliberating, socialised, and superior to animals. In *Titus Andronicus*, the metaphor of a broken body politic is

⁶⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 317.

⁶⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 317.

often mapped literally onto the dismembered or amputated bodies of its citizens. As a result of these two factors, when the characters in *Titus Andronicus* are unable to perform handclasps, their status as human citizens becomes ambiguous and questionable. Partly because of this destruction of the handclasp, Rome degenerates from being (if it ever was this at all) a society of humans to a collection of beasts preying on each other, to a heap of plant matter with Marcus' final image of the city as a 'sheaf' of 'corn'. Here, again, Shakespeare goes one further than Ovid: whilst Philomel, Procne and Tereus transform from humans to birds, Shakespeare takes the transformation a step further and turns everyone ultimately into plant life. This transition seems inevitable in a society where human bonds are so badly, and so increasingly, disrupted.

For Merleau-Ponty, the status of the clasped hand as ambiguously subject and object of the touch illustrates the difference between human beings and objects. Unlike objects, humans can not only be perceived through the touch, they can also touch back and perceive the world around them. This dual subject-object status is, he states, constitutive of what makes us human; he illustrates this as we have seen with the image of a person pressing their hands together, becoming alternately subject and object of their own touch. Titus, however, imagines his hands interacting only to destroy this relationship. Instead of Merleau-Ponty's image of two hands caressing each other, Titus evokes an aggressive, attacking gesture when he states of his hands, 'all the service I require of them| Is that the one will help to cut the other' (3.1.77-8). By destroying his power to touch with his hand, Titus destroys an important part of his humanity. No longer potentially both subject and object, Titus' severed hand can only ever be a mere object. This is underscored by the fact that in performance, Titus' 'hand' is not made of flesh, but is a prop made of (depending on the era) materials like silicone, paint, wax, and leather which were never part of a human body in the first place.

Directing Merleau-Ponty's theories back onto this intellectual tradition of thinking about hands as paradigmatically human tools provides one explanation why, following the loss of their hands, Lavinia and Titus are described using imagery of bestial and vegetable, rather than human, life. Symbolically relinquishing their power to touch and be touched by the world which constituted them as human subjects causes them to lose their human qualities and take on a more object-like status. When he first sees Lavinia after the attack, Marcus uses horticultural language of 'lopping',

foreshadowing his description in the next line of Lavinia as a tree with ‘branches’,⁶⁸ ‘What stern ungentle hands| Hath lopp’d and hew’d, and made thy body bare| Of her two branches...?’ (2.4.16-18). Chiron, again evoking tree imagery, refers to Lavinia’s amputated arms as ‘stumps’ (2.4.4) as does Titus (5.2.182) and a stage direction (SD after 4.1.76). Later, Titus remarks to Marcus, ‘we are but shrubs, no cedars we’ (4.3.46) and ends up being a mere ‘trunk’ (5.3.152). Moreover, at the very point of letting Aaron chop off his hand, Titus describes it as a plant, ‘such with red herbs as these| Are meet for plucking up’ (3.1.177-8). Lavinia is also described as an animal, a ‘dainty doe’ (2.2.26) to be hunted by Tamora, Chiron and Demetrius, who are themselves described as predatory tigers (2.3.142). Themselves inhuman, Tamora and her sons destroy the humanity of others; Titus takes revenge in kind by dehumanising them even more in return. When Chiron and Demetrius are eaten in a pie, the human body is turned into the ultimate object, to be consumed and used rather than respected as a subject in its own right. Directors often present Chiron and Demetrius as butchered animals at this point; it is a common directorial decision to hang them upside down on meathooks in a slaughterhouse (Julie Taymor, Jane Howell, and Lucy Bailey did so, for example). In Howell’s production, young Lucius stands alone on stage, pointedly contemplating some butchered animal carcasses hanging beside him before turning his attention to the dead Chiron and Demetrius, suggesting that he perceives a similarity between the animal and human corpses.

Directors often draw out the text’s suggestions that Titus and Lavinia become progressively less human and increasingly more like objects, animals, or plants. Remembering McNeill’s description of the gesturing head as ‘a kind of third hand’ suggests that Lavinia carrying Titus’ hand in her mouth is a subversion of the gesture of taking hands because instead of mutual skin contact, Titus’ deadened hand is clasped in Lavinia’s teeth. Some critics, for instance Alan Dessen, have noted that this gesture makes Lavinia resemble a hunting dog carrying quarry in her mouth.⁶⁹ Lavinia is indeed compared to Hecuba, whom Ovid depicts in *Metamorphoses* 13 as

⁶⁸ ‘To lop’ was the early modern way of translating Latin *amputare* in horticultural contexts; *amputare* also meant to cut off a human limb but tended to be translated as ‘to dismember’ in medical texts. In the dictionary of horticultural terms prefacing his 1693 translation of Jean la Quintinie’s *The Compleat Gardner*, the diarist John Evelyn writes ‘*Amputation*, is the lopping or cutting off, of any considerable Branch or Limbs of a Tree’ (London: for M. Gillyflower, 1693), [a]1^r.

⁶⁹ Alan Dessen, *Titus Andronicus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 56.

turning into a barking dog with grief, two scenes later; she reminds Lucius of how ‘Hecuba of Troy| Ran mad for sorrow’ (4.1.20-1). In Howell’s version (1985, BBC), the camera focuses on Aaron orchestrating the plot to rape Lavinia, and straight after this the screen is filled with a barking dog haloed in flames; this serves to announce the start of the hunt and perhaps prefigures Lavinia’s Hecuba-like role.⁷⁰ These canine connotations once again suggest that, when the mutual touch is subverted, the result is something less than human. In the National Theatre company’s 1995 performance at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, Doran went so far as to replace Jennifer Woodburne who played Lavinia with an object at the moment that she loses her hands: a blank, featureless mannequin which Chiron and Demetrius attacked.⁷¹ It is tempting to read this as a visual statement that the attackers reduce Lavinia to an object by denying any mutuality to the touches they exchange with her.

Julie Taymor deploys particularly poignant use of tree imagery in her film *Titus* (1999), an adaptation of her stage version performed by Theatre for a New Audience off-Broadway in 1994. In this film, Marcus discovers Lavinia (Laura Fraser) after the attack standing in a landscape of amputated trees (Taymor in her Directors’ Commentary to the film says that this landscape represents Lavinia herself, ‘the essence of the raped woman’).⁷² Standing on a tree stump, Lavinia takes the place of its absent trunk. Twigs are stuck into what Chiron calls her ‘stumps’. By replacing her hands with twigs, Chiron and Demetrius mockingly literalise Marcus’ subsequent metaphor of Lavinia as a tree that has lost its branches. However whilst an amputated tree branch can usually grow back (and indeed, such an amputation can make the tree grow back even stronger than before), an amputated hand is lost forever. The French surgeon Ambroise Paré (1510-90) invokes and stresses this difference between human and plant life, stating that human bodies are not like plants which ‘grow again when they are set and grafted’.⁷³ By mockingly suggesting that, like plants’ tendrils,

⁷⁰ *Titus Andronicus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Jane Howell, BBC, 1985, DVD.

⁷¹ Cue Sheets, *Titus Andronicus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Gregory Doran, National Theatre, 1995, National Theatre Archive. Doran and Sher, *Woza Shakespeare*, 127-8. Its object-like status was highlighted when it was literally used as a mannequin, draped with Tamora’s dress, earlier in the production.

⁷² Director’s Commentary, in *Titus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Julie Taymor, 1999, Walt Disney Studios, 2005, DVD.

⁷³ Ambroise Paré, *The Workes of that Famous Chirugion Ambroise Parey*, trans. Thomas Jonson

Lavinia's severed limbs can regrow, the twigs stuck into her stumps in this production cruelly emphasise the fact that in actuality as a human her hands are lost forever. They thereby uncannily evoke the human body that is descending into a vegetable life form. The presence of plant life underscores the loss of the human. This is a powerful example of how, from a single stage direction, actors can embody the richly metaphorical movement of Lavinia, and Rome, from a human to an animal to a plant.

Throughout Taymor's film, the human body hovers on the brink of object-like status: it is dispensable, visibly dismemberable, re-constructible, bestial, plant-like, and edible. The broken hands and feet of stone statues (perhaps of the last emperor) litter the set, for instance, creating a lasting image of the body, and by extension the state, as composed of parts that can be assembled and disassembled. In a scene inserted between 3.1 and 3.2, young Lucius brings Lavinia a pair of wooden prosthetic hands he has obtained from a shop full of prosthetic body parts and articulated dolls. When he enters the shop, the camera rests on the hands in the process of being made, emphasising the idea that the human body can be constructed from separate parts.⁷⁴ Early on, moreover, as Tamora (Jessica Lange) stares at Titus (Antony Hopkins), Alarbus' torso and limbs whirl between them, engulfed in flame, making it clear that Tamora is obsessed with the dismemberment of her son and that this is what fuels her desire to harm Titus. The limbs multiply, with five hands whirling past (arguably these represent Alarbus' two hands, plus Lavinia's two hands and Titus' one), suggesting the vindictive dismemberments that are generated by Alarbus' death. With this hallucinatory image, Taymor taps into what I suggested above to be the uncannily-continued agency of Alarbus' severed limbs as they live on in Tamora's mind. During the attack scene, special effects metamorphose Lavinia into a deer and Chiron and Demetrius into tigers (in the stage-version, this was achieved with cut-out tiger-puppets and a deer mask).⁷⁵ As well as the final scene in which

(London: Richard Cotes, 1649), 577.

⁷⁴ In Taymor's stage version, as described by David McCandless, Titus held these prosthetic hands (which were sharp like 'talons') still whilst Lavinia impaled herself on them to kill herself at the end of the play, "A Tale of Two *Tituses*: Julie Taymor's Vision on Stage and Screen," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53(4) (2002), 487-511. Here, turned against her as a weapon, Lavinia's hands are objects literally opposed to Lavinia as a living subject. This does not occur in the film, where Titus breaks her neck instead.

⁷⁵ McCandless, "A Tale of Two *Tituses*," 493-4.

Chiron and Demetrius are eaten in a pie, there are several additional evocations of the human body as food, subverting another key social bonding ritual: the communal meal. Tamora and Saturninus (Alan Cumming) throw a party featuring giant edible people; Tamora can be seen plucking out the eye of one (made of what looks like a kiwi fruit) and feeding it to Saturninus. The morning after, Demetrius picks up a pair of leftover chicken feet and waggles them at Chiron whilst they are talking before throwing them away; here, the dismembered, edible body is worthless, used as an accessory and simply discarded. Later, Aaron cuts off Titus' hand in a kitchen using a meat cleaver that had just been used to chop vegetables, as though the hand were just another foodstuff. Taymor's *Titus* is perhaps the most thoughtful recent production of the play in terms of integrating characters' descent from human to animal to plant life with what Berry describes as a very 'Shakespearean' idea of Roman justice as bodily dismemberment and re-memberment.

Cognition and exchange

When his hand is severed, Titus' change of status from a dual subject-object to a mere object draws on ideas of exchange; '*lend* me thy hand and I will *give* thee mine' sounds like an usurious bargain, 'help me out for a moment and I will give you something to keep'. Early modern texts establish handclasps as ideally a cognitive exchange, participants exchange thoughts and emotions through the physical touch of the hand and this helps to embed them within society. However, in *Titus Andronicus*, only the 'physical' side of the metaphor is left behind. Presented to Aaron in return for his sons' lives, Titus' hand becomes an object rather than an agent of exchange; an inert, senseless thing used to bargain with. We know that handclasps were involved in the exchange of valuable objects, tactile information, and abstract entities, as well as enabling an exchange of hearts both literal and metaphorical. Thereby, early modern handclasps enmeshed the gesturer in a variety of cultural norms and expectations, emotions, and deliberations. Looking more closely at early modern metaphors of exchange via the handclasp shows how important it was for these exchanges to be made by a living hand, which keeps multiple different metaphors of exchange (of hands, hearts, love, minds, bodies, objects) in play. In early modern texts, the hand's agency as it clasps another hand can be closely tied to the material objects which it exchanges, something which Titus exploits to the full. The *Book of Common Prayer* states in one breath that bride and groom are married 'by gevyng and recyvyng golde

and sylver and by joining of handes'.⁷⁶ Often, early modern handclasps enabled two people to exchange information about themselves, the hand's temperature, humidity, and roughness was thought to transmit information about their state of mind.⁷⁷ Here, the hand both actively exchanges and passively contains information. As illustrated by Giovanni Bonifacio in his compendium of gestures *L'Arte Dei Cenni* (1612), the gesture of taking (or rather 'giving') hands, 'dar la mano', was often a metaphorical act of gift-giving. When one takes hands with someone, Bonifacio argues, one is 'giving' them something abstract: one's friendship, service, fidelity, love, or allegiance, whilst hands themselves are a valuable 'gift' from God.⁷⁸ As an object of exchange, the dead hand goes too far with the metaphor and as a result destroys the very communal and interactive systems of economic exchange that Titus jokes about.

Bulwer's preface to *Chirologia...Chironomia* involves a detailed discussion of handclasps which draws on early modern ideas of exchange, showing how closely they are related. Bulwer's preface demonstrates the rich symbolic potential of the handclasp for cognitive theory. Dedicating the work to his friend Edward Goldsmith of Gray's Inn (there are two Edward Goldsmiths in the register of admissions to Gray's Inn in the seventeenth century: one in 1621 and one in 1624),⁷⁹ Bulwer states, 'having put forth my *Right Hand* in signe of amity to you, and for performance of promise: there remaines nothing (most noble *Chirophilus*) but that you take it in between Yours in token of warranty'.⁸⁰ This dedication creates a very allusive and polyvalent idea of the hand as figuring in an exchange. In dedicating *Chirologia...Chironomia* to Goldsmith, Bulwer is giving him his 'Hand' in the sense of giving him a book called 'The Hand' (the preface often roughly and reductively translates *Chironomia*, or 'rules of the hand', as 'The Hand'). Bulwer is also alluding

⁷⁶ Cranmer et al, *The Book of the Common Prayer*, 30^r.

⁷⁷ We see this when Othello grasps Desdemona's hand and asserts, 'this hand is moist... This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart... that commonly rebels' (*Othello* 3.4.39-43). As he so often is, Shakespeare is here concerned with the ability for gestures to be misinterpreted; Othello's interpretation of the information he receives from this handclasp is warped by his notion that Desdemona is unfaithful to him.

⁷⁸ Giovanni Bonifacio, *L'Arte Dei Cenni* (Venice: Francisco Grossi, 1616, first published 1612), 290 [Italian, my translation].

⁷⁹ John Foster, *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889* (London: The Hansard Publishing Union), 781, 823.

⁸⁰ Bulwer, *Chirologia...Chironomia*, A4^r.

to the practice of presenting Goldsmith with his flesh and blood hand as an act of friendship. Moreover, he is presenting both book and anatomical hand for Goldsmith to read in both a figurative and a literal act of chiromancy (the subject matter of the book will also help Goldsmith to be an even better chiromancer). When Bulwer writes, ‘you turn’d *Chiromancer*, divining by the lines of *life* and *property*, which appeared fairlie unto you in the first draught, that the Hand would be embraced and kissed by the more intelligent part of the world’,⁸¹ it is unclear whether the ‘Hand’ being kissed here is the book or Bulwer’s flesh and blood hand, and whether the ‘lines’ being read are creases in Bulwer’s palm or lines of print, ambiguities that perfectly capture the ambiguous playing on the word ‘Hand’ in this preface. Bulwer’s evocation of the hand as an object as well as an agent of exchange involves much richer and more playful ideas of the hand’s ability to convey information than can be found in the cognitive works of Goldin-Meadow and McNeill. For Goldin-Meadow and McNeill, the hand communicates information to others with visible gestures alone. For Bulwer, however, the hand conveys information not only by being watched as it gestures, but also by being touched, by being given as a gift, by being read as if it were a book by a chiromancer, and by being read as a literal book by the reader. The cognitive texts reflect the early modern notion of the hand as the main body part for making signs and for communicating information about a speaker’s state of mind. This shared concern, coupled with the fact that early modern conceptions of the hand involve a variety of ideas about the hand’s ability to convey meaning that are untapped by cognitive theory, make texts like Bulwer’s a useful resource for cognitive studies of hand gesture.

The hand’s ability to be both giver and gift relies on its attachment to a human agent. Titus’ severed hand can no longer give, and as a gift it is worthless because it no longer contains information about his state of mind, or enables him to affect and be affected by the other people it touches. Titus’ severed hand is, accordingly, described only as a low-value monetary object of exchange. Aaron calls it a ‘ransom’ (money exchanged for the lifting of some penalty) (3.1.156) and Titus describes both his hand and his sons in economic terms: the hand is something to be ‘given’ as a barter whilst his sons are ‘jewels purchas’d at an easy price’ (3.1.198). However, Titus is tricked, and his gift is returned; a messenger enters, bringing Titus back his hand and with it

⁸¹ Bulwer, *Chirologia...Chironomia*, A2^v.

his sons' heads. It is tragically fitting that, having tried to bargain for human life using dead flesh and by renouncing the touch which is constitutive of his humanity, he gets dead, rather than living, flesh in return. Titus' failure to buy his sons' lives with his severed hand also marks his hand out as valueless in that it cannot be exchanged for anything of value. It is treated only with derision, the messenger who returns it describes it as 'in scorn to thee sent back' (3.1.237), and Titus later remembers 'my hand cut off and made a merry jest' (5.2.174). At the end of the play, Aaron draws on another, by then well-established, meaning of 'hand' as the 'hand of cards' dealt to a player in a game. Aaron taunts Lucius with what could be read as an image of himself cheating at a card game, gambling with Titus' 'hand' in the sense both of his 'hand of cards' and his flesh and blood hand, 'I play'd the cheater for thy father's hand' (5.1.111). *Titus Andronicus* pre-dates by 6 years the earliest known use of 'hand' to signify 'fortune' or 'chance', a meaning enabled by the metaphor of Fortune dealing out a person's fate like a hand of cards.⁸² However, it is possible that the word was used in this sense before it was written down in 1600. Aaron is perhaps presenting himself as a trickster-Fortune, deliberately dealing Titus a losing hand with his plots. Here, the unfairness of the exchange is further underscored; rather than with an equitable purchase of the kind that keeps a society's economy running well, Titus' hand is won dishonestly by cheating and gambling.

When the handless characters in *Titus Andronicus* absent themselves from the ability to make productive exchanges, they also evoke a varied set of metaphors to do with the hand of justice and of God. Bonifacio asserts that handlessness is a symbol of legal impartiality because it represents exclusion from systems of exchange. He refers to a statue of justice in Thebes whose lack of hands signifies that justice takes no bribes and is thus incorruptible.⁸³ This idea does not seem to be widely discussed in early modern English literature, though it is entirely possible that Shakespeare saw, or read or heard about, them. The description of Theban handless judges (rather than Justice) stems from the *Moralia* of Plutarch, an author popular in the Renaissance, and depictions of handless Justice and handless judges were common in European

⁸² O.E.D., hand, *n*, 24a-d. The earliest citation given by the O.E.D. of 'hand' as 'a player's set of cards' is c.1555, whilst the earliest citation of 'hand' as 'fortune' is 1600.

⁸³ Bonifacio, *L'Arte Dei Cenni*, 326.

courts of the time.⁸⁴ Sionaidh Douglas-Scott describes such depictions of ‘maimed justice’ as encompassing an ‘ambiguity’; they both suggest that justice is completely incorruptible and that she is always-already corrupted. As Douglas-Scott implies, perhaps Justice had to have her hands chopped off because she just could not help snatching up those bribes? As such, Douglas-Scott argues, these depictions also ‘reveal a lack of faith and absence of confidence in the virtue of justice’.⁸⁵

Using Douglas-Scott’s analysis alongside Berry’s argument that the dismembered body is integral to the imperfect Roman justice in *Titus Andronicus* suggests that Lavinia (and perhaps Titus) could be read partly as a problematic symbol of the impartial justice Bonifacio describes. The character of Lavinia is not merely a symbol. But, her resonance with contemporary iconography of Justice illustrates the way that the severing of her hands leads to her focus her cognitive agency on securing revenge. All of Lavinia’s gestures and actions after Chiron and Demetrius’ attack on her relate back to the attack (from searching through an edition of Ovid to catching the brothers’ blood in a basin), and help her to avenge the wrongs against her and Titus. In keeping with the ambiguous, problematic nature of the maimed justice, Lavinia and Titus only break society further apart as they work to get revenge. Revenge is, as Francis Bacon wrote, at best ‘a kind of wild justice’, undesirable because it ‘putteth the law out of office’.⁸⁶ Richard Posner explains that this idea applied to private acts of revenge where individuals sought, without recourse to the law, to punish other individuals who had wronged them. Posner writes that Elizabethan and Jacobean legal authors saw the criminal justice system as the accessory of God’s revenge, but that justice was emphatically an official, communal activity involving the entire state; any private act of revenge was seen as radically excessive and lawless, usurping God’s prerogative to revenge.⁸⁷ The law was thus a

⁸⁴ ‘In Thebes... there were set up statues of judges without hands, and the statue of the chief justice had its eyes closed, to indicate that justice is not influenced by gifts or by intercession’, Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1935), 355.A. Judith Resnik and Dennis Curtis discuss numerous examples of paintings and sculptures these so-called ‘Theban judges’ in sixteenth century Poland, Germany and Switzerland, *Representing Justice: Invention, Controversy and Rights in City-States and Democratic Courtrooms* (Ann Arbor: Sheridan Books, 2011), 44-7.

⁸⁵ Sionaidh Douglas-Scott, *Law After Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 216-7.

⁸⁶ Francis Bacon, “Of Revenge,” in *Essays*, ed. Michael Kiernal (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 13.

⁸⁷ Richard Posner, *Law and Literature: A Misunderstood Relation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

kind of divinely-sanctioned revenge (as Titus says of his sons, ‘the law hath taen revenge on them’ (3.1.117)), but all private acts of revenge that occurred without recourse to the law were sinful. And yet, with the highest authorities in Rome working against them, private acts of revenge are one of the only means available to Titus and Lavinia; ‘the most tolerable sort of revenge’, Bacon concedes, ‘is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy’.⁸⁸ The handless Lavinia could thus perhaps be read as a symbol of the wild and rough justice to which she and Titus are driven, a poor replacement for the divine justice which, Titus states, has left the earth: ‘terras Astrea reliquit’ (4.3.4). She is also a reminder of how, in this play where broken handclasp both represent and cause the breakup of society, Justice ought ideally to have hands, so that she can participate in the mutual touches that are constitutive of a properly working human society. Lavinia and Titus’ handlessness thus evokes both the lack of justice, and the ability to do justice.

This suggests that we can refine Berry’s idea that justice in *Titus Andronicus* is all about dismemberment. The ability of the severed hand to symbolise two completely opposite things, action and inaction, is an overarching theme of *Titus Andronicus*. Whilst severed hands do break society apart in one sense in that they embody an imperfect form of justice and broken social ties, they also embody the entirely just principle of powerful impartiality. Moreover, hand gestures have a very wide metaphorical remit; as we have seen, so many ways of conceptualising knowledge, experience, and acting within society revolve around embodied metaphors of grasping and touching. Thus, even when the physical hand is severed, this web of metaphors remains in force. Throughout the play, handlessness paradoxically represents both an inability to engage cognitively with the world and an ability to affect the world in profound, metaphorical, and abstract ways.

The severed hand as a phantom of cognition

The idea of the ‘phantom limb’ (where patients with severed limbs continue, whether deliberately or involuntarily to behave and feel as though their limbs are still there) provides a way of articulating how limbs can remain in existence and exert an uncanny agency even when they have been physically severed. Phenomenological and

University Press, 1988), 80, 110.

⁸⁸ Bacon, “Of Revenge,” 13.

neuroscientific studies of phantom limbs suggest that limbs are not merely anatomical features, but are also constructed within discourse. These theories provide a cognitive understanding of how Titus and Lavinia's hands are constructed in relation to internal representations. Though the theory of phantom limbs has its roots in the early modern era in the works of Paré, it is unlikely that Shakespeare was explicitly referring to ideas of phantom limbs in *Titus Andronicus*. Nevertheless, these theories are very useful for understanding the play, as what is at stake in phantom limb theory is similar to what is at stake in *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare, cognitive theorists, and neuroscientists all aim to understand how limbs, as part of an embodied self, are created through representation and can be recreated through language and, specifically, how hand gestures and mental processes are intrinsically linked. These shared concerns mean that phantom limb theory is a rich repository of ideas that can be used to understand *Titus Andronicus*, and vice versa.

Merleau-Ponty argues that phantom limbs are amputees' ways of retaining the image of their body they had before they lost a limb. Though his explanation of the phantom limb effect is by no means definitive or supported by all of the neurological evidence, it is a powerful illustration of how limbs are part flesh, and part imagination. For Merleau-Ponty, a phantom limb enables an amputee to believe that they can continue to manipulate and be affected by the environment as if the limb was still there. Their conceptions both of themselves as subjects and of their environments thus remain the same:

What it is in us which refuses mutilation and disablement is an *I* committed to a certain physical and inter-human world, who continues to tend towards his world despite handicaps and amputations... To have a phantom arm is to remain open to all the actions of which the arm alone is capable; it is to retain the practical field which one enjoyed before the mutilation.⁸⁹

Neurologist V.S. Ramachandran describes patients with phantom limbs continuing to respond to the demands of the world as though their limbs still existed. One patient tried to pick up a tray loaded with glasses of water using her one good hand and her

⁸⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 94.

phantom hand, inevitably dropped it and spilled water all over herself, yet maintained that she had successfully lifted the tray and not spilt a drop. Others claimed to have tied their shoelaces with their phantom hands whilst the laces clearly hung loose, completely untied. As well as a neurological disorder of proprioception, Ramachandran interprets this as the patient using language and rhetoric to persuade “him”self, a refusal to accept the fact of the amputation that is often so deeply rooted that ‘the patient believes his own denials and confabulations’.⁹⁰

Merleau-Ponty and Ramachandran draw on a long tradition of the phenomenon of phantom limbs that stretches back until Shakespeare’s time. The term ‘phantom limb’ was not coined until it was included in a short story by the doctor and fiction writer Silas Weir Mitchell in 1866 (thus the ‘phantom limb’ was from the outset a mix of neurological evidence and literary creativity).⁹¹ But, the idea of *pain* in limbs that had been amputated was available in the sixteenth century. Paré first described the phenomenon of phantom pain in 1551; the 1649 English translation of his works runs, ‘the Patient who have many moneths after the cutting away of the legge, grievously complained that they yet felt exceeding great paine of that Leg so cut off’.⁹² Though he could have read Paré’s original French text or heard the phenomenon of phantom pain recounted, Shakespeare does not explicitly evoke the idea of either a literal phantom limb or phantom pain in *Titus Andronicus*. What he does do is show how hands exert influence in society not only physically but through language and, in particular, metaphor.

Other characters drive home the fact that Lavinia has lost her hands; in doing so, they conjure up phantom hands in their imaginations, urging Lavinia to wash or tie ropes and recalling how she sewed and played music. Chiron and Demetrius mock her by commanding her to perform actions of which she is no longer capable. They ask her to write their names, joke ‘wash thy hands...she hath no hands to wash’, and suggest in parting that she should hang herself despite having ‘no hands to help thee knit the cord’ (2.4.3-10). Marcus’ first reaction to the attack is to dwell lamentingly

⁹⁰ V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakesee, *Phantoms in the Brain* (New York: Fourth Estate, 1999), 98-9.

⁹¹ In this tale, the protagonist’s severed legs literally return as ghosts during a séance and reattach themselves to his body, Silas Weir Mitchell, “The Case of George Dedlow,” *Atlantic Monthly* 18(105) (1866), 1-10.

⁹² Paré, *Works*, 773.

on hand gestures and actions no longer available to Lavinia: embracing a husband, sewing, and playing the lute (2.4.19-46). When Titus sees her he states, ‘Thou hast no hands to wipe away thy tears’ (3.1.106), and later he says that he and Lavinia ‘cannot passionate our tenfold grief’ (3.2.6) because they have no hands to make the proper expressive gestures. In Howell’s production, Lavinia (Anna Calder-Marshall), frozen in horror and seemingly oblivious to much that has gone on since the attack began, indeed first seems to become aware of the attack by acknowledging for the first time her inability to use her hands. She notices a spot of blood on her dress, motions as if to wipe it away with her hands then stops, staring at her arms in horror, suddenly realising that she cannot do so.⁹³ Thus the characters, and many actors and directors, emphasise the cognitive crisis that occurs when, due to the loss of a body part, a person can suddenly no longer act in their environment in the way in which they were accustomed.

Though it does not employ the idea of literal phantom limbs, *Titus Andronicus* can be described as deploying the idea of limbs that, despite being severed, continue to figure in a person’s cognitive world, and which return from the dead to exert an uncanny agency. As we have seen, the hands have an important metaphorical function: as well as actually carrying out our intentions, hands symbolise our more general ability to intend, plan, and create. As Bonifacio writes, they are ‘symbols and figures of human operations in both the arts and sciences’.⁹⁴ Titus and Lavinia use language, and in particular the rich metaphorical language associated with the hand, to compensate for their lost hands and their suddenly disabling environments. Their physical hands lost, Lavinia and Titus fall back (as Bulwer did when he played on the idea of giving Goldsmith his hand) on the wider connotations of the hand as an instrument of the thought and as a symbol of human ability to plan and carry out those plans. Their severed hands thus return as phantoms in language, spectral symbols of wider cognitive abilities to engage with the world. Titus plays on ideas of ‘laying hands on’ (manipulating) one’s body and the world and intellectually ‘handling’ themes as ways of cognitively engaging with the world, ‘What violent hands can she lay on her life?...O handle not the theme, to talk of hands’ (3.2.25-9). Titus also uses the hands of others as instruments of his thought, ‘Lay hands on them’, he instructs

⁹³ *Titus Andronicus*, Howell.

⁹⁴ Bonifacio, *L’Arte Dei Cenni*, 274.

Caius and Valentine when he has Chiron and Demetrius in front of him and cannot grab them himself (5.2.158). In Howell's version, Trevor Peacock placed extra stress on the word 'hands' as he pronounced this sentence, amplifying his voice and lengthening the vowel; the aptness of laying metaphorical revengeful hands on the men who had helped to take away his and Lavinia's physical hands thereby seemed to be at the forefront of his mind.⁹⁵ Rather than being in denial, lost in what Ramachandran suggests is a world of false 'confabulations', Titus is drawing on the wider idea of 'the hand' as any force that has a social impact. Titus is not the only early modern figure to fall back on the wider metaphoricity of the hand in order to cope with the loss of his anatomical hand. Eyewitnesses report that, on the brink of losing his hand as a public punishment for writing a seditious pamphlet in 1579, John Stubbs 'said often to the people "Pray for me, now my calamity is at hand"'.⁹⁶

Performance and cognition

Cognitive theorists, Merleau-Ponty, and early modern texts such as the Book of Common Prayer, *L'Arte Dei Cenni*, and the works of Bonner and Bulwer, focus on the hand(clasp)'s ability actually, and in an embodied way, to affect a person's state of mind and to provide accurate information about their thoughts. Shakespearean drama, however, often focuses on the potential for a handclasp to be used deceitfully and to conceal rather than reveal a person's thoughts. It is precisely the fact that the handclasp is usually seen to be an honest expression of friendship, love and allegiance that enables many Shakespearean characters (not least Titus and Aaron) to use it for entirely different purposes. Thinking about how the meanings of handclasps are deployed calculatingly by characters in *Titus Andronicus* helps us to understand how actors also deploy hand gestures to affect audiences cognitively.

For example, in *Julius Caesar*, Antony counts on the conspirators assuming that his insistence on shaking their hands is a genuine gesture of friendship. However, far from wishing to unite his love and goals with the conspirators', Antony hates them and only wants them to believe he is their ally so that they will let him speak at Caesar's funeral (where he denounces them). The conspirators' hands are covered

⁹⁵ *Titus Andronicus*, Howell.

⁹⁶ Eyewitness account, Folger MS V.b.142 f 54^v, cited in Lloyd E. Berry, "Introduction," in *John Stubbs' Gaping Gulf With Other Letters and Documents*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1968), xxxvi.

with Caesar's blood and Antony makes clear that by taking their hands, his hands will be contaminated with the blood too, 'Let each man render me his bloody hand' (3.1.184). The blood becomes a symbol of the contaminating power of the other, but one which is fittingly only superficial and impermanent; the blood adheres only to the surface of Antony's skin, and only for a short time, whilst his mind remains unaffected by the touch of the conspirators' hands. When the conspirators leave, Antony states unequivocally in his soliloquy that he feels only animosity towards them and, significantly, towards their hands; he wishes, 'Woe to the hands that shed this costly blood!' (3.1.258).

Shakespeare empowers Caesar's blood with an ambiguous symbolism before Antony's entrance, meaning that this handclasp is a site of proliferating meanings. The conspirators deliberately intend that their act of covering their hands in Caesar's blood should turn their bloody hands into meaningful signs; Brutus instructs the other conspirators to 'bathe our hands in Caesar's blood| Up to the elbows and besmear our swords' so that their hands and swords will appear to Rome's citizens as signs of 'peace, freedom, and liberty!' (3.1.106-10). However, the blood also makes the conspirators look like terrifying, violent murderers, and in performance the Roman citizens often act very fearfully when they see the conspirators' bloody hands and swords. The ambiguous significance of Caesar's blood—does it represent violence or peace? Amity or animosity? Freedom or a new tyranny? A permanent new political order and set of alliances or a momentary disruption in the Roman state?—explored in the remainder of the play is already present in the ambiguous nature of the handclasp between Antony and the conspirators. David Farr's 2005/6 RSC production brought the symbolic nature of the contaminating blood to the fore. Farr's conspirators did not get their hands bloody during the course of Caesar's murder, but, once he was dead, they calmly dipped their hands into plain metal buckets of stage blood.⁹⁷ Rather than a mere by-product of stabbing Caesar, the blood was a symbol, allowed to stand alone as if it was more important than Caesar's body, of all of the elements present in Antony's handclasp: violence, freedom, hatred, allegiance, hypocrisy, peace, contamination.

⁹⁷ *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare, directed by David Farr, Swan Theatre, Stratford on Avon, August 21 2006.

Antony is playing with fire here because, as we have seen, the early modern handclasp was thought to invoke divine, religious, and physiological forces to bring about lasting changes in identity (marriage, for example) that affected the participants' souls. This may be what led Shakespeare to emphasise its potential for misinterpretation. By disrupting the normative significances of the gesture of taking hands, Shakespeare often safely distances his plays from the consequences that occur from real life handclasps and underscores the fictionality of their context. The real life religious significance of taking hands in marriage makes it a potentially taboo subject on the early modern stage, for instance, especially after the 1606 Act To Restrain The Abuses of Players tightened restrictions on depicting or mentioning anything to do with God. This may be the reason that, even when they are central to the plot, marriage ceremonies are never completely performed in Shakespeare's later plays but rather occur offstage (*Othello* and *Desdemona*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are two examples) or are interrupted (in *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, Hero's first attempt at marriage is abrogated when Claudio jilts her, and her second attempt to marry him is put off until after the play ends when Benedick insists that everyone dances first). But, in the earlier play *Titus Andronicus*, the fictional context enables Shakespeare to push the boundaries of the handclasp, taking the ideas of exchange central to the marriage ceremony and playing on them in the extreme form of the severed hand, the deadened link to the heart, gambled with like an object worthless in itself.

Shakespeare's interest in deliberately performed handclasps is partly a metatheatrical one; it can be linked to the ways in which actors perform this gesture and also to their relationship with the audience. Handclasps have long been the subject of, and shaped by, debates on how to perform gestures on stage. From the mid eighteenth century, as the earliest acting manuals in English began to be written, descriptions of the handclasp were incorporated into instructions for actors about how to express loyalty, subservience, and amity on stage. Siddons' *Practical Illustrations*, the text instructing actors how to represent different emotions cited earlier, shows how very thoroughly sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discourses of the prime importance of the hand and the meaning of the handclasp were absorbed into acting manuals. Siddons is here adapting a German text by Johann Engel, the Director of the Berlin National Theatre, entitled *Ideen zu Einer Mimik* (1785), to include examples from Shakespearean plays and references to British actors. Siddons writes that, 'the

hand is the general instrument of the mind' and that love or friendship 'gives testimony of its internal contentment, its desire of a reciprocal communications of souls, its wishes for a union, by the clasping of hands', because the handclasp is 'a gesture of hearty good will'.⁹⁸ Later acting manuals echoed Siddons' instructions, often to the letter, such as Joshua Belcher's *The Thespian Preceptor* (1810), which was widely read but which was also something of a byword for promoting overly programmatic acting. As Dene Barnett shows in his comprehensive study, seventeenth- to eighteenth-century acting manuals throughout England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, Siddons' included, heavily influenced and copied each others' texts and illustrations as well as sticking rigorously to rules laid by earlier theorists such as Quintillian, creating a high degree of uniformity in the way in which they described gesture.⁹⁹ It is difficult to tell precisely how far these books influenced actors themselves. However, the fact that Siddons' original precepts did not obviously appear on stage in an undigested or unmodified form suggests that his descriptions of hand gestures had a certain adaptability and openness to interpretation. This perhaps fits Siddons' purposes more than anything else, because he often implies that a gesture needs to be inhabited by the individual actor's body rather than simply copied from his book. Siddons speaks vehemently against the 'pedantry' of actors who simply follow to the letter guides about which outward gestures to perform; this leaves us with the ability to 'complete a set of puppets', he writes, but not to act.¹⁰⁰

The set of meanings associated with the handclasp also extends to the relationship between actors and audiences; at certain points, Shakespearean characters proffer their hands to audience members to create a social bond. Several of his plays end with actors asking for applause with variations of what we have seen to be a multiply significant phrase: 'give me your hands' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.1.437). This gesture is often implicated in discourses of exchange: characters bargain with the audience for applause, or promise them future entertainments in return for their 'hands'. As he offers his hand to the audience Puck says he will 'restore amends' (5.1.438) to dissatisfied audience members, for instance, and the

⁹⁸ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*, 163-4.

⁹⁹ Dene Barnett, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of Eighteenth Century Acting* (Carl Winter: Heidelberg, 1987). Earlier primary sources are collected in Lisa Zunshine, ed., *Acting Theory and the English Stage*, 5 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).

¹⁰⁰ Siddons, *Practical Illustrations*, 30.

King in *All's Well That Ends Well* asks the audience 'your gentle hands lend us' as he promises to 'pay' them with future plays (Epilogue, 3-6). By proffering (like Bulwer) friendship, a text, and a bargain through the image of the handclasp, Shakespearean epilogues extend the rich set of metaphors associated with the gesture of taking hands to the relationship between actors and audience. Here, as often, Shakespeare uses a fictional situation to affect audiences cognitively in very real ways. Though Puck is a fictional character, the relation that the audience feels with him, or experiences with the actor playing him, can be emotionally real.

Moreover, whatever the era, Puck's offer of a handclasp with the audience prompts them to experience the proprioceptive situation described by Merleau-Ponty where they are both subject and object of the touch when they clap their hands together to applaud. Bulwer defines the gesture of applause as 'clapping [the] hands'; this type of applause was a prominent part of early modern drama, and signified approval and encouragement, as well as often accompanying laughter.¹⁰¹ This is also a kind of exchange, as audiences 'give' Puck their hands, they echo the more economic ways in which they financially support the acting companies and the theatre by handing over money to watch a play. Though the two plays are generically very different, there is a certain echo of Titus' words when Puck asks the audience to feel their own human-ness and remember economic exchanges by 'giving' him their hands. Steven Connor describes applause in terms redolent of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, stating, 'Clapping one hand on another dramatises the fact that you are a subject and an object simultaneously, a doer and a done to'.¹⁰² As they respond by clapping, audience members are implicated in the subversive potential of the handclasp. Handclasps involve two people touching each other's hands, whilst by contrast applause in the theatre consists of a crowd of people touching their own hands together. However, what these two gestures—clapping and clasping the hands—have in common is the fact they involve people experiencing what it is like to be both subject and object of a touch; whether a touch that is entirely their own or one that is shared with someone else. Theatre audiences feel themselves both subject and

¹⁰¹ Bulwer, *Chirologia*, A5^r. See Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 33.

¹⁰² Steven Connor, "The Help of Your Good Hands: Reports on Clapping," last accessed June 23 2015, <http://www.stevenconnor.com/clapping/>.

object of their own touch in a way which is also performed, or at least demanded of them.

Titus Andronicus underscores the (meta)theatricality of the handclasp by asking audiences to focus on an act which can only be artificial and performed; audiences know that the moment when Titus and Lavinia lose their hands necessarily involves some deliberate contrivance, some clever use of props or costume. The play generates much interest in how severed hands are created on stage, whether audiences are enchanted by Vivien Leigh's spectacular costume and makeup or busy peering at the copious blood and realistic dummy hands in Lucy Bailey's production to see how she created the severed hand effect. Many directors opt for a stylised approach to the play, inviting audiences to acknowledge the artifice involved in creating the severed hands. Doran, for instance, used giant plasters which scarcely concealed Woodburne's balled up fists to evoke Lavinia's stumps; to make the artifice more transparent, these were applied on stage in full view of the audience.¹⁰³ Sher notes, 'Greg wants the audience to *see* whatever device we use'.¹⁰⁴

The real and the fictional are not ontologically separable in *Titus Andronicus*. An obviously fake severed hand can still produce a powerfully real (and sometimes very physical) yet still calculated and conscious cognitive response in audience members. Audience responses to the severed hands in *Titus Andronicus*, from the faints and ostentatious walkouts at Bailey's production to the gasps and swoons at Brook's, may, in some cases, even have been deliberate performances. Such audience responses to the failed handclasps in *Titus Andronicus* interrupt the immediacy of the relationship between actor and audience, echoing the interrupted handshake between Aaron and Titus on stage.

Conclusions

As he hands over his own hand, Titus asks Aaron to tell the emperor, 'it was a hand that warded him| From thousand dangers. Bid him bury it' (3.1.194-5). Here, Titus indicates the importance of the living hand to metaphor and social action. Alive,

¹⁰³ Michael Church, Review of *Titus Andronicus*, *Independent on Sunday*, July 16 1995. Cue Sheets, *Titus Andronicus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Gregory Doran, National Theatre, 1995, National Theatre Archive. Production Photographs, *Titus Andronicus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Gregory Doran, National Theatre, 1995, National Theatre Archive.

¹⁰⁴ Doran and Sher, *Woza Shakespeare*, 143.

Titus' hand has a history; it records memories of its previous actions. It has the ability to help hold society together with its touch; forming bonds and allegiances as well as wielding weapons. The intimate link between the living handclasp and cognition is such that Titus sees his severed hand as no longer able to participate meaningfully in society. Once it has been exchanged as a mere object, he implies, it is good for only one thing: burial. These lines show in microcosm, how, in *Titus Andronicus*, a concern with the loss of the capacity to touch enables a study in the move from human subject to object, and from gestures that create a multiplicity of meanings and metaphors to a narrowed metaphorical scope.

It is true that social interaction is embodied in *Titus Andronicus*, and thus that according to the 'Roman' logic of this play the dismemberment of the body can only spell the breakup of the state. However, it is significant that, instead of being buried, Titus' hand returns to him and continues to have meaning and a metaphorical agency right up to the very end of the play. This chapter has shown that, like Lakoff and Johnson, Goldin-Meadow and McNeill, the Shakespearean touch roots metaphors for thought in the body, as characters 'handle' themes, grasp ideas, 'touch' each other's minds and 'lay hands on' a solution. Putting these ideas into the spotlight in *Titus Andronicus* has uncovered a rich set of meanings that enables Titus' failed handshake to resonate throughout the play. Everything from the vegetable imagery associated with Lavinia to his own order to 'lay hands on' his enemies works within a framework of ideas about embodied social cohesion.

Severed hands, then, are never completely 'buried' in *Titus Andronicus*. Cognitive processes and social ceremonies are so pervasively embodied in gesture in this play that even when hands are severed they remain as a symbolic and cognitive force in Rome. The next chapter develops these arguments about embodied political action, examining how a relatively brief kneeling gesture in *Julius Caesar* lingers on with an uncanny agency.

Chapter 2

‘Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?’ Kneeling in *Julius Caesar*

Introduction

In *Julius Caesar* (1599), the conspirators kneel to Caesar before killing him.¹⁰⁵ Their ostensible purpose is ‘to beg enfranchisement for Publius Cimber’ (3.1.57), but, given that immediately afterwards they turn against Caesar and perform the utmost act of disobedience by murdering him, their kneeling gesture is much more than a simple act of submission. This kneeling gesture is striking because Shakespeare deliberately added it to the drama and carefully emphasises its presence. In Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s *Life of Julius Caesar*, the key source for Shakespeare’s play, the conspirators do not kneel before killing Caesar, they simply ‘press’ close to him.¹⁰⁶ Shakespeare’s characters, contrastingly, highlight this kneeling gesture, making what North figures as a horizontal movement into a very definitely vertical one. Cassius, for instance, says to Caesar, ‘as low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall’, and Caesar remarks, ‘doth not Brutus bootless kneel?’ (3.1.56, 75). At first glance, it seems odd that, precisely at the moment that they aim to destroy his authority, the conspirators perform a gesture of obedience to Caesar. This chapter establishes that both early modern texts and cognitive theory suggest that the kneeling gesture can produce deferent thoughts in the kneeler’s mind towards the person they are kneeling to. This makes the conspirators’ kneeling gesture seem downright hazardous as well as counterintuitive: why would they risk making their thoughts become submissive towards Caesar when their goal is to submit to him no longer? This chapter uses Catherine Malabou’s theory of neural plasticity to provide an answer to this problem. Reading neuroscientifically-inspired texts by Malabou, Amy Cook, and Guillemette Bolens alongside *Julius Caesar* shows that, precisely because kneeling is so crucial to creating and cementing social hierarchies in this play, it is also a gesture with the potential to trouble and disrupt those hierarchies.

Amy Cook in *Shakespearean Neuroplay* (2010) and Guillemette Bolens in *The Style of Gestures* (2012) have developed theories of kinesis in literature and drama

¹⁰⁵ The play was first published in the First Folio (1623); tourist Thomas Platter’s diary records visiting the newly-opened Globe around 2pm on September 21 1599 to see *Julius Caesar*.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas North, *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (London: Richard Field, 1595), Xxxi^v.

that are useful for understanding this kneeling gesture in *Julius Caesar*. *Shakespearean Neuroplay* focuses on conceptual blending theory: a cognitive linguistic theory that, as Cook describes, explains how Shakespeare blends together different concepts in *Hamlet* to create ‘a complicated and often ambiguous text’ filled with ‘novel ideas, creative leaps, and powerful associations’.¹⁰⁷ Within this overall linguistic framework, Cook constantly draws attention to the actors’ bodies as a place where not only the author’s words but the audience’s own thoughts are ‘incarnated’: ‘the words of the author become the language of the character through the bodies of the actor and we are incarnated’.¹⁰⁸ *Shakespearean Neuroplay*’s concern with bodily movement as a site where thought is not just represented but also produced is also taken up in *The Style of Gestures*. Bolens argues that we use our ability to read other people’s thoughts and emotions through their gestures to help us to understand the thoughts and emotions of literary characters. She contends that, taking advantage of our ‘ability to read others’ kinesis’, authors embody characters’ cognition in descriptions of those characters’ bodily movements, as well as of other bodily phenomena such as blushing.¹⁰⁹ This chapter will extend Bolens’ examination of kinesis in books that are intended to be read (she focuses here, for instance on the novels of James Joyce and Jane Austen, and worked in 2013-4 on the experience of reading Dante’s *Divine Comedy* aloud) to gestures performed on the Shakespearean stage.

As explored in the previous chapter, Lakoff and Johnson argue that our abstract concepts are inherently based on embodied metaphors, and that the physical structures of the brain and body fundamentally shape thought. We saw that the notion of ‘grasping’ an idea is embodied in the grasping motion of the hand; the same principle can be applied to genuflection and other gestures of submission. For instance, when I say that I ‘refuse to bow to your arguments’, Lakoff and Johnson’s work suggests that the notion of ‘bowing’ is not just a secondary representation of the more abstract concept of my acquiescing to your point of view. Rather, our understanding of what it is to ‘acquiesce’ is entirely shaped by our embodied experience of the bowing motion of the knees and back.¹¹⁰ The idea that thought is

¹⁰⁷ Amy Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 91-2.

¹⁰⁸ Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay*, 150.

¹⁰⁹ Guillemette Bolens, *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative*, trans Guillemette Bolens, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2012, first published in French, 2008), 40.

¹¹⁰ C.f. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 3, 9-12, 77.

shaped by the body has always been, and continued to be, central to cognitive theory, as the work of Matlock, and Murat and Aydede (cited in the introduction), demonstrates. Cook uses submissive gestures, kneeling in particular, to illustrate this. Submissive gestures, she argues, generate feelings of submissiveness on the part of the gesturer, and reflect and generate hierarchical power-relationships. She writes, ‘who we are—what we feel, what we do, where we are, and what we remember—is then best seen as an embodied, embedded, and transactional *performance*’. By ‘performance’, Cook means that gestures do not just represent thought but can also produce it, ‘the performance of the action does not signify; it creates’.¹¹¹ The fact that the actors are deliberately acting the kneeling gesture perhaps insulates them from the potential performativity of this gesture: they do not kneel like a devout subject or worshipper, hoping that the gesture will effect a mental transformation. The actors are not in the court pledging allegiance or in the church attempting to connect with the divine, but in the theatre, following a script. As far as the *characters* of the conspirators in *Julius Caesar* are concerned, though, it can be argued that the kneeling gesture does have a significant impact on their minds. As this chapter will demonstrate, early modern discussions of kneeling suggest that the physical gesture of kneeling was all that was needed to produce submissive thoughts. I will contend in this chapter that it is possible to read *Julius Caesar* as depicting something like this happening to the conspirators’ thoughts when they kneel.

Intriguingly, Shakespeare leaves it somewhat ambiguous as to whether or not the conspirators kneel ironically, or, like the theatre actor, with a deliberate and conscious sense of creating a particular visual effect rather than a genuine mental transformation. This is particularly true of Cassius, who (as we have seen) expresses scorn earlier in the play at having to ‘bend his body’ (1.2.116-8) at Caesar’s command. In this way, Shakespeare also problematises the neat distinction between the actor and the character that I have just proposed.

As one of the most important and widely-used early modern gestures of secular and religious obedience, kneeling was a powerful tool for rulers to shape their subjects’ thoughts into a submissive bent. This suggests that Shakespeare and his audiences, along with modern cognitive theorists, are likely to see the conspirators’ kneeling gesture as potentially producing submissive thoughts in the conspirators’

¹¹¹ Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay*, 135.

minds. Notably, unlike other gestures such as kissing saints' images, kneeling in church survived the reformation and related political changes (though it still provoked controversy). Invoking Aristotelian theories of habit discussed at more length in chapter 4, the historian Ramie Targoff writes that Elizabeth I's insistence on attendance at the Church of England, no matter what each individual worshipper's private thoughts were on the matter, enabled the monarch to produce conforming, pious, obedient subjects, due to the church's 'affirmative belief in what Aristotle describes as the efficacy of "habit"...what appeared to be a simple request for an untaxing and potentially unmeaningful participation in a weekly service turns out to be a strategy to transform the worshipper's soul'. Targoff cites Hamlet's advice to Gertrude, 'assume a virtue if you have it not', and suggests that, according to Elizabethan Anglicanism, 'assuming' a virtue for long enough enables one to 'have' it eventually.¹¹² Elizabeth I did not rely solely on kneeling to procure conformity; she required all members of the House of Commons to swear an Oath of Allegiance to her in 1563 for instance. However, the potential for kneeling to sculpt thought was clearly an important part of Renaissance discourse and theological and political practice.¹¹³

Cook's assertion that subjectivity is 'transactional' centres around the experimental finding that subjects learn through mimicking others' gestures, 'According to embodied cognition, perception/cognition does not exist as thought; it is an internal action. We imitate in order to feel, and we feel in order to know'.¹¹⁴ Guillemette Bolens argues that people learn by understanding and replicating others' bodily movements in their own bodies and anchoring them in our bodies through 'kinaesthetic memory'; she calls this process 'kinaesthetic learning'.¹¹⁵ Paul Murphy has applied these kinaesthetic theories to medieval prayer, arguing that bowing and

¹¹² Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: Chicago University press, 2001), 4.

¹¹³ James I remained preoccupied with kneeling; prescribing and controlling the ways in which his subjects knelt in church enabled him to test their allegiance. Jacobean debates about the significance of kneeling were 'exemplary of the power, interdependence, and ultimate vulnerability of political and religious discourse in the age of James I', Lori Ann Ferrell, "Kneeling and the Body Politic," *Religion, Literature and Politics in Post-Reformation England 1540-1688*, ed. Donna Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 74.

¹¹⁴ Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay*, 134-5. Cook discusses the neuronal basis of mimicry in depth, 123-33.

¹¹⁵ Bolens, *The Style of Gestures*, 1-3.

kneeling were widely accepted in the medieval era as the best way for lay people, though illiterate and untrained in theology, to achieve the penitent mindset adequate for salvation simply by copying the priest's kneeling gestures.¹¹⁶ Post-reformation theological texts tend to display a similar trust in the power of gesture to teach and induce conformity.¹¹⁷ The Anglican (though Puritan-leaning) bishop of Winchester Lancelot Andrewes' (1555-1626) discussion 'Of Outward Reverence in Gods worship' in *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at Large* (published posthumously in 1650) provides one of the most thorough accounts, and one that is particularly suggestive for kinaesthetic ideas of habit. Andrewes proposes three reasons that worshippers ought to kneel in prayer,

1. That God may be glorified, as well by the body, which is the external worship, as by the soul and spirit, which is for the internal. 2. That our outward gesture may stir up our souls to their duty, as clothes increase the heat of the body, though they receive their heat at first from the body. Lastly, as to stir up our selves, so to stir up others by our example, that they seeing our reverend behaviour, may fall down with us, and be moved to do that which they see us do, and to glorifie God on our behalf.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Paul Murphy, "John Mirk, Reginald Pecock and the Gestures of Late Medieval Prayer," paper presented at *Sensing the Sacred* conference, University of York, 21-22 June 2013.

¹¹⁷ Gervase Babington, who was to become bishop of Worcester writes, 'The Lord weigheth not outward gesture, but inward hart, yet in respect of our selues outward gesture dooth helpe our inward heart, and stir vs vp rather vnto reuerence as changing of garments, kneeling & bowing with eies, and hands lift vp, and such like, therefore to be vsed', *Certaine Plaine, Briefe and Comfortable Notes Upon Everie Chapter of Genesis* (London: for Tomas Charde, 1592) X7^r. Bulwer argues that prayer gestures bridge the gap between the material and the immaterial by expressing the mental and spiritual in visible form, 'the Soule being invisible, unless she shew herself by demonstration of gesture', *Chirologia*, B8^f. In 1635, Robert Shelford wrote, 'do we not perceive plainly that when we betake ourselves to our knees for prayer; the soul is humbled within us by this very gesture', cited in Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 7.

¹¹⁸ Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at Large*, Ee1^{r-v}. Andrewes' equation of clothing and gesture as 'outward' signs of worship reflects a much broader strand in early thought. Writers often used rhyme to emphasise the close relationship between the two, coupling 'gesture and vesture' in discussions of external signs of worship. Margery Kempe (c. 1373-c.1439), for example, deduces a priest's holy mindset from his 'gestur and vestur', *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt

Andrewes establishes gesture's power to bear meaning in church ritual by asserting that it can 'glorif[y] God'. With a felicitous implicit pun on habit (custom), habit (clothing), and inhabiting a role until it inhabits us, Andrewes highlights the reciprocal, duplicative role of kinesis emphasised by Bolens in her discussion of how we learn by physically copying others, arguing optimistically that gesture can cause others to 'be moved to do that which they see us do'. Andrewes is writing after the reformation, when kneeling had become a much more controversial gesture in terms of different Christian sects than it was in the medieval era. However, one key continuity between Andrewes' thoughts on kneeling and medieval ideas of genuflection is his suggestion that kneeling has the power to affect the gesturer's mind, and the minds of others.

The first prayer manual to deal with kneeling, *De Penitentia*, was written before the early modern period, by the twelfth-century French theologian Peter Cantor. Cantor's work is significant here as he concentrates on the cognitive effects that kneeling has on the penitent, establishing ideas about kneeling's power to sculpt thought that laid the foundations for early modern discussions of kneeling. Cantor shows how the physical gesture of kneeling constructs a distinct relationship between the person kneeling, their environment, and anyone they are kneeling to. Despite its focus on twelfth-century Christianity, Cantor's work remains applicable today because his observations about kneeling are rooted in the downward bodily movements involved in the kneeling gesture, and these have not changed over time. It has been the case from the twelfth century to the present day that the kneeler becomes physically lower than the people standing or sitting around them. Concomitantly, kneeling creates a significant difference in perspective between the person kneeling and the person they are kneeling to, or other people standing around them. Kneeling restricts the view to the feet or legs of the person being knelt to, or (if the kneeler's head is bowed) simply to the ground and the kneeler's own hands. The person being knelt to, however, has a complete view of the kneeler's body and of the world around them. The kneeler can often feel the painful or uncomfortable presence of the ground

(London: Longman, 1999), 142. Bishop of Exeter John Gauden writes, 'a Master of a family may appoint the time, place, manner, and measure, gesture and vesture, wherein he will have all his family to serve God with him', having also coupled 'vesture, gesture' one page earlier, *Considerations Touching the Liturgy of the Church of England* (London: J.G., 1661), F3^{r-v}.

with their knees, touching the earth with more of their body than they do when standing, making the earth more of an insistent presence in their experience of the world at that point. As such, before the early modern era began, kneeling had acquired associations of vulnerability, disempowerment, earthliness, and inferiority.¹¹⁹

Cantor attests that kneeling is the most significant part of outward penitence, because it reminds the gesturer of their fallen condition, that their thoughts are sinfully turned to the earth rather than heaven, and their beast-like nature.¹²⁰ Bending

¹¹⁹ In his twelfth-century commentary on the Ephesians, St. Thomas Aquinas writes that kneeling signifies humility and subjection, moreover, ‘the strength of the body is located in the knees; thus, when someone bends their knees they testify to the loss of their strength’, ‘*flecto genua mea ad patrem*, etc... est signum humilitatis propter duo. Primo quia qui genua flectit, quodam modo parvificat se, et subiicit se ei, cui genua flectit: unde per huiusmodi ostenditur recognitio propriae fragilitatis et parvitas. secundo quia in genu est fortitudo corporis. Quando ergo quis genua flectit, protestatur debilitatem suae virtutis’, *Epistolam ad Ephesios*, 3.4, *Corpus Thomisticum*, last accessed June 2 2015, <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/>, my translation. The other connotations of kneeling are discussed in more detail below.

¹²⁰ ‘[S]ane quoniam potissima et principalis pars est penitentiae exterioris genuflexio’ (Cantor reiterates this in his section “De Genuflexionibus,” ‘kneeling is the most powerful element of external penitence, and its strongest instrument’: ‘genuflexiones sunt potentissima pars exterioris penitentiae et fortissimum ferramentum eius’); ‘whoever prostrates themselves on the earth resembles a beast’, ‘thus kneeling is a sign of penitence and misery’ (‘Qui in terra iacet, bestiis quasi similes in factis cernimus’, ‘Item signum est penitentis et dolentis genuflexio’). Kneeling is fitting at all times, he says, because ‘this prostrating the person, signifies of him humility, remorse, penitence, devotion, and a mind focused on God’, ‘est autem gestus sic prostrati et iacentis hominis significatio, et cum iactura humilitate, compuncte, contrite, devote, atque intente ad deum mentis’, “De Oratione,” in *The Christian At Prayer: An Illustrated Prayer Manual Attributed to Peter the Chanter*, ed. Richard Trexler (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), 233-4, 189. All translations from Cantor are my own. Cantor identifies seven key gestures for use in prayer, all of which he argues can be practiced in order to produce various specific types of devotional mindset; two involve kneeling, one is total prostration, the rest are various standing postures. Cantor ‘never defines a motion as a mode of prayer...not even “genuflexion”...as used by Peter, this word—like all other words describing prayer behaviour—refers to the already-shaped body and not to the process of shaping it’; for him, “gesture”...means posture: an immobile sign of a stable moral or immoral condition’, Richard Trexler, “Introduction,” in *The Christian at Prayer*, 36-7. *De Penitentia* exists in 9 different manuscripts of varying length, each with different illustrations. Trexler calls his edition, based on all 9 manuscripts, “De Oratione”. Cantor wrote at a time when kneeling upright with the hands clasped (as opposed to the previous form of total prostration) was just emerging as a significant way of kneeling, Przemysław

the face to the earth whilst kneeling also, Cantor notes, has the practical effect of preventing the gesturer from seeing anything that might distract them from prayer (‘a woman, or anything else that might draw the heart from God’).¹²¹ Cantor’s work initiated a long tradition, stretching into the early modern era and beyond, of viewing kneeling as the best gesture for producing a penitent mindset.¹²² In the Renaissance, these associations were deeply politicised: high and low postures of the body correlated to high and low social status. These culturally-agreed meanings of the kneeling gesture were instrumental in forming and consolidating Renaissance political hierarchies.

Before, during, and after the Reformation early modern subjects knelt in almost every imaginable context where deference to authority was being confirmed or appealed to. Subjects would kneel when asking a favour, pardon, or blessing from, or declaring allegiance and obedience to, a parent, courtly lover, political authority (such as the monarch or a noble person), or God. They would kneel to be knighted and arise with new honours attached to their name. As in *Othello* 3.1 when Iago and Othello vow, kneeling, to kill Desdemona, it may have been common to kneel before making a pact, treasonous or otherwise, to register before God one’s determination to perform certain actions. The German tourist Leopold von Wedel describes courtiers wishing merely to gossip with Elizabeth I in a casual after-dinner setting nevertheless having to kneel before her for the duration of the conversation as she sat or reclined on a cushion.¹²³ It was also customary for actors to kneel or bow at the end of a play, to say a prayer or express allegiance to the monarch and (often) the players’ patron.¹²⁴

The kneeling gesture’s deep entanglement with social hierarchy, and its power to disrupt these hierarchies, is present in the earliest discussions of religious kneeling

Mrozowski, “Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture: The Gesture of Expiation—The Praying Posture,” trans. Janina Dorosz, *Acta Poloniae Historica* 68 (1993), 21.

¹²¹ ‘Tunc precipue geniflexio est sincera et optima cum os et genua et digiti pedum partier inherent terre...non videndo feminam nec aliquid alium quod retrahat cor tuum ab oratione, leviter poteris in dei contemplatione perseverare’, “De Oratione,” 233.

¹²² For instance, Anglican clergyman Edward Kellett describes kneeling as an appropriate and natural sign of humility, ‘if we worship God in our hearts, our hearts will command the humble Bowing of the knees’, *Tricoenivm Christi in Nocte Proditionis Suae* (London: Thomas Cotes, 1641), LIII^v.

¹²³ Robert Lacey, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (London: Cardinal, 1975), 103-4.

¹²⁴ Tiffany Stern, “Epilogues, Prayers after Plays, and Shakespeare’s *2HenryIV*,” *Theatre Notebook*, 64 (2010), 22-9.

in the West. As Targoff shows, Cantor marks an early emphasis on kneeling's power to shape thought that continued into the Renaissance. Despite this broad continuity, though, it is important to remember the discontinuity between medieval and post-reformation discussions of genuflections. Whilst Cantor talks more generally about kneeling producing penitent thoughts, post-Reformation writers often took great care to distinguish between Catholic and Protestant notions of penitence and devotion. As the discussion of Thomas Morton's writing later in this chapter shows, whilst post-reformation Church of England officials tended to agree that kneeling had power over a gesturer's mind, they were careful to separate out this kneeling gesture from the 'idolotrous' ideas associated with genuflection in Catholic worship.

De Penitentia is permeated with an attention to social hierarchy; Cantor divides worshippers into three categories. The clerical classes' ability to read scripture and pray verbally places them in a masterful, pedagogic role, shaping the gestures and thus the minds of the lower people whose only hope of salvation is copying the priests' prayer gestures. In the middle are the soldiers, who defend Christianity against enemies, protecting the passive laypeople.¹²⁵ When a higher-ranking person kneels, the gesture has the potential to disturb their social position by associating them with inferiority and subjection. Cantor repeatedly wrestles with the problem that soldiers, rich people, and nobility felt 'ashamed' to kneel and disdained this gesture because it was associated with social inferiority. Cantor describes the twelfth-century upper classes as, 'those wretched people too proud to bow their knees before God'.¹²⁶ Strikingly, many of the various manuscript editions of *De Penitentia* make this issue visible, and perhaps attempt to correct it, by depicting high-status people kneeling and prostrating themselves: rakish men-about-town, bejewelled women, and soldiers;

¹²⁵ '[P]ersonae ecclesie, et omnes dea devote'; 'bellatorum...hoc est, militum qui debent expugnare inimicos ecclesie'; 'agricolum et pauperum atque operarium labore et sudore...Quos tam oratores quem pugnatores tenentur protegere ac defensare, atque pro eis intercedere et orare', Cantor "De Oratione," 224-6. Trexler argues that this 'pedagogical formalization' of praying gestures 'casts doubt on their assertedly "natural" character', marking them out as something socially constructed, "Legitimizing Prayer Gestures in the Twelfth Century. The De Penitentia of Peter the Chanter," *History and Anthropology* 1(1) (1984), 97. C.f. Trexler, "Introduction," *The Christian At Prayer*, 9, 25-6.

¹²⁶ '[I]sti sane miseri dedignantur flectere genua sua coram deo', Cantor, "De Oratione," 187.

people who would be kneeled *to* in a secular context.¹²⁷ Richard Trexler argues that this attempt to encourage twelfth-century nobility to kneel was a key cause of the ‘failure’ of Cantor’s book to gain popularity among the upper classes.¹²⁸ With its complaints about the ‘wretched’ elite and its depictions of them in gestures of submission, Cantor’s text shows that from its inception as a Western religious gesture, kneeling could be used to challenge and unsettle social hierarchies.¹²⁹ At the same time, kneeling in prayer was one way that early modern monarchs asserted their claims to religious authority; one famous example is Elizabeth I’s 1559 prayer book (currently held in Lambeth Palace Library), which depicts Elizabeth kneeling in prayer. The prayers inside evoke both Elizabeth’s humility and her power: she is cast as a ‘weake woman’ and yet one who (with God’s help) will ‘rule these thy kingdoms of England and Ireland, an innumerable and warlike nation’.¹³⁰ A traditional gesture of religious and social humility since at least Cantor’s time, kneeling was nevertheless the site of power over other human beings in the Renaissance. Again, despite the similarities between these medieval and Renaissance depictions and discussions of

¹²⁷ Cantor did not illustrate the manuscripts himself. Trexler provides discussion and sample images from all extant manuscripts, “Introduction,” *The Christian at Prayer*, 62-5. Trexler suggests (121) that illustrators included these figures in the manuscripts to try and dispel the shame socially-elite figures felt when kneeling, providing them with their own images to copy.

¹²⁸ Trexler argues that Cantor ‘failed’ because high-status people continued to disdain to kneel. He adds that the illustrations also often contributed to the text’s failure by misrepresenting the substance of the text, “The *De Penitentia* of Peter the Chanter,” 115. The very fact that Cantor’s manuals on kneeling are marketed to the upper classes reflects and helps to consolidate this class’s position as arbiters of taste and key role models when it comes to the kneeling gesture.

¹²⁹ Before the twelfth century, ‘genuflection occurs only sporadically in the iconography of early Christianity’ (it is mentioned, for example, by Tertullian), for a similar reason: previously to this kneeling was eschewed in practice, and in religious iconography, because it was ‘semantically connected with sin and the sense of guilt’; thus kneeling was prohibited on Sundays and Easter in the first centuries of Christianity (at first officially, and then officially in 325 at the Council of Nicea) because it did not befit a celebration of freedom from sin. The Virgin Mary was not depicted kneeling until around the twelfth century; previously to this, portrayals of her kneeling would have contradicted the assumption that she was sin-free. Mrozowski argues that when depictions of a kneeling Virgin did begin to appear in iconography this ‘shows that this gesture had completely changed its meaning, that in Latin Europe it had become first and foremost an expression of full dedication, trust, love and adoration’, “Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture,” 6-8, 18, 22.

¹³⁰ Lambeth Palace Library, ‘Queen Elizabeth I Prayer Book’, <http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/content/elizabethprayerbook> (accessed March 1st 2016).

kneeling, Renaissance texts are markedly shaped by their specific context. Here, for instance, Elizabeth uses her kneeling gesture to assert her dominance over Ireland and her martial power.

Kneeling was also an important site of intersection between political allegiance and religious devotion; to kneel to God was simultaneously to submit oneself to the divinely-instituted monarch and vice versa. This secular significance is woven into the very roots of the kneeling gesture; Przemysław Mrozowski shows that kneeling was first used in the West as a signifier of feudal allegiance and was adopted into church ceremonies in the eleventh century as a metaphor which allowed worshippers to see God as a kind of feudal lord.¹³¹ In his much-published 1547 homily ‘An Exhortation to Obedience’, Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury who helped to shape the new Church of England under Henry VIII, nakedly links the divine and ecclesiastical order to the imperative to obey the earthly monarch, urging subjects to ‘obey from the bottom of our hearts’ and ‘fear the most detestable vice of rebellion’ because ‘he that resisteth common authority resisteth God and his audience’.¹³²

Isabel Davis shows that kneeling was intimately linked to the creation of social class. Davis uses Althusser’s theory of ‘interpellation’ to explain how kneeling produced late-medieval subjects. Interpellation is the process of ‘hailing’ or ‘calling’ to someone and thus forcing them (when they respond to the call) to acknowledge themselves as the recipient of the call and thus to take on the role of the particular

¹³¹ Mrozowski describes a ‘genetic link’ between kneeling in ceremonies of feudal homage and the earliest use of kneeling as a prayer gesture in the 11th century church: kneeling was ‘adopted in the sacral sphere to represent the attitude to God in prayer...Not only was the earthly ruler a temporal image of God; God, too, was perceived in earthly categories in the general consciousness’; ‘the adoption of secular symbolism in the sacral sphere’ rendered orthodox the idea of Christians paying ‘feudal homage’ to God, Mary, or Christ, “Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture,” 8-9, 22-4.

¹³² Thomas Cranmer argues that failure to uphold this hierarchy will result in ‘calamity’: everything from wayside robbery to goods held in common, *Certain Sermons, or Homilies, Appoynted by the Kynges Majestie* (London; Richard Grafton, 1547), R1^{r-v}. This text went through several editions throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was appointed to be read in churches as a more detailed exposition of the orthodox doctrine in the 39 articles. Cranmer had ‘a breathtaking scepticism about any independent character for the church’, believing it should answer to ‘the authority of the Christian prince’, Diarmaid MacCullough, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 278-80.

type of subject that was being hailed. Althusser gives the example of a policeman hailing a criminal, ‘hey you’; by turning round and acknowledging the call, the person called becomes a criminal subject.¹³³ Davis argues that kneeling in response to a command from authority, such as a monarch commanding subjects to kneel in conformity, produces subjects in precisely this way. She contends that, as we have seen with early modern kneeling gestures, kneeling in the medieval era produced subjects of both God and the current monarch, ‘God temporarily suffers imperfect human “callings” at the same time as he issues his own call. Thus, although human and divine “callings” are not identical, they are also not necessarily distinguishable and in fact often coincide’.¹³⁴ As in the present day, in the medieval and early modern eras, being ‘called’ in the sense of having a ‘calling’ or ‘vocation’ is equivalent to having a designated role in society. In the Renaissance, kneeling to, or at the command of, those in authority, produced and consolidated hierarchical social relations.¹³⁵ Deploying the idea of interpellation in the context of cognitive theory enables us to reassess Althusser’s idea that the kneeling gesture is not necessary for producing ideological subjects. Althusser states that even if subjects did not kneel, or otherwise respond to commands from their superiors, they would still be subject to their authority because all subjects are already subjects of the dominant ideology, ‘ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects...an individual is

¹³³ Louis Althusser describes hailing as states’ main tool for reproducing social inequalities, ‘Ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all) or “transforms” the individuals (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey, you there”’, “Ideology and State Apparatus” (1970), in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 118-9.

¹³⁴ Davis focuses on Philippians 2, a key text for medieval and early modern discussions of kneeling, ‘at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow’, explaining, ‘A Pauline turn in recent Continental philosophy has acknowledged and endorsed a significant theological residue within Marxist thinking; in particular, it has rewritten Paul’s doctrine of calling to describe the relationship between individual and Law as intersubjective’, “Calling: Langland, Gower, and Chaucer on Saint Paul,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012), 55, 53.

¹³⁵ ‘Kneeling and acknowledgement of name, of what someone is *called*, are thus intricately bound together’, Davis explains, citing the poet William Shoreham who uses ‘knowing’ and ‘kneeling’ as ‘commensurate homonyms’, Davis, “Calling,” 82.

always-already a subject, even before he is born'.¹³⁶ Judith Butler rearticulates this idea in her book-length treatment of interpellation, contending that because we are born into a network of normative relationships, from which we cannot separate ourselves, we are born always-already interpellated, 'there is no "I" that can finally stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence'.¹³⁷ Cognitive theory, however, suggests that the kneeling gesture is not just (as Butler and Althusser maintain) a symbolic recognition of a person's social status. Rather, this social status or 'vocation' would not exist or stay in existence without gestures like kneeling that respond to commands and 'calls' from authority. For example, in keeping with Butler's ideas of performative gesture, kneeling to become a knight is not an empty signifier of a pre-existing relationship between knight and feudal lord; it creates that relationship. As such, kneeling is also the site where that relationship can be troubled and disrupted; the individual gesturer's identity is in a state of flux as (s)he performs the gesture.

Malabou's theory of 'plasticity' can explain both why kneeling was a powerful tool for rulers to influence their subject's minds and how the conspirators in *Julius Caesar* might be reclaiming this gesture for their own, republican ends. Plasticity is both a neural phenomenon and a cultural one; linking plasticity intrinsically to habit, Malabou sees it as fundamental to human existence.¹³⁸ Habitually using certain synapses (the structures which allow electrical signals to pass between nerve cells) when we perform certain actions and have certain thoughts strengthens those synapses and increases their responsiveness. Rarely-used synapses become increasingly less responsive. Thus, our neural pathways reflect our habitual thoughts and actions, making us increasingly adept at performing those thoughts and actions that we most habitually perform.¹³⁹ Malabou argues that this 'plasticity', this

¹³⁶ Althusser, "Ideology and State Apparatus," 118.

¹³⁷ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 7.

¹³⁸ Plasticity is intrinsic to being, 'there is perhaps no reason to talk of the plasticity of Being – as if plasticity were some kind of quality – but of saying that Being is *nothing but* its plasticity', Catherine Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, trans. Caroline Shread (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010), 36.

¹³⁹ Malabou cites cognitive neuroscientist Marc Jeannerod, 'If a synapse belongs to a circuit in frequent use, it tends to grow in volume, its permeability increases, and its efficacy increases. Inversely, a little-used synapse tends to become less efficacious. The theory of synaptic efficacy thus allows us to explain

ability for the brain to develop and adapt, often is an unconscious process whereby we allow ourselves to be shaped by the dominant cultural norms of our time. An Elizabethan subject who habitually submits unthinkingly to Elizabeth's ideological regime as they kneel, imbibing its ideas about what kneeling means in terms of obedience to the monarch and denial of transubstantiation, will form habitual patterns in their brain that make this the dominant pattern of their thought.

Michel Foucault describes 'docile bodies', malleable bodies obedient to the commands of authority. Malleable, that is, until they achieve the form desired by the authorities, at which point they are fixed and solidified into obedient patterns of thought and action. Bodies become truly 'docile', Foucault argues, when a person's habitual expressions of obedience are internalised and become 'natural and "organic"'.¹⁴⁰ Though, for Foucault, this ultimate fixity is never completely attained, it is the key goal towards which authorities work. Malabou articulates a similar idea, explaining that habitual actions dissolve the boundary between the mind and body, turning the body's external gestures into a holistic second nature until eventually we (first 'passively', then deliberately) fulfil the commands of authority almost, she says, as if we were 'slumbering',

If an external change is repeated, it turns into a tendency internal to the subject. The change itself is transformed into a disposition, and receptivity, formerly passive, becomes activity. Thus habit is revealed as a process through which man ends by *willing* or choosing what came to him from outside. Henceforth the will of the individual does not need to oppose the pressure of the external world; the will learns gradually to want what is.¹⁴¹

the gradual molding of a brain under the influence of individual experience, to the point of making it possible for us, in principle, to account for the individual characteristics and particularities of each brain', Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, trans. Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 7.

¹⁴⁰ 'A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved', Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1975), 136, 156.

¹⁴¹ Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During (London: Routledge, 2005), 70-1. She describes (8-9) how plasticity creates an intractable

Thus, ‘habit is the process whereby the contingent becomes essential’.¹⁴² As Targoff suggests, Renaissance notions of habitual conformity entailed that eventually subjects internalised conforming thoughts without even consciously having to think them, ‘man ends by *willing* or choosing what came to him from outside’.

Early moderns underscored the importance of physical action to creating thought-patterns, by using physical metaphors to express the idea of religious conformity. The word ‘conform’ derives from Latin ‘conformare’, which means to shape or modify things so that they become alike. The ideal early modern subject is physically and mentally malleable; conformity of mind is produced through a conformed body. Non-conformists (generally, Puritans who disliked using too many gestures of worship) tended to be described as contrastingly ‘stiff-’ or ‘hard-’ necked because they refused to bow their necks in church (and, thus, it was assumed, refused to submit to the monarch’s authority), and therefore did not allow themselves to be shaped into conforming subjects. Archbishop of Canterbury and staunch anti-Puritan Richard Bancroft (1544-1610) laments the ‘hardened neckes’ of non-conformists in several of his printed works.¹⁴³ Like Lakoff and Johnson’s theories, early modern notions of habitually-subservient thoughts are inextricable from the bending motions of the body bowing to authority. Kneeling in *Julius Caesar* evokes an early modern belief that the mind bends with the body, making the conspirators’ gesture in one sense highly risky, and hard to understand if they want to steel their thoughts to kill Caesar.

Malabou’s work suggests a solution to this conundrum; whilst Foucauldian ‘docile bodies’ are disempowered by their malleability, Malabou emphasises that we can also control our own plasticity to resist the attempts of authorities to transform

second nature, ‘the adjective “plastic”, whilst certainly in opposition to “rigid”, “fixed”, and “ossified”, is not to be confused with “polymorphous”. Things that are plastic preserve their shape, as does the marble in a statue: once given a configuration, it is unable to recover its initial form. “Plastic”, thus, designates those things that lend themselves to being formed while *resisting* deformation’.

¹⁴² Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 74.

¹⁴³ E.g. Richard Bancroft et al, *Certaine Demandes with their Grounds, Drawne out of Holy Writ* (Middelburg: R Schilders, 1605), D2^r. The phrase ‘stiff-necked’ is first recorded in Tyndale’s 1526 English Bible, O.E.D., ‘stiff-necked’, *adj.*

us.¹⁴⁴ By being conscious of how our brain responds plastically to our thoughts and actions, we can choose to cultivate certain ideas and practices that enable us to shape our own brains in ways that resist the dominant culture. Thus, plasticity can be both active and passive,

According to its etymology – from the Greek *plassein*, to mold – the word *plasticity* has two basic senses: it means at once the capacity to *receive form* (clay is called “plastic”, for example) and the capacity to *give form* (as in the plastic arts or in plastic surgery). Talking about the plasticity of the brain thus amounts to thinking of the brain as something modifiable, “formable”, and formative at the same time.¹⁴⁵

Malabou stresses plasticity’s anarchic properties further with her idea of ‘destructive plasticity’, whereby, ‘plasticity is also the capacity to annihilate the very form it is able to receive or create...to talk about the plasticity of the brain means to see in it not only the creator and receiver of form but also an agency of disobedience to every constituted form, a refusal to submit to a model’.¹⁴⁶ Instead of allowing others to exploit our malleability, and the close relationship between gesture and thought, we can take control of our own plasticity, habitually manipulating our body to change our mindset to our own liking. These specifically neural ideas are embedded in Malabou’s broader theories of habit, where she emphasises that we can allow others to use our habits to shape us, or we can use them to shape ourselves. In *The Future of Hegel*, she links Greek *hexis* (habit) with *exein* (to have/possess) and talks of creating a new

¹⁴⁴ Foucault describes the ideal subject’s body as relinquishing all of its power to the state, and being so completely shaped by the hands of the state that it has no remaining energy to act autonomously, ‘discipline...disassociates power from the body’, leaving it only with enough energy to carry out the tasks that the state has shaped it to do, *Discipline and Punish*, 138.

¹⁴⁵ Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*, 5. Clayton Crockett explains, for Malabou, ‘The plasticity of the brain is so radical that we create our brains...We think that our brains make us, forgetting that we also make our brains’, “Foreword,” in Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, xxii.

¹⁴⁶ Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*, 5. Elsewhere, she puns “Plastic” on its own is an explosive material with a nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose base that can set off violent detonations....the annihilation of all form (the bomb)’, *The Future of Hegel*, 9.

nature deliberately ‘imposed by the soul’, enabling a kind of self-*possession*.¹⁴⁷ Prompted by these ideas, this chapter explores the hypothesis that, when they kneel in *Julius Caesar*, the conspirators are in fact attempting to reclaim this gesture: by consciously deploying it as part of a republican coup, they attempt to destroy kneeling’s significance as a gesture of submission.

When *Julius Caesar* was first performed in 1599, kneeling was embedded within a complex network of different, and often conflicting, meanings, which it had absorbed throughout Reformation debates.¹⁴⁸ Like the conspirators, early modern people were thus able to exploit the fact that kneeling had the potential to embody many different meanings, allowing onlookers to assume that their kneeling gesture meant one thing, when in fact it meant quite another. Before the Protestant Church of England was created in 1534, when people knelt before the Eucharist they were (officially, at least) kneeling before the Real Presence of Christ. After 1534, church leaders created explicit injunctions to try and fix the meaning of the kneeling gesture, so that it was not an acknowledgement of the Real Presence but simply a mark of gratitude to Christ. Most notably in 1552, a section of text called the ‘Black Rubric’ was added to the Book of Common Prayer, stipulating that worshippers should receive communion kneeling, but stressing that kneeling did not signify idolatrous ‘adoration’ of the sacrament or belief in the Real Presence, and was merely a sign of the worshipper’s thankfulness and devotion.¹⁴⁹ For many worshippers throughout the sixteenth century, this transition from Catholicism to Protestantism was not smooth or welcomed, rendering their kneeling gestures ambiguous.

¹⁴⁷ Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 56. She writes (37-8), ‘The characteristic of habit is to substitute for an immediacy which is natural a second immediacy, an immediacy “posited” by soul. This repeated immediacy rightly deserves the name of “second nature”’.

¹⁴⁸ Ferrell explains, though outward conformity in worship was rarely enforced in practice, vehement debates about conformity were longer-lasting, “Kneeling and the Body Politic,” 75-9.

¹⁴⁹ Removed under Elizabeth in 1559, the Black Rubric returned in condensed version in 1662 prayer books. This condensed Rubric represents a considerable change from the originally more fluid meaning of kneeling evoked at the end of the 1549 prayer book, ‘As touching kneeling, crossing . . . and other gestures: they may be used or left as every mans devocion serveth without blame’, *The Book of Common Prayer* (London: Edward Whytchurche, 1549). The injunction to kneel at communion reached Scotland in 1617-18, when the first article of James VI’s Five Articles of Perth stated that communion should be received kneeling. Reluctantly approved by Scottish Parliament in 1621, the articles remained controversial and were later repealed.

Early modern audiences would have been alert to the way that the kneeling gesture could be used both to induce conformity and to carefully calibrate precisely what type of conformity is being produced. These audiences would surely have been attuned to the way that the conspirators' act of kneeling can be read, variously and simultaneously, as creating a tyrant, acknowledging a lawful ruler, or, even, defying a ruler's authority altogether under the cloak of outward conformity. Early modern writers were often very explicit about the ways that they manipulated the meaning of kneeling to control subjects, making them conform. The officially-sanctioned treatise *A Defence of the Innocencie of the Three Ceremonies of the Church of England* (1618) by Bishop of Durham Thomas Morton is perhaps the most thorough illustration of how rulers and church leaders used theological arguments to justify this political aim. Morton states that kneeling is not a sacrament whose meaning is fixed by God, but a 'ceremony indifferent' whose meaning can be decided by humans.¹⁵⁰ Morton deploys a slippery idea of 'liberty' to situate the monarch as the sole arbiter of this meaning. He argues that allowing human beings to decide whether to kneel in church and what this gesture means preserves the 'liberty' of both worshippers and clergy, 'to deny the Church power, to choose her gesture of Reverence, is contrary to the libertie allowed her by Christ'. He adds that worshippers should be freed from the meaningless ceremonies to which Catholicism had bound them, enjoying 'a *libertie* from the necessary observation of such things, which are in their owne nature

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Morton, *A Defence of the Innocencie of Three Ceremonies of the Church of England* (London: for William Barret, 1618), ¶4^v. Ferrell shows that rulers used this argument that kneeling was 'adiaphoric' (or morally 'indifferent') throughout the reformation, explaining of the 1549 prayer book, 'to describe communion kneeling as expressive solely of humility and good order made possible, therefore, not only its description as mere ceremonial, but also its analogy to secular obedience'; she adds that the 5 articles of Perth 'pitted the interpretation of the Eucharist against the meaning of obedience to the monarch', "Kneeling and the Body Politic," 80, 75, 77-8. Alain Badiou argues that Christian truth needs to contain an adiaphoric element, in order to allow individuals to create their own meanings, and that it is not a stringent emphasis on conformity that enables Christian truth to be universal, but the presence of multiplicitous meanings, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2003; first published in French, 1997), 111. Malabou also argues that in uniting essence and accident, habit allows us to acquire universal attributes, "'Plastic individuality'" makes it possible to imagine the "conformity" of singularity with the universal by means of a perspective totally different from that of pure and simple subordination'; 'The adjective "plastic" indicates the nature of what is at once universal and individual', *The Future of Hegel*, 26, 71.

indifferent'. However, Morton quickly makes clear that the monarch's liberty to stipulate what gestures worshippers use in church, and what those gestures mean, overrides the individual worshipper's liberty to decide what gestures they use in worship. Kneeling is thus not a site of liberty for individual worshippers at all; quite the opposite. Once the monarch has decided on the form of 'gestures of Reverence', Morton writes, it is seditious for worshippers to oppose this decision.¹⁵¹ Morton carefully balances the need to make kneeling a powerful symbol that demonstrates and produces the monarch's power over their subjects, with the need to ensure that it is not thought of as a sacrament as this would mean that God rather than the monarch controls its meaning. He defines kneeling as an 'operative symbol' or 'morall signe': not a sacrament, but a gesture especially rich in moral meaning, 'profitable for admonition and for testification of our duties'.¹⁵² Morton's pamphlet demonstrates the strong early modern concern with making kneeling in both secular and religious contexts a way of testifying the gesturer's 'duty' to their monarch. Simultaneously, the idea that a worshipper might kneel to recognise the Real Presence threatens Morton's desire to co-opt the kneeling gesture into a wider politicised idea of 'duty'. As Morton's opponents argued, Morton's desire to afford the kneeling gesture as much signifying power as possible creates the possibility that worshippers could use the gesture to give undue reverence to the Real Presence.¹⁵³ Morton's pamphlet demonstrates how early modern attempts to give kneeling a single (Protestant) meaning tended to fail to contain this gesture's multiple potential meanings.

¹⁵¹ Morton, *A Defence*, z4^r.

¹⁵² Sacraments are 'a necessary means to salvation', 'unalterable by any authoritie of man'. Morton illustrates this by contrasting kneeling with the sacramental use of aspersion. The form and meaning of aspersion are fixed by God and cannot be altered by humans, 'the Aspersion of the water in Baptisme is a signe of the Remission of sinne conferred upon the person Baptized, and therefore is it proper to God, who onely giveth the thing, to ordaine such a signe'. He does acknowledge that kneeling's meaning is not completely arbitrary but is partly derived from scriptural precedents and customs of kneeling in 'Adoration', *A Defence*, ¶4^{r-v}, z4^r, Oo4^r-Nn1^v.

¹⁵³ E.g. William Ames' *A reply to Dr. Mortons General Defence of Three Nocent Ceremonies* (Amsterdam: Giles Thorp, 1622). The Puritan William Prynne argued that kneeling should be abolished altogether; he wrote many times against the use of genuflexion as described by Morton. Prynne argued that kneeling was something purely superstitious and idolatrous because it was not commanded by God. E.g. *Lame Giles his Haltings* (London: for Matthew Sparke, 1630), A4^{r-v}.

Indeed, much of the anxiety occasioned by the kneeling gesture in the early modern era arose from the fact that it could potentially embody several very different meanings without the kneeler's intention being clear. The Anglican clergyman Thomas Fuller worried in 1652 that the religious connotations of kneeling could uneasily be present when kneeling occurred in a secular context, making parents like gods when they were knelt to by their children. He asks of parents who 'expect their Children should crave their blessing on their knees, Whether do they not assume to themselves too much Reverence, and therein intrench upon Divine Honour?', but comforts himself by reasserting the distinction between kneeling to divine and secular authorities, 'No: Such Genuflection being onely a Civil posture to express their Humility; and is performed to Princes and Parliaments, by their Petitioners: and therefore may be required by Parents, Monarchs over their own Children'.¹⁵⁴ By emphasising this distinction, Fuller reasserts the polyvalence of kneeling; it can be either secular or religious, and thus still has the potential to be both at once. Indeed, many Puritans wanted to eliminate kneeling from church ceremonies completely, to remove the very possibility that people might kneel in 'idolatrour' worship of the Real Presence.

Like Malabou, and drawing like her on the Greek root *plassein*, early modern writers compared 'plastic' physiological processes – the 'plastic power' whereby the soul controls the body's actions and the body heals itself and develops into a distinct shape – to humans shaping clay in the 'plastic' art of sculpture.¹⁵⁵ Deriving from Latin *plasticus* and Italian *plastica*, the word 'plastic' was first used in English in the late sixteenth century, in translations of G.P. Lomazzo's 1584 Italian treatise on painting and sculpture. Richard Haydock's 1598 translation of Lomazzo, *A Tracte Containing the Arts of Curious Painting, Carving and Building*, uses the word 'plasticke' plentifully. For example, Haydock states in the Preface that 'God was the first Plasticke worker' because 'with his owne hande hee framed the moulede of the first man and afterwards most miraculously inspired it with a living soule'.¹⁵⁶ As this

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Fuller, *A Comment on the Eleven First Verses of the Fourth Chapter of Matthew's Gospel* (London: James Cottrell, 1652), L7^v.

¹⁵⁵ 'Plasticity's native land is the field of art. Plasticity characterizes the art of "modelling"', but also 'signifies the general aptitude for development, the power to be moulded by one's culture, by education', and finally 'the "plasticity" of the brain', Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 8.

¹⁵⁶ O.E.D. 'plastic', n.1a. Richard Haydock, *A Tracte Containing the Arts of Curious Painting, Carving*

quotation from Haydock shows, the word ‘plastic’ encompassed the body and its relation to the mind. The popular *Masterpiece*, a work on human reproduction apocryphally attributed to Aristotle, states that the body’s ‘natural or vegetable soul’ has a ‘plastic power’ which enables it to move and adopt various postures, whilst a ‘plastic or formative principle’ turns a lump of formless matter into a human shape in the womb.¹⁵⁷ Though they tend to associate plasticity with humans’ lower, material nature, as opposed to the superior spiritual aspect of their being, early modern writers often describe the power of the plastic body to affect a person’s temperament. Writing to his fellow natural philosopher Margaret Cavendish, Joseph Glanvill (1636-80) equates the ‘Plastick Faculties’ with a ‘*Lower Nature*’, yet attests that their ‘violent *Impetus* is the cause of many of our irregularities and vices’. In a later letter, Glanvill admits that he cannot tell whether these plastic faculties are a part of the body or the soul, ‘whether, as your *Grace* inquires, they are Faculties inherent, in the Soul, or are only Mechanical Motions of the Body I cannot determine certainly’.¹⁵⁸ Glanvill attests that natural philosophers find plasticity somewhat mysterious, ‘what it is, how it works, and whose it is, we cannot learn...For though the Soul be supposed to be the Bodies *Maker*, and the builder of its own house; yet by what kind of Knowledge, Method, or Means, is as unknown’.¹⁵⁹ Malabou references the early modern roots of the term plasticity,¹⁶⁰ and her theory of plasticity helps us to provide new answers to this particularly Renaissance question of how the actions of the body affect a person’s temperament and vice versa. Her ideas are thus directly relevant to, and rooted in, the early modern culture that *Julius Caesar* evokes.

and *Building* (Oxford: for R.H., 1598), Aiii^f.

¹⁵⁷ Anon, *Aristotle’s Master-Piece*, trans. Anon (London: B. Harris, 1697), A4^v, B4^r.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Glanvill, in various authors, *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess, Margaret, Dutchess of Newcastle* (London: Thomas Newcombe, 1676), Dd2^v, Ii2^{r-v}.

¹⁵⁹ Joseph Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (London: E.C., 1661), E6^{r-v}. Many early modern authors are sceptical about the idea of plasticity, believing it to be a placeholder for ignorance; in his medical dictionary, Stephen Blankaart shows how the idea of plasticity was itself plastic and adaptable, ‘*Plastica Virtus* is that which can form or fashion any thing; it’s an old saying and a sure Refuge of Ignorance, for what the Ancients could not explain they called a plastick Virtue’, *A Physical Dictionary* (London: J.D., 1684), Q5^v.

¹⁶⁰ ‘[P]lasticity...also means the ability to evolve and adapt. It is this sense we invoke when we speak of a “plastic virtue” possessed by animals, plants, and, in general, all living things’, Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 8.

Malabou's theory of plasticity helps to nuance descriptions like Andrewes', cited above, and to place a useful emphasis on the fact that early modern subjects could use 'outward gesture' to 'stir up their souls' to many different forms of 'duty'. Indeed, Andrewes highlights the symbiotic relationship between thought and gesture that is crucial to ideas of plasticity. His assertion that, though the soul gives the body an initial impetus, it is only when the body is involved that a person can experience a meaningful relationship with God through prayer, can be understood using Malabou's idea of a habitual 'mutual fashioning of soul and body' which enables gesture to shape as well as be shaped by the mind, and dissolves the barriers between them,

Through its power of self-repetition, habit creates in man the condition for the reversibility of psychic and physical attributes. The features of the soul, as they acquire a physical means of expression, cease to function as a separate world, or a "mysterious inner space". Similarly, the body, as it is made into an instrument, will no longer act as a natural "immediate externality" and a "barrier".¹⁶¹

Malabou depicts the human subject teetering between plasticity's manifestations as an increasingly intractable second nature, and as form that can be seized and shaped with liberating consequences,

A lifetime always proceeds within the boundaries of a double excess: an excess of reification and an excess of fluidification. When identity tends towards reification, the congealing of form, one can become the victim of highly rigid frameworks whose temporal solidification produces the appearance of unmalleable substance. Plasticity situates itself in the middle of these two excesses.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 73, 69. She continues, 'in so far as the influence of habit causes a translation of soul into body and body into soul, these two will form a unity-in-separation, an absolute unity without fusion...Between container and contained, a reversible relation abolishes the partition between exterior and interior, allowing soul – henceforth constituted as "Self" – to relate to the world, the real externality', relating to the world in a way that reflects the world back into self-consciousness.

¹⁶² Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 81.

The conspirators in *Julius Caesar* exhibit a similar tension between their entrenched habits of obedience to Caesar, bending to him in mind and body, and the more autonomous, liberating use of the kneeling gesture they deploy before killing him. Brutus describes Caesar's murder with a curious mixture of respect for his elevated status and a desire to destroy him because of that status. Strikingly, though he hates the idea of Caesar becoming a petulant, scornful 'tyrant', Brutus states, 'let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods| Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds' (2.1.173-4). This image of killing Caesar with a mannered, almost respectful 'carving', acknowledging that he is 'fit for the gods', the highest beings, suggests an esteem for, and deference to, his authority. The rhetorical device of antithetic parallelism creates a similarity in these two lines' structure, emphasising the contrast between Caesar's high status and the low status of a dog-gnawed corpse by spatially aligning and contrasting the phrases 'let's *carve* him' and 'not *hew* him', and 'fit for the gods' and 'fit for hounds'. Mark Antony makes this ambiguity between respect and disrespect of Caesar even sharper, 'Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart| Crying, "Long live! Hail, Caesar!"' (5.1.31-2). In this chapter's cognitive reading, the most complexly significant moment of *Julius Caesar* is not Caesar's actual death, but what happens just before he dies, when the conspirators kneel to him. At this moment, the network of embodied up-down metaphors and the ambiguous presentation of Caesar come to a crux.

Kneeling in Shakespeare's works

Drawing into question how sincere the conspirators' kneeling gesture is shows, again, the importance of the relationship between performance and reality in Shakespeare's works. It seems that the conspirators are attempting to separate the two, to make what is usually a sincere gesture of obedience into an ironic performance. Shakespearean texts often explore the potential for kneeling to be parodied or deliberately performed. One of the very few Shakespearean characters depicted kneeling in prayer, Claudius in *Hamlet*, makes visible the process of both mentally and physically becoming malleable that is associated with kneeling.¹⁶³ Though Claudius' prayer is abandoned,

¹⁶³ Most kneeling in Shakespearean drama is, probably because of contemporary censorship, performed before secular rather than divine authorities. The 1606 parliamentary Act to Restrain the Abuses of

by dwelling on his mindset as he attempts to kneel, Shakespeare shows a tight link between the body and mind during this gesture: Claudius' mind cannot 'bend' unless his knees do first. And, the mind must be habituated to this gesture: its stiffness must be made pliable. Where Claudius seems to fail outright to achieve this pliability, the conspirators in *Julius Caesar*, accustomed to 'bend [their] bod[ies]' (1.2.116-8) before Caesar have minds that have laid down habits of submission that threaten to thwart their rebellious plans.

Claudius has trouble kneeling to pray, prompting him to meditate on physical and mental (in)flexibility, rendering explicit the themes that are implicit in the conspirators' kneeling gesture. Echoing contemporary descriptions of the unyielding bodies of impenitent or non-conforming people, Claudius emphasises his body's reluctance to bend into a contrite gesture, 'Bow stubborn knees| And heart...be soft' (3.3.70-1) (Q1 alone has the additional stage direction 'he kneeles'). Claudius extends this idea of stiffness to include his 'liméd soul' (3.3.68); unable to alter their sinful patterns, his thoughts are stuck in wickedness like birds trapped in birdlime, a strong adhesive. Claudius abandons the prayer by stressing that the gesture has had no effect on his thoughts, 'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.| Words without thoughts never to heaven go' (3.3.97-8). Targoff argues that Claudius' prayer critiques the Church of England's reliance on the idea that the kneeling gesture produced conforming and devoted thoughts in a person's mind, no matter what their

Players forbade any 'jesting' mention or representation of God on stage, consolidating a long tradition of censoring representation of religion on stage. Playwrights often escaped these strictures by using stories from myths or (as with *Julius Caesar*) the distant past. Characters in plays written before the Act sometimes make explicit reference to God when kneeling, for instance in *3 Henry VI*, promising to fight harder for the Yorkist cause, Warwick states, 'Here on my knee, I vow to God above' (2.3.29). Shakespeare's characters kneel most commonly to acknowledge social superiors (in *The Tempest* 3.2.40-1, Stephano orders his new servant Caliban, 'Kneel...I will stand and so shall Trinculo'), to ask favours (in *Measure for Measure* 5.1.19, Peter tells Isabel, suitor to the Duke, to 'kneel before him'), and to ask pardon (Aumerle, having killed Richard II in *Richard II* 5.3.30, states, 'For ever may my knees grow to the earth'). Not kneeling is significant in some plays; for instance in *Henry VIII* 4.2.99-103, when Katherine is supplanted by Ann Boleyn, a messenger pointedly fails to kneel when he brings a message to Katherine, signalling Katherine's descent through the social hierarchy. The only example of a Shakespearean character kneeling before a divine being on stage is *Cymbeline* when 'The Ghosts fall on their knees' (SD after 5.4.92), before Jupiter (pagan deities tended to escape censorship). The database provides a comprehensive list of kneeling gestures in Shakespeare's plays.

initial intention before they started to kneel.¹⁶⁴ In finding his body stiff and ‘stubborn[ly]’ unaccustomed to kneeling, Claudius enacts the fact that the body must be carefully moulded into certain habits and the mind thereby ‘soft[ened]’ and made malleable so that it can acquire new thought patterns. Sticking and faltering, Claudius demonstrates the difficult process of forcing a soul to habituate itself, through gesture, to obedience. As Malabou writes of habitual action, ‘In the initial stages, the body shows itself intractable, its movements are uncertain and are either too strong or too weak for the task at hand’.¹⁶⁵

Julius Caesar’s interest in the idea that kneeling might disrupt rather than preserve social hierarchies can be traced back to Shakespeare’s earlier works. In *Henry VI*, Suffolk kneels to be knighted, but the play questions the common early modern notion that kneeling to be knighted has a performative power that ennoble the kneeler and confirms their loyalty to the monarch.¹⁶⁶ The king intends thereby to

¹⁶⁴ Like Cook, Targoff suggests that the kneeling gesture can produce and ‘transform’ thought. She argues that historical evidence suggests that even when gesturers seem sceptical of kneeling’s ability to transform thought, the inherent power of this gesture will nevertheless transform their minds to some extent. Targoff’s discussion of the ambiguities surrounding kneeling’s effect on the mind in *Hamlet* can be extended to similar ambiguities in *Julius Caesar*. ‘[W]hat is strikingly, and mistakenly, absent from our accounts of the Elizabethan sentiment is precisely what the play interrogates in staging Claudius’s prayer: the belief that external practices might not only reflect but also potentially transform the internal self... Within the context of *Hamlet*, the potential for a causal relation between outward performance and inward change is neither confirmed nor entirely denied. The play does not pursue any further the state of Claudius’ mind, nor does it burden Hamlet with discovering the folly of his misreading. And yet, however ambivalent *Hamlet* may ultimately be about the transformative capacity of external behaviour, the Church of England was firmly aligned behind it. There were no absolute divisions between sincerity and theatricality, inwardness and outwardness, within the early modern English church’, Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 3-4.

¹⁶⁵ Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 73.

¹⁶⁶ The performativity of the knighting ceremony is well documented; Jesús D. Rodríguez Velasco writes that from its inception knighting was ‘a performative moment in which a particular speech act gives rise to the transformation of a political subject; someone who was not previously considered a knight becomes one and acquires a set of privileges, social distinction, and fiscal exemptions’, *Order and Chivalry: Knighthood and Citizenship in Late Medieval Castile* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010), 19. Knighting is often used as a key example of a performative utterance or gesture, e.g. Greig Henderson, “Performative,” in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Irena Makaryk (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993), 237. Mrozowski argues that kneeling and rising quickly (as in the knighting ceremony) were merely symbolic acts, whereas the

reward Suffolk for his good service, but Suffolk ultimately emerges to be a political traitor who connives against the king and commits adultery with the queen. Another aspect of *Julius Caesar* echoed in other Shakespearean plays is the idea that when a person kneels to someone they ought to have authority over, they overturn a natural, cosmic hierarchy. The conspirators force Caesar to prostrate himself before them in death, prompting a disruption of natural order, ‘a lioness hath whelpéd in the streets, and graves have yawned and yielded up their dead’ (2.2.15-16); earlier, Brutus enjoins his wife, ‘Kneel not gentle Portia’ (2.1.278), suggesting that he is uncomfortable with a ‘gentle’ (noble, high born, distinguished) person kneeling to him.¹⁶⁷ Volumnia emphasises that kneeling to Coriolanus inverts her natural maternal authority over him (in Ralph Fiennes’ 2011 film this is exacerbated because Vanessa Redgrave’s Volumnia is a high-ranking officer, unaccustomed to submission):¹⁶⁸ ‘I kneel before thee, and unproperly| Show duty, as mistaken all this while| Between the child and parent’ (*Coriolanus* 5.3.54-6). Coriolanus extrapolates her idea that it is ‘unproper’ for a mother to kneel to her child, conjuring an image of a cosmic hierarchy completely overturned,

What is this?
 Your knees to me? to your corrected son?
 Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach
 Fillip the stars; then let the mutinous winds
 Strike the proud cedars ‘gainst the fiery sun;

prolonged and painful kneeling of prayer had greater power to affect a person’s thoughts, as a ‘posture of sustained meditation, which is helpful to inner transformation and the absolution of sin’, “Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture,” 8, 10-11.

¹⁶⁷ O.E.D., ‘gentle’, *n*.

¹⁶⁸ *Coriolanus*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Ralph Fiennes (California: Icon Entertainment International, 2011), DVD. It is difficult to tell whether Redgrave’s Volumnia ranks higher than Fiennes’ Coriolanus (which would make her kneeling to him especially striking), because their uniforms are only loosely based on real twenty-first-century military ones. As a Roman, Fiennes variously wears Serbian combat uniform and a uniform redolent of the Serbian gendarmerie, whilst Redgrave’s uniform suggests Bundeswehr parade dress with ribbons taken from US army citations. Miloš Brckalo and Bill Emerson identified the Serbian uniforms and Redgrave’s insignia respectively for me via email. Emerson remarked that it was unusual for twenty-first-century officers to wear so few awards, another way in which the uniforms were removed from reality.

Murdering impossibility, to make
What cannot be, slight work. (5.3.56-62)

Coriolanus shows how important the notion that, as Cranmer urged, human authority is part of a wider cosmic hierarchy, was to Shakespeare. Though unlike Cranmer, *Julius Caesar* does not explicitly evoke the divine right of kings, in this play the destructive effects of inverting the significance of the kneeling gesture have dramatic consequences in the natural world, suggesting that human authority is part of a much more all-encompassing order of things.

Cassius acknowledges that Caesar's murder has the potential to be performed, 'How many ages hence| Shall this our lofty scene be acted over| In states unborn and accents yet unknown!' (3.1.111-3). Here, Cassius hints that future tyrants will be dealt with in a similar fashion, but also explicitly alludes to a wider preoccupation in Shakespeare's works with the potential for the kneeling gesture to be theatrically performed. In *1 Henry IV*, Falstaff dresses as the king, and Hal pretends to genuflect devotedly to him, 'here is my leg' (2.4.388). In *2 Henry VI*, Bullingbrooke organises a fake ceremony of allegiance to the devil, he asks the 'witch', 'be you prostrate, and grovel on the earth' (1.4.10-11). These examples test the performative power of kneeling, suggesting that this gesture of allegiance to authority can be used to mock or undermine authority. Bullingbrooke is only encouraging the witch to kneel to the devil because he aims to entrap the Duchess of Gloucester in the act of witchcraft, thus putting an end to devil-worship. Hal and Falstaff's purpose is ostensibly to parody Hal's ceremoniously deferent relationship with his father; Falstaff wears a cushion on his head for a crown and calls the bottle of wine he is drinking from his 'sceptre'. However, both these examples also suggest that despite this parodic context, kneeling does have the power to induce or consolidate deferent and loyal thoughts. Throughout most of the *Henry IV* duology, Hal remains loyal to Falstaff as an alternative father-figure (before spectacularly disowning him when he becomes king). In *2 Henry VI*, once the Duchess has been caught, the witch is also led off under guard (1.4.52, and SD after 1.4.54), presumably to be punished as if her devil-worship was in earnest. This reflects that fact that, whether or not they are hypocritically performed, most acts of kneeling in Shakespeare's plays have a persuasive power and symbolic significance. These earlier examples which depict very real consequences to faked or parodied kneeling gestures suggest that in *Julius Caesar* there is a residual

power in the kneeling gesture that continues to make the conspirators deferent to Caesar even after they have killed him.

Kneeling in Julius Caesar

Rather than solely constituting a sign of Caesar's power over his subjects, kneeling in *Julius Caesar* is the site of these subjects' power over Caesar in two significant ways. Kneeling to Caesar gives the conspirators a pretext for getting close enough to their ruler to destroy him, a clear inversion of the normative significance of the kneeling gesture, which was usually used to produce and consolidate feelings of deference towards authority. Whilst in early modern culture kneeling was a ruler's way of constructing obedient subjects, in *Julius Caesar* the conspirators turn this on its head. The conspirators use the traditional implications of kneeling as a gesture of subservience to a tyrant to construct *Caesar* proleptically as a tyrannical ruler in an attempt to justify his murder. The conspirators acknowledge that Caesar is not yet a tyrant; they kill him purely because he might later become one, just as a serpent's egg should be destroyed before it hatches into a snake,

So Caesar may
Then, lest he may, prevent...
think him as a serpent's egg,
Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous
And kill him in the shell (2.1.27-34).

In *Julius Caesar*, kneeling creates a mutual relationship, where relatively 'higher' and 'lower' bodies translate into 'higher' and 'lower' social statuses. In one of the play's most crucial speeches, where Cassius persuades Brutus to join the conspiracy, Cassius demonstrates how a mutually-constructed relationship can be a way of controlling others. Cassius argues that, just as an eye needs a reflective surface to see itself, a person can only know themselves through others. Brutus acknowledges, 'the eye sees not itself but by reflection| By some other thing' (1.2.52-3), and Cassius counters,

Since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection; I your glass
Will modestly discover to yourself

That of yourself you know not of (1.2.67-70)

Cassius concludes by urging Brutus to pursue ‘Honour’ (1.2.91 ff), which he defines as snatching power from Caesar. Cassius is like a warping mirror, actively constructing rather than passively reflecting Brutus’ identity. This echoes the way in which being a noble person in the early modern era was, as the historian Ian Archer explains, primarily about the way other people responded to you, ‘being a gentleman was essentially about being accepted as one by other gentlemen’.¹⁶⁹ Cassius applies the same logic to Caesar, arguing that Caesar’s and his subjects’ relative social roles are created through mutual interaction; Caesar is only a tyrant because the Romans treat him as one, constructing themselves as passive followers, ‘Why should Caesar be a tyrant then? [...he would not be a wolf] But that he sees the Romans are but sheep’ (1.3.103-5). This opens up the possibility that not only Caesar but his subjects can change the meaning of these roles. This is precisely what the conspirators do when they use the kneeling gesture to construct Caesar as a tyrant so that they can feel justified in killing him.

Cassius uses the fact that Brutus’ identity is created ‘by reflection’ in Cassius’ words to sculpt Brutus into a particular role: that of head conspirator. One of the most significant ways that identity is mutually created in *Julius Caesar* is through comparing postures. Throughout the play, Caesar and the conspirators are always intensely aware of their relative postures. Cognitive theory and earlier texts like Cantor’s suggest that higher and lower bodies are not mere metaphors for higher and lower social ranks; rather, social hierarchy is produced and given meaning by means of these movements and arrangements of the (‘docile’) body. The philosopher Alphonso Lingis uses Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the body schema to explore ideas of posture, uprightness, and ‘standing tall’. Lingis argues that our gestures are given meaning by their relationship to other people, ‘Our “body image” is not an image formed in the privacy of our own imagination: its visible, tangible, and audible shape is held in the gaze and touch of others’. Like Merleau-Ponty, Lingis argues that understanding, responding to, and mimicking other people occurs ‘not with a concept-generating faculty of our mind’, but with the motions of the body. He cites as an

¹⁶⁹ Ian Archer, *Up and Down the Social Ladder in Elizabethan England*, Lecture, National Portrait Gallery, London, November 28 2013.

example our ability to understand the uprightness of a sequoia trunk only by sensing and replicating this uprightness in our own posture,

When we look at the sequoias, we do not focus on them by circumscribing their outlines; the width of their towering trunks and the shapes of their sparse leaves appear as the surfacing into visibility of an inner channel of upward thrust. We sense its force and measure its rise with the movement of our eyes and the upright axis of our body. We comprehend this uprightness of their life not with a concept-generating faculty of our mind but with the uprighting aspiration of our vertebrate organism they awaken.¹⁷⁰

This quotation shows that we can both understand and alter our relations to others simply by adjusting the vertical axis of our body. It helps us to see that, though there is an undeniable element of conscious planning to Caesar's murder, an attention to, and manipulation of, the 'upright axis' of the body is crucial to Caesar's downfall. The play establishes a strong pattern of embodied up-down metaphors to express and create power, and it is as if the conspirators pick up on this and use those metaphors to their own advantage.

Caesar's death, which the conspirators describe as ridding the world of a 'tyrant' who has achieved a social position too high over other people, is seen as a 'fall' (3.1.77) from a standing posture, to a posture of prostration. Brutus imagines Caesar climbing other people like a 'ladder', then looking down on them from his vantage point, 'scorning the base degrees| By which he did ascend' (2.1.23-7). Cassius describes the conspirators as exaggeratedly smaller beings, no higher than Caesar's legs, playing upon the contemporary dual sense of 'petty' as 'physically small' and of low social importance or rank, or (as Cassius goes on to say), 'dishonourable'.¹⁷¹

he doth bestride the narrow world

¹⁷⁰ Alphonso Lingis, "The Body Postured and Dissolute," in Veronique Foti, ed., *Merleau Ponty: Difference, Materiality, Painting* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 64-5.

¹⁷¹ O.E.D., 'petty', *adj.* and *n.*

Like a Colossus, and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonourable graves (1.2.135-8)

Cassius emphasises the difference in perspectives between kneeling people and Caesar standing. The conspirators do not see but simply ‘peep’ (‘peep’ is further linked to ‘petty’ by alliteration), and their views are restricted by Caesar’s ‘huge legs’; unlike Caesar who surveys the world and makes it ‘narrow’ by comparison, all the conspirators can see from their much lower perspective is their own ‘graves’.

Kneeling to Caesar in *Julius Caesar* seems to be a habit for the conspirators. Cassius’ emphasis on Caesar’s hugeness is part and parcel of the same cognitive framework which demands that Cassius (like every inferior of Caesar) ‘must bend his body’ (1.2.116-8) at Caesar’s whim. That this is a society whose inhabitants have been trained to use kneeling as social currency is seen not only in the conspirators’ pointed kneeling gesture before Caesar’s murder but also in Antony’s servant kneeling before the newly-victorious conspirators: ‘Thus, Brutus, did my master bid me kneel...’ (3.1.123). Couple this with the fact that (as the early modern sources discussed in this chapter show) kneeling was a prevalent way of expressing and creating hierarchical social and religious relations in the early modern era, and we can productively examine *Julius Caesar* as a play that dramatises the effect of habitual kneeling on the mind and body.

As the conspirators kneel to Caesar, both parties draw attention to the social implications of the gesture. Cassius addresses Caesar, ‘As low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall’ (3.1.56). The word ‘falling’ throughout the play signifies low social status; at Brutus’ suggestion that Caesar has epilepsy, ‘the Falling sickness’, Cassius responds with a pun on being content with a dishonourable life, ‘No, Caesar hath it not: but you and I...we have the falling sickness’ (1.2.255-6). Caesar compares his high ‘rank’, ‘true-fix’d...quality’, and superior social ‘place’ to ‘the northern star’, high up in the ‘firmament’ (3.1.60-9). When he dies, Caesar registers the end of his authority as his body’s physical descent, ‘fall, Caesar’ (3.1.77). Antony also registers the idea that Caesar’s physical fall is precisely the moment of his ‘fall’ from authority; Antony’s first words contrast Caesar’s prostrate form with his previous political might, ‘O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?’ (3.1.148). At the Globe’s 400th anniversary production, Mark Rylance created a striking contrast as Caesar’s prone

corpse lay at the feet of his towering statue, the latter as ‘fix’d’ and ‘unshak’d’ as Caesar had mistakenly believed himself to be.¹⁷² In North’s Plutarch, the wound that Brutus gives Caesar is ‘low’ both because it is low down on Caesar’s body and because it is ignoble (‘below the belt’ in both senses of the word), ‘Brutus him selfe gaue him one blow about his privities’.¹⁷³ Brutus’ new status as high up in the social hierarchy is underscored when he is knelt to straight after killing Caesar; Antony’s servant enters and says, ‘Thus, Brutus, did my master bid me kneel...’ (3.1.123).

Julius Caesar is an apposite play for examining how seemingly-stable social roles can be resisted and changed, as it repeatedly problematises the idea that vocations and social hierarchy are fixed. At the beginning, the tribunes grow anxious because they are unable to discern the vocations of holidaying tradespeople. Flavius berates the traders for not having ‘the sign| Of your profession’ (1.1.4-5). The cobbler responds that his business is with ‘awl’ and ‘all’ – suggesting he is both of a fixed trade (he works only with the ‘awl’) and of fluid identity (he works with ‘all’); the homophony of ‘awl’ and ‘all’ further frustrates Flavius’ attempts to discern the cobbler’s trade.¹⁷⁴ Caesar by contrast associates superior social ‘rank’ and ‘quality’ with fixity, implying that a key indicator of high social status is retaining that status constantly,

I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fix’d and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament...
So in the world: ‘tis furnish’d well with men,
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;
Yet in the number I do know but one

¹⁷² Archival Recording, *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Mark Rylance, September 21 1999, Globe Theatre Archive. In the prompt book for this production, scene 3.1 is labelled ‘THEN FALL, CAESAR’ in pencil, suggesting that this image of falling was central to this company’s interpretation of the play, Prompt Book, *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Mark Rylance, Globe Theatre, 1999, Globe Theatre Archive, 31.

¹⁷³ Plutarch, *Lives*, Xxxi^v.

¹⁷⁴ Athanasios Boulukos argues that the cobbler’s quibbling over his identity prefigures Brutus’ preoccupation with stoic wisdom and social hierarchies, citing Horace’s remark in *Satires* that a wise person has the capacity to be both a cobbler and a monarch without actually practicing either vocation, “The Cobbler and the Tribunes in *Julius Caesar*,” *Modern Language Notes* 119(5) (2004), 1084.

That unassailable holds on his rank,
Unshak'd of motion; and that I am he (3.1.60-70)

In Rylance's production, at the words 'unshak'd of motion', Caesar slapped the kneeling Brutus half-playfully on the cheek; Brutus remained kneeling 'unshak'd'. This gesture suggested that Caesar was attempting to 'shake' Brutus from his kneeling posture and thus to test how fixed the social hierarchy was; he thereby drew attention to the way that this hierarchy is embodied in, and threatened by, gesturing subjects and their rulers.

Caesar's speech reflects prominent early modern descriptions of the ideal social hierarchy as static, immutable, and divinely-ordained. Cranmer states, 'Almightie God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, earth, and waters in a most excellent and perfect order'. In the human realm, 'He hath assigned kings and princes with other governors under them all in good and necessary order... Every degree of people in their vocation, calling, and office hath appointed to them their duty and order. Some are in high degree, some in low'.¹⁷⁵ In *Julius Caesar*, natural portents—corpses rising from the grave, comets, lions giving birth in the streets—strengthen the sense that Caesar's murder is a disruption of this hierarchy encompassing heaven and earth. However, Cassius' critique of kingship, and the play's continual engagement with debates about the fixity of vocations and hierarchies, suggest that, rather than being always-already in existence, this hierarchy requires the habitual performance of acts of obedience by 'docile bodies' to stay in being. Specifically, the fact that the early modern body needed to be moulded and shaped to fit its social role indicates that the 'natural' hierarchical order is partially constructed by humans. The social mobility for which the conspirators stand was just as prominent as appeals to God-given hierarchy in the late sixteenth century.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Cranmer, *Certain Sermons*, R1^{r-v}.

¹⁷⁶ 'Population growth, the commercialised economy, and the growth of London' generated a growing class of upwardly mobile merchants who threatened the established hierarchy; this nouveau riche's status was not static like the old hierarchy but endlessly fragile, able to move both 'up and down the social ladder', Archer, *Up and Down the Social Ladder*. Kieran Dolin speaks of Shakespeare's concern in plays of this period, like *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-8), with the 'radically new conditions of existence' generated by 'the gradual collapse of feudal society' and new social mobility, *A Critical Introduction to Law and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 85.

Implying that the social inequality between Caesar and themselves is wrongful, Cassius denies that fixed 'stars' determine a person's life, rather, 'Men...are masters of their fates' (1.2.139). He focuses on kneeling as a symptom of this wrongful inequality, whereby Caesar presents himself as having a fixed place in society and also wants to fix others in a lower place, by moulding their bodies, 'Cassius is| A wretched creature, and must bend his body| If Caesar carelessly but nod on him' (1.2.116-8). But the conspirators try to use the very adaptability that had made their bodies docile and obedient to Caesar to change their social status and resist his rule.

Shakespeare leaves it ambiguous whether the conspirators are successful in reclaiming the kneeling gesture. Caesar's response to the conspirators' kneeling gesture both consciously renounces the tyrant-subject relationship the conspirators attempt to construct, and discloses certain tyrannical features,

These couchings and these lowly courtesies
Might fire the blood of ordinary men...Be not fond
To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood
That will be thaw'd from the true quality
With that which melteth fools—I mean sweet words,
Low-crooked curtesies and base spaniel fawning.
Thy brother by decree is banished
If thou dost bend, and pray, and fawn for him,
I spurn thee like a cur out of my way (3.1.36-46)

Initially, by rejecting kneeling and the 'low-crooked curtesies' it implies, Caesar refuses to accept that other men should kneel to him like a tyrant's subjects. And yet, this refusal stems from Caesar's belief that he is superior to 'ordinary men'.

Insultingly calling Cimber a 'cur', Caesar reveals that he does have the potential to become a tyrant, lording it over other people. Caesar's ambiguous depiction of himself as both a lordly superior and a person battling with a dog or 'cur' uncannily echoes the conspirators' own ambivalent depiction of Caesar as potentially both a noble being who is sacrificed by humans in an almost Christ-like way and a dead animal gnawed by dogs after a hunt, 'Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods| Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds'. Surveying Caesar's corpse, Antony evokes precisely the hunting image the conspirators aimed to avoid, 'here wast thou bayed,

brave hart...here thy hunters stand' (3.1.204-5). Just as Caesar walks a fine line between being a legitimate ruler and a tyrant, the conspirators walk a fine line between being liberators and lawless animals.

Rylance's production made this tension visible. Initially, the conspirators 'carved' rather than 'hewed' Caesar, circling Caesar calculatingly and cutting him carefully with their swords. Then they descended into an animalistic 'hewing' of his 'carcass', ultimately engaging in what the fight notes call a lengthy, frenzied 'mass stabbing' of Caesar's prostrate body, as one cast member let out a long animal wail of pain, evoking a bestial hunt.¹⁷⁷ Brutus did not partake in this mass stabbing, and his actions emphasised the contrast between 'carving' and 'hewing', and between acting like men and like 'hounds'. Having stabbed Caesar once, Brutus returned to the spot on stage where he had knelt to Caesar before the attack and resumed his kneeling posture.¹⁷⁸ Brutus' courteous kneeling gesture downstage emphasised the animalistic behaviour of the other conspirators upstage. Whilst Brutus respectfully 'carve[d] Caesar] as a dish fit for the gods', the other conspirators 'hew[ed] him as a carcass fit for hounds'. Taken together, the action upstage and downstage encapsulated the curious mix of respect and disrespect for Caesar in the way that the conspirators envision his murder. This production drew out the way that, in the play-text, the conspirators fail neatly to construct Caesar as a pure tyrant with their kneeling gesture. They can never completely fix his malleable image in the form that they desire.

And yet, the conspirators are unable to shake off this constructed image of Caesar as tyrant. When Caesar's ghost appears, Brutus' first reaction is to believe that he has created this domineering image of Caesar, 'I think it is the weakness of mine eyes| That shapes this monstrous apparition' (4.3.276-7). North's Plutarch does not identify the ghost as Caesar, emphasising rather its superiority and authority: it seems a man of 'wonderful greatness'.¹⁷⁹ Shakespeare's stage directions in 4.3 stipulate that it is 'the ghost of Caesar', but also preserve North's association of the ghost with

¹⁷⁷ 'Assassination of Caesar: FIGHT SEQUENCE', *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Mark Rylance, Globe Theatre, London, 1999, 1 leaf, Globe Theatre Archive. For instance the 5th move is, 'Caesar grabs Metellus right arm. Caesar circles with Metellus, holding Metellus' sword arm, and points sword'.

¹⁷⁸ *Julius Caesar*, Rylance.

¹⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Lives*, Xxxiii^v.

authority and domination. On the battlefield at Philippi, the conspirators' military defeat is described as Caesar's revenge. Brutus chooses to kill himself when he sees the ghost 'here in Philippi fields' (5.5.19), whilst dying on his own sword, Cassius states, 'Caesar, thou art reveng'd| Even with the sword that kill'd thee' (5.3.44-5). This is fitting given that they knelt to Caesar before killing him, as kneeling was originally a pagan gesture of submission to a military victor;¹⁸⁰ the kneeling gesture thus prefigures and even generates Caesar's ultimate victory. As the conspirators kneel, the plasticity of a group of people attempting to overturn others' authority over them competes with the fixity of traditional social hierarchies. Habits of submission are partly destroyed, but also partly linger in powerful, residual ways.

Performance, plasticity, and hypocrisy

In the earliest performances of *Julius Caesar*, the kinaesthetic class differences within the play, whereby characters' high and low social statuses are embodied by higher and lower bodily postures, will have been replicated and confirmed by the ways in which the audience was vertically arranged. The most expensive seats were situated higher up in the Renaissance playhouse and enabled the richer (and usually more noble) patrons of the theatre to enjoy a higher position than the poorer, lower-class, groundlings standing in the yard below. However, this effect will have been, potentially, multiply nuanced. For example, though the higher-class audience members in the higher-up seats will have enjoyed the ability to look down on the onstage action like Caesar atop his metaphorical ladder, they will at times have had to bow their heads and bodies to see the players below them. In so doing, they may have felt their backs and necks bend in a way that resonated with Cassius 'bend[ing] his body' in submission. This remains the case to an extent in the modern Globe, where it is still much cheaper to be a groundling than to sit up in the gallery. However, the Globe is an exception nowadays; in the modern West End in London, the situation is reversed: the most expensive seats for the richest people are also the lowest, in the stalls. And of course we do not kneel or bow to each other nearly so much in present day England. The fact that audience members are not, in the present day, always arranged in a vertical hierarchy that neatly mirrors the hierarchies in the play is perhaps one reason why modern directors often seek other ways than the vertical axis

¹⁸⁰ Mrozowski, "Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture," 6-8.

of the body to portray the onstage kneeling gesture. For example, in Jan Klata's 2013-14 *Hamlet* with Schauspielhaus Bochum, Claudius' struggle to kneel and pray did not focus on him struggling to move from a standing to a kneeling posture at all. Instead, Klata darkened the entire stage except for a tiny spotlighted space stage right. As he attempted to pray, Claudius laboriously attempted to move from the dark space to the light space; this dark-light contrast will have been experienced in the same way by all members of the audience, wherever they were sitting.¹⁸¹ In Rylance's version, several critics noticed not the relative heights of Caesar and the conspirators but rather the time Caesar took to die (which again will have been experienced in the same way, wherever a person sat). Caesar's death was noticeably drawn out, lasting roughly 67 seconds (from Cassius' line 'speak hands, for me' to the final stab) and involving a 16-phase fight sequence whereby Caesar tried to fend off each conspirator in turn. Ignoring the height-issue completely, Michael Billington wrote in the *Guardian* that it was the sheer difficulty of killing Caesar quickly and cleanly that showed his power over the conspirators and the durability of his authority; he was 'a robust autocrat who was going down fighting'.¹⁸²

Tackling these difficulties head-on, Phyllida Lloyd's 2012/13 production of *Julius Caesar* at the Donmar Warehouse, London, is a good illustration of how the differences in perspective between Caesar and the kneeling conspirators can still work powerfully in modern performance. The production was set within a women's prison; the cast played a group of prisoners staging a production of *Julius Caesar*. Lloyd argued that the prison setting ('a world of oppression and violence') resonated with the play's themes of hierarchy, 'By setting it in a prison, we are creating a world in which violence is ever possible, freedom is restricted, power and hierarchy are the meat and drink of every person who is incarcerated; where status is important, and

¹⁸¹ *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Jan Klata, Teatr Szekspirowski, Gdańsk, October 3 2014. This theatre, opened in September 2014, is a reconstruction of what is believed to be the first professional purpose-built theatre that housed productions of Shakespeare's works in continental Europe during Shakespeare's lifetime. The original site was used by travelling English players performing popular classics, including *Hamlet*.

¹⁸² Michael Billington, "Saturday Review," *Guardian*, May 29 1999, 4. Many critics noted, often negatively, how much this moment was dwelt upon. For instance, Robert King writes, the 'violence was studiously artificial', *The North American Review*, 284(6) (1999), 42. Madeleine North describes the drawn-out killing sequence as, 'a cartoon-like farce', *Time Out*, June 2 1999, 130.

where superstition is rife'.¹⁸³ This production focused innovatively on the kneeling gesture when the conspirators knelt to and then murdered Caesar (Frances Barber). Lloyd deliberately gave her theatre a levelling effect, with all audience members seated on the same level in rows of prison-style plastic seating, so that she could play with perspective and audience experience.

At Caesar's murder, the company carefully drew the audience's attention to the differences in perspective between the kneeling conspirators and Caesar who sat elevated above them on a chair. Barber swapped seats with an audience member in the front row, meaning that as Caesar died he was facing the same way as the audience. As a result, as the conspirators knelt to Barber, the audience shared Barber's perspective relative to them. Occasionally turning round to address her lines to audience-members in a manner that suggested she expected sympathy and support from them, Barber consolidated this relationship, and this identification, between Caesar and the audience. Simultaneously, via a camera trained on Barber's face, an image of Caesar's threatening countenance was shown on television screens positioned high up on either side of the stage. Thus, as well as experiencing Caesar's viewpoint of the conspirators as they knelt and looked up at him, the audience could see Caesar's face looking down on them, as if they were in the conspirators' position.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ The Donmar Warehouse, "A Conversation with Phyllida Lloyd, Director," *Julius Caesar: Behind the Scenes*, Accessed July 15 2014, <http://www.donmarwarehouse.com/~media/Files/Julius%20Caesar%20Behind%20the%20Scenes%20Guide.ashx>, 21. Lloyd analogises, 'Caesar represented an erosion of fundamental civil rights so huge, so towering, terrifying and confining that the conspirators believed they were in a prison', 18. Harriet Walter (Brutus) draws the same comparison in an "Interview" (27), 'The metaphor of an incarcerated group of people who are dependent on favours and handouts and punishments and everything else from a superior power is also neat. That is everyday life in a prison'. Lloyd's "Production Diary" demonstrates how seriously the prison setting was taken: during rehearsals, 'staying true to our locked prison setting, no-one leaves the space. This means that in the first run, props go astray, wires end up in a tangle and costumes are left all over the place', Week Six, 20. The actors used only those props and costumes that would have been available to prisoners. For instance, the phrase 'beware the Ides of March' is found in a magazine horoscope.

¹⁸⁴ The audience also experienced the death physically; the conspirators jostled the audience as they crowded to force Caesar to drink bleach, Archival Recording, *Julius Caesar*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, Donmar Warehouse, London, January 22, 2013, V&A Archive, Blythe House, London.

Lloyd's production illustrates how crucial perspective and relative vertical height are to significant moments in the play. As Caesar was murdered, Lloyd enabled the audience to experience the radically different viewpoints of the kneeling conspirators and the upright Caesar and invited the audience to ponder the different allegiances with different characters that these two perspectives might provoke. Fittingly, in this production, after Caesar's death, Barber returned to the stage to play a tyrannical prison warden who threatens to stop the amateur production in its tracks: a bold suggestion that after his murder Caesar retains some authority over the conspirators.

Returning, in conclusion, to the material cultures of 1599, the original performance conditions of *Julius Caesar* meant that this play will very likely have been framed by another significant moment of kneeling; the players will probably have knelt to the audience, and to the monarch if the play was a court performance, at the end of the play. Tiffany Stern questions the previously-common idea that prayer to and on behalf of monarchs and players' patrons were only a feature of court performances. She shows 'that in some—and perhaps all—companies, terminal prayers for some public performances were usual' throughout the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. Stern describes these moments as ones where the boundary between the fictional world of the play and the 'real' world outside it is uncertain, as they are often 'moments in which the Epilogue becomes cognizant of the audience and "notices" the monarch' in court performances.¹⁸⁵ She suggests that prayers or bows to monarchs in court performances at the end of plays that critique the authority of rulers might be contaminated by some of the anarchic elements in the play, even as the final kneeling or bowing gesture attempts to contain those elements by reasserting the players' deferent relationship towards their rulers and patrons. This was especially the case once Shakespeare's company officially became 'The King's Men' with the accession of James I in 1603, 'That means that though, potentially, whatever king or queen may have been questioned or slaughtered within the fiction, the reigning monarch of the

¹⁸⁵ Stern, "Epilogues, Prayers after Plays," 27, 25. Stern states (27), 'Though prayer endings from the time of King James onwards tend not to be found in print, they are still referred to' in other texts and therefore probably continued to happen, especially as these mentions of prayer-endings 'assume a reader who is familiar with the event they are describing. They seem, that is to say, simply to be reflecting normal theatrical practice'.

time ruled the end of some versions of Shakespearean drama'. For instance, she writes, in words that could equally be applied to *Julius Caesar*,

the prayer moment in Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* suggests that on some occasions at least Shakespeare's play ended its exploration of troubled kingship, its questioning of everything the monarch stood for, with a rousing, monarchical prayer. Ironies encoded in this text can perhaps be traced to that prayer...its words are already potentially heralded as meaning their opposite...Bringing complicated issues of loyalty to God and to the monarch to bear on whatever play had preceded them, the will (depending on the audience's point of view) have bolstered or ironized the play that they accompanied.¹⁸⁶

Stern's evidence suggests that players knelt or bowed at the end of *Julius Caesar* for some (if not all) of their earliest performances, especially as the Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company before they became The King's Men) often performed at court. This action will have resonated with the conspirators kneeling to Caesar within the play. The preceding action of the play will question the sincerity of the players' act of kneeling deferentially to the monarch at the end of the play. At the same time, this act of deference will retrospectively comment on the conspirators' hypocritical and seditious kneeling gesture, framing it as something aberrant and wrong. The next chapters explain how this uneasy relationship between performance and reality in the theatre was at the heart of antitheatricalist discourse, and has continued into the present day; antitheatricalists and modern cognitive theorists both express fear that performance can create real seditious, immoral, or dangerous behaviour.

Kneeling at the end of the play, a player retains residual traces of their character. Half in and half out of the play, part player finishing the day's work and still part fictional character, they occupy a space where performance and reality are not ontologically separable but shape and reflect each other. This is the very space where habit does its work, where performed gestures seep into the core of our being and become 'real' second nature. The cognitive themes that this chapter has explored

¹⁸⁶ Stern, "Epilogues, Prayers after Plays," 28-9.

in *Julius Caesar* can also be brought to bear on the process of creating the play itself. For instance, we saw that Cassius and Brutus espouse a model of kinaesthetic learning whereby one person's identity is created and sustained by their relation to the people around them, 'The eye sees not itself| But by reflection, by some other thing'. In her analysis of how early modern actors learnt their parts and created roles, Tribble describes a 'dynamic system' whereby embodied learning is fundamentally achieved through mimicking, observing, and interacting with other gesturers.¹⁸⁷ By relying on embodied interactions to shape each other's identities, Cassius and Brutus, and the conspirators kneeling to Caesar, reflect both early modern rehearsal practices in the playhouse and early modern methods for producing political subjects. In *Julius Caesar*, the boundary between real-life kinaesthetic relationships and staged representations of those relationships is blurred.

This reflects a wider Shakespearean and early modern concern with the potential for kneeling to be either pure performance or a genuine devoted gesture. Most worryingly for early modern religious writers, these two were not strictly separable; seemingly devout gestures could conceal seditious or impious thoughts. Speaking of fictional prayers performed by characters within the world of the play (rather than those addressed outwards to the audience or monarch) Joseph Sterrett argues that Shakespearean 'prayers, like plays, are performances, enactments that expose the prayer-ers to judgment, both human and divine',¹⁸⁸ claiming that Shakespeare often deliberately stages prayers that are not heard by God, such as Claudius' failed prayer in *Hamlet*, in order to draw attention to the fact that they are heard by a human audience in the playhouse. As we have seen, though not praying, the conspirators explicitly invoke ideas of performance and acting as they kneel then kill Caesar, 'How many ages hence| Shall this our lofty scene be acted over| In states unborn and accents yet unknown!'

Renaissance writers often focus anxiously on the fact that it is difficult to tell whether a kneeling gesture effectively shapes the thoughts of the gesturer and makes them devout, whether 'performance' becomes 'reality'. In the Elizabethan religious context, particularly towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, these debates were

¹⁸⁷ Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe*, 2.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph Sterrett, *The Unheard Prayer: Religious Toleration in Shakespeare's Drama* (New York, Brill, 2012), ix.

dangerous ones to partake in, with potentially painful lethal consequences for those who overstepped the mark. By reframing ideas about kneeling, performance, and reality within a partly-fictional Roman context, Shakespeare is able to explore, and perhaps even intervene in, these debates from a safe distance. Many early modern religious writers were obsessed with scrutinising whether or not a person was kneeling out of true loyalty to the Church of England and the monarch.¹⁸⁹ Because the body was the only visible sign of thought and intention available to scrutiny during silent moments of prayer, writers on kneeling had to look for bodily clues that a person was using a seemingly-devout kneeling gesture to cloak secret seditious or impious thoughts. Thus, though early moderns often acknowledged that the body does not always shape or represent the mind, they nevertheless believed that the signs of this separation between thought and body would be embodied. In *A Poore Mans Rest* (1620), John Norden acknowledges that many people make gestures of devotion purely to appear pious, or to flatter rulers. These gestures do not match up to the gesturer's heart, 'there cannot be a more apparant discouery of a rancke Hypocrite, then to make outward shewes of *Deuotion*, with the gesture and lips, and yet the heart to be busied in the cogitation of idle, earthly, and prophane things'. However, Norden argues, even the most inveterate hypocrite cannot completely prevent their body from representing their impious thoughts. Small bodily details like wandering eyes will give them away, 'nothing more discouereth an idle heart outwardly, then the wandering of the eye in the time of diuine prayer: for it is probable, and often found

¹⁸⁹ There are many instances of early modern writers discussing deceptive Christian-like gestures. A translation of the sixteenth-century *Lazarillo de Tormes* (attributed to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza) concentrates on one of Lazarillo's masters' ability to control even his eyes when counterfeiting prayer, 'he could counterfeit a good deuoute countenance in praying, without any strange gesture, either with mouth or eye', *The pleasaunt historie of Lazarillo de Tormes a Spaniarde*, trans. David Roulande (London: Abel Ieffes, 1586), B1^f. Compare Shakespeare's Richard III, appearing with two churchmen reading a bible, purely for effect (*Richard III* 3.7.47-8). Kneeling was also separated from intention in the widespread practice of surrogacy, whereby people would place figurines or paintings of themselves kneeling beside the altar at church, so that they could in a sense kneel when their minds were occupied elsewhere, or even after they were dead. C.f. Laura Gelfland and Walter Gibson, "Surrogate Selves: The 'Rollin Madonna' and the Late-Medieval Devotional Portrait," *Simolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 29(3/4) (2002), 119-38. Mrozowski identifies donor portraits like these as, from the 9th century onwards, one of the most important iconographical sources for information about kneeling, "Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture," 12.

by experience, that the eye withdraweth the heart: and if the eye be inconstant, the prayer hath not, nor can haue the due *Attention* of the heart'.¹⁹⁰ Whilst acknowledging the ability of the body to deceive about the state of the mind or soul, Norden nevertheless attests that no body can completely hide its profound connection to a person's thoughts. It is the body (the wandering eye) that betrays that the outwardly devout body is concealing an impious mind. This totalising discourse of embodiment, whereby all thought is embodied, even those thoughts that attempt to exploit the potential for the soul and body to be separate, is particularly attractive for theories like Lakoff and Johnson's.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, many Puritans saw any religious gestures at all as potential hypocritical performances. Dissolving the distinction between religious and theatrical ideas about the performance-reality boundary, these Puritan writers tended to connect religious gestures with theatrical performance, as though 'Stage-plays' were the paradigm of hypocrisy and deceit. The separatist martyr Henry Barrow uses the adjective 'stagelike' throughout his works to describe the posturing of 'Popish' ceremony. He laments in *A Brief Discoverie of the False Church* (1590) for example, people 'making not only an art, but a stage play and an occupation of religion'.¹⁹¹ This trend continued into the seventeenth century; William Prynne, one of the Puritans who spoke out against kneeling in church, was also a ferocious opponent of the 'immorality' of theatre, as he describes in *Histriomastix* (1632). This association of stage plays and religious hypocrisy lends strength to the idea that with *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare was engaging with contemporary discourses about

¹⁹⁰ John Norden, *A Poore Mans Rest* (London: T Snodham, 1620), B5^v-B6^r. Norden was a cartographer-surveyor and also a writer of popular devotional texts.

¹⁹¹ Henry Barrow, *A Brief Discoverie of the False Church* (London: 1590), Hiiiij^v. See Patrick Collinson, "Barrow, Henry (c.1550–1593)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 28 August 2012, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1540>. Jody Enders illustrates the thin line separating the religious and the theatrical, describing how, during an early modern French theatrical representation of Christ feeding the masses, a miracle is said actually to have occurred when thousands of loaves appeared, "Performing miracles: mimesis of Valenciennes (1547)," in Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait, eds. *Theatricality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 40-64. Elizabeth Williamson's *The Materiality of Religion in Early Modern English Drama* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), and Elizabeth Williamson and Jane Hwang Degenhardt's edited *Religion and Drama in Early Modern England* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009) demonstrate that drama appropriated, performed, and thus changed understandings of religious practices.

kneeling, performance, and authenticity. The play might also be said to be staging an intervention into these discourses. Though in the short term Brutus' kneeling gesture might seem little more than irony, in the long term it plays out across contemporary ideas about the lasting significance of kneeling. *Julius Caesar* acknowledges the crossovers between politico-religious and (anti)theatrical debates about the boundary between performance and reality. It then depicts a group of people who try and fail to separate performed gestures from the reality of their consequences (Brutus kneels ironically, the repercussions are real submission to Caesar). Shakespeare thus reaffirms the notion that Targoff states is so central to Elizabethan politics and religion: actions performed without conscious understanding and in jest can fundamentally shape our ways of understanding, and can become serious parts of our nature.

Renaissance writers also often linked the idea of vocation and social status, another key theme in *Julius Caesar*, to the theatre, suggesting that having a vocation was like having a part to play on the stage of the world. The Renaissance Neo-Stoic Guillaume du Vair stated that we must play the part God gave us rather than writing our own, and Lemnius Levinas wrote at length of how, 'the earth is as it were a stage, whereon euery man liuing in his state, condition, order and degree, doth play his part'; people's roles are thus not immutable, they 'are not in deed those persons, which in the eie of the world, and light of the common wealth they shew themselues to bee...No surely, they are but plaiers vpon the scaffold for a short time'.¹⁹² Shakespeare alludes to this common trope in his description of the 'poor player' on the stage (*Macbeth* 5.5.24-8), and Jacques' 'all the world's a stage' speech in *As You Like it* (2.7.138ff).¹⁹³

¹⁹² Lemnius Levinas, *The Sanctuarie of Salvation* (London: Hugh Singleton, 1592), B6^f. Levinas repeats this image of the world as a stage throughout his book.

¹⁹³ See also E.L.'s description of 'the vaine worldes stage', *Romes Monarchie* (London: the widow Orwin, 1596), C1^f. Thomas Heywood's prefatory "The Author to his Booke" in his *Apology for Actors* explores the trope of the world as a stage and the different parts that can be played there at length (A4^f v). Several conduct books suggest that people ought to learn to perform the gestures appropriate to their vocation, as if they were playing a part. For example, Jacques Guillemeau states, 'the Chirurgiane must endeuoure him selfe to have a wise & grave gesture', befitting his role, *The French Chirugereye*, trans. A.M. (Dort: Isaac Canin, 1598), Aij^f.

Historically-specific variations in acting techniques will have altered the ways in which these habitual actions will have been put into practice. Tribble states, for instance, that the main cognitive difference between early modern and present day actors was that the former relied more on intense ‘rote repetition’ whereas modern actors have a longer rehearsal period in which to explore their characters psychologically.¹⁹⁴ However, there is a long tradition of interrogating the effect on the actor’s personality of the habitual action involved in creating a role on stage. In *Republic* 3.399, Plato argues that people should only imitate good character-models because imitation is a form of assimilation to another person whilst acting a wicked role causes a person to become imbued with wickedness. Building on this tradition, writers such as Thomas Heywood in *Apology for Actors* argue that actors *become* their characters.¹⁹⁵ Richard Flecknoe described Burbage as ‘a delightful Proteus, so transforming himself into his part...he never...assum’d himself again until the play was done’.¹⁹⁶ More recently, Konstantin Stanislavsky, who inspired Method Acting, has described acting as an ‘art of experiencing’ where actors attempt to become their characters from the inside out.¹⁹⁷ Cognitive theory of habitual action suggests that this is more than just rhetoric, and is in fact a real and inevitable aspect of the process of rehearsed performance.

It is perhaps too simple to say that *Julius Caesar* draws on aspects of kneeling in real life and presents them by means of a theatrical performance. Looking at kneeling in *Julius Caesar* illustrates, rather, how performance and reality tend to collapse into each other in this play, reflecting the wider way in which performance and reality collapse in early modern acts of fealty and devotion. The kneeling gesture, in church and in secular contexts, was already imbued with connotations of

¹⁹⁴ Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe*, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Heywood, *Apology*, B4^r.

¹⁹⁶ Richard Flecknoe, “A Short Discourse of the English Stage” (1664) appended to *Love’s Kingdom* (London: R. Wood, 1664), G4^r. For Proteus imagery and a discussion of the tradition see Joseph Roach, *The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1993, first published 1985), 56. Roach writes (49) of the pervasive early modern assumption that ‘the actor toys with enormous forces that he can evoke quickly but not easily subdue’.

¹⁹⁷ For Stanislavsky, ‘it is always best when an actor is completely taken over by the play. Then, independently of his will, he lives the role, without noticing *how* he is feeling, not thinking about *what* he is doing, and so everything can happen spontaneously, subconsciously’, *An Actor’s Work: A Student’s Diary*, trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2008; first published 1938), 17, 20.

theatricality, and contextualised within debates about hypocrisy and about the distinction between gesture and thought. At the same time, any kneeling gesture at the end of *Julius Caesar* would surely be parsed as a ‘real’ rather than hypocritical act of deference to a monarch or patron. Moreover, no matter how hypocritical we believe the conspirators’ kneeling gesture to be, as it was habitually performed in production it is likely to have had a real effect on the actors’ plastic bodies and minds, strengthening those neural pathways that made them most prone to kneel when they spoke the relevant lines, ‘As low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall...pardon, Caesar...’.

Conclusions

Using cognitive theory to examine these acts of falling, rising, and, in particular, kneeling has drawn Renaissance ideas of plasticity, flexibility, fixity, and conformity to the fore. These ideas, in both Renaissance thought and cognitive theory, challenge the notion that performance and ‘nature’, and gesture and thought, are separable. Cognitive theory provides a scientific basis for the common early modern assumption that repeatedly performing this subservient gesture would make subservient thought-patterns increasingly dominant in a person’s mind. Simultaneously, the conspirators’ hypocritical and seditious kneeling gesture in *Julius Caesar* alerts us to the potential for subjects to assert control of this gesture and to use it to make their own meanings, resisting those meanings that authority-figures have associated with kneeling and resisting those authority-figures themselves. Malabou’s theory of plasticity helps to explain how this can be so; the plastic mind and body can be shaped either by secular and religious authorities or by the gesturer themselves, depending on whether the gesturer is conscious of the plasticity of their mind and body and keen to assert control over it, or whether they are unconscious of how authorities are using prescribed behavioural norms to shape their thoughts.

Cognitive studies are often depoliticised, perhaps because of the implicit idea that being freed from political ideas makes them more objective. Books like Suparna Choudhury and Jan Slaby’s *Critical Neuroscience* (2012) discussed in the next chapter, and Malabou’s *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* which show how neuroscience has been shaped by cultural metaphors, demonstrate that depoliticising cognitive science is both an unattainable and an undesirable goal. Reading cognitive texts alongside *Julius Caesar* and early modern discussions of gesture has demonstrated that the ability of the kneeling gesture to shape thoughts as well as be

shaped by them has historically been inherently politicised; it has been used as both a tool to achieve political and religious compliance and as a method of religious non-conformity, hypocrisy, or political resistance.

With its explicit discussions of the use of the vertical axis of the body to create and sustain unjust hierarchies, *Julius Caesar* makes visible the workings of ideology as it is generated and maintained through gesture. As such, the play can enable us to gain that consciousness of how minds and bodies are plastic that Malabou says is crucial if we want to be able to take control of our own plasticity. *Julius Caesar* also makes us aware of our own plasticity because this play encourages us to use our thoughts in a flexible, adaptable way. We have seen that the kneeling gesture was a source of both power and anxiety in the Renaissance precisely because it could embody many ambiguous and contradictory meanings. I have argued that the conspirators' kneeling gesture is part of a wider ambiguity in the ways in which both Caesar and the conspirators are presented. Caesar could be a presumptuous tyrant or a divinely-ordained ruler, and the conspirators could be wicked traitors or noble liberators of Rome. As Lloyd's 2012 production shows, audiences can be invited to sympathise with either one of these perspectives, or both at once. The play can be seen as tragic because great Caesar dies, or because noble Brutus does, or because they both do. The play encourages us to use our ability to adapt our minds to encompass both, or to recognise the potential of either, of these readings. It thus has the potential to make us physically aware of our own ambiguous relationship to kneeling gestures.

Chapter 3

‘I’ll smell it on the tree’: kissing in *Othello*

Introduction

Addressing Desdemona, whom he has just murdered, Othello states,

I kiss’d thee ere I kill’d thee. No way but this:
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss. *Dies* (5.2.358-9)

Earlier, Othello describes kissing Desdemona as a powerful olfactory experience that threatens to change his mind about killing her. He figures kissing her as smelling a rose, ‘I’ll smell it on the tree’, and exclaims, ‘Oh, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade| Justice to break her sword’ (5.2.15-17). He foreshadows this sensation earlier in the play, suggesting that Desdemona’s precious, powerful scent contradicts his conscious perception that she is a mere ‘weed’, ‘O thou weed| Who art so lovely fair and smell’st so sweet| That the sense aches at thee’ (4.2.67-9). How can something as gentle and transient as breath, as scent, threaten to break the heavy, immutable sword of Justice?

Olfaction is an integral element of the gesture of kissing and embracing. The way in which kisses will be perceived and thought about by the gesturers will be fundamentally shaped by their olfactory experiences, by the chemical sense data that they receive during a kiss. But, simultaneously, the gesturers’ prior perceptions of kissing, which are shaped both by cultural norms and their individual expectations and thoughts regarding the person they are kissing, will influence the way in which they interpret the olfactory sense data received during the kiss. When Othello kisses Desdemona, the tastes and scents involved in a kiss mingle and compete with, and are shaped by, Othello’s belief that Desdemona is having an affair, and his decision to kill her. This first chapter showed that the Shakespearean touch is a site where performance and reality can both separate and dissolve into each other and where established social ideas about gesture can be overturned. Involving both touch and scent, kisses add an olfactory dimension to these findings. The kiss also raises new questions of audience engagement: if audiences cannot smell Desdemona’s breath (as this scent is represented in Othello’s words but not necessarily reproduced with

corresponding sweet smells released into the audience), does this have the effect of insulating audiences from the fictional world of the play? Othello is stating that he can smell something that his audience cannot: Desdemona's scent. However, at the same time, as Tanya Pollard has argued in *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England*, scents in the theatre are not the same as scents in real life; interwoven with the language and action of the play, they are designed to produce emotional effects in the audience. Pollard explains that narcotics, perfumes and potions in Shakespeare 'are not just *in* the theatre but *of* the theatre' because (like the magical juice that Puck applies to the lovers' eyes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) they encourage the character to 'feel new emotions'.¹⁹⁸ The theatrical effect of Desdemona's scent can apply both to Othello and to the audience: both can experience altered thoughts and emotions as Othello leans in for his final kiss.

An analysis of gesture in Shakespeare's plays needs to take into account all of the factors that Shakespeare foregrounds with respect to gesture. That means analysing not just kinesics but (as we saw with *Titus Andronicus*), touch as well and not just the touch but also (as we see in *Othello*) the olfactory elements of gesture. Kissing is one of the most common and also one of the most emotionally-charged gestures in Shakespeare's plays: Shakespearean characters kiss as they die, greet, or betray each other. *Othello* emphasises the olfactory element of the kiss and this links to a thread of olfactory imagery running throughout the play. It would thus be impossible fully to understand Othello's kissing gesture without examining its olfactory element. Moreover, this chapter's discussion of olfactory cognition in Shakespeare provides the foundation for chapter 5's analysis of the emotional 'contagion' associated with violent theatrical gestures in *Hamlet*.

Othello's final couplet seems to have been one of the play's most troubling moments for modern directors. Here, Othello gives voice to the excessive sensual power of the kiss, the breath, and olfaction. But, several directors have taken advantage of the lack of kissing in *Othello*'s stage directions to elide such moments or rein them in. F1 and Q2 (1630) have no stage directions for Othello's kisses given to Desdemona before he kills her, nor before he kills himself, but at both points

¹⁹⁸ Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5. Pollard does not focus so much on Othello, or on Othello's kiss, but she does note, for instance, the way in which (p. 134) Iago's effect on Othello's mind is like 'a chemical reaction'.

Othello's lines make clear that he does kiss her. Indeed, before killing her, Othello cannot stop kissing Desdemona; his lines show he does so at least three times: 'one more, one more' (on the third kiss, Q1 (1622) alone has the stage direction '*Kisses her*'). At Othello's death, F1 merely states '*Dies*' without mentioning a kiss (though later editions, Arden for instance, sometimes add a kiss in).¹⁹⁹ Q1 and Q2 read '*He dies*', again without mentioning a kiss. In several performances, Othello died before he was able to kiss Desdemona. At the RSC in 1954, it seems his wish to die on a kiss was never put into practice; Anthony Quayle (both director and actor playing Othello) embellished Shakespeare's text with the prompt 'Oth fall on end of bed', suggesting that Othello never reached Desdemona's head.²⁰⁰ In the late nineteenth century, critic Edward Mason describes the Italian actor Tommaso Salvini (the first realist actor to perform in London) dying 'before he can reach the bed' where Desdemona lies; the whole scene is then contained by a 'Quick curtain'.²⁰¹ In Quayle's 1955 production, the prompts suggest that the three kisses Othello gives Desdemona as she sleeps are somewhat too numerous, as they are marked with an emphatic 'yet again', 'OTH kisses DES| Kisses again| Yet again'.²⁰² In 1930, W. Bridges-Adams cut at least two of the three kisses Othello gives Desdemona before killing her, deleting Othello's line

¹⁹⁹ E.J.A. Honigmann edits the SD to, '[*Kisses Desdemona and*] *Dies*', *Othello* by William Shakespeare (London: Arden, 1997), 331.

²⁰⁰ Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Anthony Quayle, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1954, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

²⁰¹ '[H]e gets his sword; as he says "thus" ("Cosi"), he draws it violently across his throat, sawing backward and forward. His head falls back, as if more than half-severed from his body; he drops the sword and staggers backwards toward the alcove; but, before he can reach the bed, he falls backward, and dies, in strong convulsions of the body and the legs. Quick curtain'. Edward Mason, *The Othello of Tommaso Salvini* (London: GP Patromi's Sons, 1890), 106-7. A play-text interspersed with Mason's descriptions of how certain lines or scenes were performed, and occasional supplementary diagrams depicting blocking, this is a detailed description of Salvini's Othello that usefully notes moments when Salvini performed a gesture or passage differently in different performances. Mason watched Salvini's *Othello* 'several times' between 1881 and 1889, allowing Salvini to correct and edit an Italian translation of the text in 1882 (some of his remarks are incorporated into the text, others became footnotes). Though he describes his text as still 'slight and inadequate...to describe a consummate work of art', Mason argues that he took scrupulous care to ensure its accuracy because he believes Salvini's performance was 'the greatest of our time' (v-vi).

²⁰² Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Anthony Quayle, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1955, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

‘one more, one more’.²⁰³ In Godfrey Tearle’s 1948-9 RSC festival production, ‘one more, one more’ is scored it out with a strong pen-line, and at Othello’s death there is no mention of a kiss, he merely ‘Falls on the bed and dies’.²⁰⁴

In the productions above, the kisses are cut by directors. However, in Terry Hands’ 1985 RSC production, restraint was transferred from directors to characters; Othello himself was presented as disinclined to kiss Desdemona too much. In this production, Othello’s three kisses to Desdemona before killing her were preserved, but an earlier kiss was restrained; when Desdemona greeted Othello (Ben Kingsley) on arriving in Cyprus, ‘Des opens her arms but Oth stops her by not moving’, and his ‘and this...and this the greatest discords be’ were kisses on her cheek before finally and only at Shakespeare’s stage direction, ‘they kiss’ each other’s lips.²⁰⁵ Later productions have used characters to draw attention to the excessive physicality in Othello and Desdemona’s kisses in other ways; for instance as Othello (Adrian Lester) and Desdemona (Olivia Vinall) kissed passionately when greeting in Cyprus in Nicholas Hytner’s 2013 *Othello* at the National Theatre, Othello’s soldiers’ looks of discomfort and embarrassment marked these kisses as somewhat inappropriate. Here, what in earlier productions had been a discreet directorial embarrassment at the number of kisses is staged and made visible. The soldiers in Hytner’s production also stage the question of the effect that kisses have on audiences; as they squirmed and looked away, they made visible the notion, which this chapter traces from the early modern era to present day cognitive theory, that watching onstage kisses can have a chemical, cognitive effect on viewers.

In Benson’s 1904 RSC production, the text was cut so that it ended on the couplet, ‘I kiss’d thee ere I kill’d thee: no way but this,| Killing myself, to die upon a kiss’. The couplet has been physically cut out from a copy of *Othello* and pasted in Benson’s prompt book alongside the stage direction ‘*dies*’. ‘Curtain’ is pencilled in with a flourish beneath, emphasising the couplet’s momentousness. Overall, there is a sense that this final kiss has deliberately been chosen as a climactic, powerful

²⁰³ Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by W. Bridges Adams, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1930, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

²⁰⁴ Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Godfrey Tearle, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1948, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

²⁰⁵ Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Terry Hands, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1985, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

ending.²⁰⁶ This is a suggestive example because it showcases both the marked directorial propensity to make cuts in the final scene of *Othello* and the deep significance and dramatic power of Othello's final kisses. Stanley Cavell argues that Othello is re-enacting the moment when he consummated (or failed to consummate) his marriage, punning on the alternative Renaissance significance of the word 'die' as 'to have an orgasm';²⁰⁷ kissing in *Othello* often seems to be seen by directors as a dangerous, unstable site of inordinate sensuality that needs to be curbed. Using cognitive theory, this chapter suggests that it is the olfactory element to kissing that gives it this significance; often unacknowledged by critics, but crucially important to *Othello*, Othello's act of smelling raises modern questions about the chemical dimensions of cognition and the metaphoricity of the air.

Olfaction is central to *Othello*. As well as Othello's explicit references to smell as he kisses Desdemona, there is an implicit interest in olfaction running throughout the entirety of the play. The handkerchief at the play's heart is steeped in human odour; when made it was 'dyed in mummy, which the skilful| Conserv'd of maiden's hearts' (3.4.74-5). Othello's insistence that this 'mummy' liquor came from maidens suggests that the handkerchief is imbued with a palpable odour of chastity. Designed to soak up odour-bearing bodily fluids such as mummy liquor and sweat (whilst the strawberries perhaps suggest drops of blood as well), the handkerchief's uncomplicated relationship with chastity is overlaid in Othello's mind by the idea that it has been contaminated with Cassio's sweat, Iago claims to have seen 'Cassio wipe his beard with' it (3.3.439). *Othello*'s earliest critic Thomas Rymer mocked Shakespeare in 1693 for giving this insignificant piece of cloth so much prominence, contending that it is implausible even for Othello (whom Rymer thinks very stupid) to be so swayed by a handkerchief, 'the Handkerchief is so remote a trifle, no Booby, on this side Mauritania, cou'd make any consequence from it'.²⁰⁸ However, recent

²⁰⁶ Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by F.R. Benson, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1904 [according to note in inside cover], Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive. Interestingly, the prompt 'falling upon Desdemona' is written in pen after 'no way but this' then crossed out.

²⁰⁷ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, first published 1987), 134.

²⁰⁸ Thomas Rymer, "A Short View of Tragedy" (1693), in *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 159.

cognitive studies have focussed on the idea that olfaction is central to romantic relationships; ‘love hormones’ like pheromones in sweat have been suggested to influence our romantic inclinations. A 2012 study argued that smelling a loved one’s clothing brings feelings of comfort and happiness,²⁰⁹ whilst in 1995 Claus Wedekind claimed that heterosexual women responded more positively to men’s sweat-soaked T shirts the more compatible their genes were.²¹⁰ Whether or not these studies are accurate, they work within a long tradition of associating physical or romantic attraction with enticing smells. Othello’s interest in smell is echoed in other characters’ use of olfactory and gustatory metaphors for the quality of romantic relationships. Emilia describes women discerning between kind and cruel lovers like gourmands choosing a dish, ‘they see and smell| And have their palates both for sweet and sour’ (4.3.94-5).

Kissing is figured as a form of olfaction by both early modern and present day writers. As it brings two people into close contact, this gesture enables them to experience each other’s scents. Involving the mouth, the organ of taste, kissing is often described as a form of taste and smell. Indeed, as similar chemoreceptors in both the nose and mouth are involved in a kiss, the distinction between kissing as a form of tasting and as a form of smelling blurs. In *Othello*, kisses are linked at once with scents and with gustatory or sexual tastes and ‘appetites’. When he kisses Desdemona before killing her, Othello seems to be doing an experiment with olfaction, testing whether her scent can change his mind (which he egotistically describes as ‘persuad[ing] Justice to break her sword’). Earlier, Othello describes Desdemona’s supposed adultery as a bad smell, ‘Heaven stops the nose at it’, proposing a link between kissing, licentiousness, and air, ‘the bawdy wind that kisses all it meets...will not hear’t’ (4.2.78-80). Kissing her alive for the last time, there is a dissonance between the actual ‘balmy’ scent of Desdemona’s breath and the horrible smell of adultery. ‘Balmy’ had a variety of sixteenth-century meanings, encapsulating the wide range of meanings attributed to air in the Renaissance: medicinal, soothing, soft,

²⁰⁹ Donald McBurney, Sibyl Streeter and Harald Euler’s survey respondents suggested that ‘smelling the unwashed clothing of a loved one is...widely practiced’ and reported that ‘it made them feel happy and comfortable’, “Olfactory Comfort in Close Relationships,” in Gesualdo Zucco, Rachel Herz, and Benoist Schaal, eds., *Olfactory Cognition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), 72.

²¹⁰ Claus Wedekind, et al., “MHC-dependent preferences in humans,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* 260(1359) (1995), 245–49.

deliciously fragrant, and delicate.²¹¹ Othello is led to ponder the difference between his perception that Desdemona is wicked and the uncorrupted scent of her breath. He pauses before acting on his aim to kill her, kissing her repeatedly ('one more, one more') as if to repeat the experiment, to test his resolve and to render clearer the effect that her scent is having on him. He concludes that, like many a poisonous gas, she is sweet-smelling but deadly, 'so sweet was ne'er so fatal' (5.2.20). Though cognitive theorists do not use their experiments to decide whom to murder, what is at stake in Othello's experiment is also at stake in many recent neuroscientific experiments in that both aim to discover how far olfaction can produce or destroy romance, sexual attraction, and moral or emotional feelings of disgust.

With experiments into olfaction, cognitive theorists also confront the fact that smelling and tasting have long been metaphors for knowledge and experience. Investigating olfaction causes cognitive theorists, consciously or unconsciously, to interrogate their metaphors for their own praxis. We absorb, digest, chew over ideas, hunger for knowledge and taste victory in an argument. The cultural historian of sensation David Howes notes that words like 'sagacious', 'sapient', 'sage', and (the obsolete) 'nose-wise' can mean both 'clever' and 'having a good sense of taste or smell'.²¹² In the prologue to *Gargantua* (1534), for example, Rabelais compares a philosopher seeking knowledge in books to a bloodhound sniffing out the scents of a delicious marrowbone, punning on 'estre saiges' ('to be wise'), and the idea of a delicious taste or savour.²¹³ The now obsolete seventeenth-century word 'hogo' (from French 'haut gout': strong taste) meant both a strong taste or smell and a brief experience of something; the chef William Rabisha describes 'a rich Broth, with a very high hogo'.²¹⁴ Surly in Mr Crown's 1685 comedy *Sir Courtly Nice* makes puns that echo Othello's idea of Desdemona's adultery stinking to high heaven, 'Lock up the Women till they'r musty, better they shou'd have a Hogo, than their

²¹¹ O.E.D., 'balmy', *adj.*

²¹² David Howse, "Nose-wise: Olfactory Metaphors in Mind," in Catherine Rouby et al, eds., *Olfaction, Taste and Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69.

²¹³ Françoise Rabelais, *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, ed. Mireille Huchon (Paris: Folio, 2007), 6-7. This example comes from a talk given by Kathryn Banks at the *Renaissance Kinesis* workshop in honour of Guilemette Bolens, Clare College, Cambridge, September 25-7 2014.

²¹⁴ O.E.D., 'hogo', *n*; William Rabisha, *The Whole Body of Cookery* (London: by RW, 1661), D4^v.

Reputations'.²¹⁵ Othello's exclamation when he thinks Cassio is boasting about his affair with Desdemona, 'I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to' (4.1.142-3), is not so outlandish given that the nose is the organ of experience; Othello understandably hates the organ that represents Cassio's supposed knowledge, at once literally olfactory and metaphorically sexual, of Desdemona.

Othello's attempt to smell Desdemona's virtue represents both a metaphorical evocation of his desire to 'know' her character and a more literal, practical attempt to know her by physically smelling her body. For cognitive theorists, physical olfactory experience is fundamental to many forms of memory, knowledge, emotion, and unconscious perceptions of people, places, and things. The historian of perfume Annick Le Guérer writes that smell is,

indispensable in grasping some extremely subtle, pre-rational factors, the indefinable "something" that emanates from a person, an object, a place, a situation. As the sense most closely linked with affect and contact, a sense that helps to establish a fusional relationship with the world, revelatory not only of substances but also of ambiances, climates, and even existential states, the sense of smell is a subtle tool for knowledge that allows for intuitive and prelinguistic understanding.²¹⁶

The cognitive psychologist Rachel Herz finds that smells can have cultural associations and emotive affects particular to a certain person or social group. For instance, the smell of a lighted match can give cocaine addicts cravings for cocaine; US study participants described wintergreen as a pleasant smell (as it is used in US candy) but participants in the UK hated the smell (due to wintergreen's use in UK analgesics and its consequent association with pain, trauma, and clinical environments).²¹⁷ The ecstatic, welcoming, entirely 'sweet' kisses Othello gives Desdemona in 4.2 seem to create habitual memories that colour his perception of kissing her in Act 5: though he wants to think of her as a sour betrayer, his intuitive, emotive associations and memories suggested to him that she is 'sweet'.

²¹⁵ Mr Crown, *Sir Courtly Nice* (London: H.H. Jun., 1685), F1'.

²¹⁶ Annick Le Guérer, "Olfaction and Cognition: a Philosophical and Psychoanalytic View," *Olfaction, Taste and Cognition*, 11.

²¹⁷ Rachel Herz, "Influences of Odor on Mood and Cognition," *Olfaction, Taste and Cognition*, 162-4.

Sergius Koderer has shown that early modern neoplatonic and Aristotelian writers like Marsilio Ficino and Gregor Reisch (following earlier neoplatonic authors like Calcidius and Plotinus) often described the soul as airy and breath-like. Thus, the idea that thoughts are transmitted or perceived by breathing and sniffing was not entirely figurative. Koderer explains that air was the site where the material and the abstract coalesced in the Renaissance,

in a Neoplatonic conceptual framework that embraces the idea of universal animation, it remained difficult to keep the two notions, that is, air and soul apart. The ambiguity of the two notions becomes obvious in the common functions both entities share in the metaphysical as well as in the natural hierarchy of being: air and soul stretch and communicate between the realm of mind and that of body.²¹⁸

In *The Matter of Air*, Steven Connor argues that ‘air is the privileged matter of thought’. He traces how, since the sixteenth century, air has been envisaged as the vehicle for smells, gases, magnetic waves, and invisible fluids that transmit, alter, and disrupt thought, and as a metaphor for the fluid, intangible nature of thought itself. Connor proposes that the ‘bulky, odorous, corporal, kinetic’ nature of physically breathing or sniffing ought to be differentiated from the ‘volatile, edgeless, self-generating act of thought’, mounting ‘a defence of the concrete against the abstract air, the air of breath against the air of universal thought’.²¹⁹ Othello wrestles with this distinction, setting Desdemona’s ‘balmy breath’ off against what he sees to be the higher more spiritual purpose of ‘just’ murder. Cognitive science sheds light on how, in *Othello*, the physical act of smelling threatens to collapse into the ‘edgeless act of thought’, and how it is often uncertain whether words like ‘sweet’ predominantly refer to smells or to moral qualities.

Several neuroscientific studies suggest that dislike and disgust, and attraction and moral approbation, are strongly linked to olfactory stimuli and olfactory memories. Mary Phillips and Maïke Heining write, ‘the neural response to olfactory

²¹⁸ Sergius Koderer, *Disreputable Bodies: Magic, Medicine and Gender in Renaissance Natural Philosophy* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 136.

²¹⁹ Steven Connor, *The Matter of Air: Science and Art of the Ethereal* (New York: Reaktion, 2010), 99-100.

stimulation reflects, at least in part, processing of the emotional component of such a stimulus', and conclude that taste and smell are almost always linked to emotional, cognitive valuations,

findings to date indicate that many of the brain regions associated with emotion perception are also involved in perception of olfactory stimuli: the orbitofrontal cortex, amygdala, and insula. Because odors are rarely devoid of emotional salience, it is probable that the involvement of the orbitofrontal cortex, amygdala, and insula demonstrated in the neural response to olfactory stimulation reflects, at least in part, processing of the emotional component of such a stimulus.²²⁰

Cognitive theory offers an explanation for moments like the King James Bible's (1611) description of Christians as 'a sweet savour unto Christ' (2 Corinthians 2:15) which materialised as sweet smelling incense in church, the use of perfume to soothe the mind,²²¹ or the links made between bad smells and moral corruption (the phrase 'stench of sin' was common throughout the seventeenth century).²²² Phillips and Heining's research suggests that the pervasive early modern tendency to equate olfactory stimuli and emotional or moral value-judgements is grounded in the fact that emotion perception and olfactory stimuli are processed in the same brain regions.

Othello's idea of taste and smell specifically refers to sexual knowledge, reflecting the fact that, since the eleventh century, 'to know' has had a specifically

²²⁰ Mary Phillips and Maïke Heining, "Neural Correlates of Emotion Perception: From Faces to Taste," *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, 197, 202. Salvini evoked a physical (though not predominantly olfactory) disgust at Desdemona in the final scenes, 'As Desdemona speaks, she throws her arms around Othello's neck. He snatches her arms, thrusts them away, and violently repulses the embrace, starting back from her as he says "Away!" Her touch is hateful to him. He not only hates, but also loathes her', 'As she says "Will you come to bed, my lord?"', Othello shows his feelings of strong abhorrence by facial expressions, and by a muttered, inarticulate sound', Mason, *The Othello of Tommaso Salvini*, 67, 91.

²²¹ 'It is the greatest comforter of the Brain that can be, and from thence sends such Cheerfulness to the Heart, that it rejoyceth the whole Body', A.S., *The Gentleman's Compleat Jockey* (London: Henry Nelme, 1697), H7^v.

²²² E.g. 'we are in the stench of sinne', Robert Southwell, *An Epistle of Comfort to the Reverend Priests* (London: John Charlwood, 1587), A8^f.

sexual meaning.²²³ He imagines ‘the general camp,| Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body’ (3.3.345-6). Considered in the context of Merleau-Ponty’s work, *Othello*’s interest in the sexual touch in particular is the next step on from *Titus Andronicus*’ more general interest in skin contact. Chapter 1 established that Shakespeare was interested in how a mutual touch can cognitively affect the two participants and convey information to each about the other. Merleau-Ponty writes that the erotic touch expresses the essence of the touch’s ability to experience the world, ‘the body in its sexual being is the primary function whereby we bring into existence, for ourselves, or take a hold upon, space, the object, or the instrument’.²²⁴ This chapter’s analysis of kissing builds on chapter 1 by examining an additional, olfactory, element to tactile cognition. There are more nerve endings on the lips and tongue than on most other areas of the body,²²⁵ and though they did not express themselves in terms of ‘nerve endings’, several early modern texts see the lips’ super-sensitivity as significant, foreshadowing Merleau-Ponty’s argument that the kiss is a test-case for ideas of touching in general. For instance, the anatomist Gideon Harvey (1636/7-1702) believed that touching consisted in ‘the Tact’ or ‘a thick coarse spirituous air, the moving of which is the raising of the feeling’. This moving air had most effect on the thinner skin of the lips; this is the source of the ‘delightful feeling’ in a kiss, and also enables a kiss to be a site where the body is most keenly affected by air and attendant olfactory stimuli as ‘air, thin vapours, exhalations...stir & quaver these tangent spirits’.²²⁶ Harvey imagines the kiss as combining olfaction and kinesis; we can add these ‘stir[ring]’ and ‘quaver[ing]’ movements in the skin of the lips to the more obvious kinetic features of the kiss discussed earlier in the chapter which in various different productions have involved collapsing, kneeling, and leaning in for a kiss.

²²³ O.E.D., ‘know’ v, 8.

²²⁴ ‘Let us see how a thing or a being begins to exist for us through desire or love and we shall thereby come to understand better how things and beings can exist in general’, Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 178. Later (192-3), he states ‘the body expresses total existence...because existence realises itself in the body...sexuality has an existential significance’.

²²⁵ Stanley Jacobson and Eliot Marcus, *Neuroanatomy for the Neuroscientist* (New Jersey: Springer, 2011), 110.

²²⁶ Gideon Harvey, *Archelogia Philosophica nova* (London: J.H., 1663), Cccc2^f.

Cognitive studies establish that tasting and smelling are an inextricable mix of physiological sensation and linguistic descriptions, memories, and conscious expectations. The ‘air, thin vapours, exhalations, or spirits’ Harvey describes are not just the physical experience of the kiss but also the more metaphorical vapours of ‘airy’ thoughts described by Kodera and Connor. Measuring variations in voltage and chemicals in the human scalp, Bettina Pause found that our olfactory memories, and the way we emotionally and consciously evaluate odour (‘olfactory learning’ and ‘odor evaluation’), can affect our sensitivity to certain odours and the way that we process smell.²²⁷ Cognitive psychologist Pamela Dalton finds that our experience of a smell depends both on what substance we expect to smell and on how it is described to us. She asked subjects to smell the same scent several times, but each time her ‘confederate (an actor) relayed a series of scripted comments (positive, negative, or neutral) intended to bias the true subject’s perception of the quality of the odour and any symptoms or sensations the odour produced’. Dalton showed that the way odours are described dramatically changes how pleasant and intense they are perceived to be. She distinguishes between an odour’s ‘bottom up qualities’ (its actual chemical composition) and its ‘top down qualities’ (the biases and conditions surrounding it); both top-down and bottom-up qualities influence an odour’s intensity and pleasantness.²²⁸ The neuroscientist James Goode states that flavour or scent is the combination of higher order processing and the signals received in our olfactory receptors: it cannot be reduced to the latter.²²⁹ Goode explains that the nose’s 2000 olfactory receptors do not send signals to the brain in a ‘linear’ way that simply involves informing us what type of scents are around. Rather, our experience of scent is affected by ‘higher-order processing’ in the orbitofrontal cortex whereby the brain ‘edits’ the most relevant information about a flavour. Goode’s research is based on a cognitive priming experiment with wine; wine tasters given the same wine to taste,

²²⁷ Bettina Pause, “Human Brain Activity during the First Second after Odor Presentation,” *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, 314.

²²⁸ Dalton found that the same scent generated reactions of disgust from participants when described as ‘body odour’ and enjoyment when described as ‘cheddar cheese’, Pamela Dalton, “There’s Something in the Air: Effects of Beliefs and Expectations on Response to Environmental Odours,” *Olfactory Cognition*, 31.

²²⁹ James Goode, “Wine and the Brain,” in Barry Smith, ed., *Questions of Taste: The Philosophy of Wine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 81-3, 85.

but with different labels, decided that the wine with a more special, upmarket label was more ‘complex’ than that with a simple run-of-the-mill label. He concludes, ‘What critics are scoring is not some intrinsic property of the liquid in the bottle, but a perceptual representation that is to some degree specific to them’. Thus, ‘The language we use for describing wine is intrinsic to not only sharing those ideas, but also to forming them in the first place’, calibrating and ‘shap[ing]... the experience’.²³⁰ Othello’s conscious decision that Desdemona is guilty, and Iago’s descriptions of her supposed adultery, calibrate his experience of her smell and eventually override the power that her ‘sweet’, ‘balmy’ breath has over Othello.

Prompted by Othello’s demand for ‘ocular proof’ (3.3.360), critics have overwhelmingly tended to focus on the visual in *Othello*; LaRue Love Sloan even coins the term ‘eyeconography’ to describe Othello and Iago’s emphasis on sight and blindness.²³¹ A decade and a half ago, Michael Neill focussed on the ‘anxious fascination’ caused by Othello’s race in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audiences. Neill’s analysis focuses on visuals, on what he calls the ‘stage-picture’; for instance, he discusses how ‘the violent chiaroscuro of [the actor William] Macready’s blackened face thrust between the virgin-white curtains was experienced as a shocking sado-erotic climax’, and he emphasises that what shocked these audiences in the final scene were two visuals: the presence of a black character (and in the case of Ira Aldridge, a black actor) on stage, and the fact that rather than occurring offstage we *witness* Desdemona’s murder, see ‘the lurid vision of the bed’ with all its visual accoutrements from bloody sheets to wild violent movements.²³² The words Neill uses and quotes, like ‘hideous’, ‘obscene’, and ‘monstrous’, are all related to people or objects that are shocking specifically to the eyes. Andrew Sofer argues persuasively for the centrality of the handkerchief to *Othello*, and his discussion focuses on this prop’s visual properties, describing it as ‘an incriminating sign’. Sofer enumerates the handkerchief’s various movements (falling, being scooped up, and so on) and dwells on questions of sight. He asks, for instance, whether the handkerchief’s strawberry

²³⁰ Goode, “Wine and the Brain,” 95-6.

²³¹ LaRue Love Sloan, “Trumpeting and ‘seeded’ eyes: a semiotics of (Eye)conography in *Othello*,” in Philip Kolin, ed., *Othello: New Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 371. There is not one discussion of smell in the volume.

²³² Michael Neill, “Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40(4) (1989), 390, 397, and *passim*.

pattern would have been visible to audiences and what they might have made of this visual clue.²³³ Sofer uses a telling visual metaphor for his methodology, stating that he wants to analyse ‘how the handkerchief appears to consciousness’; the word ‘appears’ encapsulates the way that visual metaphors are Sofer’s framework for understanding thought.²³⁴ Only at the very end of his article does Sofer mention the mummy juice in which the handkerchief is steeped. Yet even here, he says nothing of its potential odour, and describes this liquid as a ‘felt absence’ rather than a powerful presence, contending that, ‘Instead of merely symbolizing its human couriers, the handkerchief absorbs and literally inscribes them as felt absences within its ghostly palimpsest’.²³⁵ Persistently stopping short of examining olfaction, Sofer’s article is as haunted by the absence of human odour-bearing liquids as he imagines the handkerchief to be.

Instead of a nebulous absence, or an incidental feature of the play’s climax upstaged by ‘the lurid vision of the bed’, olfaction is key to *Othello*. *Othello* is a play that centrally explores the potential for olfactory stimuli and language to influence the ‘taste’ of something, how that person or event is experienced. But it is also a play about how language and olfactory and gustatory stimuli can conflict with each other. Iago aims to change the ‘taste’ of Desdemona in Othello’s mouth using words, ‘the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida’ (1.3.347-9). Iago conducts an experiment similar to Goode or Dalton, investigating how far his descriptions of Desdemona as unchaste alter Othello’s perception of her. And yet, to Othello, despite all this, Desdemona still smells ‘sweet’; the intensity of her scent, and the pleasant memories Othello has of her work against Iago’s descriptions. Peter Holz argues that our language of olfaction is inherently metaphorical; English lacks a lexicon of odour, and so we borrow words relating to taste (‘sweet’), touch (‘hot’), and moral evaluation (‘corrupt’) to describe odour. Holz concludes that, because of this metaphoricity, ‘research on language about olfactory qualities *necessarily* requires the analysis of poetic features. Without the poetic perspective, any semantic analysis of olfactory language turns out to be ungraspable

²³³ Andrew Sofer, “Felt Absences: The Stage Properties of ‘Othello’s’ Handkerchief,” *Comparative Drama* 31(3) (1997), 368-9.

²³⁴ Sofer, “Felt Absences,” 368.

²³⁵ Sofer, “Felt Absences,” 388.

and arbitrary'.²³⁶ By using literary theory to analyse the poetics of Othello's descriptions of his olfactory experience, this chapter brings an awareness of language to cognitive theories of olfaction, showing that moral appraisals and sense data seep into and influence each other, as Iago's powerful verbal descriptions of Desdemona's supposed infidelity compete in Othello's mind with his appreciation of her 'sweet' scent.²³⁷

Renaissance and Shakespearean kisses: affecting souls through olfaction

Knowledge of the wider early modern discourses involving olfaction helps to cast light on just why Othello's final kisses give him such cognitive confusion. Othello's kisses draw on a widespread early modern practice of creating and cementing social bonds through touch and olfaction, and this collides in his mind with more sinister contemporary associations of the kiss with betrayal and idolatrous lust. Erasmus wrote in the late fifteenth century, 'the world is full of kisses';²³⁸ my database shows that kissing and embracing is (after taking hands, refusal to gesture, kneeling, and striking) the fifth most common gesture-type in Shakespeare's plays. The historian J.A. Burrow establishes that kisses were prolific in the early modern era and possibly more common than handshakes; people kissed each other socially on the mouth, regardless of age or gender, far more frequently than they do in the present day (when such a kiss tends to be restricted to romantic or erotic contexts).²³⁹ Many Shakespearean characters kiss in greeting or parting: Benedick tells Beatrice, 'I will kiss your hand and so leave you' (*Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1.332), and Titus tells Lucius, 'Let's kiss and part' (*Titus Andronicus* 3.1.287). Burrow and William Frijhoff argue that

²³⁶ Peter Holz, "Cognition, Olfaction, and Linguistic Creativity," in Martina Plümacher and Peter Holz, eds., *Speaking of Color and Odors* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 202.

²³⁷ Work has been done on actual smells in the theatre and early modern world (from perfume to fireworks) by Holly Duggan. See, for instance, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). In "Scent of a Woman: Performing the Politics of Smell in Early Modern England," *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38(2), 229-52, Duggan analyses some descriptions of scents in medieval and early modern drama, but she has not examined this crucial moment in *Othello*.

²³⁸ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus Letters 1-141 (1484-1500)*, trans. and ed. R. Myners and D. Thompson (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002), letter 103.

²³⁹ J.A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33-5.

kisses were so common that early modern writers often did not bother recording them.²⁴⁰ This suggests that, even if not explicitly mentioned, kisses often can be assumed to occur at moments of greeting or parting in early modern plays.²⁴¹ It also suggests that kisses that are mentioned in early modern documents are especially significant in some way.

Othello's kisses are striking because they protract and hinder rather than neatly effect a farewell, and they constitute betrayal rather than consolidating love and friendship. Othello's statement 'I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee' is likely to have reminded early modern audiences of Judas, who marked Christ out to die by kissing him, 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?' (Luke 22:48, K.J.V.). Early modern writers often describe Judas' kiss as the ultimate betrayal because it subverts the kiss's usual role of an innocuous greeting or gesture of love. The Church of England clergyman George Lawson writes, 'he betrays him with a kiss, a sign of love in it self; but, in this business, an effect and act of horrid treachery'.²⁴² As Rachel Herz's discussion of the cognitive effects of wintergreen suggests, the early modern olfaction-laden gesture of a kiss was suffused with cognitive meanings and associations (friendship, betrayal, love, idolatry) that, variously emphasised, will have influenced how that kiss was experienced.

Amy Cook's work, cited in the previous chapter, indicated that kneeling is a gesture 'that does not just signify', but 'creates'. Early modern kisses could be equally performative, able to create as well as represent love, religious devotion, social

²⁴⁰ Burrow, *Gestures and Looks*, 34. 'As an intimate token of love it usually escapes formal recording or public observation which are the main sources of historical knowledge', William Frijhoff, "The Kiss Sacred and Profane: reflections on a cross-cultural confrontation," *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, first published 1991), 210.

²⁴¹ For a discussion of Shakespearean greeting and parting see David Hillman, "O These Encounterers: On Shakespeare's Meetings and Partings," in Peter Holland, ed., *Shakespeare Survey 62* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 58-68, and Hillman's forthcoming *Greetings and Partings in Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University University Press, 2016).

²⁴² George Lawson, *Theo-Political Or A Body of Divinity* (London: J Streater, 1659), N2^v. Naseeb Shaheen argues that Shakespeare alludes directly to Judas in this scene and that Shakespeare's manuscript originally compared Othello killing Desdemona to a 'base Judean' throwing away a precious pearl, not Q1's 'base Indian', *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 600-3.

bonding and reconciliation.²⁴³ Burrow explains that these traditions were established in the medieval era and continued into the early modern period; in ceremonies of medieval homage, ‘the mutual *fidelitas* was sealed by a kiss, mouth-to-mouth’ between vassal and feudal lord.²⁴⁴ Caliban kissing and licking Trinculo’s shoe throughout *The Tempest* and promising to be his ‘slave’ draws on this common connotation of kissing. The ecclesiastical lawyer Henry Swinburne (c.1551-1624) writes in *A Treatise of Spousalls* that kisses can replace words in effecting a marriage contract, ‘albeit the one party use no words at all, but signifie his or her consent by some Signs...the other party kissing or giving hand accordingly, Spousals are thereby Contracted’.²⁴⁵ Thus, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia asks Proteus, ‘seal the bargain with a holy kiss’ (2.2.7). Kissing the ‘X’ on a contract validated it, and kissing the Bible was common in court, for example in swearing in foremen;²⁴⁶ at his death, Romeo evokes the kiss’s power to seal a bond, ‘lips seal with a righteous kiss| A dateless bargain to engrossing death’ (5.3.114-5).

This power to seal legal, romantic, and social bonds made kisses deeply transgressive if the wrong person or thing was kissed, creating the potential for cognitive confusion and dissonances. For Catholics, to kiss a saint’s image was to give it value as a vehicle for contact with God; for Protestants, this kissing represented an overvaluing of material signs that in fact prevented a close communion with God. Early modern anti-Catholic discourses link kissing a saint’s image with kissing a corpse, marking both out as sinful. Susan Zimmerman explains that this was because post-Reformation writers against idolatry tended to see kissing statues as an excessive, irrational act of lust for a non-living human form,

²⁴³ In the early modern era, the same word (‘kiss’, and much less frequently ‘buss’) is used to describe all these kinds of kisses. Burrow divides early modern kissing into four categories, each of which is determined by a different function: peace-making (the kiss of peace in church), social (e.g. welcoming guests), reconciling, and amorous, *Gestures and Looks*, 50. Frijhoff relates that Roman grammarians differentiated ‘*oscula* (kisses of friendship and affection); *basia* (kisses of love), and *suavia* (passionate kisses)’, “The Kiss Sacred and Profane,” 211.

²⁴⁴ , Burrow, *Gestures and Looks*, 11-12.

²⁴⁵ Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousalls* (London: S. Roycroft, 1686), K3^r.

²⁴⁶ Jonas Adames, *The Order of Keeping a Court Leet and Court Baron* (London: Thomas Orwin and William Kirckham, 1593), A3^v.

Homage to idols was thought to have a strongly erotic dimension...the desire to substitute a dead, tangible image for the living, invisible God...signified man's overestimation of bodily forms themselves and was virtually certain to involve the sin of concupiscence.²⁴⁷

First performed in 1604, *Othello* is sandwiched between several other Shakespearean plays involving characters who kiss dead bodies and die on a kiss. Cleopatra (1606-7) tells her servants Iras and Charmian 'take the last warmth of my lips' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.291), and Romeo (1591-5) expresses himself almost identically to Othello, 'with a kiss I die' (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.120). Romeo, Juliet, and Othello combine their kisses with protestations of overwhelming romantic love and with imagery of saints and stone images, evoking the contemporary link between subversive idolatrous kissing and lust. Romeo, in the shared sonnet that marks his first conversation with Juliet, describes Juliet as a 'shrine', and his lips 'two pilgrims' ready to kiss her (1.5.93ff.); Juliet calls Romeo 'god of my idolatry' (2.2.114). Gillian Woods explains that *Romeo and Juliet* here re-thinks the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, because instead of being the traditional absent, voiceless addressee of Romeo's sonnets, Juliet takes up and alters his metaphors herself.²⁴⁸ Romeo and Juliet evoke ideas of stillness and movement playfully, with Juliet suggesting that she is an unmoved (unaffected, chaste) saint, and Romeo altering the metaphor, telling her 'move not, whilst my prayer's effect I take' (1.5.106): stay still and let me kiss you! Othello's implicit troping of Desdemona as stone image, however, is more disempowering; the image of motionless alabaster proleptically figures Desdemona as dead whilst she is still alive, denying her agency. Othello follows an implicit anti-Catholic chain of thought to its logical conclusion; romantic lust is a materialistic lust, kissing a saint's image is an overly materialistic act, saints' images are dead not alive, and so romantic kisses are like kissing a stony corpse.

Modern productions of *Othello* rarely make Christian religious imagery the main focus of the play, but this imagery is certainly available to modern audiences. Othello, who explicitly states the excessive nature of his love, saying he 'lov'd not

²⁴⁷ Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 26.

²⁴⁸ Gillian Woods, *Romeo and Juliet: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 106-7.

wisely but too well' (5.2.344), is often depicted kneeling reverently before Desdemona's bed as he kisses her, as if he is adoring a saint's image.²⁴⁹ Othello consolidates these associations with idolatry by imagining Desdemona as a statue instead of a person; rather than sensitive and living her skin is 'smooth as monumental alabaster' (5.2.5). In his anti-Catholic tract *The Survey of Popery* (1596), written after he converted in 1593 from vehement Catholicism to equally vehement Protestantism, Thomas Bell ridicules the numerous kisses in 'the Popish Mass'; his main quibble with kissing images is that Catholics treat something that is not alive as if it were a living person, 'they kisse them...as they were yet living'.²⁵⁰ In *The Communion of Saints* (1607), the separatist minister Henry Ainsworth argues, 'we may not kisse them' for the same reasons.²⁵¹ Kissing Desdemona's dead body before his own death, Othello enacts the subversive, necrophiliac kiss that Post-Reformation discourse associated with Catholicism. By declaring 'on a kiss I die', he also literalises the idea that kissing a dead image was fatal to the idolater's soul. His evocative 'cold, cold my girl!! Even like thy chastity' (5.2.275-6) invites audiences to imagine the physical sensations of loving a cold, dead, idol-like being and thus to engage empathetically with the bodily act of idolatry.

However, Othello also seems confused, throughout the murder scene, about whether Desdemona is a real person or an alabaster idol and whether he is righteously destroying or reverently worshipping that idol. Explaining that Protestant iconoclasts saw humans as 'lively images of God', contrasting them to 'dead' images of wood or stone, Jennifer Waldron argues that Othello tries desperately to envisage Desdemona as a false idol, evoking ideas of a Christian or Old Testament rightful sacrifice (or Christ, or of an adulterous wife), but ends up acknowledging that he has committed an all too human and mundane murder.²⁵² To add to the confusion, whilst reformers

²⁴⁹ In Quayle's 1955 production for instance, he 'kneels up'; *Othello*, Quayle. Othello 'kneels', too, in Michael Attenborough's later version. Prompt Book, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Michael Attenborough, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1999, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

²⁵⁰ Thomas Bell, *The Survey of Popery* (London: Valentine Sims, 1596), R7^v.

²⁵¹ Henry Ainsworth, *The Communion of Saints* (London: Giles Thorp, 1607), I3^v.

²⁵² Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice and Early Modern Theater* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8, 20-1, 161, 164-5. Waldron adds, 'Othello's references to law, confession, and sacrifice in the final scene reinforce the play's earlier allusions to Desdemona as a

criticised kissing statues because this was tantamount to pretending that a dead image was a living body, Othello inverts this, kissing a living woman as if she was a dead stone image. Othello's knowledge that he is not kissing Desdemona properly perhaps gives rise to this implicit description of the kiss as idolatrous. The confusion of imagery matches the olfactory confusion in this passage; Othello does not smell what he expects to smell, expecting a sinful 'weed' he smells a chaste, sweet 'rose'. Expecting a stinking false idol he comes into contact with a pure body sweet as a statue perfumed with incense. The spiritually-dead, righteously-murdered adulterous Desdemona mingles in his mind with an alluring saint, a pure white image.²⁵³

Kissing a dead corpse was a common motif in Renaissance romantic ballads, and literary writers particularly emphasise the fact that the corpse, like an idol, could not feel anything. The popularity of images of kissing corpses in romantic songs and poems suggests that these kinds of texts were places where the strong religious taboo on lust and idolatry was (implicitly) challenged. The 1625 song *The Passionate Lover* ends, 'Wa is me, ligs my luife on the cawd ground,| Let me come kisse his frosty mouth'.²⁵⁴ Often, such ballads associate romantic love with frustration and with the sense that mortal pleasures are limited because they end at death, or even cause death due to their reckless excess. In this way, literary texts dissolve the boundary between the dual meaning of 'die': 'to lose one's life' and 'to experience orgasm' – a common pun in early modern ballads. Analysing a Scottish ballad depicting two lovers (one alive, one now a ghost) Pollard argues that the 'strong breath' of the ghost suggests 'a tangible deathliness that will penetrate through the kiss'.²⁵⁵ This association between death and romantically or lustfully kissing dead images appears a several times on the early modern stage, too. In John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), for instance, the

figure of devotion and as a type of Marian intercessor'.

²⁵³ This can be linked to what Farah Karim-Cooper describes as the 'anxiety about woman's fundamental lack of readability' evident in early modern cosmetic culture (which embraced both perfumes and make-up), *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 34.

²⁵⁴ Anon, *The Passionate Lover* (London: A. Matthews, 1625). The lover 'ready was pale Death to kisse' because of his unrequited love; this line echoes the evocation of Death as a love-rival and the idea of kissing death as a pleonasm for 'dying' seen in *Romeo and Juliet*.

²⁵⁵ Pollard, *Drugs and Theater*, 176-7.

devoted wife Isabella dies when she kisses a poisoned picture of her husband,²⁵⁶ and Karim-Cooper has linked this to the ‘poisoned minerals’ with which women (in an act of theatrical deception which often called their ‘virtue’ into question) painted their faces to seem romantically alluring.²⁵⁷ Karim-Cooper traces puns in Webster’s work on ‘to dye the complexion’ and to die literally or metaphorically.²⁵⁸ In *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606) the Duke dies when he is tricked into kissing the skull of Gloriana, believing she is a woman he is going to sleep with.²⁵⁹ This early modern dramatic tradition shares themes with ballads but is not above parodying them (as, for instance, Autolycus does in *The Winter’s Tale* with his ballad of a cold maiden who turns into a fish), distinguishing itself as a higher form of art than the ballads. Knowledge of this tradition of literalising the idea of excessive lust as fatal intensifies the sense of danger when Othello kisses his corpse(-like)-wife.

Unlike *The White Devil* and *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, which depict characters literally kissing dead, unfeeling idols (a picture and a skull), Othello kisses a living woman and as such has to do careful, intense mental work to bring ideas of idolatry into play. Desdemona is not (yet) a corpse and she is made of flesh not stone or paint, but Othello warps his image of her to fit this tradition of idolatry; she is a monument, alabaster, something dead, cold, remembered. The powerful set of cultural associations, persisting for centuries, that link the extravagant olfactory sensuality of Othello’s kisses and idolatrous, sinful lust may well have informed more recent directorial decisions to cut them. The early-twentieth-century directors cited at the start of this chapter may have had an additional imperative to cut these kisses based on racist attitudes, shying away from depicting an interracial kiss that may have shocked, and Neill shows historically did shock, audiences. Othello’s dying kiss is also subversive in the context of the phenomenological theories that have informed

²⁵⁶ The RSC’s 2014 production perhaps evoked these associations of idolatry by subverting the image of the Virgin Mary pregnant with Christ; Isabella (Faye Castelow) visibly miscarried when poisoned, staining the crotch of her white pajamas with blood. *The White Devil*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Maria Aberg, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, August 8 2014.

²⁵⁷ Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics*, 89. ‘Cosmetics were troubling because many of them were poisonous even while they made a woman beautiful’ (91).

²⁵⁸ Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics*, 90.

²⁵⁹ Thomas Middleton, *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, ed. Brian Gibbons (York: New Mermaids, Methuen, 2008), 3.5.146.

cognitive theory. Evoking an Othello- or Juliet-esque image of a lover caressing a dead body, M.C. Dillon explains that for Merleau-Ponty, erotic touches that are not experienced as a mutual congress of body and mind constitute a marked failure to connect cognitively with the other,

without the intersection of immanence and transcendence, without the incarnation of consciousness in the body's flesh, desire and the caress cannot be. You must inhabit your body for it to be the object of my desire, and when I caress your body it must be you that I touch—otherwise erotic love would be but mystified necrophilia.²⁶⁰

Both in the early modern era and the present day, the kisses Othello gives Desdemona just before and just after her death represent a shocking contrast to ideals of loving behaviour. The way in which *Othello* transgresses conventions and ideals (i.e. via the motif of kissing a corpse) is, however, common in both literary and theological texts.

Paradoxically, as well as being associated with death, Othello's kisses are associated with more positive early modern notions about the kiss's ability to heal or to bring life to another person. Othello's kisses awaken Desdemona from sleep, and she also revives a few minutes after she has been killed to speak a few words.²⁶¹ St. Martin is described healing a leper with a kiss, and Romeo imagines a breath-like (and thus potentially olfactory) kiss resurrecting his dead body, 'I dreamt my love came and found me dead...and breathed such life with kisses on my lips| That I revived and was an emperor' (5.1.6-9).²⁶² Just as today a 'French kiss' is alternatively called a 'soul kiss',²⁶³ many early moderns believed that kissing could cause the souls of two people to communicate, and even to inhabit each other's bodies. Citing Plato as a precedent, the scholar Pietro Bembo in Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528) says that, ideally,

²⁶⁰ M.C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 146.

²⁶¹ In Hands' *Othello*, Desdemona spoke 'falsely, falsely murdered' in a mechanical way that suggested an automaton, something that was almost but not quite human and alive. Archival Recording, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Terry Hands, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1985, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

²⁶² Frijhoff, "The Kiss Sacred and Profane," 211.

²⁶³ O.E.D., 'soul kiss', n2.

a man delights in joining his mouth to that of his beloved in a kiss, not in order to bring himself to any unseemly desire, but because he feels that that bond is the opening of mutual access to their souls, which, being drawn by desire for the other, pour themselves each into the other's body by turn, and mingle so together that each of them has two souls; and a single soul, composed thus of these two, rules as it were over two bodies. Hence, a kiss may be said to be a joining of souls rather than of bodies, because it has such power over the soul that it withdraws it to itself and separates it from the body.²⁶⁴

Many early modern writers described kissing as a way of communicating with, touching, or even stealing another person's soul. John Cleveland (1613-58) writes of 'two souls pickeering in a kiss'; 'pickeer' (now obsolete) meant amorous or sporting play, or military skirmish.²⁶⁵ In Abraham Cowley's (1618-1667) poem "The Enjoyment", the lover promises 'I'll kiss thee through, I'll kiss thy very soul'.²⁶⁶ Early modern texts describe kisses as communions of souls to varying degrees of literalness; many imagine souls mingling, or being sucked into another person's mouth, like breath. James Shirley (1596-1666) advises "A Lover that durst not speak to his Mistress" about how much he loves her, to 'breathe it in a kisse| And mingle souls'.²⁶⁷ Kissing Helen of Troy not long before he is due to relinquish his soul to Satan, Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* references this trope in a way that suggests wish-fulfilment, 'her lips suck forth my soul!' (5.1.90); if only Helen *would* suck away his soul, he would not be burdened with the prospect of it being tormented in hell. In Shackerley Marmion's 1666 *Cupid's Courtship* (a translation of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*), Psyche kisses Cupid before killing him. Her experience is at once an olfactory, physically pneumatic one of tasting and sucking and a cognitively affecting one where her thoughts are altered by Cupid's encroaching soul, 'She his lips would tast...with

²⁶⁴ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1976), 253.

²⁶⁵ John Cleveland, "The Senses Festival," in *Cleveland's* [sic] *Genuine Poems* (London: for Robert Harford, 1677), B4^r.

²⁶⁶ Abraham Cowley, "The Inioyment," in Abraham Cowley, *The Mistresse* (London: for Rowland Reynolds, 1667), E5^r.

²⁶⁷ James Shirley, *Poems &c* (London: Ruth Raworth and Susan Islip, 1646), B8^v.

her lips she labours all she may| To suck his soul out'. The 'tast' of Cupid's lips transfers thoughts of 'love' and Cupid's other 'vertues' from his soul to Psyche's, demonstrating the power of early modern kisses to cognitively affect participants, to alter and shape their minds.²⁶⁸

Othello brings his soul into the equation as soon as he starts building up to kissing Desdemona for the last time, 'it is the cause, my soul' (5.2.1). Whether threatened by idolatrous excess or affected lovingly by another person, souls are deeply implicated in early modern conceptions of the kiss. Juliet, speaking within the oxymoronic mode of Petrarchan tradition, encapsulates the power of the kiss to feed and destroy, to restore and kill, to bring sexual pleasure and (punningly) death, 'I will kiss thy lips| Haply some poison yet doth hang on them| To make me die with a restorative' (5.3.164-6). Over and above the usual chemistry of the kiss, she wants a toxic chemistry to come into play and literally kill her. Juliet's hyperbolic emphasis on the chemical aspect of kissing foreshadows Othello's interest in olfaction. Breath, kissing, and death are closely linked in *Othello*; after savouring Desdemona's breath, Othello cuts it off by strangling her. Salvini made this motif more explicit by playing on the idea of being 'breathless' after a kiss; Mason reports, having kissed Desdemona in welcome, 'As Othello says, "it stops me here", he lays his hand upon his throat, speaking the words and those which follow as if short of breath. The Italian is "Esse il respire mi tronca" – "It cuts off my breath".'²⁶⁹ As Connor's analysis establishes, the air and the breath are vehicles for smells both literal and metaphorical, for poisons, infections, and affect.

Disgust and enjoyment as moral and olfactory qualities

²⁶⁸ Shackerley Marmion, *Cupid's Courtship* (London: E.O., 1666), C7^v-C8^r. It was commonly said that God killed Moses in a loving way by 'sucking' his soul out with a kiss God to save it from Samuel, sucked out his [Moses'] soul from the Body by a kisse', Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition... On the Epistle of Jude* (London: J.M., 1657), Zz3^v. Richard Allestree says that God can both give and take life with a kiss; if Adam had not sinned, 'God would have taken up his soul to him with a kiss, which they call osculum pacis, he would have receiv'd that spirit which with his mouth he did inspire, a kiss of taking leave here to meet in Heaven', *Forty Sermons* (Oxford and London: for R. Scott et al, 1684), S2^r.

²⁶⁹ Mason, *The Othello of Tommaso Salvini*, 22.

Cognitive studies of olfaction are sites where cognitive theory confronts metaphors for cognition. Historically, thought has been figured through metaphors of smelling or tasting the world, metaphors that draw their power from the fact that smelling and tasting are indeed forms of experience that affect, and are affected by, our beliefs, memories, and knowledge. Cognitive studies into smell and taste are studies of metaphors for knowledge, of real embodied ways of knowing, and of cognitive theory's metaphors for itself. Examining the ways in which humans use smell and taste to cognise the world and each other, cognitive theory is also well placed to interrogate the way it itself has historically been envisaged as a form of 'tasting' or 'smelling' other people and the world. Throughout its history, this olfactory metaphor for cognition has been accompanied by anxiety due to olfaction's associations with the sexual, the animal, the 'base'. Le Guérer traces the history of the idea that smell (and, often, taste) is(/are) the 'lowest' of the senses from St Augustine, through Freud, and onwards, with the result that, 'The rare attempts by philosophers and psychoanalysts to provide a cognitive re-evaluation of the sense of smell have led to the idea of a non-rational intelligence, a "flair" that cannot be expressed in words', thus, she argues, smell is, 'Frequently denigrated as a tool for rational knowledge because of its resistance to abstraction, and because of its close links to sexuality'.²⁷⁰ Accordingly, in their preface to the 2002 work *Olfaction, Taste and Cognition*, the editors note that despite cognitive studies always having taken a great interest in gesture, emotion, touch, and sight, their study of olfaction and cognition is one of the first of its kind,

Unlike the other senses, olfaction and taste do not have a learned discourse dealing with elementary aspects, that is, sensory processing, as well as the most abstract aspects, that is, symbolic processing. ... We are still quite unaware of the nature of gustatory and olfactory representations, as compared with what we know about vision and audition, for example.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Le Guérer, "Olfaction and Cognition," 11.

²⁷¹ Catherine Rouby, Benoit Schaal, Danièle Dubois, Rémi Gervais, A. Holley, "Preface," in *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, xv.

Othello insists that sensuality in general (of which kissing and smelling are a part) is ‘baser’, lower, cruder, more animal than other, ‘rational’, forms of cognition; ‘goats and monkeys!’ he exclaims, thinking of Desdemona and Cassio together, whilst Mason describes Salvini transforming into an animal, a ‘tiger’, as he is overcome by sensual rage.²⁷² This places Othello firmly within this tradition of seeing sensuality, of which olfaction is a subcategory, as a lower, less rational form of cognition. Othello registers olfactory data, but also attempts to disregard them. He tries to manage and diminish the sensual ‘ache’ produced by Desdemona’s scent by concentrating instead on his ‘heavenly’ conscious purpose of killing her, which he relates to ideals of ‘justice’. He repeatedly contrasts these ‘higher’ conscious and divine ideals with what he sees as lower, more sensual motivations: romantic love, lust, rage; one of the things he most fears is that ‘my blood begins my safer guides to rule’ (2.3.205).

Othello experiments with olfaction whilst simultaneously attempting to contain and control it, something cognitive theorists are increasingly doing. However, *Othello* as a whole focuses on Othello’s tragic inability to keep sensuality and reason, olfaction and his ‘higher purpose’ completely separate. An obsession with sexuality mingles very literally with Othello’s high purpose of ‘honour’. For him, Desdemona’s honour is as important to him as his own; ‘she is protectress of her honour too’ (4.1.14), he tells Iago. After twenty lines, though, Iago has cracked this lofty word apart and given it a cruder significance, punning on Desdemona’s ‘honour’ and who has been ‘on her’. He states that he knows Cassio,

did...Lie-

OTHELLO: With her?

IAGO: With her, on her, what you will.

²⁷² ‘Othello’s manner, from the moment of Desdemona’s entrance has shown strong self-restraint, a settled purpose to make what he intends to do a judicial sacrifice in the interest of justice: he will repress passion and act with calm deadly deliberation, as the passive instrument of fate...He holds his passion in check, as a giant might hold a raging tiger. Gradually it becomes evident that this restraint cannot last, and that the wild beast must break loose’ but, ‘Her repeated denials of her guilt exasperate him, until they make his heart too great for what contains it. Finally, her words “Alas! He is betrayed, and undone”, and her weeping fairly madden him – the tiger is loose, free, beyond all control – and the remaining speeches are uttered in wild and headlong fury and with lightning rapidity’, *The Othello of Tommaso Salvini*, 94-5.

OTHELLO: Lie with her? Lie on her? We say lie on her when they belie her
(4.1.32-5)

Othello's noble obsession with 'honour' and what he sees as a 'baser' obsession with who has been 'on her' become confused, via homophony: 'honour' – 'on her'. This contaminates even his final speech, when Othello states 'nought I did in hate but all in honour' (5.2.295), we hear Iago's jingle in the background 'all in- on- her'.²⁷³ In 1999 Ray Fearon (the first Black actor to play Othello at the RSC since Paul Robeson in 1930) particularly brought out this pun, enunciating each syllable of 'hon-our'.²⁷⁴ The silent 'h' in 'honour' gives way to breathier glottal approximants when 'honour becomes' 'on her' and is paired with 'hate'. This draws attention to the pneumatics involved in pronouncing these lines, and underscores the ways that breath and smell infiltrate Othello's attempts to live purely abstractly and rationally.

As well as sharing a certain disgust at olfaction as a baser, cruder form of knowing, cognitive theory and *Othello* both recognise that olfaction is integral to our experience of disgust and attraction. In the case of *Othello*, this interest becomes more and more pronounced after Othello falls prey to Iago's influence. Cognitive studies like Herz, Philips, and Heining's found that the 'emotional' content of scents, which includes moral judgements like 'healing', or 'wicked', is inextricable from the physical experience of that scent. Many early modern texts also suggest that kissing enables people to smell or taste moral or abstract qualities, giving both a literal and a figurative meaning to kisses that are sugared, sweet, honeyed, or bitter. When Bottom counsels his fellow players, 'eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath. And I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 4.2.42-4), the literal idea of nice-scented breath blends with a more abstract notion of melodious and appealing words. In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the Duchess

²⁷³ Waldron suggests a further blurring of what Othello sees to be higher and lower thoughts as he grapples with the word 'confess' yet 'recoils from the vulgarity of *con* and *fesse*', *Reformations of the Body*, 169.

²⁷⁴ Archival Recording, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Michael Attenborough, Swan Theatre, Stratford upon Avon, April 15 1999. Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive. Several reviewers remarked on Fearon's way of emphasizing words in this manner, Michael Davies called him 'too stilted', *Oxford Mail*, April 23 1999. Paul Taylor criticized Fearon's 'slow and nerveless verse delivery', *Independent*, April 23 1999.

remarks after an incestuous kiss, ‘had not that kiss a taste of sin, ’twere sweet’ (3.6.207), allowing the idea of an appealing ‘sweet’ taste to blend and contrast with the idea of something that is also morally unappealing. In Geoffrey Thornley’s mid-seventeenth-century translation of Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*, the physical ‘taste’ and feel of Chloe’s kiss, which is first described in a very literal sense of tactile softness and gustatory sweetness, ‘softer than roses...sweeter than the honeycombs of the lawns and meadows’, has a cognitive effect on Daphnis’ ‘heart’ and ‘soul’, enabling him to experience the world in a much wider cognitive sense; he suddenly finds himself able to speak and put thoughts into words. Whereas before he had been a blunt, plainly-spoken man, he is strikingly described as able to ‘taste’ the world in a more abstract sense of experiencing and knowing, ‘now first beginning to taste of the world and the language of love’.²⁷⁵

Discourses of idolatry are commonly linked with both moral and literally olfactory repugnance. The Pope’s shoe (which Catholics could pay to kiss) or the antichrist’s foot were described as ‘stinking’ in sharp contrast to the actual sweet scents like incense involved in the Mass.²⁷⁶ Othello’s evocation of idolatrously kissing an ‘alabaster’ statue, and his concomitant concern with how that statue/corpse/woman *smells*, are intrinsically linked. Early modern writers often claim to be able to ‘sniff out’ idolatry thanks to the stench it creates. In *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603), Samuel Harsnett describes the ‘foule stench’ of demons and hell. Harsnett’s book is suffused with smells, from the ‘brimstone’ that devils use to torment their victims to lay people’s own reports of their ability to smell the delicious holiness of priests and the true cross, as well as (as is the case with a woman called Sara) to detect the newly-sweet smells of people who had just taken communion.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Geoffrey Thornley, trans., *Daphnis and Chloe* (London: for John Garfield, 1657), E3^v-E4^f. O.E.D., ‘taste’, v 3.

²⁷⁶ E.g. the Church of Ireland Bishop of Armagh Thomas Lancaster writes of the Antichrist, ‘the hiest potent vpon earth who god him self comaunded to obey must knele downe & kysse his stynkyng fote’, *The Right and Trew Vnderstandynge of the Supper of the Lord* (London: E. Whitchurch, 1550), D6^f. The comfit-maker (and thus dealer in sweetness) John Graunt, who wrote several Church of England religious tracts, writes in strikingly similar language of the Pope, ‘Kings and Emperours must kisse his stinking feet and toes, in token of their slavish subjection’, *Truths Victory Against Heresy* (London: H.R., 1645), G2^f

²⁷⁷ Samuel Harsnett, *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (London: James Roberts, 1603), T3^f, and see e.g. KK3^fff, which describes the blind churchgoer Sara who could tell how many people had

Writers often literalise the idea that idolatry was physically disgusting by harnessing a common cultural perception that kissing buttocks was repugnant and describing idolaters kissing the devil’s anus or buttocks with excessive enjoyment. In the section “The Use of Kissing Satan’s Back-parts” in his popular tome *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Reginald Scot spells out the notion that ‘to kisse the devils back-parts’ is an inversion of order, something ‘unseemly’, a morally and physically repugnant overturning of the right order of things,

The baser and vnseemelier the homage is, the more it binds, Reason being turned vpside downe cannot iudge otherwise thereof: The more vnseemly the more it binds, as agreeable to flesh, that delights in filthinesse, it is iust with God to giue vp to such slauish basenesse, because his seruice being most pure and holy, is reiected. Looke vpon Poperie the nurse of Witch-craft.

Scott’s marginal note links this more explicitly to the excessive, lust-like approach to religion that was commonly associated with desires to kiss ‘dead’ statues, ‘The glorie of Popish Religion is shame most glorious in her greatest libertie to the flesh, in the grossest filthynesse thereof commending horrible vncleannesse not to bee named, as if delighted in kissing Satans backe-parts’.²⁷⁸ Fleshly liberty and delight in sensuality are precisely what Othello aims to counter; he states that he wants Desdemona with him in Cyprus ‘not| To please the palate of my appetite,| Or to comply with heat – the young effects| In me defunct’ (1.3.262-4). Shakespeare perhaps mockingly draws on the ideas that kissing the anus and kissing a stone idol are ‘vile’ and similar actions in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (5.1.200-1) when Pyramus kisses the wall’s ‘stones’ (early modern slang for testes, but also perhaps very implicitly evoking the idea of idolatrously kissing stone images), and his ‘vile...hole’, ‘O kiss me through the hole

taken communion because their scents changed, and how ‘the deuill, who can wel enough endure the loathsome odours, and euaporations of hell, is not able to endure the vapour issuing from the mouth of a priest, but had rather goe to hell, then abide his smell’.

²⁷⁸ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: Henry Denham, 1584), K4^{r-v}. James Carmaichel also relates that a devil induced witches to ‘kisse his Buttickes in signe of duetye to him’ as he spoke treacherous words about the king of Scotland *Newes from Scotland* (London: E. Allde[?], 1592), A4^v

of this vile wall'. Thisbe's reply, 'I kisse the wall's hole, not your lips', emphasises the way that stones and hole replace lips and living flesh, perhaps parodically resonating with more serious contemporary critiques of idolatry. At the RSC in 2004, Trevor Nunn made these connotations explicit by having Pyramus and Thisbe talk between the wall's legs, so that Thisbe kissed the actor playing Wall's buttocks. The mechanicals' jokes enable the reader or audience (including the 'audience' on stage, consisting of the wedding party) to enjoy the scene, to explore the possibilities for 'delight' in these ideas that were so dangerous in the religious context.

Idolatrous kisses represented a complete subversion of the normative idea of the kiss as social cement. They often did so by simultaneously subverting the kneeling gesture in ways that overturned normative ideas of kneeling as social cement discussed in chapter 2. Kneeling or bending to kiss the devil's buttocks in 'homage' is a hellish alternative to the kiss of feudal homage, also delivered kneeling. In 1593, the clergyman George Gifford describes a bewitched man whose key problem was that he couldn't help kissing his cow's buttocks, evoking the sense of lust as beast-like which plagues *Othello* (in the very first scene, Iago imagines Cassio and Desdemona 'making the beast with two backs' (1.1.116-7)), 'for his life he could not come in where she was, but he must needs take up her tayle and kisse under it'.²⁷⁹

Shakespeare's 94th sonnet (first published in 1609, but written and circulated much earlier) shows that the link between idealised stone women and the ability to smell out that woman's (predominantly sexual) moral qualities was an abiding feature of Shakespeare's thought. The sonnet begins with a series of homiletic riddles, idealising chaste women as stonily still and cold, 'Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,| Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow'. In *Othello* (2.1.148-61), Iago presents Desdemona with similar comparisons in a series of couplets beginning, 'She that was ever fair and never proud,| Had tongue at will and yet was never loud'. Iago's sonnet is structurally very similar to Sonnet 94, except for the ending, which tails off, 'She was a wight, if ever such wight were... To suckle fools and chronicle small beer'. Desdemona criticises Iago's 'most lame and impotent conclusion'; her remark draws attention to the conclusion of Sonnet 94 which Iago seems to be deliberately avoiding and which in a more grave fashion specifically links

²⁷⁹ George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* (London: Tobie Cook, 1593), L4^v.

the smell of the beloved as a flower or ‘weed’, to the perception of moral corruption, ‘The sweetest things are soured by their deeds,| Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds’. Sniffing their idols, Othello and the ‘I’ of the *Sonnets* aim to distinguish between the chaste and the unchaste. The distinction in the sonnet is clear cut. A once sweet lily smells worse when it rots, compared to a weed that never smelt particularly good, just as a once idealised beloved seems worse when (s)he is unfaithful than does a lover who was never particularly faithful. But Othello is confused: Desdemona smells ‘sweet’ (like a perfect lily) yet he believes she *is* a weed. His confusion upsets the clear equation between moral qualities and smell he expects to find. Desdemona’s ‘sweet’ smell indicates to the audience, though, that Othello is wrong, and that olfaction is an accurate register of morality: to us her, ‘sweet’ smell can be seen as confirming her purity. Shakespeare’s interest in the nuanced, profound interrelationship of olfaction and cognition prepared ground that cognitive theorists are only just beginning to explore.

Cognitive theory’s tendency, until quite recently, to regard olfaction as something unworthy of study thanks (as Le Gu er and the editors of *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition* show) to its associations with the irrational, the thoughtless, and in particular the sexual has deep roots in early modern thought. Cognitive theorists also grapple with another, more modern anxiety about the association of olfaction with the ‘lower’ aspects of life, due to the prevalence of discussions of olfaction in ‘pop science’ and popular culture, and particularly media articles about how ‘love hormones’ are supposed subconsciously to influence our satisfaction with our romantic partner during kissing. Drawing on this profoundly twentieth century idea of hormones, popular science articles often compare kissing to taking drugs, due to its powerful and subconscious affect on the mind. One article in the Washington Post uses a quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*, ‘star-crossed lovers’, to place neurochemicals in a similar position to the deterministic powers of fate. The author, Sheril Kirschenbaum, argues that, by prompting the release of ‘the love hormone oxytocin’, ‘kissing influences the uptake of hormones and neurotransmitters beyond our conscious control, and these signals play a huge part in how we feel about each other’,

The assessment [of the person we are kissing as a potential life-partner] occurs at a subconscious level, yet a bad initial kiss may be a result of a

genetically star-crossed pair. (Which is something else to worry about during a new encounter: “What if the girl of my dreams rejects my genes?”)²⁸⁰

As Giovanni Frazetto and Suzanne Anker noted in 2009, ‘In general we are witnessing the rise of a neuroculture (or neurocultures), in which neuroscience knowledge partakes in our daily lives, social practices and intellectual discourses’; as a result many neuroscientists attempt to separate out and critique inferior, more popularist uses of neuroscientific findings.²⁸¹

Slaby and Choudhury, the editors of *Critical Neuroscience* (2012) explain that it is most of all the media that, by sensationalising neuroscientific findings, distorts people’s images of their selfhood, leading them to view neuroscience as the most objective and infallible way to understand themselves, and to the reductive belief that ‘my brain made me do it’. As they point out, ‘Pervasive media messages in this manner lead to a climate of opinion that singles out sensationalistic themes, often ideologically laden, and pushes towards simplified, and technocratic solutions to social problems’.²⁸² Many essays in *Critical Neuroscience* discuss how fMRI images are circulated and tidied up for the popular media in order to create the most sensational contrasts (for instance strikingly-dissimilar images of a brain before and after drug taking), even if these images have gone through several layers of representation and thus are not entirely reliable. Choosing a theme familiar to many early modern anti-Catholic writers, Sheril Kirshenbaum’s *The Science of Kissing* deceptively collapses and simplifies evolutionary arguments, stating that darker lipsticks make women more attractive (to men) simply because they replicate the dark colours of bonobos’ buttocks and of the appetizing berries that our ancestors

²⁸⁰ ‘A good kiss can work like a drug, influencing the hormones and neurotransmitters coursing through our bodies. It can send two people on a natural high by stimulating pleasure centers in the brain. The feeling has much to do with a neurotransmitter called dopamine, which is responsible for craving and desire and associated with “falling in love”’, Sheril Kirshenbaum, “Sealed with a kiss-and Neuroscience,” in *Washington Post*, December 26 2014, last accessed July 8 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/23/AR2010122304771.html>.

²⁸¹ Giovanni Frazetto and Suzanne Anker, “Science and Society: Neuroculture,” *Nature Reviews: Neuroscience* 10 (2009), 815-21.

²⁸² Slaby and Choudhury, “A Proposal for a Citical Neuroscience,” *Critical Neuroscience*, 30.

supposedly sought in the ancient forests.²⁸³ Edmund Rolls presents similarly reductive and heteronormative arguments, reducing art to principles of sexual selection, arguing that literature is at its root a male display of resources (men are better at art than women he claims for this reason), and that the best art uses colours and other stimuli that are associated with rewards and sexual attractiveness.²⁸⁴

As Suma Jacob et al argue, olfaction generates several prime examples of this sort of populist, distorted reasoning. The notion of pheromones, which are said to influence our evaluation of sexual and romantic partners via the sense of smell, are a case in point. Even if pheromones do exist, they contend, '[t]he expectation that human pheromones can consistently elicit stereotyped behavior is unrealistic', as the experience of smell is determined by factors like memory and cultural context, 'The inherent multimodal, multidimensional complexities of human behavior render such a strict mode inappropriate, and the elaborate neocortical cognitive systems of the human nervous system preclude the initiation of complex behaviors by a simple signal'.²⁸⁵ Olfaction seems particularly susceptible to this sort of reading because olfaction is linked in people's frames of understanding with sex and the pre-cognitive. Theorists and lay people alike have tended until relatively recently to treat olfaction as if it was resistant to thorough, logical theorising, and have either ignored it or mixed cultural assumptions in with their analyses of it.

Cognitive theory is deeply affected by its own olfactory metaphors. Its methodologies have historically been shaped by dominant cultural attitudes to olfaction that saw it as a volatile, base form of experience not worthy of serious neuroscientific study. In recent years, cognitive theorists have been seeking to redress the balance. Predictably beginning with studies into olfaction and sexuality, cognitive theory has since broadened its range to examine how olfaction affects our 'higher' emotions and value judgements. Othello's distaste for sexuality and his distrust of olfaction even as he experiments with it mean that he has several of the same concerns as these cognitive theorists. However, because it is performed on stage, Othello's 'experiment' into olfaction's effect on his conscious decision-making

²⁸³ Sheril Kirschenbaum, *The Science of Kissing* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011), 9-13.

²⁸⁴ Edmund Rolls, *Neuroculture: On the Implications of Brain Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 247-66.

²⁸⁵ Suma Jacob, Bethanne Zelano, Davinder Hayreh, and Martha McClintock, "Assessing Putative Human Pheromones," *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, 178.

capabilities has different limits, and offers different opportunities, for understanding the significance of olfaction, compared to a laboratory study.

Performance

Ever since St. Augustine's suggestion that theatrical performances infect theatregoers 'with a plague of the soul', where 'evil spirits' inspire the populace with reckless lust and love of pleasure, 'luxuria', antitheatricalist writers have linked theatregoing with moral infection and even demonic possession.²⁸⁶ Stephen Gosson's *Playes Confuted* (1582) for example describes a play which involved Bacchus and Ariadne gesturing lustfully to one another such that,

when they departed to bedde; the company presently was set on fire, they that were married posted home to their wiues; they that were single, vowed very solemnly, to be wedded. As the stinge of *Phalangion* spreadeth her poyson through euery vaine, when no hurt is seene; so amorous gesture, strikes to the heart when no skinne is rased.²⁸⁷

Farah Karim-Cooper traces a chain of imagery linking theatre to the infectious looks of the basilisk, reclaiming 'tactility' as key to the experience of theatre as a sensory medium, which was tasted, 'consumed' and chewed over by audiences.²⁸⁸ Pollard concludes that 'a chorus of voices—both from attackers and defenders of the theatre, as well as from playwrights themselves—saw theatre not only as a vehicle for representing drugs and poisons but also as a kind of drug or poison itself.'²⁸⁹ And

²⁸⁶ St. Augustine remarks that this is ironic given that theatres were originally set up to ward off physical plagues from cities, 'Dii propter sedandam corporum pestilentiam ludos sibi scaenicos exhiberi iubebant; pontifex autem propter animorum cauendam um cauendam pestilentiam ipsam scaenam constitui prohibebat.'; he speaks of the cleverness of the evil spirits ('astutia spirituum nefandorum') creating this plague, *De Civitate Dei*, ed. Peter Walsh (Oxford: Aris & Philips, 2005), 1.32-33.

²⁸⁷ Gosson, *Playes Confuted*, G5^r.

²⁸⁸ Farah Karim-Cooper, "Touch and Taste in Shakespeare's Theatres," in Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, eds., *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 215. In this essay, Karim-Cooper explains how (as we have seen) such metaphors for taste and infection often conceptually blurred physical and intellectual experiences into one.

²⁸⁹ Pollard, *Drugs and Theater*, 9.

indeed, Gosson's description of theatre as a 'poyson' that 'strikes' the heart without inflicting a physical wound resonates strongly with contemporary descriptions of both kisses and smells being able to affect the mind and body imperceptibly. We saw that Daphnis' soul 'sparckles' when he kisses Chloe, whilst in his translation of Tasso's *Aminta*, Oldmixon writes 'something sweet from ev'ry kisse| Mixt with poison, struck my heart'.²⁹⁰ Though antitheatricalists tended to focus on infection through visual means, the chemical, the olfactory, and the airborne miasma are also important elements in their discourse. For instance in *Histriomastix* (1633) William Prynne speaks of 'Players and Stageplaies' being 'diffused like an infectious leprosie, so deeply riveted into the seduced prepossessed hearts and judgements of voluptuous carnall persons'.²⁹¹ The word 'diffuse' had the sense of spreading a liquid through air; Prynne thus creates an image of plays as a disease inhaled by, and affecting the hearts and minds of, playgoers.²⁹²

Many early modern writers evince an additional fear of more literal forms of infection, which, like smells or sights, were borne imperceptibly through the air. The close-packed bodies of a theatre audience are prone to infection, just as Cleopatra imagines herself produced like a theatrical show before crowds with 'thick breaths| Rank of gross diet' and being 'forced to drink their vapour' (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.211-4), or Caska, faced with 'the stinking breaths' of the crowd feels 'fear of opening my lips and receiving the bad air' (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.246-50). This looming miasma becomes even worse if, as Gosson suggests, theatregoers are provoked to lust and begin kissing. The surgeon Charles Peter remarks in 1686 that venereal disease (among other ailments) is 'gotten by kissing', so 'the common Lacivious way of Kissing doth much adjuvate [aid] this way of infecting', via an 'unwholesome kiss'.²⁹³ The closure of theatres during the plagues added a literal as well as a moral dimension to the fears of infection associated with theatre.

Kisses in *Othello* implicate the audience in ideas of being influenced by chemicals, smells, feelings, and demonic influences in the air. Audience members do not physically go up and smell Desdemona in order to replicate Othello's experience

²⁹⁰ Mr Oldmixon, trans., *Aminta* by Torquato Tasso (London: for Richard Parker, 1698), C2^r.

²⁹¹ William Prynne, *Histriomastix* (London: E[dward] A[l]lde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes], and W[illiam] I[ones], 1633), ***6^{r-v}.

²⁹² O.E.D., 'diffuse', v, 1, 2.

²⁹³ Charles Peter, *Observations on the Venereal Disease* (London: D. Mallet, 1686), A6^{r-v}.

of olfactory confusion. Doing so would only emphasise the fact that the actor playing her may not smell ‘sweet’ at all; rather, Desdemona’s scent is created through performance and poetry as Othello responds to and describes it. Nevertheless, audiences can be affected by this scene; when Othello says ‘sweet’, audience members’ personal olfactory memories and the emotions they associate with sweet scents can trigger affective responses in their minds. Holly Duggan shows that smells like gunpowder and candle wax would have made theatre a powerfully olfactory experience as well as a visual and auditory one;²⁹⁴ but the most important smell in *Othello*, Desdemona’s ‘sweet’ breath is not something the audience experiences directly. Audiences are at once aware of their distance from Othello as he is profoundly affected by a scent that they do not experience, and empathetically in sync with him as his words conjure up that scent for the audiences in their minds. The gap between fiction and reality, character and spectator, becomes visible even as it blurs at this climactic moment. Olfaction is staged and represented in *Othello*, but it cannot be reproduced as an experience that audiences can completely share with Othello.

Shakespeare elsewhere uses a kiss to test the olfactory boundary between audiences and actors to its limit. In the “Epilogue” to *As You Like It*, Shakespeare cannot resist literalising the common idea that onstage kisses implicate audiences in feelings of disgust or lust. The actor playing Rosalind states to the men in the audience, ‘If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had...breaths that I defied not’, that is, she says, ‘sweet breaths’ (18-22). Though still half in character, Rosalind draws attention to the fact that she is a fictional character. ‘If I were a woman’ reminds audiences that the speaker is in fact a male actor; however, it is too soon for the illusion that the speaker is the fictional Rosalind to have completely dissipated. As we saw in the discussion of kneeling at the end of plays in chapter 2, at this moment it is ontologically uncertain whether the person addressing the audience is the character of Rosalind or the actor: the actor is half in half out of their role. As with her/his promise to kneel, Rosalind’s proposal to kiss the audience, and her deliberations as to whether she would take pleasure or feel disgust at doing so, demonstrate that kissing on stage has the power to cross the boundary between what is real and what is performed, most commonly because kisses performed on stage have real effects on the material bodies and brains of audience members. By analysing the

²⁹⁴ Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume* and “Scent of a Woman.”

way that these ideas played out in early modern texts, this chapter has laid the historical foundation for chapter 5's discussion of modern cognitive studies into the effect of stage violence on audiences.

Conclusions

Studies of *Othello* tend to focus on the eyes, particularly on Othello's insistence that he needs 'ocular proof' (3.3.360) of Desdemona's infidelity. In addition to the essays by Sloan, Neill, and Sofer cited above, for example, Angus Fletcher's chapter, "Othello and the Subject of Ocular Proof" in his cognitive study *Evolving Hamlet* traces how the idea of ocular proof in the play will have developed from an unreliable source of sense-data to a source of Cartesian certainty. Fletcher argues that it is this emphasis on 'ocular proof' as a reliable and yet unreliable form of sense data that makes Othello 'an icon of paranoia'.²⁹⁵ The word 'icon' suggests that Fletcher's model of Othello is as something visual, statue-like, much as Othello sees Desdemona. However, this chapter has established that as well as vision, *Othello* centres on a strong interest in the link between kissing, olfaction, and moral qualities that was replicated in the broader early modern context. Scents, too, are both reliable and unreliable indicators of Desdemona's chastity in the play, and Desdemona's scent causes what might be described as a paranoid fear that the world of senses is deceptive (or truthful) in the murder scene. Because it focuses so explicitly on, and seeks to expound, the thought processes behind trying to 'sniff out' someone's moral character, *Othello* has proved to be a useful text to read alongside cognitive and phenomenological theories of olfaction and erotic gestures.

In the case of kissing, the physical and metaphorical elements of olfaction are not easily separable. By presenting us with a description of how kissing Desdemona troubles Othello's strict ideas about her and the strict hierarchy he envisages between the sensual and the rational, *Othello* has been useful for a cognitive analysis of how the thoughts and emotions associated with a kiss can potentially change a person's mind. The close association in early modern thought between demons, transgressive kisses, bad smells and chemical poisons on the one hand, and purity, the divine, loving kisses, sweet smells, and restorative chemical affects on the other hand have

²⁹⁵ Angus Fletcher, *Evolving Hamlet: Seventeenth Century English Tragedy and the Ethics of Natural Selection* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 68.

been given a scientific explanation using cognitive theory. Cognitive studies show that there is a symbiotic link between how sweet a smell is and the moral and emotional effects we associate it with. There is a 'bottom up' process whereby a scent or flavour will produce chemical and concomitant emotional effects in the brain and mind. But there is also a 'top down' process, whereby the cultural associations and expectations we have respecting that smell affect how we perceive it. Reading *Othello* alongside other early modern texts has shown how both dominant cultural attitudes and personal experiences can shape the way smells are experienced; hatred of idolatry or witchcraft caused early modern writers to associate these things with repulsive smells, whilst Iago's descriptions of Desdemona's infidelity cause Othello to be surprised at her 'sweet' breath.

Desdemona's stillness and coldness contribute to Othello's narrative in which she is an idol or monument to be worshipped or destroyed. The next chapter returns to the idea of theatre as a site of demonic infection to examine more closely the implications of characters and actors who, like the dead or sleeping Desdemona are gestureless, yet fascinating, presences on stage.

Chapter 4

‘Her Silence Flouts Me’: restraint and the refusal to gesture in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Introduction

Encapsulating what she hates most about Bianca, Katherine states in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593), ‘her silence flouts me’ (2.1.29). Bianca’s ‘silence’ is part of a wider repertoire of modest behaviour which involves mild gestures and an obedient demeanour. To ‘flout’ someone was to mock them or to affect an attitude for a sarcastic purpose and so Katherine’s statement suggests that, far from being a passive, ineffectual phenomenon, restrained behaviour can be a source of powerful intentionality.²⁹⁶ This chapter shows that it is not just gesture that is cognitively rich in Shakespeare’s plays; refusals to gesture and moments of stillness are just as important. Katherine’s suggestion that Bianca’s modest demeanour might be a deliberate, parodic performance draws attention to the gap between her outward behaviour and her thoughts.

I argue in this chapter that several significant moments of stillness in *The Taming of the Shrew* draw attention to the gap between performance and reality. In doing so, Shakespeare encourages audiences to read Katherine and Bianca’s performances of femininity alongside the performances of the actors playing them. As well as thereby demonstrating that ‘character’ in Shakespeare’s plays is a category that necessarily includes ‘actor’, this chapter examines how actors and characters use the same moments of stillness and silence in cognitively very different ways. Whilst for actors, a moment of stillness involves careful thought and gestural memory, for characters it is often intended to be an indicator that no thought is taking place at all, or that that character’s thoughts are being controlled by another. The theory of ‘offline cognition’ provides a neurological basis for understanding stillness as a legible sign of deep, private, abstract, intense thought which is detached from conscious awareness of what the body is doing. However, the theory of ‘cognitive underload’ suggests that actors need to work against this type of stillness, because gesture helps to bear some of the cognitive ‘load’ involved in memorising and performing lines, restraining gesture can impede this process. This suggests a difference between the stillness and

²⁹⁶ O.E.D., ‘flout’, v1.

silence of an actor and that of their character. Whilst a character's stillness might denote abstract, intense thought during which the character's mind is decoupled from their body, the early modern actor will have produced this effect through an intense awareness of their body, using gesture to lighten their cognitive load as they memorise and recall their part in the play. However, by suggesting that Bianca's 'silence' is a deliberate performance rather than an unconscious part of her nature, Shakespeare problematises this distinction, and creates a play where the boundaries between the actors' and characters' cognitive uses of stillness always have the potential to blur or overlap. Here, too, actor and character can ask critical questions of one another.

Findings from the database: Shakespeare's wider interest in stillness as ideal female behaviour – and performance

We have seen that a rough distinction can be drawn between characters and actors' stillnesses. Whilst a moment of stillness (like a faint, or falling asleep, or simply being ground down into stunned submission to others) can be completely involuntary and unconscious on the character's part, it is deliberately, consciously intended by the actor. However, the database shows that Shakespeare frequently worked with this issue of intentionality in a less binary way. *The Taming of the Shrew* is not the only Shakespearean play in which characters perform stillness and silence just like actors do, appropriating restrained gestures as legible signs of passivity and obedience for their own ends. For example, in *1 Henry IV* Falstaff 'falls down as if he were dead' (SD after 5.4.76), lying motionless on stage to avoid being killed by Douglas, only to pop back up again, drawing attention to the fact that his stillness was cleverly performed. Throughout most of *The Winter's Tale* 5.3, Hermione pretends to be a statue; as Leontes ponders whether or not she is in fact a real woman he draws attention to Hermione's deliberately performed stillness. Whilst Hermione's stillness is a rather passive test of Leontes' devotion, *Antony and Cleopatra* contains a testing moment of stillness much closer to Katherine's idea of using restraint or lack of movement and speech to downright 'flout' someone. Angry that Iras has died before her and thus will be able to greet Antony first in the afterlife, Cleopatra interprets Iras' stillness as a snub, 'Dost fall?...Dost thou lie still?' (5.2.293-6).

The Taming of the Shrew is informed by the early modern notion that physical restraint was part of a wider backdrop of ideal female behaviour that included a

disinclination to argue or contradict others and a modest temperament. ‘Stillness’ could mean the complete absence of movement, absence of mental agitation, absence of strife between two people, and ‘Quietness of temper or behaviour; freedom from turbulence or self-assertion’.²⁹⁷ In Act 1, Lucentio infers from Bianca’s restrained speech and gesture that she embodies the ideal obedient and chaste woman with her ‘Maid’s mild behaviour and sobriety’ (1.1.71), summing Bianca up as ‘this young modest girl’ (1.1.156). Katherine proclaims at the end of the play,

A woman mov’d is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty,
And while it is so none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it (5.2.142-5).

The slightest movement, it seems, will blur a woman’s beauty. Used in a predominantly emotional sense here, the word ‘moved’ is nevertheless rooted in the kinetic movements of the body. As an ideal of female behaviour, restraint was repeatedly linked to two New Testament passages, and though this chapter’s focus is on restrained gestures, these passages show how crucial verbal silence was to ideals of femininity as well.²⁹⁸ In the King James Version 1 Timothy 2:15-28 reads, ‘Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection...I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence’. 1 Corinthians 14:34 rearticulates this injunction, ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law’. In 1629, the clergyman Thomas Adams wrote that a wife ought to cultivate a ‘still and mild’ manner to demonstrate her recognition that her husband was ‘her better’, ‘favouring all quietness and lowliness of affection...her reverence doth enjoin

²⁹⁷ O.E.D., ‘stillness’, *n*.

²⁹⁸ In some cases, women who were thought to have spoken out of turn would be physically punished. One notorious punishment for ‘scolds’ or women who spoke too much or too controversially was the ‘brank’ or ‘scold’s bridle’, a mask with a metal gag for the tongue, which physically enforced the silence society’s norms recommended of women by simultaneously enforcing stillness: stopping the tongue from moving. See Meg Brown and Kari McBride, *Women’s Roles in the Renaissance* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 67.

her silence when she stands by'.²⁹⁹ Here, the still and silent woman 'stands by' rather than acts in her own right, speaking with neither her voice nor her body. In Adams' description, a woman's restrained gestures are not used to express her own mind, but are legible only as signs of 'reverence' towards others. How different, then, is Bianca, whose 'silence' and restraint, while ostensibly signalling her meekness, 'flouts' and enrages her sister.

Shakespeare describes an idealised woman in sonnet 94 as 'unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow' (line 4). As P.A. Skantze shows in her book *Stillness in Motion in Seventeenth Century Theatre* (2003), many early modern texts described stillness as an ideal of female behaviour. For example, Skantze discusses Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* where 'the confined movement of women of quality is a practice lamented by Lucretia and Isabella'.³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, despite this ideal, Skantze traces the way that early modern texts frequently depicted 'men shocked at the way that women really behaved', citing Samuel Pepys's diary where he is confronted by Nell Gwynn certainly not standing still and docile in her dressing room as she flirted with and slept with men between the acts.³⁰¹ Here, Skantze picks up on the same pun that is implicit in sonnet 94: 'to move' could also mean 'to have sex with'; she concludes that Restoration drama 'jostled the static position of looker and silently looked upon when bawdy, imaginative women moved about'.³⁰²

Shakespeare's interest in stillness was often closely tied with an interest in performance, and in particular the actor's ability consciously to perform transformative moments of unconsciousness and lack of control. Sly's life (seemingly) changes completely whilst he falls still on stage and sleeps, but Richard III experiences a darker vision when the ghosts of his murder victims visit him in his sleep: they deliver the self-fulfilling prophecy 'despair and die' to Richard whilst blessing his sleeping enemy Richmond. Richard's sleep is a period of stillness—sometimes punctuated on stage by his troubled gestures in response to the ghosts' words—with devastating consequences. Waking, Richard affirms 'I shall despair'

²⁹⁹ Cited in Kate Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman, A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England* (London: Routledge, 1995), 32. Aughterson (69) emphasises that silence was at the core of both secular and religious ideals of feminine behaviour alongside 'chastity, humility, and obedience'.

³⁰⁰ P.A. Skantze, *Stillness in Motion in Seventeenth Century Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2003), 181.

³⁰¹ Skantze, *Stillness in Motion*, 138.

³⁰² Skantze, *Stillness in Motion*, 138.

(5.3.127-200); he is then defeated and killed by Richmond in battle. Several similar Shakespearean stillnesses embody the confusion between performance and reality that a cognitive reading finds to be so central to Shakespearean drama. Death and sleep, for instance, are often confused with each other in Shakespeare's plays: Juliet and Innogen both fall into charmed sleeps that make the other characters believe they have died. Though they are moments of complete passivity on the character's part, these stillnesses tend to be crucial to Shakespearean plotlines. Characters rarely fall asleep in Shakespeare's plays without experiencing a life-changing vision or other visitation; they rarely faint without revealing something crucial about themselves or changing the course of the plot.³⁰³

As the discussion of failed handshakes in chapter 1 showed, Shakespeare is often particularly interested in gestures that do not do what they are supposed to. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the same is true of restrained gestures; mild, modest behaviour does not always indicate a restrained and obedient mind and in fact can be a sign of the opposite: defiance, manipulation, 'flouting'. This issue is particularly obvious at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*; here, the text falls significantly silent at the climactic moment, when we potentially see whether Katherine has indeed turned into an ideal docile wife. In the final scene, as Baptista states, Katherine appears 'changed, as she had never been' (5.2.115). At the start of the play, she is a 'shrew': a violent, voluble, disobedient, malignant person.³⁰⁴ Many actresses have emphasised this behaviour by moving their bodies wildly and energetically, from Ada Rehan who really did punch John Drew (Petruccio) in Daly's New York production in 1887, through Mrs Benson in 1921 who 'bites' F.R. Benson's Petruccio during the

³⁰³ As we saw, Brutus in *Julius Caesar* has a similar experience to Richard III with the Ghost of Caesar. The divorced Katherine in *Henry VIII* (SD after 4.2.82) experiences a wish-fulfilling vision of six dancers curtsying to her and placing a crown on her head; she wakes 'assured' of 'eternal happiness' (4.2.90-2). Old Hamlet is murdered in his sleep setting of the chain of events that cause *Hamlet*, as are the two young princes in *Richard III*. The tortured misunderstandings in *Cymbeline* begin when Iachimo creeps into Imogen's bedroom as she sleeps (2.2), ending only when the sleeping Posthumus is given a message by the ghosts of his family (5.4. ff.). Dead bodies in Shakespeare's plays, too, continue to signify in important ways, despite being mute and motionless. In *2 Henry VI* 3.2.147ff, the King and courtiers gather round Duke's Humphrey's body, interpreting its appearance to gauge whether he has been murdered, for example, whilst in *Measure for Measure*, the dead Ragozine's head is disguised as Claudio's so the Duke can pretend that Claudio has been executed (4.3.69-102).

³⁰⁴ O.E.D., 'shrew', *n*.

wooing scene, to Elizabeth Taylor's screeching Katherina hitting Richard Burton with a plank of wood she has torn up from the floor.³⁰⁵ By the end of the play, Katherine's behaviour is modest and obedient. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the word 'shrew' was particularly applied to wives; the contrast between Katherine's behaviour at the beginning and end of the play is a contrast between undesirable and desirable wifely behaviour as described by Corinthians and writers like Adams. However, when Katherine proposes, and Petruchio commands, an ultimate test of docility and obedience, placing her hand beneath Petruchio's foot (5.2.177ff.), nothing in the stage directions or in any of the characters' lines indicates whether or not Katherine obeys him. This moment of textual silence enables an ambiguity about how far Katherine actually is tamed. This moment also foregrounds the agency of the actor playing Katherine, who has to decide how to respond to Petruchio's command when the text gives so little guidance.

Directors often seem compelled to 'solve' the problem of textual indeterminacy by emphasising one of two options: either Katherine is 'really' tamed, or she is just pretending. In 2003 at the Globe, Katherine (Kathryn Hunter) left no doubt that her mindset was not that of an awe-struck, obedient wife or that her new 'tamed' identity was purely an external show. She parodied tropes of idealised femininity by overplaying them, bowing and scraping to Petruchio in exaggerated, ironic obedience, emphasising the disparity between her scrupulously 'wifely' behaviour and her derogatory opinion of Petruchio.³⁰⁶ By contrast, Michelle Gomez's Katherine (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2009) had her autonomy completely

³⁰⁵ Tori Haring-Smith, *From Farce to Metadrama: A Stage History of The Taming of the Shrew 1594-1983* (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), 63. 'bites him', Prompt Book, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by F.R. Benson, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1921, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive. *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, 1967, London, Twentieth Century Fox, DVD.

³⁰⁶ Production Photographs, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Phyllida Lloyd, Globe Theatre, 2003, Globe Theatre Archive. Descriptions of the final scene also derived from Gerry Halliday, review of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Rogues Review*, August 24 2003; Elizabeth Schafer, "The Taming of the Shrew," *Around the Globe* 25 (2003), 14-15. Haring-Smith explains that this interpretation became particularly fashionable in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when portrayals of Katherine as terrorized by a violent Petruchio generally fell from favour and directors instead attempted to inject some light domestic comedy into the play, *From Farce to Metadrama*, 60-70.

destroyed by Petruchio and ended the play sitting motionless and vacant eyed on the stage as Petruchio kicked her. Reviewers described her Katherine in the final scenes as a ‘zombie’, ‘doll’, or ‘automaton’, all entities whose gestures are characterised by restraint, slowness, and, in the case of a doll, complete stillness.³⁰⁷ These revealing metaphors suggest that Katherine’s loss of her willpower and Petruchio’s control over her thoughts were central to her new ‘tamed’ identity in this production; there was no disparity between Katherine’s external behaviour and her thoughts, because Petruchio had destroyed her capacity for independent thought.

At every turn, Katherine and Bianca’s behaviour is associated with the actor’s art. Not only is their docile feminine behaviour overshadowed by the suspicion that it is a mere performance, their shrewishness is likewise a very theatrical performance, exploiting the generic conventions of a string of early modern plays about shrews and pointing towards discourses about the shrewishness of theatre itself. Sly moves in just 15 lines from being a loud drunken lout and unruly kinetic presence (he has ‘burst’ (Induction 1.68) several glasses, for instance) to a contained presence on stage when he falls fast asleep (SD at Induction 1.15), showcasing the actor’s ability to move quickly from wild movements to stillness. But, Bryan Reynolds shows that in *The Taming of the Shrew* Shakespeare is doing much more than providing a few moments where actors can show off their comic skill at performing stillness. Rather, Reynolds suggests, Shakespeare embeds Katherine and Bianca’s performances of docile

³⁰⁷ Sarah Hemming found her ‘utterly subservient, so stripped of spirit that she looks as though she were on tranquilisers’, *Financial Times*, February 19 2009. Michael Coveney described her as ‘zombie-like’, *Independent*, February 19 2009. An inflatable female sex doll was thrown around the stage throughout the stag-party-themed production. Several critics (for instance Claire Allfree and Lyn Gardner) compared Katherine to the doll, unable to think or feel for herself, an instrument of other characters’ misogynistic aims. Allfree argues, ‘Katherina’s limp body at the end echoes the blowup doll tossed around by the stags’, *Metro*, February 19 2009. Gardner notes, ‘The blowup doll of the stag night becomes flesh and blood in the final moments, as Michelle Gomez’s broken Katherina lies limply on the floor’, *Guardian*, February 23 2009. Charles Spencer stated that Petruchio’s goal was ‘to break her spirit’, *Telegraph*, February 18 2009. Quentin Letts says he ‘generally behaves like a CIA man with a suspected terrorist’, whilst she is ‘humiliated and forlorn and pitiable’, *Daily Mail*, February 18, 2009. Fiona Mountford described her as ‘utterly subjugated and humiliated, walking and talking like an automaton’, *Evening Standard*, February 18, 2009. In one particularly shocking early modern shrew-taming story, Johannes Bramis’ *A Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wife* (c.1530), the husband uses pure violence to tame his wife, beating her and then wrapping her in a salted horse’s skin.

femininity explicitly within early modern antitheatrical discourses that saw the theatre as a site of demonic power. Reynolds argues that Petruchio's exercise of diabolical influence over Katherine, commanding her to perform a role that erases her original personality, reflects early modern descriptions of the theatre as a 'devil's house' where actors are possessed by their characters as if by demons.³⁰⁸

In the early modern era, both supporters (for instance Thomas Heywood) and opponents of the theatre described acting as a kind of demonic possession by a role. This idea derives ultimately from St. Augustine's description in *City of God* of an actor becoming their character in the same way that the thoughts of a possessed person are deeply altered by the demon possessing them.³⁰⁹ Robert Schuler argues that Katherine and Petruchio are both 'inscribed within the discourses of demonology' because they invert and transgress patriarchal norms. Referring to this transgression, Grumio calls Katherine a 'fiend of hell' (1.1.88) and repeats that the only husband she can have is 'a devil' (1.1.121, 123). The word 'shrew' itself could mean any evil thing or person, and until around 1500 it was a synonym for the devil.³¹⁰ Reynolds' work shows that Katherine's transgression of expected feminine behaviour is rooted in the idea that performance is itself a transgression of the norm. When Petruchio deliberately disrupts his own wedding in 2.1 by punching the priest and flinging the communion wine in the air, he makes visible contemporary notions of the theatre as the site of blasphemy.

³⁰⁸ Bryan Reynolds, "The Devil's House, 'or worse': Transversal Power and Antitheatrical Discourse in Early Modern England," *Theatre Journal* 49(2) (1997), 149. As Reynolds explains, the early modern antitheatricalist John Rainolds (1549-1607) called theatre 'the devil's house'.

³⁰⁹ Augustine also uses the metaphor of infection and plague to describe the ways in which an actor's personality is infiltrated and altered by their character's, *De Civitate Dei*, 8. Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1612), B4^r. Stephen Greenblatt argues in his essay "Shakespeare and the Exorcists" that discourses of possession and exorcism pervasively underlie early modern ideas of performance, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1988), 94-128. C.f. Hillaire Kallendorf's book-length study of this trope, *Exorcism and its Texts: Subjectivity in Early Modern Literature of England and Spain* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003). The notion of the actor becoming their character is discussed in Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 49ff. Henk Gras argues that audiences perceived actors on the stage as if they truly were their characters, *Studies in Elizabethan Audience Response to the Theatre*, 2 vols (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993), vol 1, passim, c.f. 124 for discussion of the exorcism-trope.

³¹⁰ O.E.D., 'shrew', n2.

The motifs of the devilish shrew, a marriage between a shrewish woman and the devil, and the demonically possessed woman were theatrical spectacles to which early modern audiences were well accustomed. For instance, *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (c.1600) depicts the demon Belfagour's attempts to marry the shrew Honoria and his discovery that she is more diabolical than he is. *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608), originally thought to be by Shakespeare but probably by Thomas Middleton, portrays a husband possessed by a violent devil.³¹¹ Schuler contends that Petruchio is modelled on the medieval vice or stage-devil and he identifies several witch-like traits in Katherine's character, placing them firmly within the literary tradition of shrews or witches wedded to devils.³¹² However, in an earlier play, 1 *Henry VI* (composed c.1591, first published in the First Folio), Shakespeare does not just use this generic framework to structure his plots, he also questions it and tests its limits. This precedent suggests that antitheatricalist discourse, and ideas of (gendered) performance and stage craft are crucial to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

In 1 *Henry VI*, testing the limits of the trope of the violent woman married to, or possessed by, the devil involves staging verbal silence and restrained gesture as a form of protest, of 'flouting', as well as of powerlessness. When Joan la Pucelle calls on her devils for military aid in 5.3, a stage direction states of the devils, 'They walk, and speak not' (SD after 5.3.12). Because the devils have no lines in this scene, their

³¹¹ There are parallels between Petruchio's insistence that all he wants from marriage is a rich wife, no matter what her personality is like ('wealth is burden of my wooing dance...I come to wive it wealthy in Padua', 1.2.68, 75), and the Husband in *A Yorkshire Tragedy* who is greedy for his wife's dowry and willing to sell his soul to the devil to get rich. The Husband tells his wife that 'hell will stand more pleasant than her house at home' when she refuses to feed his profligacy with her money. He explains that he was prompted to kill his children (to rid himself of the expense they caused) because 'the enemy my eyes so bleard'; 'the enemy' is a very common Elizabethan euphemism for Satan. The murderous husband displays a supernatural strength when servants try to restrain him, again suggesting that he is possessed by the devil; 'a fowler strength than his| Ore threw me', one of the servants attests after fighting the husband. ['William Shakespeare'], *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (London: Richard Braddock, 1608), B1^v, D3^v, C4^v.

³¹² Robert Schuler, "Bewitching the Shrew," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46(4) (2004), 392, 395. Schuler compares Petruchio depriving Katherine of food and sleep and then asking her to perform ridiculous tasks like calling the sun the moon to the techniques used by inquisitors to force witches to confess the most outlandish crimes (409). He interprets Katherine's final emphasis on her soft body as a kind of transformation from witch to good woman, as 'a key reputed feature of the witch was her unnaturally "hard body"' (413).

only noted appearance in the play, their lack of speech is a given fact. Thus, this in some ways otiose stage direction emphasising the silence is especially significant. The devils' silence is doubly emphasised by Joan's response to it, 'O, hold me not with silence over-long' (5.3.13). As Joan continues to plead with them, 'They hang their heads', and 'They shake their heads' (SDs after 5.3.18, 20). In early modern England, as now, these were gestures of bashfulness or shame, and dissent or refusal, respectively.³¹³ Finally, 'They depart' (SD after 5.3.24), completely denying Joan their help. Contextualised among these other gestures of refusal and inability to help, the stage direction 'They walk and speak not' acquires a similar significance to these other stage directions. Far from a mere neutral absence of speech, the devils' silence is a powerful, meaningful form of resistance to Joan's demands. Indeed, Joan interprets the devils' gestures as signs of their relative power: 'My ancient incantations are too weak| And hell too strong for me to buckle with' (5.3.27-8).

When Joan offers the devils her 'body' in return for their help (*1 Henry VI* 5.3.20), she evokes the common early modern literary theme of the marriage of a witch or shrew to the devil, and this shared theme is not the only suggestive comparison that can be drawn between *1 Henry VI* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Whilst the devils flout Joan with their refusal to speak, Bianca and Katherine flout with both restrained gestures and words. Both plays disrupt generic conventions, not by using violent spectacles but by staging restraint. Constrained and powerless devils crop up in several other early modern plays: Marlowe's Mephistopheles' power is limitless save for the fact that he cannot speak the truth about holy things, for instance, '*Faustus*: Sweet Mephistopheles, tell me who made the world| *Mephistopheles*: I will not'.³¹⁴ However, early modern audiences would have reason to expect their stage-devils to be unruly in speech and gesture; since the Mystery Cycles, devils had been a thrillingly kinetic presence on the stage, providing a highlight of early modern drama as they leapt around surrounded with loud noises and striking stage effects. The devils in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* (1604, 1616)

³¹³ O.E.D., 'hang', v, 4b and 'shake', v, 6b.

³¹⁴ *Dr Faustus* (1604 text), in Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey, eds., *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays* (London: Penguin, 2003), 2.3.70. *Grim the Collier of Croydon* turns the idea of devils' limited power into a comedy; the demon Belfagour is so thoroughly brow-beaten and taken advantage of by a shrew and her friends that he is positively delighted to escape back to Hell. I.T., *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (London: R.D., 1662).

appear throwing fireworks at several points, for example. The mute, constrained devils in *1 Henry VI*, then, also signify Shakespeare's refusal to conform to generic conventions and present his audiences with wildly gesturing demons. The devils are not only characters refusing to perform for Joan, they are also actors refusing to perform according to the established generic conventions of stage-devils. In one way, *The Taming of the Shrew* completes this trajectory as we trace Katherine's transformation from a devilish 'shrew' to a woman who refuses to engage in devilish behaviour (though in so doing she remains firmly embedded within what Schuler identifies as the diabolical practice of theatrical representation).

Compare *1 Henry 3*, too, with a work like Barnabe Barnes' *The Diuels Charter* (1607), the final scene of which is entirely dedicated to depicting devils 'triumphing' over Pope Alexander, who sold his soul in exchange for worldly power. At this climactic moment, 'Alexander is in extreame torment and groneth whilst the diuill laugheth at him'; the devils plan lavish torments for Alexander and taunt him for his 'hipocrisie' as he attempts a last-minute prayer.³¹⁵ In *1 Henry VI*, the appearance of the stage-devils is contrastingly anticlimactic and is usurped by the English soldiers and nobles; it is they, rather than the devils, who taunt Joan for her hypocrisy as they prepare to torment and execute her (the fact that she claims – albeit not entirely convincingly – to be pregnant makes their decision to kill her especially shocking). The next chapter will trace another way in which *1 Henry VI* set the tone for Shakespeare's later career as a pioneer of stage violence. By refusing to let the devils steal the show, Shakespeare foregrounds the play's battle scenes instead. As Charles Edelman argues, *1 Henry VI* stands out for being the first English play to represent sustained periods of hand-to-hand combat.³¹⁶ Muted and restrained, the devils are prevented from upstaging the play's fight-scenes, which would have been skilled and realistic.³¹⁷ In the next chapter, we will see how Shakespeare innovated stage violence further in *Hamlet* to exploit and close the gap between performance and reality. In terms of *The Taming of the Shrew*, though, drawing on gendered

³¹⁵ Barnabe Barnes, *The Diuill's Charter* (London: G.E., 1607), Scaena Ultima, SD after 183.

³¹⁶ 'Shakespeare was an innovator...of stage-violence' from *Henry VI* onwards, Charles Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous: Swordfighting in Shakespeare's Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 23.

³¹⁷ Early modern fight scenes would have deployed state of the art fencing techniques, Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, 51.

notions of the theatricality of the diabolical enables Shakespeare to tie feminine performance even more closely to theatrical representation.

I suggest that when it comes to gesture, what Shakespeare is drawing our attention to in this play is not this question of whether or not Katherine's restrained behaviour indicates that she is really tamed. As we saw in chapter 2, this distinction between essential nature and 'mere' performance has the tendency to dissolve on the Shakespearean stage. Rather, it seems that Shakespeare is most keen to draw attention to the gap between character and actor, fascinating audiences by the way that this gap widens but also seamlessly disappears. Cognitive theory helps us to tease out this relationship by explaining how restraint and stillness are cognitively different for characters and for actors. Performances of modest femininity are the key focus of interrogating the relationship between actors and their characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*.³¹⁸ The play's main action is carefully framed by the Induction, where the players who perform *The Taming of the Shrew* are coached on how to perform a good play. Several of the players (and Bartholomew the page) then go on to pretend to be women: Bianca, Katherine, and Sly's 'wife'. But, the lord warns them, it is important to keep the gap between performance and reality closed, to stay in character no matter what,

I am doubtful of your modesties.
Lest, over-eyeing of his odd behaviour
(For yet his honour never heard a play),
You break into some merry passion (Induction 1.94-7).

By couching his warning in the gendered language of 'modesty', the lord implies that a good performance of femininity and a convincing theatrical performance share the qualities of physical restraint, controlling gesture from the unruliness of 'passion'. By

³¹⁸ Laurie Maguire argues that the performed femininities in the play are linked through a chain of imagery relating to another type of playing: playing musical instruments. She explains that 'the figurative association between bad behaviour and bad music was a Renaissance commonplace', and links this to ideas of taming and misogyny as 'the lute remains an object that the male subject uses for pleasure', "Cultural Control in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Renaissance Drama* (56) (1995), 87, 97. This gives new connotations of subversiveness to Bianca's 'silence', as an instrument which refuses to make a sound is one that refuses its male 'player' the 'pleasure' Maguire describes.

using the word ‘modesty’, the same word used by Lucentio of Bianca, the lord’s speech signposts the way that the players’ performance and Katherine and Bianca’s performances of femininity are one and the same; the play that the players perform is *The Taming of the Shrew* and two players will take the roles of Katherine and Bianca. When they perform femininity, Katherine and Bianca are actors, both within the fictional world of the play (where the players put on *The Taming of the Shrew* to entertain Sly) and in reality, where they are created by actors in the Globe.

The tension between the theories of cognitive underload and offline cognition helps to tease out the relationship between actor and character. Goldin-Meadow explains how, according to the principle of ‘cognitive underload’, not gesturing impedes thought. She contends that gesture is used to aid, organise, and generate thought by lightening a person’s ‘cognitive load’ and allowing them to think more efficiently. According to this theory, without the aid of gesture, understanding becomes more difficult. Goldin-Meadow explains, ‘speakers gesture in order to lighten their cognitive load. They produce more gestures on difficult tasks in order to make the task easier... gesturing can free up cognitive resources that can then be used elsewhere’.³¹⁹ Goldin-Meadow tested this by giving participants two tasks to do (remembering items on a list and solving a maths problem). When allowed to gesture, the participants performed better on the tasks than when not allowed to gesture. In another test, she asked people to depress two buttons with their hands whilst speaking (so they could not use their hands to gesture); they performed less well on memorising and computational tasks than they did when they could gesture freely.³²⁰ Impeded, restricted gestures, she concludes, are correlated with impeded, restricted thoughts. Evelyn Tribble applies the theory of cognitive underload to early modern performance, arguing that actors relied heavily on gesture to enable them to learn lines. She reasons that, with the big demands made on them to memorise their parts (often within just two weeks), these actors ‘offloaded’ knowledge onto their environment (and particularly onto part-books, play-summaries, prompters and the bodies and minds of other actors) and anchored memories within their gestures in order to reduce their cognitive burden. By limiting the amount of knowledge that they contained in their own heads, and distributing memories and cues for memories in

³¹⁹ Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture*, 150.

³²⁰ Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture*, 159, 70.

their bodies and their environment, they freed up cognitive resources for memorising their lines. Tribble explains that because it does not just involve the brain and body but is extended into the environment, this is ‘a genuinely extended (rather than a merely embodied) practice’,³²¹ but like Goldin-Meadow she affirms that gesture is crucial to enabling the free flow of thought, suggesting that the actors performing *The Taming of the Shrew* will have needed movement to ensure a convincing performance.

Rhonda Blair (both an actor and a cognitive theorist) provides a first-hand account of using Tribble’s theories to rehearse. She states that ‘rote repetition’ accompanied by gesture ensured that her lines were ‘securely embodied’ such that, when she deployed the gestures she had rehearsed in performance, the relevant lines emerged from her memory. Blair describes concentrating on the shape of her mouth as she spoke and using gestures that, for her, evoked the tenor of particular words. For example, she would ‘clench’ her body at what, due to her personal memories and associations, felt to her like cold or ‘wintery’ words (‘partridge’ was one such word).³²² By focusing on the way her lines were thus embodied, Blair successfully ‘offloaded’ and anchored information in her body, aiding her cognitive processes.

Nevertheless, actors can appropriate stillness as a sign of abstract thought. The idea of ‘offline cognition’, which views stillness as a legible sign of deep thought rather than impeded thought, derives from Robert Gordon and Alvin Goldman’s research in the 1980s into ‘simulation theory’ (which the next chapter looks at in more detail). According to this theory, thought is at its most powerful not when attached to gesture but when it is decoupled from the body. Gordon and Goldman argued that in order to understand other people’s minds, or to make decisions about future events, people create hypothetical ‘simulations’ of these occurrences; they imagine them happening. Because these are hypothetical situations, they do not rely on perception of what is actually happening in the body of, or world around, the person creating the simulation. Simulation thus involves a subject disengaging from the sensory inputs provided by their environment (and, potentially, even their own bodies) in order to reason abstractly. This disengagement came to be known as ‘offline cognition’. Its

³²¹ Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe*, 2, 101, 20.

³²² Rhonda Blair, “Text to Embodiment: Situated Cognition and Some Implications for the Actor,” paper presented at *Cognitive Futures in the Humanities* conference, Bangor University, Wales, April 4-6 2013.

opposite is ‘online’ cognition, where a person’s thoughts engage directly with their environment. Offline cognition is generally described by cognitive theorists as reflective, deliberate, conscious, and self-aware (whereas online cognition is often seen to be habitual, conducted without much reflection). Marisa Przyrembel et al explain,

states of offline, or decoupled cognition, tend to emerge in situations in which the mind generates streams of thoughts that have minimal direct correlation to ongoing perceptual events and are often defined as stimulus independent thoughts (SIT). These SIT can also subserve inferences about other people’s minds, or, alternatively, reasoning about the self and the world.³²³

The theory of offline cognition provides a scientific basis for the long-held idea that moments where a Shakespearean character’s exterior bodily signs become difficult to read indicate that thought (in some cases, Shakespeare’s, in others, his characters’) is at its most intense and interesting. This is often the case in performance at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, when Katherine’s seemingly-docile restraint has the potential to conceal subversive, manipulative intentions.

There exists a sizeable tradition of identifying periods of stillness and/or silence on stage with particularly profound inner thought.³²⁴ Previously to the definitive emergence of cognitive theory into Shakespeare studies (with works by authors like Lyne, Cook, and Tribble) in 2010-12, twenty-first-century examinations of interiority in Shakespeare’s plays, like David Hillman’s *Shakespeare’s Entrails*

³²³ Marisa Przyrembel et al, “Illuminating the Dark Matter of Neuroscience,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 6(190) (2012), 112. See P.J. Corr, “Individual Differences in Cognition: In Search of a General Theory of Behavioural Control,” in A. Gruszka, G. Matthews and B. Szymura, eds., *Handbook of Individual Differences in Cognition* (Berlin: Springer, 2010). In an influential article, Margaret Wilson emphasises that offline cognition is not a rigidly-defined theory, but has several different interpretations, “Six Views of Embodied Cognition,” *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review* 9(4) (2002), 626.

³²⁴ C.f. especially Katherine Eisamann Maus, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995) and Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984). This tradition is summarised and critiqued in Margreta de Grazia, “Hamlet before its Time,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 62(4) (2001), 355-75.

(2007), have tended to be psychoanalytic. Critics used psychoanalytic theory to find evidence of repressed thoughts and other aspects of a character's inner life in moments where meaning is hidden, withheld, or left ambiguous or unsaid.³²⁵ Hillman argues that the pervasive early modern idea that the body's external appearance obscured the workings of a person's inner life resulted in inevitably frustrated 'fantasies of access' to the interior of other people's bodies and minds.³²⁶ Cognitive studies of Shakespeare's plays have tended to affirm this idea that stillness and silence draw attention to the presence of an 'inner' world of profound thought. But cognitive theory highlights the difficulty of teasing out the specifics of this inner world according to its own frameworks. Lyne writes that all these, 'Places where meaning is difficult, occluded and resistant to resolution' indicate the presence of abstract thought so complex and powerful that it surpasses the power of language.³²⁷

Cognitive studies take this tradition into new territory by examining stillness as the location where the relationship between character and actor becomes most visible. There is a potential tension here. On the one hand, we have this suggestion that thought is given most free rein when it is liberated from gesture (and its accompanying reminders of corporeality and the specifics of time and space). But, on the other, we have the idea that restraining gesture results in cognitive overload and thus impedes and disrupts thought precisely because thoughts are 'decoupled' from gesture and an awareness of the environment. This highlights the distinction noted above between actors and the characters that they are playing. Whilst a moment of

³²⁵ Joseph Schwartz writes in his history of psychoanalysis, 'psychoanalysis is a systematic attempt by many workers over the last 100 years to understand the structure and dynamics of the inner world of the experiencing human being'; Schwartz argues that, in pursuing this endeavour, psychoanalysis 'shares a boundary with literature', *Cassandra's Daughter: A History of Psychoanalysis in Europe and America* (London: Penguin, 1999), 1.

³²⁶ '[T]he problem turns out to lie in, precisely, the fantasy of access; the search fails in so far as the ruling notion remains that of an inner realm that is incommensurate with the outer. In the end, it is a notion that is in the service of an attempt to stave off knowledge, a refusal to recognise something about the necessary sufficiency, in human matters, of the external', David Hillman, *Shakespeare's Entrails: Belief, Scepticism, and the Interior of the Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 172.

³²⁷ Lyne, *Shakespeare, Rhetoric, and Cognition*, 12. Sophie Read, "Shakespeare and the Arts of Cognition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare's Poetry*, ed. Jonathan Post (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Philip Davies, *Shakespeare Thinking* (London: Continuum, 2011) rearticulate this argument. All of these studies focus on language rather than gesture.

stillness and/or silence for a character can indicate ‘offline cognition’ or deep and abstract thought, this does not apply to the actor, who at this very moment may be very much ‘online’ and (as Tribble suggests) highly (though unconsciously) aware of their body and their environment as they draw on all of their bodily resources in order to remember and (re)create a plausible performance of introspection.

The chapter ends by arguing that *The Taming of the Shrew* is permeated by what Sibylle Baumbach describes as literary fascination. For Baumbach, this is ‘both attraction and repulsion’ resulting in ‘a moment of stillness, of petrification or fascination’.³²⁸ If characterisation is what Aoife Monks refers to as ‘an exchange of looks’,³²⁹ where actors and characters exchange looks with each other and the audience, *The Taming of the Shrew* invites us to look closer, to look at the relationship between character and actor itself. As Katherine pauses before putting her hand beneath Petruchio’s foot (or not), her suspended gesture makes us aware of two simultaneous and not completely separable performances in play, that of the actor performing Katherine, and that of Katherine performing a tamed woman. As Bianca throws a tantrum at her sister before quickly restraining her gestures when she sees Lucentio, and as Bartholomew the page hastily adopts a woman’s garb and restrained behaviour, this gap between the performer and the character they assume is made part of the play itself. This invites us to pause and to stare, fascinated, at the complex play of actors’ and characters’ thoughts. I argue that in these moments of stillness and restraint, Katherine and Bianca are fascinating both because they open up the gap in the fiction to reveal the actor and because they show how transgressively-appropriated (rather than essentially natural) gender norms are. Fascinated by Katherine’s (at the time) deviations from the feminine norm and (in the present day) deviations from our feminist expectations, other characters on stage and audience members offstage are invited to become still themselves, as they gaze at this spectacle. What fascinates us cognitively about the play is precisely the moment where performances threaten to fail to signify anything definite, and, in so doing, highlight the fact that they are performances.

³²⁸ Sibylle Baumbach, “Medusa’s Gaze and the Aesthetics of Fascination,” *Anglia* 128(2) (2010), 225, 229.

³²⁹ Aoife Monks, *The Actor in Costume* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 143.

Performing stillness: what does this mean cognitively?

We have seen that there is a disparity between what stillness signifies for an actor and what it signifies for the character they play. According to theories of cognitive underload, insofar as gesture is essential to learning lines, moments of stillness impede the actor's art. However, the actor's performance on stage will often involve falling still when their character sleeps, or dies, or simply pauses to ponder; in the early modern era (and, most likely, in other moments throughout Shakespearean stage history) these onstage stillnesses are likely to have been rehearsed and memorised by the embodied processes Tribble describes. Thus, though they may be intended to signify that a character is failing or struggling to think or remember or is making no cognitive effort at all, deliberate stillness on stage is the product of careful cognitive effort and memorisation. Signs of impeded or inefficient cognition for a character, they are the products of fluent and efficient cognition on the part of the actor.

This highlights a key complexity that an exploration of Shakespeare's plays introduces into cognitive theory. Cognitive theory often tends to examine how people behave when they are not attempting to deliberately perform their gestures. Indeed, Goldin-Meadow defines gesture as a spontaneous and involuntary movement that 'slips out' as a person speaks rather than something consciously performed.³³⁰ It was crucial to Goldin-Meadow's study of restrained gestures that the people she observed were not trying to deliberately perform their gestures, so she aimed as far as possible to study gesture and cognition in everyday situations; for instance she sat in on a maths lesson in a real classroom. This is very different to theatrical performances, where pauses in actors' speech and gesture tend to be scripted and consciously controlled.³³¹ Because it explicitly makes visible, and examines, the theatricality of restrained gesture, *The Taming of the Shrew* can provide pointers for the cognitive theorist on how to adapt theories about restrained gesture as an involuntary symptom

³³⁰ Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture*, 12.

³³¹ Amy Cook notes the discrepancy between the findings from cognitive linguists' laboratory experiments about language-use and actors' use of language on stage. She argues that it is difficult to neatly apply these laboratory findings to scripted discourse on stage, 'There are important differences between actors speaking someone else's words within a discourse structure they may not understand and asking people to speak about their past and future in front of camera', *Shakespearean Neuroplay*, 119.

of deep thought or as an obstacle to thought, in order to include a nuanced sense of the actor's intentionality.

Actors have historically intentionally appropriated stillness in order to play a fictional role, destabilising the assumption that these outward signs are always a reliable indicator of a person's thoughts. Looking at the stage history of stillness shows that actors have done this from the early modern era to the present day, though stillness was expressed in different ways in different periods. Cognitive theory encourages us to seek both shared traits and culturally-specific differences between performances in different eras. On the one hand, cognitive theory seeks to uncover facts about the brain that might resist historical difference. For instance, Rhonda Blair's effective use of the early modern cognitive rehearsal techniques described by Tribble demonstrates that techniques of cognitive underload are as useful for modern performers as they were for early modern actors. On the other hand, cognitive theories also emphasise plasticity; the brain's ability to adapt to new experiences creates patterns of thought that are often highly individualised. The neurobiologist Stephen Rose explains that the brain 'is inseparably a product of both evolution and development and the culture and history within which we are embedded', so 'The brains and minds of twenty-first-century people differ not just from those of our Pleistocene ancestors, but even from those of our great-grandparents' and those of our contemporaries due to the difference in individuals' experiences and memories.³³² Historically-nuanced, stillness and restraint have nevertheless been key parts of acting on the Shakespearean stage since the early modern era, and remain so today. This is especially the case with *The Taming of the Shrew*, where an interrogation of feminine stillness is built into the text.

Paul Menzer argues that early modern actors often deployed a deliberately postured 'articulate stillness' which audiences understood to convey aspects of their character's 'necessarily unseen passionate inner life', a 'legible passionate experience'.³³³ This was certainly the case in later centuries as well; many eighteenth-

³³² Stephen Rose, "The Need for a Critical Neuroscience," in *Critical Neuroscience*, 60-3; Slaby and Choudhury write that this is because the self is 'constitutively situated', constituted by as well as constituting its environment, "Introduction," in *Critical Neuroscience*, 12.

³³³ Paul Menzer, "The Actor's Inhibition: Early Modern Acting and the Rhetoric of Restraint," in Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett Sullivan, eds., *Embodiment and Environment in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 84, 107.

and nineteenth-century actors tried to cultivate what art historian Robin Simon calls an ‘immobile style’.³³⁴ Advising actors how to portray different emotions in his influential *Guide to the Stage* (1864), Francis Wemyss writes of a number of introspective, withdrawn emotions which are portrayed by a deliberate stillness. For instance, ‘*Tranquillity* or *apathy*, appears by the composure of the body and limbs, without the exercise of any one muscle...’, and ‘*Melancholy*, or *fixed grief*, is *gloomy*, *sedentary*, motionless’.³³⁵ David Garrick (1717-79) was particularly famous for pausing in the midst of his lines to create a *tableau vivant*, signifying deep thought or ‘inner turmoil’ by a stillness and silence that deliberately drew the audience’s attention.³³⁶ In his diary, the early twentieth-century actor and director Herbert Beerbohm Tree described *Twelfth Night*’s still and measured Viola as, ‘Deep water with a ripple on it’, her lack of energetic action signifying all the more clearly that she was a deep thinker.³³⁷

The example of Garrick, contrasted with some of his contemporaries, illustrates how actors made stillness legible to a theatre audience. Each of Garrick’s *tableaux vivants* involved bodily postures and facial expressions associated with a specific emotion. The emotion in question was legible to his audiences because it was uniformly represented by that particular static posture and expression not only on stage, but in paintings, painting and acting manuals, and theatrical prints. Garrick imitated the static poses found in paintings (particularly those of his friend Hogarth).³³⁸ He also knew that painters (notably Hogarth) often observed him acting

³³⁴ Robin Simon, “Shared Conceptions of Gesture and Action,” part of the Mellon Lecture series, National Portrait Gallery, London, January 28 2013.

³³⁵ Francis Wemyss, *The Guide to the Stage* (New York: Samuel French, 1864), 32

³³⁶ Todd Borlick, “‘Painting of A Sorrow’: Visual Culture and the Performance of Stasis in David Garrick’s *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 5(1) (2007), 3-31. ‘Garrick astonished audiences by both suspending his voice and sustaining postures in the midst of the most frenzied activity, creating both an auditory silence and a physical stillness’ (5).

³³⁷ Diary, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, 1903, entry for May 11, Bristol Theatre Archive. The word ‘Viola’ is added later in pencil to this phrase (which is written in ink) as though having jotted down the phrase, Tree returned to it later when it gained meaning for him as a description of Viola. Tree rarely used his diaries (which are almost all held in this archive) to actually write his appointments in; rather, he used them as notebooks, writing choice quotations or ideas for plays all over them.

³³⁸ The connection between Garrick’s Shakespearean roles and Hogarth’s paintings was often so deep as to be unconscious – several audience members remarked the similarity between Garrick’s

to gain inspiration for future paintings. This was a prominent example of widespread eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practices of cross-fertilisation between actors' poses held as they paused on stage and paintings. Robin Simon explains that actors would study painting manuals, especially Charles LeBrun's treatise on representing emotion in painting, *Méthode pour Apprendre à Dessiner les Passions* (1698), and aim to replicate the static poses and gestures they found there on the stage. Painters, in their turn, studied acting guides (particularly Aaron Hill's *The Prompter* (1734-6)) and were required by the rules laid down by the French Academy for the popular genre of history painting (which comprised paintings depicting dramatic literary or historical events) to base their paintings on 'minute attention to the text' of a particular literary work. From 1800, Simon argues, paintings began to determine acting styles more than acting styles affected paintings; owning a collection of theatrical prints symbolised an actor's success: these prints came to influence actors more than performances they had actually seen. Simon states that, as a result, paintings of Shakespearean actors, acting manuals, painting manuals, and actors on stage shared 'a language of recognisable gesture'; using this language was one of the 'plain practicalities' of painting and acting.³³⁹ Shakespearean characters on stage thus bore traces of the static paintings by which they were so often inspired.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century actors who failed to achieve an articulate stillness were ridiculed for their stock poses and gormless expressions; their acting tended to be seen as wooden and shallow rather than indicative of profound thought. For instance, in his Shakespearean roles John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) attempted the immobile style perfected by Garrick, however his dramatic pauses often rendered him more like a statue or an immobile object than a human being in the throes of passion. William Hazlitt described Kemble as, 'the very still life and statuary of the stage; a perfect figure of a man; a petrification of sentiment, that heaves no sigh, and

portrayal of Othello and a servant in one of Hogarth's *Harlots Progress* prints. Though Garrick was not deliberately copying the print, 'many years later, when Garrick was one day looking through his "own choice folio of Hogarth's prints", he came to the one in question and was bound to remark: "Faith! It is devilish like"', Alan Kendall, *David Garrick: A Biography* (London: Harrap, 1985), 40-1.

³³⁹ Robin Simon, "Shared Conceptions of Gesture and Action," and "Making History: History Painting and the Theatre," January 21 2013, Mellon Lectures. Further context from Marcus Risdell, curator, Garrick Club Archive, conversation with the author, September 24 2012.

sheds no tear; an icicle upon the bust of Tragedy'.³⁴⁰ Hazlitt's description emphasises the unchanging, stone-like effect of Kemble's pauses, the expression of this 'petrified' sentiment is halted and obscured. Hazlitt's image of Kemble as a comparatively tiny, frozen, non-human object, 'an icicle' clinging to 'the bust of Tragedy' comically evokes a dehumanising, featureless, unemotional (thanks to the figurative idea of emotional 'coldness'), diminished acting style. As we saw in the first chapter, Henry Siddons condemned actors who simply tried to follow stock advice to the letter as creating 'a set of puppets' rather than believable characters. Hazlitt's remarks suggest that during moments of articulate stillness, sentiment was expected to be energetically visible in the actor's face and posture, indicating that the character's thoughts are working profoundly and intensely, changing and progressing. Patrick O'Brian's etching *The Theatrical Steel-Yards of 1750* (April 1751) illustrates the contrast between Garrick's legible, passionate, articulate acting style and the mannequin-like stillness of inferior actors.³⁴¹ O'Brian depicts a steelyard with a giant balance, with Garrick alone on the right hand side outweighing the Covent Garden actors on the left, just as his prowess metaphorically 'outweighs' other actors'. The stock poses on the left-hand side of O'Brian's etching perhaps evoke the (often comically) rigid gestures of the ceramic Staffordshire figurines of Shakespearean characters, popular at the time.³⁴² As the above-cited accounts of Garrick and other actors suggest, when a character falls still because they are thinking deeply, abstracted from their environment and even their own body, this cognitive disengagement is achieved because the actor is, by contrast, highly cognitively engaged with their body and their environment to ensure that their facial expressions and gestures are legible to the audience and to stay aware of their cues, scripted lines, and other actors.

In chapter 2, we saw that Shakespeare was interested in how habitual action can shape the mind. This chapter began to explore how cognitive studies is part of a continuous tradition, dating back to at least Aristotle, which argues that habitual action can change a person's patterns of thought and behaviour until those habitually-performed actions become entrenched habits, and 'second nature'. This tradition suggests that, performed habitually, a particular gesture or type of behaviour changes

³⁴⁰ William Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage* (London: Robert Stodart, 1818), 100.

³⁴¹ Patrick O'Brian, *The Theatrical Steel-Yards of 1750: Publish'd 27th April 1751*, Elephant Folio, 95^f, Garrick Club Archive, London.

³⁴² A large collection of these can be seen in the Garrick Club, London.

from being a deliberately-chosen act to something a person cannot help but repeat, signalling an often fundamental change in their nature. Often explicitly engaging with Aristotle and with subsequent philosophical works, neuroscientific studies add to this tradition evidence that habitual action also changes patterns of brain function. Aristotle argued in *Nicomachean Ethics* that a person's nature can be altered by habitual actions; telling a single lie, for instance, does not make a person a liar, but lying again and again will habituate that person to lying until they are by temperament a liar. He argued that virtue and vice were by definition character traits produced by habitual action.³⁴³ A staple classroom text in the Renaissance,³⁴⁴ the *Nicomachean Ethics*' arguments about habit were prominent in early modern writings about virtue and custom. For instance Francis Bacon's popular essay 'On Custom' (1612, enlarged 1625) is grounded in this view that habit is 'the chief magistrate of men's lives' so that 'men's... deeds, are after as they have been accustomed'.³⁴⁵ Michel Montaigne's 1595 essay 'On Habit and On the Difficulty of Changing a Traditional Law' describes habit as 'the Queen and Empress of the World... the principal activity of custom is so to seize us and to grip us in her claws that it is hardly in our power to struggle free and to come back into ourselves, where we can reason and argue about her ordinances'.³⁴⁶ Both essayists conclude that the best way to reform people's manners and increase their virtue is by ensuring that they develop good habits from a young age, and that, conversely, bad habits can quickly become so entrenched that there is no hope for adults who formed bad patterns of thought and behaviour as children.

Neurological studies of habit give a scientific basis to these ideas. Steven Hyman presents drug addiction as a test-case for the implications of habitual action for volition in general, because, 'Addicted people habitually engage in apparently voluntary behaviours, such as drug seeking and drug use, that are by standard definitions of addiction compulsive or beyond the person's control'. Hyman argues that habitual, repeated action, rather than the 'biochemical toxicity' of drugs, is the most important cause of any addiction-related change to a person's nature. All habitual actions, he found, can 'affect normal brain mechanisms, such as experience-

³⁴³ Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," in *Complete Works*, Book 3.

³⁴⁴ William Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1944), 106, 237.

³⁴⁵ Bacon, *Essays*, 109.

³⁴⁶ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. M.A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1993), 122ff.

dependent neural plasticity taken to an extreme'.³⁴⁷ The neuroscientists Martina Reska and Martin Paulus also found that both addiction to drugs and the compulsive performance of seemingly neutral actions (such as hand washing) change brain activation patterns, making it increasingly difficult for a person to change their behaviour.³⁴⁸ Reska and Paulus' work suggests, again, that it is repeated action, rather than biochemical toxicity, that can change a person's character.

As we have seen, Catharine Malabou restates this neurological problem philosophically. She argues that habit is essential to creating a person's character or personality as a stable and continuous entity by creating a consistent pattern of behaviour. But, paradoxically, she states that habit also reduces the possibility for a subject to choose freely how they act. Thus, 'habit murders man. And it does so just as surely as it makes man live' because, 'The exemplary individuality' which constitutes a person is 'sculpted by habit', 'the gradual formation of the "I" is paradoxically accompanied by a loss of fluidity'. Through habit, she argues, the self reflects on its own actions, interpreting itself, and thereby constituting itself 'in and as a second nature'. She relates her analysis of neurological plasticity back to Aristotle's original argument in *Nicomachean Ethics*, illustrating how strongly modern cognitive and neurological studies reinforce the Aristotelian viewpoint, 'For Aristotle, habit implies the aptitude for change, along with the possibility of preserving the

³⁴⁷ Steven Hyman, "The Neurobiology of Addiction: Implications for Voluntary Control of Behaviour," in *The Oxford Handbook of Neuroethics*, ed. Judy Illes and Barbara Sahakian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 204.

³⁴⁸ Martina Reske and Martin Paulus, "A Neuroscientific Approach to Addiction: Ethical Concerns", *The Oxford Handbook of Neuroethics*, 187. As Hyman, and Reske and Paulus all emphasise, these neurological changes do not provide a complete picture of addiction, but must be contextualised in terms of social, genetic, and environmental factors, (they found that a child born into a family of drug addicts, for instance, is more likely to become addicted), as well as allowing space for an element of chance. 'New applications such as neurofeedback using fMRI signal are appealing, but their transfer into patients' lives outside the brain scanner have to be elaborated', Reske and Paulus, "A Neuroscientific Approach to Addiction," 192; c.f. Hyman, "The Neurobiology of Addiction," 206-7. The philosopher Shaun Gallagher supports an interactive understanding of subjectivity, whereby other people's minds and brains can only be understood in the context of their interactions with others and with their environment. As such, an fMRI image is an inadequate account of a person's mental processes. In order to truly understand cognition, a person's environment and their interactions with other people, ought to be imaged alongside their brain ('scanning the lifeworld' in its entirety), which fMRI does not provide, "Scanning the Lifeworld," *Critical Neuroscience*, 96

modifications inherent in such a change'.³⁴⁹ *The Taming of the Shrew* troubles this rather neat idea, by suggesting that in a theatrical performance (whether that means femininity performed by Katherine and Bianca, Bartholomew and the players in the Induction, or by Shakespeare's actors), repeated action does not always have such a straightforward effect on the brain. There remains the uncertainty throughout the play, that what seems to be a restrained and involuntary (second) nature is in fact a deliberate appropriation of restrained gesture for a person's own ends.

In the opening lines of Act 1, Lucentio alludes to *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle's doctrine of gaining happiness ('eudaimonia') through virtue built by habit, 'that part of philosophy| Will I apply that treats of happiness by virtue specially to be achieved' (1.1.19-20). Tranio cautions Lucentio not to become a dry 'stock' of a philosopher, suggesting that he mix Aristotle's philosophy with the advice on romance in the poet Ovid's *Amores*. Do not, he advises 'so devote to Aristotle's checks| As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured' (1.1.32-3). In Act 5, Petruchio shows off Katherine's 'new-built virtue and obedience' (5.2.118). This idea of 'building' Katherine's character, constructing it anew, suggests that Petruchio has applied Aristotelian principles to his romantic life by intervening to alter Katherine's habits until she becomes the obedient, modest, and quiet wife he wants. Shakespeare depicts Petruchio restraining Katherine's wild gestures until she appears to internalise these principles of docile femininity and restraint and performs them automatically of her own accord. But Shakespeare also emphasises the gaps in this performance, providing many moments in the text where performances of femininity are punctured or questioned. *Julius Caesar* engaged in a more implicit examination of the power of habitual performance to alter the mind, but this becomes an explicit focus of productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*. With *Julius Caesar*, there are implicit links between the habitual performances of characters and those of actors, which become particularly suggestive when the monarch was knelt to at the end of the play. Imbued with an interest in the creation of a performance of femininity *The Taming of the Shrew* takes this a step further and visibly teases out the relationship between performed femininity and theatrical performance.

Many productions depict Petruchio violently overriding Katherine's ability autonomously to choose her own way of life, until this new, 'tamed' way of life

³⁴⁹ Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 24-6, 76, 32, 57.

becomes a second nature to her and she can choose no other. In the first Shakespearean ‘talkie’ (1929) Petruchio (Douglas Fairbanks) forces Katherine (Mary Pickford) to gesture as if she loves him until, worn down, she performs these gestures of her own accord. When they first meet, Fairbanks plants his hand forcibly over Pickford’s mouth so that she cannot speak, holding her still in such a way that, to her father and the other characters behind them, it appears Katherine and Petruchio are embracing lovingly, with Katherine obediently and happily still and silent. Later, Fairbanks kisses Pickford, his mouth preventing her from continuing her angry tirade about how little she likes him; Pickford initially struggles, but eventually falls limp and still.³⁵⁰ In cognitive terms, Petruchio compels Katherine to gesture restrainedly and obediently until her thought patterns alter to make these new modes of behaviour part of her nature. Cognitive theories of habitual action suggest that here the traditional distinction between Katherine’s modest behaviour as either ‘mere’ performance or ‘inherent’ nature dissolves: the very act of performing the role of a tamed wife will shape and mould Katherine’s nature.

Some productions can be interpreted along the lines that both Katherine and the actor playing her are using habitual gestures to produce a performance, the same performance. The actor learns their role by rote, embedding their lines and gestures (including any moments of stillness that they need to perform) in their muscle memory. Katherine is forced to gesture by Petruchio in an obedient, wifely way until, it is implied, she begins to act like this of her own volition; it is she who first suggests that each wife should be ready ‘to place your hands below your husband’s foot’

³⁵⁰ *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Sam Taylor, USA, Pickford Corporation, Elton Corporation, 1929, DVD. Forced displays of affection are common in performance. In Jonathan Miller’s 1987 production, notes on the prompt book show that on their first meeting Petruchio ‘grabs her wrists’, ‘forces K to sit next to him’ and ‘hits K on the back’ to stop her struggling away, until finally her love is expressed by a ‘forced kiss’; Prompt Book, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Jonathan, Miller, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1987, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, fols 49^r-53^r. In Zeffirelli’s film, Petruchio uses the forced kiss to override Katherine’s will and her ability to make meaning. Katherine attempts to answer ‘I will - NOT!’ when asked whether she takes Petruchio to be her husband. Anticipating this, Petruchio forcibly kisses her before she manages to pronounce the word ‘NOT’. The semantics of her sentence thus altered, Katherine’s meaning is reversed; she has proclaimed, ‘I will!’, and has also resigned legal control of her life to Petruchio.

(5.2.177). Reviewing a 1981 production, Ralph Berry describes Katherine as a willing colluder in Petruchio's financial gamble,

The key is that Petruchio has won a bet, and Katherina knows it. The glance that Sharry Flett shot at her groom registered the point fully ('Did you? Good for you! And now you can buy me another gown!'). I see no reason why Katherina, alone in Padua, should be untouched by the economic drives sustaining the community. So Kate sings for her supper, and very prettily too.³⁵¹

Katherine's performance for money and approval at the end of the play coincides with the actor's.

However, *The Taming of the Shrew* also ruptures the fabric of this performance. As with Katherine's sly, silent glance aside in the performance Berry describes, this play persistently explores the possibility that obedient wifely behaviour could be a deliberate performance rather than (as in the case of the zombie-like Gomez described at the start of the chapter) second nature. This is the case not least in the Induction when Bartholomew the page, using an onion to help himself cry devotedly, tricks Christopher Sly into believing he is his 'wife in all obedience' (Induction 1.2.07). As well as being a prop to aid a theatrical performance, the onion is used to suggest that women are by nature performers, able to 'command' tears at will, 'And if the boy have not a woman's gift| To rain a shower of commanded tears,| An onion will do well for such a shift' (Induction 1.124-6), Bartholomew's onion is a stage property designed to enable him to create a femininity that is inherently performance.

The chain of 'command' does not stop with Bartholomew, or Katherine. Both performances of femininity are ultimately commanded not by the performer themselves but by others: Petruchio, the lord in the Induction, and the theatre audience. Just as Berry describes Katherine 'sing[ing]' for her supper like a theatrical performer, Bartholomew is told to perform femininity to gain the 'love' of the lord, who is paying his wages,

³⁵¹ Cited in H.R. Coursen, *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 62.

Tell him from me, as he will win my love,
He bear himself with honourable action
Such as he hath observ'd in noble ladies
Unto their lords, by them accomplish'd (Induction 1.109-12)

To 'accomplish' here means 'to perform', and the links between Bartholomew's hammed-up ideal wifely performance and Katherine's performance are even stronger when Sly and his 'wife' double as Petruchio and Katherine, as often occurs in productions; notably Michael Bogdanov's (1978), and Gale Edwards' (1995). Analogies beg to be drawn between Petruchio's coaching of Kate to perform and the more overtly theatrical coaching of the page in the Induction, and also of the very actors who perform *The Taming of the Shrew*. Catherine Bates writes,

When Petruchio invites Kate to imagine that the sun is the moon and so forth he is doing neither more nor less than the tricky Lord who lays on 'The Taming of the Shrew' in order to beguile the drunken Christopher Sly, and no more nor less, of course, than Shakespeare himself, who is all the while busy urging us to suspend our disbelief and enter into the theatrical illusion of his Padua ...with the moral laws governing human sexuality temporarily suspended during courtship, the aesthetic laws governing art and illusion neatly step in to take their place.

For Bates, *The Taming of the Shrew* stands out amongst all of his works for making visible the theatrical mechanisms behind Petruchio's 'building' up of Katherine's new character,

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare makes the comparison between the two more pointedly than ever. A man orders his woman exactly as the artist orders his material. Here love's labours are won in the same way that an audience is won, the implication being that the

success or failure of the one necessarily dictates the success or failure of the other.³⁵²

Petruchio's shaping of Katherine like the sculpture Malabou describes as inherently plastic is, Bates suggests, deeply bound up with the question of whether what is simultaneously a theatrical performance and a performance of docile femininity is 'successful'. Is Katherine's final stillness legible and convincing to the audience on stage (the guests at the wedding feast) and off, both as a performance of docile femininity and as a theatrical performance?

Part of the way in which Shakespeare exposes this congruence between the theatrical and the feminine performance is by pointing to moments in which either performance fails. For instance, when Bartholomew appears in the character of Sly's wife, one of Sly's 'servants' tells Sly, 'the tears that she hath shed for thee| Like envious flood o'errun her lovely face' (Induction 1.2.64-5). Perhaps this line signals that Bartholomew has used too much onion and is weeping uncontrollably; if so, the servant's remark both smoothes over the gap between fiction and reality and makes it visible by potentially creating a moment where we see the actors joking among themselves, as actors. More obviously, Sly threatens to puncture the fiction that Bartholomew is a woman by removing Bartholomew's costume, 'Madam undress you, and come now to bed' (Induction 2.115). When the Induction is included in performance (it is not always; Doran cut it in 2003, for example), audiences are primed to see femininity as a precarious performance that can fail. Katherine and Bianca are first seen as players, chatting with the lord before getting into character. When, as in the original productions, the female characters are played by male actors, the 'actorly' quality of femininity is further underscored. The fact that the female characters' restraint, which seemingly stems from innate characteristics, has been deliberately performed is hard to forget.

With or without the priming effect of the Induction, Bianca's conversion from the 'maid's mild behaviour and sobriety' with which she wins Lucentio over to be her husband to her 'headstrong' (5.2.148) behaviour when she has achieved this aim

³⁵²Catherine Bates, "Love and Courtship," in Alexander Leggat, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 118. S. Jayne focuses on the congruence between Sly and Petruchio, "The Dreaming of the Shrew," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17(1) (1966), 41-56.

suggests that her earlier restrained behaviour is a deliberate performance used only to get herself a husband. Hortensio emphasises that mild behaviour is a necessary bargaining chip for those in search of a husband when he tells Katherine, ‘No mates for you| Unless you were of gentler, milder mould’ (1.1.59-60). At the end of the play, Bianca refuses to come when Lucentio calls her, mocks wifely obedience as ‘foolish duty’, and calls him a ‘fool’ (5.2. 134, 138). George Gascoigne’s play *Supposes* (1566), a significant source for Shakespeare’s Bianca-Lucentio subplot (Lucentio nods to this when he refers to his use of ‘counterfeit supposes’ (5.1.117)), focuses on the protagonist Polynesta arranging to see her lover as much as possible whilst ensuring that other people ‘thought hir a holy yong woman’, a virgin dedicated to chastity and obedience,

Oh God, how men may be deceived in a woman? who wold have
beleevd the contrary but that she had bin a virgin? aske the neighbours
and you shall heare very good report of hir: marke hir behaviors & you
would have judged hir very maidenly...³⁵³

Katherine, Bianca, Petruchio, Lucentio, and Tranio all take on a disguise or affect behaviour to achieve a specific goal. The tension between outward behaviour and ‘essential’ nature applies not just to Katherine, but to the whole society in which she lives.

Supposes and *The Taming of the Shrew* are part of a genre of early modern plays which ask audiences to question apparent feminine virtue as not a straightforward contrast to shrewishness but a shrewd performance. For example, in Ben Jonson’s *Epicene or The Silent Woman* (1609), Epicene is praised for her silent, modest behaviour. Her seemingly-perfect performance of femininity is found to be pure deception when she is revealed to be a boy playing a trick. Offhand remarks in this play, such as ‘silence in woman is like speech in man’ (2.3.111) and Truewit’s incredulous ‘Can he endure no noise, and will venture on a wife?’ (1.2.19-20) suggest

³⁵³ George Gascoigne, “Supposes” (first performed 1566), in *The Whole Workes*, 2nd edn (London: Abell Ieffes, 1587), 3. 4.40-9. Schuler supports the notion of Bianca as a shrew, quoting the proverb ‘the white devil is worse than the black’, “Bewitching the Shrew,” 420.

both that minimal speech and gesture are ideals for women, and that women tend not to meet these ideals.³⁵⁴

In performance, the gap between Bianca's seemingly 'silent' and 'modest' nature and her real 'headstrong' self can be made explicit for an audience from the outset, by means of asides, and sharp contrasts in her behaviour when she thinks Lucentio is watching and her behaviour when she believes herself to be alone. Eve Myles' Bianca at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 2003 presented an earnestly modest and obedient demeanour to the other characters, but revealed her more cynical thoughts in gestural asides to the audience. At one point, for instance, she seemed to swoon delightedly when kissing Lucentio then turned and grimaced to the audience, shoving her fingers into her mouth to indicate 'he makes me sick'.³⁵⁵ In Franco Zeffirelli's 1967 film version, when Natasha Pyne's Bianca believes no-one can see her she screams wildly, threatening Kate with a balled-up fist so frantically that she has to be restrained. However, when Bianca realises that Lucentio is watching, she stops abruptly, places a hand on her breast, stands still and says softly to her father, 'sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe'. Gasping slightly as she sees Lucentio, Pyne leaves no doubt that her restrained gestures and protestations of obedience are merely an act to serve her plan to seduce him. Caught momentarily unawares, Pyne's Bianca registers the gap between performance and reality; catching Pyne's Bianca at the moment her performance of restrained femininity falters, audiences are alerted to the gaps in this performance, the intentionality behind a seemingly innate restraint.³⁵⁶

Bianca's ability to affect quiet, restrained behaviour, and to put this behaviour aside when she wishes, suggests that Katherine's own modest, restrained movements and words when she presents herself as 'tamed' in the final scenes of the play may likewise be a deliberate performance. Katherine's silence at the end of the play draws on a rich seam of early modern debate about whether obedient wifely behaviour was a deliberate performance rather than a manifestation of a woman's essential nature (or her 'second nature' laid down by habit). Being a 'second nature' did not necessarily mean that restraint was undesirable. The model wife Eulalia in a popular translation of

³⁵⁴ Ben Jonson, "Epicene," in *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

³⁵⁵ *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Gregory Doran, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford Upon Avon, August 21 2003.

³⁵⁶ Zeffirelli, *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Erasmus' *A mery dialogue, declaringe the propertyes of shrowde shrewes, and honest wyues* (1557), for instance, uses deliberate 'craftes' to please her husband.³⁵⁷

Eulalia's obedient words and gestures are consciously performed to further her ends of having a quiet life and a happy, strife-free marriage.

Pyne can draw, and Myles drew, laughter from audiences as Bianca exposes the deliberate thought behind her seemingly-thoughtless docility. In extreme cases, failure to maintain appropriate types of stillness can draw attention to the actor's body in ways that puncture the fictional world of the play itself. The awkward silences when an actor forgets their lines, or the involuntary movements and noises when actors laugh or slip over inappropriately are known as 'corpsing' because they 'kill' that actor's character.³⁵⁸ One example of such an incident involves John Philip Kemble; famously afflicted with a cough throughout much of his career, a contemporary account notes that, 'Mr Kemble once playing Macbeth, whilst he suffered from a violent cold, actually coughed after his decease', ruining the play.³⁵⁹ The uncertainty of whether 'his' refers to Kemble or Macbeth highlights the absurdity of this event. If the cough belongs to Macbeth, Macbeth has wondrously managed to cough after dying. When it is recognised as Kemble's cough, however, the actor's

³⁵⁷ Desiderius Erasmus, *A Mery Dialogue, Declarynge the Properties of Shrowde Shrewes and Honest Wyues*, trans. John Rastell (London: J. Cawood, 1557), A6^v. Eulalia lists these 'craftes', for instance (A7ⁱ) 'yf my husband wer very sad at anye tyme, no time to speake to him. I laughed not nor tryfled him as many a woman doth but I looked rufully and heauyly'.

³⁵⁸ Nicholas Ridout argues, 'The moment of laughter annihilates the represented being, leaving the performer alone on stage, helpless, with nothing to fall back on, nothing to do, no one to be', *Stage Fright: Animals and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 134.

³⁵⁹ James Saunders, "Macbeth's Cold," in *Collections on Macbeth and Other Plays*, Saunders Collection ER1/88-89, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, 88^f. A local antiquary, Saunders filled 51 volumes with transcriptions of historical documents and anecdotes from popular newspapers, and his own paintings of historical monuments and people; his son Henry Caulfield Saunders presented them to the Royal Shakespearean Club in 1849 and the Club placed them in the Shakespeare's Birthplace Archive after its restoration in 1862. Robert Bearman, "Captain James Saunders of Stratford-upon-Avon: a local antiquary," *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers* 33 (Hertford: Stephen Austin and Sons, 1990), 10, 29-35; Robert Bearman, emails to the author September 8-14, 2012. Amy Hurst, Collections Archivist at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust helped with me further context on various occasions in July-September 2012. Kemble's 'habitual cough' is mentioned several times in James Boaden's *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble* (Philadelphia: Robert Small, 1825), 140, 346.

body obtrudes into the play, destroying the illusion that Macbeth is lying there dead. Ironically, this example of ‘corpsing’ revives a corpse: Kemble’s cough ‘kills’ the illusion that there is such a character as Macbeth by making Macbeth seem to live when he ought to be dead. An involuntary, explosive body movement exposes, even as it troubles, the deliberate restraint involved in performing stillness on the stage. The fissures between performance and reality, the innate and the deliberately-assumed, in *The Taming of the Shrew* are built into the play-text, though surely it is not unknown for actors to corpse during productions of this play. I suggest that Shakespeare deliberately makes the performer’s intentionality visible at various moments in *The Taming of the Shrew* (whether the performer is a character playing a part, or the actor themselves) in order to create moments that are, as Baumbach puts it, cognitively ‘fascinating’.

Staging audience attention: cognitive theories of fascination

We are drawn to the gaps that show the performer behind the performance in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Bianca’s shrewd asides belie Lucentio’s naive appraisal of her character, but give audiences a glimpse of her ‘true’ nature. Bartholomew’s actorly and ‘wifely’ fear at Sly’s insistence that he undress is more straightforwardly metatheatrical: the actor is here worried that his performance might be (literally) exposed as something unreal. These moments where restrained behaviour is seen to be a deliberate act expose the differences between characters’ and actors’ cognition. The difference between the performer’s deep cognitive engagement with staying still and their almost involuntary habituation to performing stillness on stage, and the characters’ appropriation of restrained gesture to deliberately construct a seemingly innate docility, have the power to fascinate us. Cognitive studies of fascination link fascination intrinsically with both the stillness of the image that fascinates, and the stillness of the spectator who is fascinated by that image. Just as audiences were invited to pause and take in Garrick’s *tableaux vivants*, Baumbach describes the petrified Medusa as a ‘fascinating image, as well as...an image of fascination’; fascinated by stillness, we become still when we are fascinated. Baubach adds that ‘the intensity of the relation between...spectator and spectacle’ ‘becomes blurred’ during this moment of mutual stillness.³⁶⁰ She writes,

³⁶⁰ Baumbach, “Medusa’s Gaze,” 229-30.

The Medusa image can be applied to capture the moment of fascination, which freezes the senses in an encounter the unfamiliar or beautiful, holding the viewer in a state of uncertainty, rapt in the desire to know “more”. It is this tension, this in-between-ness at the instant of fascination, between self and other, which constitutes the “Medusa effect”, a temporary paralysis of the reader or spectator as an aesthetic event that is petrifying, yet not lethal, preserving without effacing its object.³⁶¹

Baumbach suggests that fascination is a measure of how successful a work of art is; whilst for Bates the blurred boundary between actor, author, and character is at the heart of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baumbach’s work suggests that we ought to interrogate the relationship between audience, actor, and character as well.³⁶² This is something that Laurie Maguire has already done with *Othello*. Maguire describes Othello as, essentially, an actor as he tells Desdemona his life story and how, listening with rapt attention, ‘Desdemona blurs the storyteller and the story told; she confuses the character and the actor.’ This reading of Desdemona’s fascinated attention as she clings to Othello enables Maguire to reconfigure the way that the play is understood; though ‘It is customary to view *Othello* as a play about Self and Other’, she writes, ‘I am suggesting that it understands these categories as theatrical rather than racial: that the plot originates not in a white woman marrying a black man, but in an audience member falling in love with an actor-character’.³⁶³

A group of cognitive scholars at Mainz University lead by Richard Hill are currently studying literary fascination, loosely defining ‘literary fascination’ as an especially focused engagement with a particular object on stage or in a literary narrative. Hill’s laboratory studies indicate that humans use their ‘current best prediction’ to create a rough scheme for understanding the causal structure of the world and hone, refine, and adapt this scheme in response to new perceptual data. Occurrences or objects that are out of the ordinary, beyond human comprehension, or particularly threatening excite fascinated attention. This kind of attention attempts to

³⁶¹ Baumbach, “Medusa’s Gaze,” 233

³⁶² Baumbach, “Medusa’s Gaze,” 229-30.

³⁶³ Laurie Maguire, “*Othello*, Theatre Boundaries, and Audience Cognition,” in Lena Cowen Orlin, ed., *Othello: The State of Play* (London: A&C Black, 2014), 10, 15.

reduce surprises in the future; fixating on unusual objects enables people to understand them and incorporate them into their future predictions about how the world works.³⁶⁴ As Baumbach puts it, we are fascinated by objects that ‘defy description or classification’, and it is only once this unusual object has been processed and understood that its ‘spell’ can be broken.³⁶⁵ The stunned silence of audience members shocked by, and attempting to comprehend, the appearance of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* ‘her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, and ravished’ (SD before 4.1.1) is one example of fascination. In explicitly exceeding the tortures suffered by her Ovidian precedent Philomel (who only had her tongue cut out by her attacker Tereus, whereas Chiron and Demetrious are ‘a craftier Tereus’ 2.3.41), Lavinia’s appearance causes audiences to re-evaluate their previous models of literary horror. Lavinia appears as a grotesque literalisation of contemporary ideals of still and silent femininity, her cut off tongue and hands are marks of violent control and male denial of her autonomy.

Characters frequently pause to watch each other’s behaviour in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and they are most fascinated when a gap between performance and reality becomes visible. Katherine and Petruchio stand still to watch this gap when the Pedant (who has been pretending to be Tranio’s father as Tranio pretends to be Lucentio) confronts the real Lucentio’s real father, ‘Kate, let’s stand aside and see the end of this controversy’ (5.1.61-2). The characters’ fascination at events like these will also tend to be shared by audiences; actors’ conscious, careful cognitive engagement in the act of staying still and silent invites a similar engagement from the audience. The ways in which audiences engaged with plays will have changed over time, in response to changes in acting styles, from Garrick’s *tableaux vivants* to the implicit equation of Katherine with a gestureless inflated sex doll in the RSC’s 2009 production with Gomez. Audiences might share the characters’ shock at a shrewish

³⁶⁴ Richard Hill, “The Phenomenology of Fascination,” paper delivered at *Cognitive Futures of the Humanities* 2013. John Lutterbie additionally describes objects of fascination using the cognitive vocabulary of ‘attractor points’ that create new focal points for meanings to cluster and emerge. For Lutterbie, a performance is a ‘dynamic system’ involving the mutual interaction of actors, audience, and props. Shifts in the focuses of audiences’ attention affects the entirety of the system, particularly with improvised theatre, “Dynamic Systems,” paper delivered at *Cognitive Futures of the Humanities* 2013.

³⁶⁵ Baumbach, “Medusa’s Gaze,” 233.

woman, or a woman who has lost her autonomy, at a disrupted wedding ceremony, or at a beautiful Bianca.

Intriguingly, in her article on Medusa's gaze, Baumbach associates fascination with the demonic and with deception, two features commonly associated with Katherine and/or Bianca. Several moments in the play where Bianca is at her most deceptive, and Katherine or Petruchio at their most subversively demonic are accompanied by descriptions of the fascination their actions provoke. *The Taming of the Shrew* stages moments of fascination at several points in the play when characters pause, struck by unexpected or socially-inappropriate sights. Bent on a life of lonely study, for instance, Lucentio is astounded to behold beautiful Bianca. He stops and stares at her as his future plans are rapidly updated to incorporate this new encounter; 'mum [i.e. silence], and gaze your fill' (1.1.73), Tranio advises him. Lucentio falls in love with Bianca whilst he stands still and stares at her, 'while idly I stood looking on, I found the effect of love in idleness' (1.1.149-51). Bianca does not drown out Katherine by talking but rather by her fascinating 'silence',

TRANIO: Mark'd you not how her sister
Began to scold, and raise up such a storm
That mortal ears might hardly ensure the din?
LUCENTIO: Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,
And with her breath she did perfume the air.
Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her.
TRANIO: Nay, then 'tis time to stir him from his trance,
I pray, awake sir (1.1.171-7)

In a 'trance' and not 'stir[ring]', Lucentio is clearly fascinated. He sees Bianca's lips moving and smells her sweet breath (employing, like Othello, images of figuratively sweet breath to suggest idealised femininity) but he does not hear anything she says. In his mind, she is thus the perfect woman: beautiful, holy, and docile. Tranio's suggestion that Lucentio is asleep fits the fact that what Lucentio sees in Bianca is more a wishful dream than a reality.

When Petruchio arrives at his own wedding transgressively attired in an extravagantly shabby manner, Baptista and the other characters are shocked to behold this 'eye-sore' (3.2.101); Petruchio's lines make it clear that they have paused to view

him in amazement, 'wherefore gaze this goodly company,| As if they saw some wondrous monument' (3.2.94-5). The early modern word 'monument' has connotations of intense, absorbed thought: to 'monument' something was to remember or record it, and a 'monument' was any document or object devoted to commemorating something.³⁶⁶ The word thus in general related intense thought, and significant cognitive acts of memory, to a motionless object. However, in Shakespeare's works, the word 'monument' is almost always contrasted with a living body, and has connotations of stillness where thought and feeling are absent. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, for instance, Bertram tells Diana that she is nothing but a monument if she is not inspired to lust and affection

If quick fire of youth light not your mind
You are no maiden but a monument
When you are dead, you should be such a one
As you are not, for you are cold and stern (4.2.5-8).

Quick and lively thought and emotion are contrasted with the unfeeling, unmoving body.³⁶⁷ A Shakespearean 'monument', then, could be a site where cognition is particularly absent, or where it is particularly and intensely present, much as in cognitive theory stillness can signify both profound and detailed thought and restricted, even absent thought.

Katherine's transgression of social expectations with her shrewish behaviour makes her an object of fascination both for other characters and for audience members; both her absence of restraint and her new restrained nature or clever performance at the end of the play can cause us to pause in fascination. Mary Pickford's first appearance as Katherine establishes her as an object of fascinated attention. Initially, only the effects of Katherine's presence are seen; the camera cuts chaotically between shots of people

³⁶⁶ O.E.D., 'monument', *n* and *v*. Baumbach discusses how, in later centuries, the fascinating Medusa became associated with monuments and how the fascinating text is itself a monument, "Medusa's Gaze," 236.

³⁶⁷ C.f. Mariana 'for ever be confixed here| A marble monument' (*Measure for Measure* 5.1.232-3); Lucrece 'like a virtuous monument she lies' (*The Rape of Lucrece* 391), and Innogen in a deep sleep in *Cymbeline* (as Iachimo compares himself to Tarquin approaching Lucrece), 'be her sense but as a monument' (*Cymbeline* 2.2.36).

fleeing her desperately and hiding wherever they can, a cat leaping onto a cornice to escape her, mirrors smashing as she throws projectiles, chairs whizzing through the air, and terrified people toppling down the stairs that lead to her room. This episode invites the audience to anticipate eagerly the extraordinarily terrifying and physically powerful source of the chaos. Then, the camera moves up the stairs, sweeping slowly over the wreckage, increasing the suspense, and finally rests on Pickford, eyes wide with fury, glamorous with her deep red lips and elaborate outfit, breathing heavily with exertion but not otherwise still. The camera lingers on Pickford as if it is itself fascinated by her, inviting to pause and take stock of this revelation.³⁶⁸ Jennifer Waldron has shown that Renaissance antitheatricalists such as Gosson were particularly suspicious of the lustful fascination prompted by performed femininity, which left audiences ‘gaping on plays’. She explains that for antitheatricalists, fascination was ‘a sensory mode that arrests the viewer’s judgement as it ravishes the body with carnal pleasures’.³⁶⁹

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, fascination works in several ways. Firstly, characters’ fascination on stage reproduces the fascination of audiences. Both characters on stage and the theatre audience gape in amazement at Petruchio’s outlandish wedding gear, for instance. However, audiences are invited not just to look at Petruchio, but to look and listen at the characters commenting on him, to observe them gaping, standing stock still. Thus, an audience member also sees a reflection of themselves, the fascinated subject, on stage. This awareness enables a critique of the performances: how well is the actor performing? Are they betraying themselves by coughing, blinking, or visibly breathing?³⁷⁰ Finally, when their attention is drawn to Christopher Sly – as he comments on the play, then very visibly fails to be fascinated by it as he falls asleep and expresses his wish, ‘Would it were done!’ (1.1.349-54) – the audience remembers that the events they see on stage are fictional. The Induction

³⁶⁸ Taylor, *The Taming of the Shrew*.

³⁶⁹ Jennifer Waldron, “Gaping on Plays: Shakespeare, Gosson, and the Reformation of Vision,” *Critical Matrix* (2004), 48-9.

³⁷⁰ Jennifer Waldron argues that Shakespearean characters’ fascinated attention ‘overlaps with the material conditions of the performance’, staging the audience’s gaze as it focuses on the gap between character and performer. For example, as Emilia and Othello scrutinize the apparently dead Desdemona for signs of life, Waldron argues, the audience are also scrutinizing the actor playing Desdemona, aware that the actor is in fact alive and could get up at any moment, *Reformations of the Body*, 176-7.

establishes that *The Taming of the Shrew* is in fact a play staged by itinerant players for Christopher Sly and his attendants, who sit on stage (originally, they were probably on the onstage balcony, ‘above’ the stage (SD after 1.1.348)) and occasionally comment on the play. On the one hand, by placing this fictional audience on stage, the play draws attention to the ways in which the roles of audience and characters overlap as fascinated characters replicate and reflect the audience’s fascinated attention. On the other hand, Sly’s interjections disrupt the attention the audience pays to the events on stage, causing audience members to replicate his own inability to focus on the play.

Several modern performances have underscored Sly’s role as both a fictional character and an audience member by attempting to create uncertainty as to whether Sly is a genuine audience member or an actor engaging in a scripted performance. In Bogdanov’s landmark 1978 RSC production, for instance, the play began with Sly emerging rowdily from a seat in the stalls. Front of House staff members threatened to throw him out or to call the police. There was a scuffle over whether Sly had a ticket or not (‘It’s alright, my mate’s got my ticket’), until he finally moved onto the stage to perform the Induction.³⁷¹ This modern performance enabled a deeper understanding of Sly’s role by drawing out his relationship to the audience. The issue over whether Sly in fact has a ticket to the play highlighted his ambiguous role: was he like a member of the audience (who should have got a ticket) or was he an actor? Bogdanov’s production also highlighted a significant aspect of the text: the way that, with Sly, Shakespeare stages the idea of (in)appropriate audience behaviour.

Sly’s inappropriate behaviour during the play (as he falls asleep and proclaims that he wishes the play was already over) draws attention by contrast to the playwright’s and actors’ desire for an audience to be still and silent in a way that

³⁷¹ Prompt Book, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Michel Bogdanov, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1978-9, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, 5^f-7^f. The scuffle with the staff, entitled ‘Sly’s Argument’ is inserted before the Induction begins. Sly is invited to ‘ad lib’ in addition to his stipulated lines. In the Induction itself, every other character speaks Shakespeare’s text but Sly’s lines are scored through and replaced by modern speech. Here, Sly’s vocabulary reflects the way in which his role hovers between that of a present-day audience member and that of one of the early modern characters of the play, until he makes the complete transition to an early modern role. Sly begins by misunderstanding the other characters’ archaic vocabulary (‘GRIFFIN: What raiment will your honour wear today?| SLY: Not Raymond, Christopher’ (9^f)) until phrases like ‘hither’ and ‘goodly’ (12^f) begin to slip from his mouth.

signals not disinterest but fascinated attention. The audience's stillness and silence is a kind of performance dictated by social constraints particular to their historical context. P.A. Skantze provides interesting material on women in early modern audiences having to force themselves not to laugh at ribald jokes on stage in order to give the (often completely false) impression that they did not understand a word of what was being said, for example.³⁷² As we have seen, when audience members do move, those movements are often significant with respect to the performance on stage. Audiences craning to see Caesar fall engage the vertical axes of their bodies in the high-low metaphoric structure of *Julius Caesar*. Audiences fainting at performances of *Titus Andronicus*, on the other hand, threaten to upstage the action on the stage. But, the most mild and modest audiences, as well as actors and many characters, must be cognitively engaged in the act of staying still.

Conclusions

The link that is so often assumed between external bodily signs and states of mind is what enables stillness to be legible in performances of *The Taming of the Shrew*. However, it is not entirely legible, and remains partly ambiguous and mystifying, precisely because this link is also questioned and destabilised by performance. Stillness is not always an expression of essential(ised) nature as both actors and characters in this play appropriate stillness for the purposes of playing fictional, feigned roles. Stillness is part of a repertoire of behaviour central both to Katherine's role as a tamed early modern wife and to the actor's art in creating her character. The moment of textual silence in Act 5, where the text leaves it uncertain whether Katherine behaves with wifely 'silence' and 'stillness' and obeys Petruchio's command to put her hand under his foot emphasises the ability of both the character of Katherine and the actor playing her to create a variety of meanings and hints of intention through still, restrained gestures and behaviour. Thereby, it draws the actor's body to the audience's attention, enabling the distinction between character and actor both to become visible and visibly to dissolve. The question of whether Katherine is 'truly' tamed or 'just' performing becomes moot: as Erasmus' Eulalia shows, tamedness necessarily includes elements of performance whilst performance can eventually become a person's real second nature.

³⁷² Skantze, *Stillness in Motion*, 142.

Paying attention to moments of stillness illustrates Shakespeare's interest not only in gesture but in the limits of gesture. The other chapters in this thesis, exploring how gestures can embody meaning, suggest that Shakespeare is most interested in moments when gestures conceal meaning, or fail to embody the meanings for which they are normally used. For example, the first chapter showed that Shakespeare pays closest attention to the gesture of taking hands in *Titus Andronicus*, but in this play handclasps are subverted so that they are no longer a gesture of amity and frank exchange of minds but a manipulative, deceptive exchange of objects. The fact that marked pauses or hesitations in gesture are so important to Shakespeare throughout his career bears witness to his wider interest in the limitations of gesture as a bearer of stable meanings and his attention to the significant ways that gesture can fail to signify. Shakespeare also favours gestures that point to their own artifice: severed hands that can only be false, kneeling gestures that are performed with potentially insidious intent, kisses involving heavenly scents that audience members cannot smell and which exist only in Othello's lines. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, restrained gestures point more profoundly to the specifically theatrical mechanisms behind the appropriation of stillness in order to create a character, prompting us to take Bartholomew's, Bianca's, and (potentially) Katherine's performances of restrained femininity with a pinch of salt.

This chapter's discussion of the importance of restraint to Shakespearean acting, and in particular of moments of restrained or refused gesture as moments where the relationship between actor and character is most fruitfully scrutinised, lays the foundation for the examination of held-back gestures in the final thesis chapter. The problem of stillness in stage deaths, illustrated by the above anecdote of 'Macbeth's Cold' shows how difficult maintaining the illusion of realistic violence and death can be on stage. The final chapter examines how Shakespeare simultaneously dissolves and makes visible the gaps between the world of the play and the 'real' world of actors, scripts, and deliberate gestures when it comes to stage violence in *Hamlet*.

Chapter 5

‘Actions that a man might play’: *Hamlet* and simulated stage violence

Introduction

When Laertes poisons his sharpened fencing foil to kill Hamlet, he emphasises the fact that Hamlet’s death will involve lightness of touch and minimal contact. Laertes will give only the very tip of his sword the merest touch of poison, ‘I’ll touch my point| With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly,| It may be death’ (4.7.146-8). Laertes imagines simply chafing or breaking the surface of Hamlet’s skin (two contemporary meanings of ‘to gall’).³⁷³ He further stresses the lack of energetic violence needed in this final duel, stating that Hamlet may ‘be but scratch’d withal’ and he will die (4.7.146). This careful framing has a significant effect on the way that stage violence in *Hamlet* is imagined by audiences, readers, and actors. It also has an effect on the way that Hamlet and Laertes’ final duel can be acted, because it relieves the actors from the need to simulate violent, bloody mortal combat. This chapter will examine how in this way the final duel between Hamlet and Laertes closes the gap between character and actor.

Critics are well attuned to the collapsible boundary between performance and reality in *Hamlet*. This is examined, for instance, by Peter Platt in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox*, which is discussed later in the chapter. This chapter reviews the relationship between performance and reality in order to think through its implications for cognitive studies. My aim here is to use a cognitive approach to this performance-reality boundary to show how theatrical cognitive studies of violence can be. As we shall see, cognitive theorists often talk, like early modern texts on theatre do, of ‘scripts’, acting and (dis)simulation. The chapter will examine and explain the close links between the theatre and the cognitive theorist’s laboratory as experimental spaces. This thesis asks not only what cognitive theory can tell us about Shakespeare, but also what Shakespeare can tell us about cognitive theory. The suggestive similarity between the theatre and the cognitive laboratory suggests that theatrical methods of pretence, dissimulation, affect and acting can help cognitive theorists to understand how humans behave, and particularly how and why they behave aggressively.

³⁷³ O.E.D., ‘gall, v¹, 1, 3.

At the end of *Hamlet* the characters' and actors' intentions—fighting with light touches—become almost the same. By implication, the character's and actor's cognitive processes are much more similar here than in bloodier types of stage violence filled with thumping blows and huge slashing, stabbing movements. In these bloodier types of stage violence, characters are trying their hardest fatally to wound each other and actors (generally) are trying their hardest to do the opposite and not harm each other too much at all. As this chapter shows, *Hamlet* (1599-1602) is a particularly pointed example of a general Shakespearean interest in around 1599-1602 in staging violence that is restrained and limited. The motif of light touches in Shakespeare's plays which this chapter goes on to discuss are, as Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle has shown in her book *Senses of Touch*, part of a wider Renaissance interest in 'delicate' touches between humans, and between the human and the divine. O'Rourke Boyle's work relates back to chapter 1's discussion of the handclasp in *Titus Andronicus* as (reflecting the Aristotelian description of the hand as 'the instrument of instruments' that was so popular in the Renaissance), she shows that the hand related uniquely to human 'dignity', creativity and piety.³⁷⁴ The present chapter reflects on, and brings to a conclusion, the ideas about touching, restraint, representation, and olfaction in the previous chapters. Discourses of part-olfactory part-mental 'contagion' stand in place of actual physical contact, and a restrained gesture becomes the point where the boundary between representation and reality once more dissolves.

Unlike kisses and handshakes, which can be performed on stage with as much skin contact as we expect from 'real' kisses and handshakes offstage, stage punches and sword thrusts often involve encouraging the viewer to imagine bodily contact that in fact is not enacted. Staged fights-to-the-death are usually moments when actors' and characters' intentions diverge. As we have seen, whilst one or both characters are trying their hardest to harm the other, the actors are trying hard not to really hurt each other at all. The gap between actors' bodies as characters supposedly make violent contact with each other becomes a widening gap between fiction and reality. When audiences can see actors slapping their own wrists instead of each other's faces, or

³⁷⁴ For a discussion of the 'delicate' touch of God, for instance, see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Senses of Touch: Human Dignity and Deformity from Michaelangelo to Calvin* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 202. In terms of literary (including Shakespearean) texts, O'Rourke Boyle links lightness of touch in particular to discourses about female simplicity and fragility thanks to the sensuality and dexterity of the female hand (see for instance 165).

smacking swords onto the stage-floor as their opponent pretends that the sword has wounded them, the fiction that the action on stage involves two people wounding and killing each other is punctured. The device of the poisoned foil in *Hamlet* both acknowledges and masks the difference between actors and characters because a slight graze can be simulated realistically without endangering the actors. Thus, during this stage fight there is little divergence between what the actors are doing and what they appear to be doing; both actors and characters are fencing and only touching each other lightly.

Early modern audiences expected a realistic fight, and early modern actors needed fencing to be included among their skills. The clown Richard Tarlton, member of Shakespeare's company, was awarded the title Master of Fence in 1587, for example.³⁷⁵ This made the stakes particularly high when it came to ensuring no harm was done to the actors whilst characters truly appeared to be fighting to the death. Edelman's research into Shakespearean stage fighting reveals a strong 'association of Shakespearean theatre with skilful fencing'. Elizabethan playhouses were used for fencing competitions, thus as the Globe 'was not only a theatre but a prizefighting arena...anything less than a totally verisimilar fight would have been laughed off the stage'.³⁷⁶ 'Fictional' fights between Shakespearean characters could cause real damage to the actor's bodies, 'Even though stage weaponry would have been bated, strong blows to the body had (and have) to be given, causing serious injury to the actor unless he is well-protected'.³⁷⁷ Terry King, fight director for Gregory Doran's 2008 RSC *Hamlet*, argues that, compared to the mass brawls of Shakespeare's histories, the duel in *Hamlet* is set up so that it has to be particularly realistic and convincing as it involves just two opponents,

³⁷⁵ Peter Thomson, "Tarlton, Richard (d. 1588)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed January 3 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26971>.

³⁷⁶ Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, 6-7. The detailed descriptions in many fencing manuals could easily be read as a set of moves to be mimicked on stage, such as this passage in George Silver's popular treatise (which draws in another form of entertainment with close links to theatre: 'dauncing'), 'if a blow be made at the left side of the head, a verie small turning of the wrist with the knuckles downward, defendeth that side of the head and bodie, and the point of the Rapier much indangereth the hand, arme, face or bodie of the striker: and if anie thrust be made, the wards, by reason of the indirections in mouing the feet in maner of dauncing, as aforesaid, maketh a perfect ward, and still withall the point greatly endangereth the other', *Paradoxes of Defence* (London: Richard Field, 1599), C3^v.

³⁷⁷ Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, 30.

The biggest challenge in *Hamlet* is that there is nothing to distract attention from the fights. Arranging big fight scenes with lots of people on stage does present its own problems, but it also means that the swordplay doesn't have to be very clever, because your eyes are constantly being pulled all around the stage. In *Hamlet* there is a lot of focus on just two people fighting, they are the centre of attention.³⁷⁸

The device of the poisoned foil means that Laertes and Hamlet's final duel can bear this scrutiny, as it is not difficult to make a slight graze look realistic. Moreover, Shakespeare dramatises the act of watching on stage as Claudius and Osric observe the duel closely and describe what is happening aloud. Claudius commands, 'you the judges bear a wary eye' (5.2.279). Osric, whose job it is to record the 'hits' is usually depicted as the main judge in performance, but Claudius' later comments, and his personal interest in seeing if Laertes manages to wound and thus poison Hamlet, means that he too is almost always depicted as watching the fight very closely. This relieves the audience from the need to scrutinise the fight-scene visually, as Claudius and Osric are scrutinising it *for* them; the audience are encouraged to follow the action of the fight through characters' verbal descriptions as Osric notes when each 'hit[s]' the other. Claudius distracts the audience further from scrutinising the fight by performing several attention-grabbing actions during the duel: poisoning the cup, enticing Hamlet to take a sip, and reacting with horror when Gertrude prepares to drink from it. In Roger Mitchell's 1987 RSC production Osric circled downstage and Claudius upstage,³⁷⁹ occluding the fight from the audience's gaze even as they gave the impression that it was being carefully scrutinised. In Michael Boyd's 2004 RSC production, Claudius (Clive Wood) circled Hamlet and Laertes watching them all the time.³⁸⁰ Wood drew attention to the wine cup at a crucial moment; he only poisoned it

³⁷⁸ Terry King, in Programme, *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Gregory Doran (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2008), 4^f.

³⁷⁹ 'Osric circles DS as they play; C circles US as they play', Prompt Book, *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Roger Mitchell, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1987, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

³⁸⁰ 'Ham + Laertes fight as Claudius circles', "Supplementary Prompt Book (moves only)," *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Michael Boyd, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 2004, Shakespeare

when Hamlet seemed to be about to win, and thus distracted the audience's attention from the stage fight just as it got most intense.³⁸¹ Careful staging and plotting make the duel 'a verisimilar fight'.

The chapter on taking hands established that touches in Shakespeare's plays are often imagined and figurative; described rather than, or as well as, physically felt with the skin. Much of the touching in *Hamlet*'s final fight sequence also happens through language. When Osric notes 'a very palpable hit' (5.2.281), he redoubles the idea of touching inherent in 'hit' as 'palpable' derives from Latin 'palpabilis', 'that which may be touched'. Osric's word 'palpable' also extends the idea of touching from a literal 'hit' to a touch that is imagined, as 'palpable' also had the wider figurative sense of something that is 'sensed' or 'felt' with the mind.³⁸² As the chapter on kissing showed, the vocabulary of touching and smelling was often used to indicate mental influence in the early modern era and in particular was a common way of envisaging the ways that people could be influenced by each other at the theatre. Laertes links the touch of his sword to olfaction and airborne contamination by describing the poison as a 'contagion', which derives from the Latin *con-tangere*, 'to touch together'. *Hamlet* is the first recorded usage for both the literal and figurative meanings of 'contagion': a disease passed on by touching, or a pernicious mental influence. The Oxford English Dictionary lists Laertes' use of 'contagion' to mean 'poison' as the first usage of this concrete meaning of contagion, and Hamlet's image of hell 'breath[ing] forth...contagion' from graves (3.2.389-90) as the first figurative usage. 'Contagion' could also simply mean 'influence'.³⁸³ When Laertes states that he will merely 'touch' the 'point' of his sword with 'contagion', the word 'contagion' completely overturns the minimal, highly localised physical contact implied by 'touch' and 'point' (which conjure up an image of Laertes just dabbing the sharp point of a sword with some poison). The word 'contagion' turns this dabbing gesture into an action that suggests a spreading infection that has a broad effect that is both physical and psychological. As well as spreading to infect Hamlet, this contagion spreads to infect Claudius and Laertes himself when Hamlet turns the sword against

Centre Library and Archive. An accompanying sketch shows Claudius' trajectory.

³⁸¹ Archival Recording, *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Michael Boyd, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, September 23 2004, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

³⁸² O.E.D., 'palpable', *adj*, 1, 3-4.

³⁸³ O.E.D., 'contagion', *n*, 3 b, c, 4.

them. Moreover, the sight of this stage violence has the power potentially to ‘infect’ audience’s minds with violent, fearful, or aggressive thoughts. Poised at a crucial moment in a play where language becomes violent and tangible in unprecedented ways, Laertes’ sword is tipped with a particularly theatrical poison, which persuasively influences audiences to imagine that they are seeing a fight to the death.

From 1662 onwards, ‘contagion’ developed a specifically olfactory meaning, ‘stench’.³⁸⁴ Jan Klata’s rendering of the duel in 2013-14 brought together these ideas of olfaction and touches, as Hamlet (Dimitrij Schaad) and Laertes (Ronny Miersch) did not aim blows or draw blood at all. Instead, the duel focused on them invading each other’s personal space; one fight-move involved Schaad pushing his head under Miersch’s T-shirt which was transparent with sweat and gurning through the fabric at the audience.³⁸⁵ Schaad’s gesture here, by transforming a scene of stage violence into one which focuses on touch and olfaction, drew (probably implicitly, or unwittingly) on the link between touching and olfaction which, chapters 1 and 3 showed, are central to early modern conceptions of how theatre affected the audience. By drawing attention to the fact that Miersch had sweated so much that his top was transparent, and by performing a comic, almost gentle, gesture instead of a stabbing one that drew blood, Schaad’s gesture also drew explicitly on the conditions of performance, where actors sweated with the exertion of performing their roles and where real violence was not permitted, only touches that did not wound. The previous chapter discussed early modern discourses of the theatre as a site of olfactory contagion, where audiences could be influenced by plays as if by airborne diseases or drugs. That chapter reframed Renaissance ideas of the subconscious influence of olfaction in a cognitive light. The current chapter examines this idea of influence from a different angle, by looking specifically at cognitive theories of violence and empathy, and in particular at what it means for audiences and actors to be ‘touched’ by a fictional story to such an extent that they experience real aggressive or fearful thoughts and feelings.

Cognitive material dealing with audiences’ reactions to theatrical stage violence is scarce. However, there exists a wealth of studies into the effects of film and videogame violence on cognition, with many studies finding that, despite the fact that videogames are more interactive than films (encouraging gamers to shoot ‘first

³⁸⁴ O.E.D., ‘contagion’, *n*, 6.

³⁸⁵ *Hamlet*, Klata.

person' style for example), they both have several similarities when it comes to producing violent thoughts. Films and games tend to be specifically designed to produce a cognitive, chemical response in viewers and players, increasing the production of hormones associated with excitement, fear, and anger like adrenaline. As Hollywood stuntman Hal Needham writes, 'When people see my movies, I want to get their adrenaline flowing; if I don't, I haven't done my job'.³⁸⁶ In a 1998 cognitive study of violent films and games, the psychologist Brad Bushman makes the connection between media violence and chemical affect particularly immediate by describing films as a 'drug', a 'hallucinogen', that has 'imitative and disinhibitive effects' on viewers, causing them to become less restrained about recreating in real life what they have seen on screen.³⁸⁷ This idea of the chemical effect of films is not just metaphorical; in 2001, Bushman and fellow psychologist Craig Anderson found that 'long-term exposure to violent media' has a 'positive and significant' effect on violent thoughts, and results in increased 'aggressive cognition' (i.e. gamers experience a higher number of violent thoughts) and 'aggressive affect' ('feelings of anger or hostility'), as well as generating symptoms of 'physiological arousal' associated with being in a fight, including increased adrenaline and stress hormones.³⁸⁸

What is interesting, too, is the way that, though these studies tend to focus on films and video games to the exclusion of theatre, they are often pervaded by theatrical metaphors. Theatre often seems to be a guiding principle, or underlying idea, behind studies into film and videogame violence. Strikingly, Anderson and Bushman use the theatrical or cinematic metaphor of 'scripts' to describe the effect of violent media on cognition; they argue that such media alter a viewer or gamer's cognitive 'scripts'. They state that violent media expose people to violent behavioural responses to hostile or challenging scenarios, which they then store in their kinaesthetic memories as 'behavioural scripts'. Implicitly, engagement with violent

³⁸⁶ Hal Needham, *Stuntman! My Car-crashing, Bone-breaking, Death-defying Hollywood Life* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2011), 11.

³⁸⁷ Brad Bushman, "Priming Effects of Media Violence on Accessibility of Aggressive Constructs in Memory," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 24(5) (1998), 357-8.

³⁸⁸ Craig Anderson and Brad Bushman, "Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggressive Behavior, Aggressive Cognition, Aggressive Affect, Psychological Arousal, and Prosocial Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Scientific Literature," *Psychological Science* 12(1) (2001), 353, 356-8.

media is like rehearsing or memorising a script which is then likely to be acted out in a person's real life.³⁸⁹ Bushman writes, 'once a script has been stored in memory, it may be retrieved at some later time as a guide for behaviour'.³⁹⁰ The script metaphor is used several times in cognitive studies of violence; for instance Nancy Guerra, L. Huesmann and Anja Spindler found that children raised in violent communities develop 'social scripts emphasising aggressive responses'.³⁹¹ This metaphor of a 'script' is used in such a way that it blurs the boundary between fiction and reality; fictional representations of violence provide the basis for real life aggressive cognition and action. Learning a script and 'rehearsing' it in our mind both involve a chemical change in our bodies and brains associated with violence experience and thus pave the way for 'real' violent action later on.

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare depicts characters who are interested, like Anderson and Bushman, in how a carefully-constructed scenario can affect the mind of someone watching, or asked to participate interactively in, that scenario. *Hamlet* is full of experiments which aim to produce an effect, or measure a reaction, in another person's mind. Characters construct scenarios, coach each other how to behave, and observe the consequences. This chapter discusses in particular how the final duel between Hamlet and Laertes is a kind of experiment, with its two carefully-concocted poisons, and Claudius carefully watching both participants' reactions, and laying a bet on the result. Earlier in the play, Polonius and Claudius 'loose' Ophelia to Hamlet and watch to see how he reacts, to test if he is indeed mad. If this encounter with Ophelia makes Hamlet analogous to a modern gamer negotiating his way through the fictional scenario of an interactive video game, *The Mousetrap* positions Claudius as someone akin to the more passive audience of a film. Hamlet writes and stages *The Mousetrap* under painstakingly-controlled conditions to see how it affects Claudius: what is perhaps the first experiment into the effect of stage violence on audience's minds is, excitingly, itself part of a play.

Hamlet carefully hones the situation, writing the script himself and giving the players lengthy advice about how to act it out, so that it will produce the effect he

³⁸⁹ Anderson and Bushman, "Effects of Violent Video Games," 356-8.

³⁹⁰ Bushman, "Priming Effects of Media Violence," 358.

³⁹¹ Nancy Guerra, L. Huesmann and Anja Spindler, "Community Violence Exposure, Social Cognition, and Aggression Among Urban Elementary School Children," *Child Development*, 74(5) (2003), 1561.

desires. Then, he scrutinises Claudius closely, hoping that the play will have a visible affect on Claudius and reveal his mind,

I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks.
I'll tent him to the quick. If 'a do blench,
I know my course (2.2.594-598).

Hamlet's 'experiment' is similar to a cognitive one (and particularly that of Berkowitz, which is discussed below) in that Hamlet is creating a situation that is honed to have a particular cognitive effect on Claudius; by observing the play's effect on Claudius, Hamlet hopes to know his mind. Hamlet cannot be as direct as a modern experimenter: he cannot ask Claudius how he feels, or get him to fill in a questionnaire rating how *The Mousetrap* has affected him. If Hamlet felt able to simply ask Claudius if he killed his father, and was sure of getting the truth, there would be no need to stage *The Mousetrap* at all. Hamlet needs to be indirect enough to catch Claudius off his guard, whilst being as direct as he can be so as to ensure that the content of the play is applicable specifically to Claudius. After a particularly pointed reference to what he believes Claudius to have done (killing his brother, marrying his sister in law), Hamlet uses imagery of poison to describe the effect the play has had on Claudius. The Player Queen declares (and what could be more provocative), 'In second husband let me be accursed. | None wed the second but who killed the first' (3.2.179-80). Hamlet, in the audience, interjects 'That's wormwood!' (3.2.181), referring to the bitter plant wormwood which also had a contemporary figurative sense of something that was bitter to experience.³⁹² Caught out, Claudius' response to the play is olfactory, 'my offense is rank, it smells to heaven' (3.3.36). Here, Hamlet and Claudius draw on the early modern discourses that linked being affected by a play to figurative and literal infection. They also prefigure modern descriptions of violent (and, as we saw in chapter 3, romantic and erotic) media as drugs or hallucinogens.³⁹³

³⁹² O.E.D., 'wormwood', *n*, 1a, 2a.

³⁹³ In the chapter 3 I suggested that Iago was experimenting on Othello by creating fictional accounts of

Hamlet's 'experiment' with *The Mousetrap* is different from the idea of cognitive scripts in two significant ways. Firstly, unlike the cognitive theorists cited above, Hamlet is not experimenting to see how the play will create a 'script' that his audience member, Claudius, might then follow in 'real life' (i.e. when he has finished watching *The Mousetrap*). Rather, the order is reversed. Claudius has already committed a 'real life' violent act, and the script Hamlet creates, the script of *The Mousetrap*, aims to recreate that act. *The Mousetrap* aims, in fact, to draw violent acts from Claudius' memory, to make his thoughts publicly visible to those who, like Hamlet, are concentrating on reading Claudius' bodily signs, and to confirm what Hamlet suspects Claudius has already done. So, *The Mousetrap* uses a fictional scenario to test what was real in the past rather than, as cognitive studies of violence tend to do, examining if a fictional scenario materialises as a 'real' act in the future. Secondly, the future violent acts intended to be prompted by *The Mousetrap* are not perpetrated by Claudius, the audience member. They are perpetrated by Hamlet, the experimenter. Hamlet does not conduct his experiment to stir his audience to violence, rather he uses *The Mousetrap* as a justification for his own revengeful violent acts. If Claudius 'blenches', Hamlet will kill him. Hamlet is a much more active force than the experimenters in the cognitive studies above, who elide themselves, slip from view, aim merely to observe and not act and perhaps assume themselves to be immune from the violent affects that they detect in their subjects. But when Hamlet remarks to Claudius, 'Your Majesty and we that have free souls it touches us not' (3.2.241-2), the sense is ironic; the affective infection of *The Mousetrap* 'touches' both experimenter and subject.

Leonard Berkowitz' "Film Violence and the Cue Properties of Available Targets" (1966), a seminal study of violence and cognition cited at length by Anderson and Bushman, is a prime example of how Shakespeare's concern with the effect of fictional scenarios on people's minds is shared by modern cognitive theorists. There is an intrinsic theatricality to Berkowitz's experiment. Berkowitz wished to measure how people's violent cognition and violent affect differed depending on whether they had watched a film of a violent prize fight or a film of a

Desdemona's behaviour that Othello takes to be true; Hamlet's 'that's wormwood' recalls Iago's blending of the literal language of chemistry with the idea that his experiment is affecting and changing Othello's soul, 'work on, my medicine work! Thus credulous fools are caught' (*Othello* 4.1.44-5).

trackrace which was just as exciting but involved zero violence. As we will see, Berkowitz took on a role akin to theatrical director, training and deploying actors, creating a series of carefully-scripted scenarios and monitoring their effect on his subjects. In this sense, he bears an intriguing similarity to Hamlet coaching the players to perform *The Mousetrap* and monitoring its effect on Claudius, or Polonius coaching Ophelia on how to behave and then monitoring her effect on Hamlet. I suggest that this similarity is not a coincidence. Because they aim to produce and test particular effects on their audience members or participants, studies like Berkowitz's tend almost of a necessity to use 'theatrical' elements. This is because theatre is a core case of an activity designed to produce specific affects in the minds of audiences. Dramatists have for centuries been carefully honing the instruments for doing so—creating characters, devising scenarios, deceiving audiences by masking the gaps between fiction and reality—and these tools have proved very useful for experimenters like Berkowitz. As Susan Feagin argues, literary narratives are much more powerful than real life situations when it comes to producing empathetic or affective feelings like hostility or sadness. This is because, like an experiment, literary texts do not involve the distractions of real life situations, and are focused instead on producing emotions and affective responses in readers, which makes them more efficient at doing so,

Simulating mental activity is likely to be easier with respect to characters in narrative literature than with actual people since literature is written for those who would appreciate it—something not to be assumed of the 'narratives' that people create as we live our lives. Good literature will often provide, through style and substance, opportunities for empathizing with characters, activities that, in turn, may enhance appreciation.³⁹⁴

The charge is often levelled against neuroscientific and cognitive experiments that they are too unlike real life for their findings to be applicable outside of the lab, that the closed, artificial environment of the laboratory where a single

³⁹⁴ Susan Feagin, "Empathizing as Simulating," in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 161.

emotion is produced and studied, does not reflect the complexity of real life. However, this is potentially a strength when it comes to reading cognitive theory alongside literary texts because, as Feagin argues, this is one of the ways that cognitive experiments can be most like literature. Berkowitz's scenarios, for example, were carefully designed to produce a particular cognitive effect in participants: hostility to varying extents. Berkowitz took pains to exclude all other variables from his scenarios so that he could focus solely on aggression.

Berkowitz's experiment demonstrates the propensity for theatrical frameworks and fictional scenarios to be permeated with real cognitive effects. The actor being beaten in the prizefight film was Kirk Douglas (though unnamed by Berkowitz, this film is perhaps *Champion*, 1949). Berkowitz instructed a confederate to pretend to be a subject volunteering for the experiment; the confederate engaged with the genuine experimental subjects and introduced himself at times as 'Kirk', a college boxer. At other times, the confederate introduced himself as the unsporty 'Bob'. Berkowitz hypothesised that the subjects of his experiment would associate this confederate called 'Kirk' with Kirk Douglas in the film, and that seeing Kirk Douglas being beaten up would provide them with a kind of mental script or behavioural pattern that would encourage them to want to attack the confederate 'Kirk' in some way. To amplify the effect, in some instances, Berkowitz secretly instructed 'Kirk'/'Bob' to play the role of an irritating, aggressive, even malicious person and at other times Berkowitz secretly asked the confederate to behave 'neutrally' around the experimental subjects. He wanted to see if, when the confederate 'Kirk' was aggressive, it further encouraged the subjects to want to re-enact the prize-fighting scenario they had seen on screen, where Kirk Douglas acted aggressively towards his opponent, after which the opponent took violent revenge. Berkowitz measured the effect that the two characters of 'Kirk'/'Bob' and their different behaviours had on his subjects' thoughts and actions by asking the subjects to complete a questionnaire about how they felt about 'Kirk' or 'Bob' and giving them the opportunity to give 'Kirk'/'Bob' electric shocks depending on how well he answered a test question (he gave exactly the same answer with each subject).

Berkowitz found that playing the part of Kirk the boxer, and behaving in a hostile fashion towards the subjects meant that the confederate increased the subjects' aggressive affect and aggressive cognition, and their aggressive actions. In their questionnaire, subjects reported disliking Kirk more than Bob, especially when he

acted aggressively towards them; they gave Kirk (especially aggressive Kirk) more electric shocks. Berkowitz manipulates several staged, fictional scenarios and characters, and finds that they had a real cognitive effect on those exposed to them. He is well aware of the fictive aspect of the experiment, often using the words ‘supposedly’ and ‘ostensibly’ (the experimenter leaves the room ‘ostensibly to bring the subject’s work to the other person for judging’; ‘Kirk’/‘Bob’ only ‘supposedly’ receives electric shocks), and indeed even revels in it with a grand unveiling at the end, when ‘the experimenter explained the deceptions that had been practiced upon the subject’.³⁹⁵

Reading the last act of *Hamlet* with studies like Berkowitz’s in mind emphasises that theatricality and ‘real’ violent cognition are not polar opposites. Indeed, recent productions of *Hamlet* have drawn careful attention to the theatricality of this fight; Adrian Noble’s Barbican version in 1992 added cannon and applause into the text, evoking both a theatrical performance and prizefights throughout the ages.³⁹⁶ Both Berkowitz’s fictional filmic prize fight and *Hamlet*’s original performances in a playing space that was once a theatre and a prize fighting arena, have been created with the relationship between theatricality and reality in mind. The final duel in *Hamlet* involves a tangle of staged and real aggression. Real fencing skills are used in fight-sequences that are staged to a fictional script; imagined poisonous chemicals are balanced against the potential for real olfactory responses as actors sweat and their adrenaline levels rise along with the audience’s; and, in general, a fictional storyline can produce real cognitive responses of fear and aggression in the actors’ and audience’s minds. Drawing on the ‘simulation theory’ of cognition (the idea of ‘simulation’ is also crucial to Feagin’s argument above), which suggests that the only difference between imagined and truly enacted violence is the intensity of affect it provokes, I will explore how the boundary between real and fictional violence, an actor’s words and a character’s touch, is dissolved in *Hamlet*.

³⁹⁵ Leonard Berkowitz, “Film Violence and the Cue Properties of Available Targets,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3(5) (1966), 525-30.

³⁹⁶ The fight scene involves ‘cannon’ and ‘APPLAUSE’ (twice), Prompt Book, *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Adrian Noble, Barbican Theatre, London, 1992, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive. ‘Court applauds’, Prompt Book, *Hamlet*, Mitchell.

Striking in Shakespeare's plays

Hamlet (first published in Q1 1603, probably performed 1600-1), was part of an ongoing Shakespearean 'experiment' into stage-violence. In particular, around the time of writing *Hamlet*, Shakespeare had developed an interest in staging how violence can be pretended, controlled, and theatrically performed. As we saw in chapter 4, in Edelman's words, 'Shakespeare was...an innovator of stage violence'. Edelman explains that, even in plays like *Tamburlaine* whose plots feature several battles, there was little actual swordfighting on the stage before Shakespeare began his history cycle with the *Henry VI* tetralogy in 1590-1.³⁹⁷ In their *Dictionary of Stage Directions*, Dessen and Thomson provide further evidence for Edelman's claim that it was only after the 1590s that, thanks to Shakespeare, stage violence became popular in England. Dessen and Thomson show that striking, fighting and wounding are all 'widely used' terms in stage directions in English plays in the period 1580-1642, but it was Shakespeare who used them most and earlier. The examples that they cite show that, apart from in Shakespeare's plays, instructions to fight or strike or wound do not really start to become common in stage directions until after the turn of the seventeenth century, with plays like *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), whilst non-Shakespearean examples from the 1590s or first decade of the seventeenth century tend not to involve not actual stage-fights, but characters walking onto the stage already wounded or having their wounds examined. Dessen and Thomson's earliest non-Shakespearean examples of people fighting or being wounded on stage tend to come later than Shakespeare's histories; one example is Drayton's *Sir John Oldcastle* (1599).³⁹⁸ It was only when Shakespeare's playwriting career was drawing to a close that other playwrights began to make onstage violence the focal point of key scenes, in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606), and other revenge-plays. Following the precedent Shakespeare had set in England with plays like *Titus Andronicus*, these plays attempt to outdo each other with the ingenuity of their violence. Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), for example, contains perhaps the most violent use of 'ax' listed by Dessen and Thomson, 'he raises the ax, strikes out his own brains'.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, 13-18.

³⁹⁸ Dessen and Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions*, 91-2, 219-20, 254-5.

³⁹⁹ Dessen and Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions*, 18.

Edelman argues that Shakespeare's key innovation was not just in portraying thrilling, realistic violence on stage (this was something that Robert Greene may also have attempted to do, as he includes combat in stage directions), but in exploring its potential to affect characters and plot, 'Shakespeare's use of these swordfights, often combining them with dialogue, turned more than a few "feats of activity" into feats of high drama'.⁴⁰⁰ The way that Shakespeare presented violent 'feats of high drama' changed considerably over time. In his early works, Shakespeare displayed an enthusiasm for simply staging violence in various forms, focusing on bloody and energetic depictions of violence, from the histories' mass brawls and hand to hand combat to the farcical beatings of servants in the early comedies, especially *The Comedy of Errors* (1594) where the Dromios expend many lines discussing, and bitterly joking about, their beatings. By the late 1590s, though, Shakespeare began to explore the opportunities offered by the theatre for examining ideas of representation and playacting by depicting arrested, frustrated violent acts. Comparing Shakespeare to Webster, R.A. Foakes also notes that whilst Shakespeare shared a fascination with violence with other early modern playwrights, what marked him out as different from them was the fact that 'during a long career he dramatized changing perspectives on representations of human violence that show a maturing of his thinking about the matter'.⁴⁰¹

As we have seen, Laertes emphasises a fight involving light, controlled touches, which are so light on both sides that there is debate over whether Hamlet in fact managed to touch Laertes at all ('Judgement', he asks, 5.2.280). This reflects the actors' need to control their movements in stage violence, stopping a stage-punch before it makes contact with the other's skin, reining in a sword-thrust so that it does not harm the other actor. The previous chapter showed that arrested and restrained gestures are places where the link between actor and character becomes particularly fraught with meaning; they are thus sites where this link can be scrutinised most fruitfully by the cognitive theorist. *Hamlet* is part of a group of plays, spanning a decade and a half in Shakespeare's career, that dramatise violence that is stopped in mid-motion, usually when it is thwarted by others. In these plays, Shakespeare explores the theatrical potential for violent gestures and situations that are halted and

⁴⁰⁰ Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, 23.

⁴⁰¹ R.A. Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9.

frustrated to generate affective responses (fear, anger, sadness) in the audience's minds.

In *King John* (c.1587) 4.1, Arthur uses the power of youth, innocence, and persuasion to stop Hubert from blinding him with the burning poker he wields; Hubert's ensuing tears may well be mirrored by the audience's. In *The Tempest* (1610-11), as their rivals sleep, Antonio urges Sebastian, 'Draw together:| And when I rear my hand, do you the like| To fall it on Gonzalo' (2.1.294-6). Swords drawn, Sebastian interrupts Antonio before they strike with, 'O but one word' (2.1.296), and Ariel wakes the sleepers up, thwarting the imminent murder. Ariel's stage-management of Sebastian and Antonio's intended violence recalls *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-8), when Portia prevents Shylock from wounding or killing Antonio. Shakespeare emphasises the suspense of this moment; Shylock whets his knife, Portia claims Antonio is beyond help and tells him to prepare for death before interrupting the looming Shylock by noting that, 'this bond doth give thee here no jot of blood' (4.1.306). In Henry Baynton's 1922 touring production in the West of England, Portia emphasised the potentially unexpected, dramatic nature of this moment; rather than making it clear that she planned all along to save Antonio with the blood-clause, she 'looked up suddenly from the bond in the trial scene [an] indication that she herself, and just at that moment, had realised the flaw'.⁴⁰² Shakespeare increases the tension and uncertainty by giving Portia new reasons not to save Antonio during this scene, even if she had originally planned to do so; her husband Bassanio interjects and states that he would gladly 'sacrifice' his wife (4.1.282-7) to save Antonio. Giving Portia the perfect opportunity to kill her key rival, this scene is also a suspenseful test of her character. Productions often emphasise this dramatic tension, giving the final frustration of Shylock's violent desires extra import. In 1947 at the RSC, Frank Benson included a crowd on stage, who weep and turn away in horror as Shylock approaches Antonio with his knife.⁴⁰³ At the Barbican in 1988, Antonio's (John

⁴⁰² J.C. Trevin, "In the Margin," in *The Triple Bond: Plays, Mainly Shakespearean in Performance*, ed. Joseph Price (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1975), 143-4.

⁴⁰³ '[T]wo weep' as Antonio is condemned, and at 'lay bare your bosom', 'ladies in crowd turn away', Prompt Book, *The Merchant of Venice*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Frank Benson, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1947, 36^v-32^f, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

Carlisle's) arms were bound to a horizontal piece of wood, evoking the crucifixion.⁴⁰⁴ When Portia stepped in to stop Shylock's striking gesture, these overtones of the sacrifice of Christ being stopped lent a sense of added momentousness to this arrested violent gesture. In this production in particular, which used a variety of biblical symbolism, in the anti-semitic world of Antonio and Bassanio Shylock represented 'the Jews' who killed Christ, and this ending gave a sense of biblical history being re-written.

Though the final duel in *Hamlet* itself does not depict a violent act that is dramatically stopped in its tracks, the fact that *Hamlet* is sandwiched between several plays that raise the stakes of threatened, then abrogated, violence emphasises the importance of the idea of controlled and resisted violence to Shakespeare's thought. Many early modern plays include intimidating threats to kill. However, making a point of dramatising characters offering, and then restraining themselves from committing, violent acts, is a particular preoccupation of Shakespeare's. In the case of *Hamlet*, it is the actors rather than the characters who must control their violent gestures; the device of the poisoned foil and Laertes' emphasis on the fact that energetic violent gestures are not needed, give them a fictional reason for doing so.

Before the duel, Hamlet asserts that he has no desire to harm Laertes, 'disclaiming' any hatred of him and stating that any harm he has done him previously is an accident, 'I have shot mine arrow o'er the house| And hurt my brother' (5.2.243-4). Hamlet's claims that he is reluctant to harm Laertes place *Hamlet* within a set of Shakespearean plays portraying characters who, though set up to fight, are unwilling to actually do each other any harm. In these plays, Shakespeare makes visible the conditions of performance, whereby actors are compelled by the script to fight but need to stop short of actually wounding each other. In *Twelfth Night* (first performed 1602), Sir Toby stages a duel between Andrew and Viola, both of whom are terrified of fighting. As Toby stage-manages the fight it seems almost as if he is conducting an experiment, seeing what will happen when he incites a chemical response of fear and aggression in two vulnerable people. Rather like Berkowitz, he runs between the two terrified combatants, checking on their responses to each other and creating a fictional atmosphere of aggression. Toby describes Andrew to Viola twice as 'incensed'

⁴⁰⁴ Production photos, *The Merchant of Venice*, by William Shakespeare, directed by Bill Alexander, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1988, 5812/C/30, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive.

(3.4.238, 260), the same word Claudius uses of Hamlet and Laertes (5.2.302). Toby pretends to Viola that Andrew is the best fighter around, ‘souls and bodies hath he divorced three’ (3.4.237); meanwhile, he presents Viola to Andrew as ‘a very devil’ (3.4.273). As they fight, Viola notes aside ‘how much I lack of a man’ (3.4.302), reminding the audience at this crucial juncture that she is in male disguise, playing a part, underscoring the fact that this is a moment where Shakespeare is thinking specifically about the potential for theatre to enable various permutations of violence.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (first published 1602, but probably performed several years earlier), Shakespeare again deploys the theatrical technique of the aside during a reluctant fight. The Host, acting again as a director, incites Sir Hugh Evans and Doctor Caius to duel; Sir Hugh is clearly putting on a show. He addresses Doctor Caius, ‘Pray you let us not be laughing-stocks to other men’s humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will one way or other make you amends. I will knog your urinal about your knave’s cockscomb’ (3.1.85-9). The first sentence is clearly spoken aside to Dr Caius as Sir Hugh is imploring him not to fight; modern editions sometimes mark this as ‘*aside*’. The second sentence, beginning ‘I will knog your urinal...’ is spoken aloud, as Sir Hugh puts on a show of pugnacity; in modern editions, these lines are sometimes marked ‘*aloud*’ or similar. The First Folio and quartos do not distinguish between the ‘aside’ and ‘aloud’ parts, however, simply separating them with a colon (F1), full stop (Q1, 1602; Q2, 1619), or semicolon (Q3, 1630) after ‘amends’. Q1 and Q2 have the additional stage direction ‘*they offer to fight*’, where ‘offer’ refers to a stage-fight that is set up and then dismantled through language and through Sir Hugh’s fearful aspect and gestures.

Sir Hugh’s aside reminds us that his and Caius’ fight is both a staged experiment and an experimental staging of controlled violence. Andrew, Viola, and Sir Hugh’s fear of real violence coincides with, and reflects, the actor’s avoidance of real violence which would puncture the fictional world of the play. These characters’ search for ingenious solutions to the need not to get killed reflects the playwright’s need to seek ingenious solutions to the problem of depicting a death or wounding on stage without actually harming anyone. Again, dramatising a need for restraint is a key aspect of Shakespeare’s stagecraft; here he is interested in creating a fictional world that responds to the material conditions of performance. Characters’ motivations provide a reason for stage violence to be restrained, and as such the more pragmatic reason for restraint (actors must not actually harm or kill other actors) is

simultaneously masked and dramatised. Perhaps the most famous example of an opposite tendency is Act 5 of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (probably first performed 1587). Here, Hieronimo stages a play in which the stabbings are performed with real knives so that Bel-Imperia and her cast-mates truly die when the plot of Hieronimo's play calls for stage-deaths. Kyd's play is in many ways the inverse of Shakespeare's technique. Staging a play that is fictional, but which turns out to be real, Kyd's characters dramatise the anxiety that many early modern actors might have felt about the potential for being really wounded by stage fights. At the same time, the violence here is clearly fictional, the 'real' stabbings involve not the actors' deaths, but the death of the characters within the play. Shakespeare, however, as *Hamlet* and the examples discussed above show, almost constantly keeps the distinction between actors and characters blurred. The actors' motivations and concerns are justified and dramatised by the characters' actions. It becomes hard to tell whether it is the actors or the characters who are restraining violence, because in many ways it is both.

Violence in Hamlet as an experiment

Cognitive theories of 'simulation' can provide a new reading of how violence on the stage relates to reality. Overturning previous assumptions, cognitive theory suggests that stage violence is indistinguishable from real violence in several significant ways. This is because cognitively humans experience imagined or otherwise fictional violent scenarios as qualitatively similar to, though less intensely than, they experience 'real' ones. The cognitive studies by Anderson, Bushman, and Berkowitz cited above indicate that when it comes to witnessing violence, audiences have the same types of cognitive responses—increased fearful and/or aggressive thoughts and feelings—to staged violence as they do to real violence. Cognitive theory suggests that performing stage violence can induce the same feelings and thoughts of fear and aggression that real violence might in the actors' minds, too. There is currently no body of cognitive research into the differences between how actors experience real violence compared to how they experience staged violence. However, cognitive theorists suggest that, though the types of affect (increased aggressive thoughts, increased aggressive cognition) are the same, there is a difference in intensity in the affects caused in audience's minds by real and by fictional violence.

In a 2005 study into how monkeys' understandings of a person's intentions can change the way that they respond affectively to their gestures, Kiyoshi Nakahara and Yasushi Miyashita suggest that the human brain generally takes the context of violence into account.⁴⁰⁵ These authors, and Jean Decety and Claus Lamm, find that violence that is known to be fictional, or which (as in the case of a surgeon inflicting pain in order to cure someone) is done for what the perceiver believes is a 'good' reason, generates much less intense thoughts and feelings of fear and aggression than does violence that is random, unwarranted, or malicious.⁴⁰⁶ In Shakespeare's works, there is also a generic difference in violence; audiences can perceive differences, for instance, between comic violence (such as the beatings in *The Comedy of Errors*) which is generally designed to raise laughs, and tragic violence, such as when Romeo and Juliet kill themselves or Mercutio dies, his life lost unnecessarily. Though both real and simulated violence generate aggressive and/or fearful thoughts and feelings in the minds of people watching it, and may (as Nakahara and Miyashita's work suggests) cause them to feel that they are themselves experiencing the pain that they are observing, real violence does so with greater intensity.

Audiences know that the violence in the final duel in *Hamlet* is fictional and does not present any immediate physical danger either to the actors or to themselves, so it is reasonable to assume that audiences' cognitive responses to this duel are less intense than their responses would be to a real fight on the street. Nakahara and Miyashita link this to the appraisal of gesturers' intentions; if violent gestures are perceived to be done in service of a good intention, for a good reason (for instance, some audiences might think punishing a wrongdoer with violence constituted a good reason), or in a fictional context, they will generate less intense feelings of fear or aggression. However, Shakespeare takes especial care to elide the differences between actors' and characters' intentions in *Hamlet*'s final duel. We know this violence to be fictional, in part because we know that the actors do not have violent intentions towards each other. But, by blurring the boundary between actors' and characters'

⁴⁰⁵ Kiyoshi Nakahara and Yasushi Miyashita, "Understanding Intentions: Through the Looking Glass," *Science*, 308(5722) (2005), 644-5.

⁴⁰⁶ Jean Decety and Claus Lamm find that when we think violence is done for a good purpose, our 'aversive reaction' is much weaker, "Empathy versus Personal Distress: Recent Evidence from Social Neuroscience," in Jean Decety and William Ickes, eds. *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 203.

intentions, Shakespeare helps to make this question disappear. When we see obtrusively ‘stagy’ stage violence, where it is clear that the action is being theatrically performed, the gap between character and actor is at the forefront of our minds. However, in *Hamlet*’s final duel, Shakespeare hides this gap, and it is up to the cognitive theorist to make it visible again. As Mark Turner has suggested, theatre and literature are filled with ‘compressed’ or hidden meanings, which humans are ‘not built to see’ immediately. Turner urged cognitive theorists to focus on unpacking and explaining the meanings that authors or performances elide, enabling us to see them at last.⁴⁰⁷

This cognitive reading provides a new way of understanding audience’s appraisal of the link between the real and the fictional in drama. Previous literary theories of simulation on stage have been dominated by the Aristotelian notion that though they do not necessarily represent things that actually occurred, plays reflect reality because they represent the sort of things that could or should happen. In *Poetics*, Aristotle gives the example of the story of Mityls, who was murdered. Mityls’ statue later fell on his murderer, killing him. Aristotle notes that this probably did not happen in real life, but it is a good story to include in a drama because it is the sort of thing that should happen; Mityls seems thereby to be getting his just revenge.⁴⁰⁸ Aristotle argues that the terrible events of tragedies help viewers to manage their emotions, enabling them to experience the purging or purifying (‘catharsis’) of fearful or violent feelings. Tragedies call up ‘pity and fear’ in audiences’ minds so as to purge them in the final act.⁴⁰⁹ On this Aristotelian model, audiences then step out of the theatre freed from the troublesome emotions of pity and fear. Perhaps this was true for the time in which Aristotle wrote, when violence was only reported rather than enacted on stage, and audiences only had to deal with descriptions of violence rather than (as is much more affecting, and as was increasingly the case on the early modern stage) scenes of violence enacted before their eyes. Descriptions of violence are, cognitive theory suggests, easier for audiences to mentally let go of than embodied enactments of violence. As we have seen, Renaissance antitheatricalists worried later that drama had the opposite effect of causing uncontrolled emotions that

⁴⁰⁷ Mark Turner, “Literary and Artistic Compressions as a Laboratory for Cognitive Science,” Keynote Speech given at *Cognitive Futures in the Humanities*, Bangor, 2013.

⁴⁰⁸ Aristotle, “Poetics,” in *Works*, IX.

⁴⁰⁹ Aristotle, “Poetics,” VI.

persist after the play has finished, as in Gosson's suggestion, discussed in chapter 3, that a play might cause audiences to experience unbridled lust.

Writing towards the end of the twentieth century, A. D. Nuttall follows Aristotle's argument, contending that Shakespeare's mimesis occurs in the 'hypothetical mode'. By this, Nuttall means that, precisely as Aristotle said, a poet does not imitate the 'actual' but the 'probable'.⁴¹⁰ Adding to this Aristotelian foundation, Nuttall argues that the difference between the fictional world of the play and reality is crucial, as it enables audiences to learn from the consequences of the (often terrible) decisions made by fictional characters without anyone having been harmed in the real world.⁴¹¹ Kendall Walton's comprehensive and influential *Mimesis as Make-Believe* argues of literary representations or 'imaginings', 'most imaginings are in one way or another dependent on or aimed at or anchored in the real world', even when they are a move to escape reality, because 'real things...prompt imaginings; they are *objects* of imaginings; they generate fictional truths'.⁴¹² All of these theories share the assumption that everything that happens on stage is *pure* representation rather than reality. Cognitive theory suggests that this distinction has been overdrawn.

Cognitive theories of simulation help to explain how stage violence materialises as real cognitive and chemical experiences of aggression and fear in the minds and bodies of both the actors performing it and the audience members watching it. While the actor might not receive a physical wound, the violent gestures involved in stage violence produce similar (though perhaps less intense) affective and physiological responses. In "The Brain's Concepts" (2005), Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff advance the 'simulation hypothesis'. Providing neural evidence, they argue that when we imagine or plan to do something, our sensorimotor systems 'simulate' the actions we are thinking about in such a way that the boundary between imagining and doing blurs. Imagining punching someone triggers almost exactly the same sensorimotor neuron activity as actually punching them. As Gary Hesslow explains, 'When one imagines seeing something, some of the same part of the brain is

⁴¹⁰ A. D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (London: Methuen, 1983), 54-5, 169.

⁴¹¹ A. D. Nuttall, *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure?* (Oxford: Clarendon 1996), 17-18, 38, 77-8.

⁴¹² Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 21.

used as when one actually sees. When we imagine moving, some of the same part of the brain is used as when we actually move'.⁴¹³ Gallese and Lakoff argue, 'The understanding of concrete concepts—physical actions, physical objects, and so on—requires sensorimotor simulation', such that '[i]magining and doing use a shared neural substrate': 'imagination, like perceiving and doing, is *embodied*, that is, structured by our constant encounter and interaction with the world via our bodies and brains.'⁴¹⁴ In *Hamlet*, audiences and actors are encouraged to simulate violent touches through language: imagining a poisoned foil, 'a palpable hit', a 'gall[ing]' 'scratch'. However, simulation theory suggests that there is little difference – in terms of how they are qualitatively experienced by actors and audiences – in pretending to fight and truly fighting, or in watching a pretend fight and watching a real fight. Audience members' knowledge that the actors are not truly harmed restricts the more active types of responses that they would likely have to real violence witnessed on the street; for instance, audiences do not call an ambulance for Hamlet and Laertes, and they do not worry that these seemingly-violent men pose a danger to them as they sit in their seats. However, the research of theorists like Lakoff, Gallese, and Hesslow suggests that watching a violent gesture prompts an embodied response in the spectator and that this embodied response is similar (though differing in intensity) for both 'real' and 'fictional' violence. Stage combat is not a representation of reality that remains distinct from reality, rather in significant ways it is experienced as reality.

As we saw in chapter 2, prior to cognitive theory, the most famous and significant theoretical articulation of the idea that reality and fiction can become ontologically inseparable in acting was Stanislavsky's description of acting as an 'art of experiencing'. Stanislavsky argued that actors involved in fictional scenarios should draw on real experiences in creating their characters, and should also experience those scenarios as affectively real. John Astington argues that because Stanislavsky's description of acting is so broad and open, it is applicable to acting throughout the ages. Astington writes, 'Stanislavski's writings about acting...do not say anything particularly new about the art', but rather describe a broad relation

⁴¹³ Gary Hesslow, "The Current State of the Simulation Theory of Cognition," *Brain Research*, 1428 (2012.), 71-9.

⁴¹⁴ Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff, "The Brain's Concepts: the Role of the Sensory-Motor System in Conceptual Knowledge," *Cognitive Neuropsychology* 21(3) (2005), 456, 472.

between players' learned techniques and their personal emotions.⁴¹⁵ Because acting methods change over time, the particular ways in which the relation between technique and emotion manifests itself will be different for different time periods and material contexts. As we have seen, Tribble shows that modern rehearsal and performance techniques differ from those of the early modern era when rehearsal times were much shorter and different materials were used. In the present day, as Astington argues, whilst an actor might match their performance to video clips of a character they are performing, or deliberately employ Method Acting to get into their role, an early modern actor relied on other techniques and technologies: rhetorical training in the grammar school, plots, prompters, rehearsal spaces in a fellow actor's home, relying on other actors' memories in ensemble scenes, or (as Tribble explains) looking out for clues and hints from the older actors to whom they were apprenticed. Astington uses as an example the idea of 'study' which Hamlet references in his advice to the players, arguing that early modern ideas of studying for a part will have been determined by the types of spaces that were available to actors, cultural practices of rehearsal, and the technologies that existed at the time.⁴¹⁶

Literary critics should always be alert to the nuanced differences between acting in different time periods. However, as Astington suggests, early modern and modern discourses of performance share an emphasis on the relationship between deliberate, controlled, theatrical techniques and the real chemical effects and affects that help to make up a performance. Robert Gordon applies simulation theory to modern Shakespearean actors, contending that representing violent or aggressive characters involves 'hypothetico-practical reasoning' whereby the actor must shift their current 'norms and values' so that they can enter an aggressive mindset.⁴¹⁷ Gordon uses as an example the characters of Leander and Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who are angry with each other, perhaps to the point of wishing to kill each other. On Gordon's reading, though the framework is a deliberate, conscious, rational one (the actor *decides* to cultivate aggression), the aggression generated for

⁴¹⁵ John Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140.

⁴¹⁶ Astington, *Actors and Acting*, 140-3.

⁴¹⁷ Robert Gordon, "Sympathy, Simulation, and the Impartial Spectator," in *Mind and Morals: Essays on Ethics and Cognitive Science*, ed. L. May, Michael Friedman and A. Clark (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 727-742.

these ‘fictional’ motivations is the same (though, again, potentially less intense) as the aggression the actor would feel if they had really been confronted with a murderous love-rival. Though early modern writers on theatre debate about the moral consequences of plays, they tend (with a few exceptions) to share an assumption that real affects are involved in acting and watching plays.⁴¹⁸ For Sidney in *The Defense of Poesy* the power of poetry lies in its ability to generate noble thoughts and emotions, ‘as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy’.⁴¹⁹ Whilst for Gosson (as we saw in the previous chapter), plays set audience ‘on fire’ with lust, for Sidney, the best plays leave audiences ‘inflamed’ with a desire to do good deeds. Burning is a very common image in antitheatricalist discourse; theatre is imagined as an emotional conflagration that spreads from the actors to the audience. Prynne notes again and again in *Histriomastix* that people who are made to ‘burn’ with lust at plays will ultimately burn in hell.⁴²⁰ It is striking, then, that in *Hamlet’s* final duel, and in *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare uses the word ‘incensed’, which could mean both literally ‘afame’ and ‘burning with

⁴¹⁸One notable (partial) exception is Gosson. Contradicting his argument elsewhere that plays infect their audiences with evil thoughts and emotions like the poison of ‘Phalangion’, he also argues that plays’ perniciousness lies in their hollowness, in their inability to produce or transmit good or noble emotions. He contends that players ‘commit every sillable to memory’ of a play but do not profit from it; so how, he continues, can the audience be expected to do so as well, ‘when we have the sight of such lessons but an houre or two’? For Gosson, the effect on players and on audiences are deeply linked, ‘what credit, hath any good counsell in Players lippes, when it workes no amendment in themselues?’, *Playes Confuted*, G5^r, C7^{r-v}.

⁴¹⁹ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defense of Poesy)*, ed. R.W. Maslen, 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 99.

⁴²⁰ E.g. Prynne, *Histriomastix*, Ggg1^r, Prynne urges ‘Play-haunters’ to note the warning in Cornithians that burning in lust can end up in hell, ‘thou art verily burned with a greater flame’. He explains (O4^v-P1^r), ‘Stage-playes are so farre from working an abhorring, that they produce, not onely a loue and liking, but also animitation of those pernicious vices that are acted in them, which are commonly set forth with such flexanimous rhetoricall pleasing, (or rather poysoning) streines; with such patheticall, liuely and sublime expressions, with such insinuating gestures; with such variety of wit, of art and eloquence, that if ever men did hate them from their hearts before, they cannot affect, at least approve, or but lesse detest them now: they being prone enough by nature for to practise them, without any allectives to edge them on.’ There is a good summary of antitheatrical discourses, and discourses in defence of theatre in Astington, *Actors and Acting*, 12-36.

anger' or 'excited', to describe the duellers.⁴²¹ 'Part them, they are incensed', Claudius exclaims of Hamlet and Laertes (5.2.298), evoking contemporary discourses of the power of theatre to inflame actors and audiences with empathy, excitement, rage, or lust. As this moment in *Hamlet* is also a moment where actors' and characters' affects, thoughts, and intentions are blurred, it can also be argued that the word 'incensed' signals a moment where actors inflame their characters with violent thoughts and affects, and vice versa.

Early modern antitheatricalists and modern cognitive theorists share an interest in the ability of fictional scenarios to affect audiences; they also share metaphors of drugs and poisons to express the ways that plays work on audiences. However, unlike modern cognitive theorists, antitheatricalists do not focus on stage violence. Renaissance antitheatricalist texts tend to focus on plays prompting lustful thoughts and feelings; violence is a more specifically modern cognitive concern. When Renaissance antitheatricalists and defenders of plays mention the effect of stage violence on audiences, it is in passing, and usually with regard to the ability of plays to teach audiences to be obedient or disobedient to monarchs. Heywood, for instance, rebuffs the charge that theatrical representations of violent rebellions might inspire audiences to act in the same way (as in the famous example of Essex's followers watching *Richard II* with its deposition scene before the Essex rebellion). On the contrary, Heywood argues, plays help audiences to resist re-enacting scenes of insurrection, because they demonstrate the negative consequences of such violent acts,

Playes are writ with this ayme, and carried with this method, to teach the subjects obedience to their King, to shew the people the untimely ends of such as have moved tumults, commotions, and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as live in obedience.⁴²²

Rather than being (as Bushman and Anderson argue) cognitive 'scripts' that are designed to be re-enacted in real life, Heywood describes plays as a kind of counter-script, one that should be ignored or mentally torn up. By showing audiences the

⁴²¹ O.E.D., 'incensed', *adj.* 2.

⁴²² Heywood, *Apology*, F3^v.

calamities that result from rebellious violence, Heywood suggests that plays present audiences with scripts that they ought not to follow. By drawing attention to the wider context of acts of stage violence (violent rebellions end up badly for those involved in them), Heywood shows how a cognitive appraisal of the context of stage-violence (its consequences and the intentions behind it) influences how far the cognitive scripts it presents audiences with are embodied and re-enacted in ‘real’ life. Or so Heywood hopes. Theories that contextualising stage violence can lessen its effect on audiences serve to qualify, and frame, the idea that watching violent acts on stage creates an embodied response in audiences. If onstage violence is depicted as having an undesirable consequence, this theory suggests, this will ultimately propel audiences more towards non-violence than towards violence in their real lives.

If early modern texts like Heywood’s can suggest modifications to cognitive theories of stage violence, cognitive theory in its turn brings a new slant to early modern notions of simulation, acting, and representation. Cognitive theory marks a significant shift in the idea of ‘simulation’ from meaning an unnatural deception to meaning a real, natural, and useful part of all action. Thus, cognitive readings of *Hamlet* provide a new way of interpreting the play that was not readily available in the Renaissance. In the early modern era, ‘simulation’ and the verb and adjective ‘simulate’ referred pejoratively to a sinful deception. Thomas Blount’s 1661 dictionary defines, ‘Simulation (simulatio) a feigning, a counterfeiting, a making of resemblance, a dissembling, a colour or pretence.’⁴²³ Examining all entries for ‘simulate’ and ‘simulation’ on Early English Books Online shows that the majority of uses of this word were in a religious context, and described a pernicious resemblance to reality, ‘put from you all simulacion or faining’ warns Catholic theologian Roger Edgeworth in 1557.⁴²⁴ In 1551, the reformed Protestant John Bale (previously a Catholic monk) described the antichrist’s ‘symulate holynesse’.⁴²⁵ However, in cognitive theory, simulation is intrinsic to thought and constitutes a cognitive process that is shared between imagined and real scenarios. Simulated violence specifically has been used to train people to deal with real violent scenarios, illustrating how in the present day ‘simulation’ can be desirable rather than sinful. From 1947, ‘to simulate’

⁴²³ Thomas Blount, *Glossographia*, (London: Thomas Newcombe, 1661), Nn8^v.

⁴²⁴ Roger Edgeworth, *Sermons Very Fruitfull, Godly, and Learned*, (London: Robert Caly, 1557), Oo3^f.

⁴²⁵ John Bale, *The First Two Partes of the Actes or Vnchast Examples of the Englysh Votaryes* (London: for John Bale, 1551), K6^f.

specifically meant to create a realistic situation that was designed to train people for a particular real life event.⁴²⁶ Military flight simulators, for instance, aim to recreate as far as possible the chemical, visual, cognitive effects of real life combat, thus providing a ‘safe environment’ where trainees can learn to respond to violent situations, creating cognitive scripts for use in real combat.⁴²⁷ The modern notion of simulation as something usefully linking fiction and reality helps to bring a fresh perspective on early modern texts, which were created at a time when simulation tended to be presented as something to avoid as it distanced a person from reality.

Cognitive theory also provides a new way of approaching theatrical simulation. Several early modern antitheatricalists make the common connection between playacting and religious hypocrisy, drawing on the fact that ‘hypocrite’ comes from the Greek *ὑποκριτή*, ‘actor on stage’. Though ‘hypocrite’ could be a neutral term for an actor, it is clear that these opponents of the theatre were using the word in a pejorative sense. In *The Hypocrite Discovered and Cured* (1644), Samuel Torshell explains, ‘the name of *Hypocrite* is drawne from them that come disguised upon the Stage, their faces and habits so coloured and altered, that they sometimes appeare to be men, sometimes women, sometimes old, sometimes young, &c’.⁴²⁸ The puritan Richard Baxter denounces pretended piety as ‘simulate, histrionick, scenical, and hypocritical’.⁴²⁹ Here, the word ‘simulate’ (‘deceptive’) slips quickly towards the word ‘hypocritical’. There is a kind of domino-effect of words relating simulation to acting and deception; ‘histrionic’ comes from Latin *histrionicus*, ‘theatrical’; ‘scenical’ means like a theatre scene. By the time we get to ‘hypocritical’, the link has been made, via ‘theatrical’ and ‘scenical’, between deception and the theatre. Stage-plays became a specific example of a more general quality of (usually pernicious) pretence, as Claudio explains in *The Dumb Divine Speaker*, ‘an hypocrite...is euery dissembler, that representeth any other condition then he is indeede. Heereupon, stage players, and all kind of Comedians were tearmed hypocrites, and the action of Comedians called hypocrisie and dissimulation’.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ O.E.D. ‘simulate’, v 3.

⁴²⁷ ‘The Virtual Reality Society, Virtual Reality in the Military’, accessed December 29 2014, <http://www.vrs.org.uk/virtual-reality-military/index.html>.

⁴²⁸ Samuel Torshell, *The Hypocrite Discovered and Cured* (London: G.M., 1644), B2^v.

⁴²⁹ Richard Baxter, *Certain Disputations of Right to Sacraments* (London: J.W., 1658), I3^v.

⁴³⁰ Giacomo Affinati, *The Dumb Diuine Speaker*, trans. A.M. (London: R. Bradock, 1605), M5^{f-v}.

The word ‘simulation’ is used only once in Shakespeare’s works, as Malvolio ponders the riddle or ‘simulation’ in a love letter, not realising that the letter is a forgery and thus a ‘simulation’ in more senses than one: ‘*M, O, A, I*. This simulation is not as the former’ (*Twelfth Night* 2.5.120).

However, throughout his works, and not least in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare is interested in how reality and pretence can collide. Hamlet notes that his melancholic symptoms (wearing black, looking downcast) could just as easily be pretended as a true representation of his state of mind. Tellingly, he uses the theatrical word ‘play’ to express this, ‘they are actions that a man might play’ (1.2.84). Critics have tended to read Hamlet’s lines as emphasising the hollowness and vanity of acting, for instance in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox* Peter Platt glosses, ‘All representation – even in the theatre of the world – is a lie...Hamlet begins the play with an antitheatricalist perspective and thus links the “actions that a man might play” to show and seeming’. Platt argues that Hamlet progresses from this distaste with falsehood to an acknowledgement of the ‘power and pathos in the gap between self and role’.⁴³¹ However, cognitive theory suggests a reading of *Hamlet* that emphasises the *lack* of a gap between character and actor. Cognitive theory has prompted an awareness of the fact that in the duel scene, Shakespeare is minimising the gap between what characters and actors have to do. Rhonda Blair, influenced by Joseph LeDoux’s argument in *Synaptic Self* that what a person ‘is’ is constituted by what their synapses are doing and have done in the past, uses cognitive theory to articulate this argument. Applying LeDoux’s ideas to actors on the stage, Blair argues,

Questions of what belongs to the “character” and what to the “actor”, what is “real” and what is not, become moot. There is no character in any objective sense; there is only the process and behaviour of particular individual in a particular context. What the actor is doing becomes simply—and complexly—that: what the *actor* is *doing*[.]⁴³²

⁴³¹ Peter Platt, *Shakespeare and the Culture of Paradox* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 154-5.

⁴³² Rhonda Blair, “Image and Action: Cognitive Neuroscience and Actor-Training,” in *Performance and Cognition*, ed. Bruce McConachie and Elizabeth Hart (London: Routledge, 2006), 183.

As we have seen, in the duel scene in *Hamlet*, tricks like the poisoned foils and the emphasis on light touches enable the actors and the characters to sidestep the usual problem in stage violence whereby there is a gap between the bloody, energetic violence their characters are engaged in and the actors' need not to actually harm each other. Moreover, cognitive studies have shown that even simulated violence results in real violent cognition and violent affect. In *Hamlet*, 'Questions of what belongs to the "character" and what to the "actor", what is "real" and what is not, become moot.'

Hamlet centres very much on the blurring of the real and the pretended. The travelling player cries real tears and puts on an entirely realistic performance, even though his speech is 'a fiction...a dream of passion' (2.2.552), for example, whilst there is constant debate (both among characters in the play and literary critics) about whether Hamlet is really mad or just pretending. The stage violence in *Hamlet* is, as we have seen, a nuanced and sometimes indistinguishable blend of the real and the fictional. As Heywood and Nakahara and Miyashita suggest, the context of the violence in *Hamlet* is crucial to understanding how it affects audiences. As Edelman showed, Shakespeare was notable not just for presenting spectacular violent acts on stage, but for infusing them with 'high drama', weaving them in to a fictional plot, framing them with speeches and dialogue. Dessen argues that verisimilitude is not 'the only yardstick' for understanding early modern stage fighting. Whilst Elizabethan audiences did indeed expect to see stage fighting that was life-like, Dessen stresses the need to relate stage violence not only to real life practices but to the plot and world of the play.⁴³³ *Hamlet*'s plot provides a context for understanding the violence of the final duel, and thus for understanding how it might act on audiences: does it present them with a script for them to follow, with a scene that invites embodied re-enactments?

Foakes argues that a mark of Shakespeare's mature style was that he became interested, particularly in *Hamlet*, in 'violence that has no motive, or is inadequately motivated, violence that may appear to arise spontaneously, and to be essentially meaningless, until meaning is attributed to it after the event'.⁴³⁴ This is potentially true of other violent acts in *Hamlet*, many of which do seem to be spontaneous,

⁴³³ Alan Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 105-6, 113.

⁴³⁴ Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence*, 16.

random, ‘inadequately motivated’ acts. When he kills Polonius, Hamlet simply stabs at an arras, unsure of who is behind it; his intention is focused on Gertrude rather than on a conscious attempt to kill Polonius. Foakes describes Hamlet’s murder of Polonius as, ‘a lashing out, a spontaneous act that may in some way release pent-up feelings and frustrations associated with his uncle, his mother, Ophelia, and the general state of Denmark, but it remains in the end inexplicable’.⁴³⁵ Gertrude seems to add weight to Foakes’ reading, as she describes Hamlet killing Polonius as ‘a rash and bloody deed’ (3.4.27), suggesting a ‘lashing out’ rather than a calculating murder. Later, Horatio sums up the whole play as a set of ‘accidental judgements, casual slaughters’ (5.2.382), and Foakes describes a pre-rational, motiveless, inexplicable human urge to violence in similar terms, as a kind of ‘lashing out’, arguing, ‘*Hamlet*... is, in the end, not about revenge so much as about the human impulse to violence’.⁴³⁶

Foakes’ arguments can be challenged by the fact that, Polonius’ death aside, most violent acts in *Hamlet* do have a clear motivation. Claudius kills Old Hamlet because he wants his crown (and, perhaps from the very start he wants to marry Gertrude too); Hamlet kills Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to stop them killing him first; Laertes kills Hamlet to avenge Polonius, and Hamlet kills Claudius to avenge his father. However, this chapter has suggested another way to argue against Foakes’ statement that violence in *Hamlet* is an expression of a motiveless, primal, unstoppable, inexplicable urge. Foakes’ argument rests on the assumption that the motive for onstage violence in *Hamlet* is located in characters’ intentions. Because characters’ intentions are not always clear, he argues, there is no recognisable motivation for their violent acts. However, this chapter has suggested that the motivation for the final duel in *Hamlet*, and specifically for the way that this duel is manifested through light touches, rests not in the characters’ intentions but in a complex mix of characters’ and actor’s needs and motivations. Looking at both the characters’ and the actors’ motivations suggests that the specifics of *Hamlet*’s final duel are shaped and driven by the actors’ need not to physically wound each other whilst simultaneously providing a powerful, realistic, affecting spectacle for the audience. This need is fictionalised using the device of the poisoned foils and the

⁴³⁵ Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence*, 126.

⁴³⁶ Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence*, 107.

distractions provided by Claudius, Osric, and Gertrude, giving the characters a lack of motivation to inflict substantial wounds on each other.

Hamlet acknowledges that this violence has had a physiological effect on the other characters watching on stage and, implicitly on the theatre audience; both ‘audiences’ ‘tremble and look pale’,

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, Death,
Is strict in his arrest), O, I could tell you—
But let it be. (5.2.394-8)

Hamlet offers to speak to the audience, perhaps to give some insight into what these violent ‘act[s]’ have taught him, but he stops himself. Unlike in *King Lear*, where a rhyming couplet sums up the lessons learned from the play’s violence (‘The weight of this sad time we must obey,| Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say’ (5.3.324-5)) no explicit lessons are laid out for the audience in *Hamlet*. Horatio promises to ‘truly deliver’ the facts of what has happened, but there is no talk of a lesson learned (other than Horatio’s suggestion that the violence was ‘unnatural’ and largely accidental or mistaken) (5.2.381, 384). This is very noteworthy given that *Hamlet* is, this chapter suggests, deeply concerned with the effects that violence can have on an audience, and especially in this final scene. *Hamlet* (and Hamlet) conducts an experiment into stage violence, but Shakespeare markedly fails to write up any conclusions. By promising to ‘tell’ and ‘truly deliver’ and then pointedly failing to keep these promises, Hamlet and Horatio draw attention to the lack of lessons learned from the violence. The previous chapter showed that meaning pours in to those moments where Shakespearean characters refuse to speak when speech is expected of them, whether by audiences or by other characters. This final chapter has suggested that the meaning of violent acts in *Hamlet* is created by audiences, characters, and actors; actors’ and characters’ intentions dissolve into each other at the moment of climactic violence, producing chemical, physiological, cognitive effects in their audiences. Hamlet and Horatio’s arrested speeches and broken promises emphasise the gap between characters’ and audiences’ knowledge, suggesting that it is up to

audiences and literary critics to interpret this moment and fill it with meaning. This is precisely what this chapter has attempted to do.

Conclusions

Cognitive theories suggest that far from being pure representation, violence on stage can, ontologically, be cognitively almost indistinguishable from reality (though there is likely to be a difference in intensity between actors' and audience's experiences of real and fictional violence). The fictional scenarios deployed in cognitive studies of violence often share with theatre in general, and *Hamlet* in particular, the aim of producing particular thoughts and affects in people's minds. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare works particularly hard to dissolve the boundary between the real and the fictional, using the opportunities and mechanisms of theatrical performance to create a final scene of violence that is perceived as realistic.

Cognitive theorists' use of scripted scenarios and acting-out to produce and analyse aggression in humans suggests that the boundary between reality and fiction in 'real life' is often just as collapsible as it is in the theatre. As Berkowitz's study showed, people can become aggressive and annoyed even when the person who is annoying them is just pretending to be an irritating character called Kirk. Acting's ability to produce real emotions in both audiences and actors is, as we have seen, a concern that early modern writers on the theatre share with cognitive theorists. In this chapter, examining violence in *Hamlet* and the effect it has on the minds of the people in the theatre has been one way of exploring this shared concern. Our understanding of how violence works on stage can be transferred over into the cognitive context: in both cases, performed violence (even when it is not particularly gory, but especially when it looks realistic) can be a contagious force that shapes the thoughts and emotions of both actors and onlookers.

The dissolved boundary between the real and the fictional has been one of the wider concerns of the thesis. Those moments when performances of Shakespeare's plays draw to a close are also moments when this boundary most often becomes tested and dissolved. This is the case not just in *Hamlet* but in plays like *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It*. From actors kneeling ambiguously half in and half out of their role to fictional provisions being made for actors' need to restrain violent actions on stage, this thesis has shown that there is often something crucial about the moment when,

just before the curtain falls, the world of the play begins to seep decisively back into the 'real' world.

Conclusion

Hamlet's description of his behaviour, 'these are actions that a man might play', expresses an essential early modern interest in the frequently wavering and dissolving boundaries between playacting and reality, and between gesture and thought. This thesis's examination of five key Shakespearean (non-)gestures has provided a rich resource for both cognitive theory and Shakespeare studies in three main ways. Firstly, an emphasis on embodiment on stage has uncovered readings of plays by Shakespeare that were readily accessible to early modern audiences and readers, but have been somewhat lost to us in the intervening years. For example, early modern audiences could hardly have failed to experience Brutus' kneeling gesture as a momentous act, thanks to the strong associations kneeling had in the early modern era with performative ceremonies of feudal obedience, religious humility, and expressions of deference to a monarch or noble. Cognitive theories of kinaesthetics have recaptured crucial gestures and moments like these for modern readers, critics, and audiences.

Secondly, this thesis has suggested new ways of doing cognitive theory. Allowing Shakespeare to speak back to cognitive theory has enabled us to understand gesture in a way that is definitively Shakespearean, rather than simply attempting to fit Shakespeare's plays into the Procrustean bed of existing definitions of gesture, cognitive or otherwise. The thesis shows that, modifying the influential definitions of gesture formulated by Goldin-Meadow and McNeill (which have helped shape the work of scholars such as Cook), significant gestures in Shakespeare's plays very often involve skin-contact and have practical purposes as well as symbolic meanings. For example, the gesture of taking hands was a tactile, pragmatic social action in the Renaissance, but it also embedded the gesturers in an abundant network of symbolic meanings involving truth, the heart, deference, love, and unity of mind. Moreover, this thesis has shown that though they involve the body in movement, Shakespearean gestures are often fundamentally comprised by restraint and cutting short. This thesis's cognitive analysis of Shakespeare has also shown how theatrical, how Shakespearean, cognitive theory already was. By dramatising the act of experimentation, Shakespeare exposes its theatrical metaphors and methods: acting, testing, performing, smelling, scripts. Though cognitive theory needed to be modified

at points to become a better tool for studying the Shakespearean text, it is in many ways an ideal theoretical tool for studying Shakespeare's plays because cognitive theorists tend to share Shakespeare's concern with the limits of gesture, its effect on viewers, its ability to shape the mind, and its relationship with language.

Thirdly, by paying attention to the conditions of performance in Shakespeare's plays, this thesis has teased out the nuanced ways in which cognitive studies of gesture in a theatrical performance differ from cognitive studies done in the laboratory. Above all, the thesis has shown that it is certainly not as simple as saying that laboratory studies examine 'real life cognition' and cognitive studies examine 'pretended representations of fictional characters cognising things'. On the one hand, the thesis has brought to cognitive theory an awareness of irony that is often lacking in scientific articles. Shakespeare's plays are constantly alert to the fact that gestures can be performed with a conscious, often Machiavellian, control over their meaning, that they can be performed to deceive both other people and the gesturer themselves.

However, this thesis has also shown that laboratory studies of cognition and Shakespeare's plays share traits with each other that they do not share with real life. In particular, the creation of a closed, controlled environment and a concentration on exploring specific isolated gestures, performed in such a way as to produce specific affects in both gesturers and those observing them is fundamental to both cognitive 'laboratory' studies and Shakespeare's plays. These elements that make laboratory studies and Shakespeare's plays similar to each other are also precisely those elements that make them differ from the messier, less controlled, less focused cognitive atmosphere of 'real life' outside of the lab, away from the theatre. In many ways, then, cognitive theory is more naturally applied to Shakespearean drama than to real life. This is evidenced, as chapters 3 and 5 showed, by the way that cognitive theory uses theatrical metaphors of 'scripts' and drugs or poisons and theatrical techniques of performance and observation. Ideas of cognition as a script, or of knowledge as something olfactory show how cognitive theorists use the same metaphors that have (as writers like Tanya Pollard show) historically been applied to the theatre: theatre as script, theatre as poison, bad habit, or hallucinogen. And in general cognitive theory's concern with gesture, language, and emotion means that it is examining the very tools of theatre.

The key finding that was common to all of the chapters in this thesis is that in Shakespeare's plays the boundaries between 'theatre' and 'reality' are highly blurred.

Shakespeare is a playwright who takes care to make visible the concerns and conditions of performance. For example, as we saw in chapter 5, *Hamlet* includes plot devices that cater for, and make obvious, at the same time that they smoothly mask, the actors' need not to really harm each other during stage fights. Shakespeare also plays with the parallels between performance and 'real life'. He draws suggestive comparisons between actors kneeling deferentially to a monarch at the end of a play and the characters kneeling murderously and ironically to a monarch within the play, he translates a staged kiss into an offer of a real kiss between character and audience members, and he shows a handshake dramatically and bloodily abrogated in *Titus Andronicus* only to have Puck offer audiences his hand across the play/real world divide in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare seemed to have been very much aware of the fact that characters and actors, performance and reality, are not ontologically separable in his plays. He tests the limits of this distinction, he makes the boundary between representation and reality visible only to cross it with a pointed theatricality.

This thesis' use of cognitive theory has generated a new way of thinking about the fiction-reality boundary in Shakespeare's plays. By drawing on new research into olfaction, cognitive underload, and phenomenological ideas of skin contact it has shown that the 'fictional' scenarios of Shakespeare's plays are completely permeated with real cognitive effects. The actors' cognitive and physiological processes as they gesture, smell, sweat, and make skin contact with each other coalesce or contrast, to varying extents, with the performed cognitive and physiological processes of the characters they are playing. The thesis has shown that cognitive theory provides a new vocabulary for addressing the long-standing critical idea of a play as a fiction grounded in reality. It also provides a scientific evidential basis for discussing the collapsing boundary between fiction and reality

We have seen that Shakespeare was very aware of this collapsing boundary, and exploited, tested, and thematised it wherever he could, creating some of the most powerful moments in his plays in the process. Cognitive theory shows us new areas for research into these moments that draw out themes that are already present in Shakespeare's plays but which have sometimes been sidelined in favour of critical discussions of language and rhetoric rather than gesture. Chapter 2 demonstrated that concentrating on the act of kneeling in *Julius Caesar* provides a new reading of the play, bringing to the fore a network of up-down vocabulary that was always there in

the play-text. The chapter on kissing showed that moving away from the usual critical tendency to emphasise ideas of looking, blindness, and ‘ocular proof’ in *Othello* revealed a train of imagery relating to olfaction as a barometer of morality and a key site for interrogating the relationship between the mental and the physical.

This thesis has shown that there is potential for further study into Shakespearean gestures. The thesis has provided a picture of Shakespearean gesture which can now potentially be extended to include more gestures, and more early modern play-texts both by Shakespeare and other authors. Though the thesis only examined five plays in detail, the database suggests that there is room for a more comprehensive study of Shakespearean gesture. Sitting down, eating, and dropping objects are all types of gestures that, though less common, appear at significant moments in Shakespeare’s plays. When Lucetta drops Proteus’ love letter to Julia in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* 1.2, for instance, it initiates a tense, comedic dialogue in which Julia attempts to both suppress and express her urge to pick it up and read it.

Branching out into a detailed examination of other playwrights was beyond the scope of a thesis that focuses on Shakespeare’s plays. However, comparing the findings in this thesis to works by other playwrights will help to see how different writers dealt with the relationship between gesture, language, and thought that this thesis has spelled out.

Finally, the thesis suggests that the decisions made by directors are very important to any cognitive study of Shakespeare’s plays. Looking at actors’ and directors’ decisions has been particularly useful for the discussions of performance in this thesis, as these types of decision making and interpretation are legible, important cognitive process at the heart of a play in production. John Lutterbie, Rhonda Blair, and similar scholars are already showing how fruitful it is when cognitive theorists are embedded in theatre companies, whether as actors, directors, or advisors.⁴³⁷ Blair occupies all three roles, and as her discussion of cognitive underload, invoked in chapter 4, shows, her cognitive-theoretical work usefully both informs and is informed by her practice on stage. This thesis suggests, then, that there are

⁴³⁷ See for instance Lutterbie, *Toward a General Theory of Acting*, Blair, “Image and Action,” and Rhonda Blair, *The Actor, Image and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience* (London: Routledge, 2008).

increasingly important relationships to be had between theatre practitioners and cognitive theorists.

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