Article

Melting flesh, living words

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Abstract This essay argues that the *Book of Common Prayer* offered new ways to think about the flesh in Reformation England. Whereas the medieval liturgy emphasized the physical vitalism of Christ's body and blood, the Anglican liturgy defined 'flesh' in the context of an ecclesiastical community characterized by linguistic transparency and textual communion. To chart this movement from fleshly presence to spiritual mystery, I show how the rubrics, ornamentations and texts of both the medieval Mass books and the reformed *Book of Common Prayer* iterated contrasting conceptions of the flesh that emerged from traditional and reformed sacramental theologies. I conclude by showing how secular institutions, namely the anatomy theater and the early modern stage, pressured such a reformation of the flesh by making the physical materiality of flesh, blood and wounds the focus of their spectacles.

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Hamlet's Molten Flesh

'O that this too too solid [sullied] flesh would melt,' muses Hamlet, overtaken by his father's untimely death and his mother's hasty marriage.¹ Hamlet's vision of corporeal dissolution proves ironic, situated as it is within a play so preoccupied with matters of the flesh. What does Hamlet's plea suggest about the ritual and theoretical functions of the flesh in Reformation England? And how do they intersect with, brush up against and rearticulate their medieval precursors?

In addition to the familiar suggestions of mortality and suicide, Hamlet's image of dissolving flesh calls to mind reformist objections to the material excesses of Catholicism including transubstantiation, relics, Eucharistic adoration and the

1 Both Q1 and Q2 have *sallied* (as in 'assailed'); F has *solid*; and *sullied* was posited by Dover Wilson as a misreading of *sallied*. As Arden 2nd Series editor

- Harold Jenkins maintains, 'the possibility of an intended play on both words cannot be ruled out' (Shakespeare, [1599–1601] 1982, 437).
- 2 See Stephen Greenblatt (2002) and Katherine Eggert (2013) on flesh in purgatorial and alchemical contexts, respectively.

use of sacred images.² Reformers longed for the day when flesh, which Catholicism rendered too 'solid' in its overwrought materiality and too 'sullied' in its provocations to idolatry, would melt. For them, 'fleshly' was a term of derision for the gross materialism of the medieval church. William Tyndale, for example, called priests 'fleshly papists' whose power of transubstantiation approximated blasphemy: 'Never ceass thei dayly to crucifye and offer him up agen which was once for ever & al offered' (Tyndale, 1533, sig. Avr). For Tyndale, the Mass repeated the physical torture of Christ's passion and in doing so was tantamount to ritual murder. Likewise, the polemicist and dramatist John Bale lauded King Johan as a monarch-martyr who would bring England 'from ceremonyes dede to the lyvynges wurde of the Lorde' (Bale, c.1538, I.1119).

Tyndale and Bale regarded the flesh as a vacuous and inauthentic distraction from the true realities of Christ and the church, which they understood in spiritual terms. They resisted a devotional culture of affective piety that emphasized the physicality of Christ's real presence evident as much in the Eucharistic sacrament as in the cults of images and relics it inspired. As Caroline Walker Bynum has argued, 'Whether one considers Lollard attacks on images, scholastic debate over the ontological status of blood relics, or the polemics surrounding pilgrimages to sites of moving statues and bleeding bread, holy matter as threat and opportunity is a theme that runs through praxis and theory in the late Middle Ages' (Bynum, 2011, 217). If reformers saw flesh as threatening, Catholics saw it as salutary and thus promoted a devotional system predicated on transubstantiation, Eucharistic miracles and the practices of penitents, stigmatics and mystics.

Citing the important role played by the body in negotiating religious change, Michael O'Connell asserts that 'the common denominator on both sides of the Reformation divide is the human body, the body as depicted in art and the body as employed on stage' (O'Connell, 2000, 36). In addition to art and theater, liturgy is another mode of ritual performance that witnessed the disparate conceptualizations of flesh across the Reformation, a point evident in Bruce Holsinger's claim that 'only through the liturgy can sacrament enter material culture' (Holsinger, 2007, 297). Because liturgical ritual and ceremony necessitate physical embodiment, to reform ceremony was, to some extent, to reform the body. The *Book of Common Prayer* (hereafter *BCP*) engineered such a dual reformation, for in articulating new protocols for public worship borne out of new theologies of sacrament and grace, it introduced to England what Pierre Bourdieu terms new 'liturgical conditions.' For Bourdieu, these are 'the set of prescriptions which govern the *form* of the public manifestation of authority, like ceremonial etiquette, the code of gestures and officially prescribed rites' (Bourdieu, 1999, 113, italics in the original). Political as much as pastoral, the 'liturgical conditions' put forth by the *BCP* not only authored a new liturgy but also redefined the place of fleshly materialism within it. Recognizing Christ's presence in the mutual participation of a sacramental community engaged in vernacular prayer, the *BCP* made its liturgical conditions contingent on the

spiritual, rather than the physical, expression of the sacraments. The replacement of the altar with a plain communion table, the translation of Latin prayers and rubrics into English, the reformulation of transubstantiation as a spiritualist theology of communion, and the revision of ritual ceremonies all expressed the deep transformation of the liturgy's doctrine and politics and all had pervasive implications for the fate of the flesh in Reformation England.

The sacrament of the altar, referred to as 'Eucharist' by Catholics and 'Communion' or the 'Supper of the Lord' by reformers, was the most salient site at which these reformations of the flesh would unfold. While it preserved the extraordinary identity of the sacrament, the *BCP* understood the body of Christ and its liturgical expressions to be spiritual rather than carnal and it regarded the comprehensible texts of the prayers, rather than the ineffable textures of the body, as the impetus for liturgical performance. This is not to say that the reformed liturgy failed to engage the sensory habitations of its congregants, for it also relied on the verbal and physical participation of the laity. In this sense, the *BCP* enacted what Ramie Targoff sees as a 'shift of emphasis from a visual to an auditory register' (Targoff, 2001, 22). What in a medieval framework was shrouded in transcendent mystery was, under reformed liturgical conditions, translated into comprehensible knowledge. Communion was an encounter bolstered by spoken, dialogic prayer rather than silent, private murmurings; the grace it offered was received through the recipient's faith in the spiritual, as opposed to material, presence of Christ.

The *BCP*'s revision of sacrament also shaped new understandings of ecclesiology. If the medieval Mass foregrounded the fleshly body of Christ, the reformed liturgy placed equal emphasis on the collective body of the laity. Rather than manifesting Christ's substantial body at the altar, the priest appeals God to make those gathered in prayer into 'very membres incorporate in thy Misticall bodye, which is the blessed company of all faythfull people' (Cummings, 2011, 36). This prayer implies that *neither* the flesh, bones and blood of Christ nor the sensory engagements of the worshippers constituted the focal point of reformed worship. Rather, the Cranmerian liturgy points toward a more abstract body – the 'blessed company of all faythfull people' – whose heavenly blessings are bestowed through communal worship on earth.

The *BCP* strictly differentiates human ritual and divine reality and from this distinction produces its doctrine of the real presence. Cranmer's vision of the 'Misticall bodye' does not differ much from Richard Hooker's definition of Eucharistic presence, for both underscore the fact that sacramental grace is conferred within the worshipper: 'The reall presence of Christs most blessed body and bloud is not therefore to bee sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthie receiver of the Sacrament' (Hooker, 1597, 5.58). While the *BCP* did not fully disengage flesh from matter, it did see Christ's body as a mystical reality that would only be debased if relegated to the domain of earthly flesh and blood. Whereas the Catholic Mass attempted to make Christ's heavenly body accessible

through physical matter, the Cranmerian liturgy saw both real presence and ritual performance in terms of the spiritual dimensions of Christ's body manifested through sacramental communion and ecclesiastical community. By making textual legibility, doctrinal transparency and social participation its common denominators, the reformed liturgy replaced oblation, substantive transformation and visual devotion with sacramental remembrance, verbal and auricular participation, and ecclesiastical community.

In what follows, I will focus on the principal texts of each liturgy, namely the medieval missal and the *Book of Common Prayer*, and I will chart some ways in which their formal strategies advance their liturgical conditions and, by extension, their different theologies of the flesh. On the one hand, medieval missals were used only by the priest and as such were specialized, arcane manuals that contained a number of ritual rubrics, those for transubstantiation chief among them. These books also exhibited a *mise-en-page* defined by visual ornamentation, vivid color, and elaborate images and illuminations, all of which elicited a sensory response. On the other hand, the *BCP* displayed a lack of ornament that indicates the very shift from flesh to spirit that I have discussed above. These formal contrasts articulate and authorize various relations between the body of Christ and the body of man at particular moments within a broad period of theological and liturgical change.

Initial Iconographies

Perhaps the most obvious features of medieval missals are their illuminated initials – colorful, decorated letters that circumscribe a scriptural scene or liturgical iconography. While rich in visual splendor, these characters are also functional, for they introduce the prayers and set the tone for various liturgical feasts to which they correspond. What is more, they draw on both the visual properties of the image and the textual properties of the word to do so. They bear out what Gail McMurray Gibson calls 'the devotional celebration of the text itself,' which insists on 'the reality of the sacred letter' (Gibson, 1989, 13–14). More than markers of liturgical enthusiasm, however, these initials articulate the important place of the flesh in the medieval liturgical imagination. By fusing the textual properties of the letter, the sensory domains of the image and the spiritual powers of specialized ritual scripts, they bespeak the missal's overall textual and ritual logic, which I term an 'incarnational grammar.'

In an 'incarnational grammar' the word makes the flesh both in the sacramental context of the Eucharist and in the textual context of the material book. The entire missal proceeds according to this grammar, for it uses textual and visual patterns to make images of Christ's flesh into actual letters and words within the text. These illuminated words and letters, themselves penned by the

living hands of scribes, coordinate textual letter and visual image. What our postmodern eyes see as ‘text’ – as language, as letters and characters – was more properly understood in relation to flesh, for the missal engaged a form of representation on the page that was embodied in the liturgical performance of the Mass. The words of the missal are efficacious, for they participate in creating, or confecting, Christ’s body and blood. They also present images of Christ’s physical body in living color and thus activate the fleshly imagination and its sensory response.³ Within an incarnational grammar, images do not merely complement the word but they constitute it; conversely, the illuminated initials, far from mere linguistic units, showcase the fleshly materialism so important to the medieval liturgy. They put the flesh on display as the impetus for the text and the liturgy it scripts.

The workings of an incarnational grammar are particularly evident in British Library Add MS 59855, the fifteenth-century *Gower Missal of Sarum Use* (c. 1440–1450).⁴ Most striking of all the missal’s illustrations is the historiated *T* that begins the *Te igitur*, the first of 32 prayers that comprise the Canon of the Mass, the part of the liturgy during which transubstantiation was said to occur (Hughes, 1982).⁵ Because this initial marks a climactic moment in the Mass, it is not surprising that it displays a Eucharistic iconography, whether the familiar Mass of St. Gregory, a crucifix, or a priest elevating the host.⁶ Figure 1 shows the initial as it appears in the *Gower Missal*, and it is evident that *Gower* amplifies these Eucharistic themes with a depiction of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, the paradigmatic Old Testament analogue for the Eucharistic sacrament and the ritual offerings of the Mass.

Both image and letter, the illuminated *T* enacts a typological relation between the old covenant of Abraham and the new covenant of Christ, both of which make physical flesh central to the act of sacrifice. The image in the missal corresponds directly to the priest’s liturgical action. As he reads the text, the priest would also gaze upon the image and would thus see the sacrifices of Isaac and Christ as inherently conjoined; just as Isaac’s body lay before Abraham in the image, so the host, which will be transformed into the body of Christ, lay before the priest on the altar. Thus *Gower*’s incarnational grammar uses the illuminated letter to link fleshly sacrifices old and new in both visual and ritual registers. The initial reiterates in word and image the Mass’s claim to be a true oblation rather than a ritual memorial.⁷

The inherent dramaturgy at play here should also call to mind the fact that the story of Isaac’s sacrifice was a critical component of the medieval cycle plays. In the Brome *Abraham and Isaac*, for example, Isaac says to Abraham, ‘Yea, father, but my heart beginnith to quake / To see that sharp sword in your hand,’ to which Abraham responds, ‘I am full sorry thy blood for to spill, / But truly my child, I may not choose’ (Cawley, 1974, 55–56). And in the Towneley cycle, Isaac questions the sacrificial piercing of his flesh saying, ‘Must my flesh be rent? / What have I done ... / And must I be slain?’ (Rose, 1961, 112–113). Both dramas

3 C.M. Woolgar reminds us that the ink used for many of these illuminations was made from live sources including vegetables, minerals, insects and grains, which intensifies the vitalism at play in these liturgical manuscripts (Woolgar, 2006).

4 Until the Council of Trent, which streamlined local variants, missals differed according to local custom, though the prayers of the Canon remained the same (Hughes, 1982). *Sarum Use* was one of the more common and was used in England through the reign of Henry VIII.

5 Space shall restrict my focus to missals, but other texts like *horae*, or books of hours, fit into this iconography. As Eamon Duffy has noted, the *horae* were ‘very much part of the religion of the image, and

the pictures were often at least as important to their users as the texts they accompanied' (Duffy, 2006, 11).

- 6 For a more detailed discussion of the historiated initial of the *Te igitur* see my essay, 'The Last Temptation of Faustus' (Zysk, 2013).

Historiated initials display an iconographic scene that produces a narrative, which distinguishes them from *floriated* initials, which are ornamental but non-narrative.

- 7 The image also anticipates the prayers that follow, in which the priest alludes to Abraham's sacrifice when he asks God to accept the bread and wine 'as thou were graciously pleased to accept the gifts of thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of Abraham, our patriarch in faith.' The Latin text from the *Gower Missal* reads: 'accēpta habere dignātus es mūnera pūeri tui iusti Abel, et sacrificium

Figure 1: The Sacrifice of Isaac. Historiated 'T' from *The Gower Missal of Sarum Use* [London, British Library, Add MS 59855, f. 128r.] (c. 1440–1450). © Reproduced by permission of The British Library Board.

emphasize the physicality of the flesh pertinent to biblical conceptions of sacrifice, and both trope on the iconographies of Christ's passion, which stressed the physicality of the flesh in everything from Christ's sweating blood in Gethsemane to his own plea to let the chalice of his suffering pass to crucifixion.

The *Te igitur* is far from the only instance of an incarnational grammar in the *missale*. Many of the collects, prefaces, secrets and blessings begin with an illumination somehow tied to a scene of embodiment. For example, an image of the *mandatum*, or washing of the feet, often introduces the liturgy of Maundy Thursday, while an image of the Virgin's coronation might introduce the liturgy for the Assumption. Figure 2 shows an historiated A from the Corpus Christi liturgy in the late fifteenth-century *Liber Missarium*. The rounded A circumscribes an image of two angels elevating a gold monstrance complemented by the caption '*De venerabili sacramento*'.⁸ The monstrance was a vessel that displayed the consecrated host during Corpus Christi processions and other devotions (Rubin, 1992). The initial not only brings this emblem of Eucharistic ritual into the foreground of the Corpus Christi liturgy but also becomes something of a monstrance itself, for it puts an image of the host on display and elevates it to the

Figure 2: Angels elevating monstrance. Historiated 'A' from the *Liber Missarium* [London, British Library, MS Egerton 1145, f. 16v.] (c. late 15th c.). © Reproduced by permission of The British Library Board.

patriarchæ nostri
Abrahæ, et quod
tibi obtulit
summus sacerdos
tuus Melchisedech
sanctum
sacrificium,
immaculatam
hóstiam' (*Gower
Missal of Sarum
Use*, c. 1440–
1450, f. 128v.).

- 8 This initial is an example of an iconographic trend, for a similarly illustrated A, displaying two angels elevating a host and chalice, also introduces the liturgy for Corpus Christi in the *Gower Missal* discussed above.

Figure 3: The Circumcision of Christ. Historiated 'P' from the *Sherborne Missal* [London, British Library, Add MS 74236, f. 47r.] (c. 1399–1407). © Reproduced by permission of The British Library Board.

reader's devotional gaze. If this illumination depicts Christ's sacramental body, Figure 3 shows a historiated *P* that makes Christ's physical body its central image. This initial begins the liturgy for the Feast of the Circumcision, and its incarnational grammar is all but obvious: a feast that commemorates a most

fleshly event in the life of Christ, and one that prefigures both the fleshly suffering of his passion and the fleshly sacrifice of the Mass, begins with a visual display of Christ's nakedness, which registers the body of Christ in patently human terms.

The physicality of the flesh evident in these texts and in the performances of the medieval Mass constitutes a point of transformation in the wake of the English Reformation. Michael O'Connell suggests that 'the real center of the altered religious aesthetic that separates the later half of the sixteenth century from a time forty or fifty years earlier is the *physical, visual* portrayal of the sacred' (O'Connell, 2000, 27, his italics). The medieval missal used the textual letter to articulate these physical and visual manifestations of the sacred. By contrast, the *Book of Common Prayer* shut down this incarnational grammar and emphasized instead the purity of the word unsullied by the fleshly provocations of images. Gone were the illuminated iconographies of scripture and sacrament. Gone too were the mysteries of Christ's transubstantiated body, the fleshly trappings of relics and images, and the various forms of corporal mortification that were seen as expressions of penitence. The Cranmerian liturgy emphasized, in text and praxis, a vernacular church and sacramental community held together by linguistic, social and national bonds. This liturgy emerged out of the textual domain, its introduction to England marked first and foremost by the publication of a new liturgical book. On the page and within its liturgical rites, the *BCP* redefined the flesh as spiritual more than carnal, and the liturgy as verbal more than corporeal.

Cranmer's Living Words

In *Corpus*, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests, 'If *hoc est enim corpus meum* says anything, it's beyond speech' (Nancy, 2008, 7). The capacity of Christ's flesh to exceed speech was the *sine qua non* of medieval Eucharistic theology and devotion, which suggested that the body of Christ had exceptional semiotic properties and that it transcended the laws of nature, in what Katherine Eggert has called the 'ridiculous physics' of transubstantiation (Eggert, 2013, 48). However contested were its actual 'reformations' to theology and practice, the first publication of the *BCP* in 1549 attempted to make the body of Christ linguistically and liturgically comprehensible.⁹ This comprehensibility was made possible chiefly by putting the book itself into the hands of the laity, who could now read along with the liturgical texts and rubrics. As Elizabeth Williamson explains, affluent worshippers would own their copies and bring them to church (Williamson, 2009). More importantly, the book itself stood as a reminder of new devotional focus, for 'the members of the new church were no longer to pay attention to the sounds and smells of the liturgy, but to the arrangement of letters on a page' (Williamson, 2009, 375). All of this resulted in what Timothy Rosendale terms 'a figurative, interpretive, *readerly* conception of the sacrament' (Rosendale, 2007, 107).

9 On the complicated theological positions of the early editions, especially 1549 and 1552, see Rosendale (2007, esp. ch. 2).

The *BCP*'s emphasis on text, interpretation and reading remained a key facet of its textual and liturgical program, even as the prayerbook itself underwent significant change from 1549 to 1662. The *BCP*'s most recent editor, Brian Cummings, suggests that the *BCP* moves rather consistently toward a textual, rather than physical, mode of worship, noting that by 1552 the *BCP* 'is undeniably more verbal and less visual and in this way catches a new aesthetic of religious devotion' (Cummings, 2011, xxxiii). This 'new aesthetic' is activated by the *BCP*'s spare layout, which contrasts with the missal's incarnational grammar. The most obvious difference is that the *BCP* is a printed book and not an illuminated manuscript, which places it at some remove from the manual act of scribal composition. In addition, black type replaces vivid color and a mostly unadorned page replaces the scriptural and liturgical iconographies depicted in the missal. Consequently, illustrated initials no longer announce visually the content of the liturgy. As the connection between material text and material flesh breaks down, we also see a new sacramental theology based on the spiritual reality of Christ's presence accessed through a shared language scripted in a common book. At nearly every juncture, the reformed liturgy reflects 'a religion of the word' as distinguished from 'a religion of material things' (Cummings, 2011, xxiv).

There is an irony at play in all of this, for by making the text of the liturgy more concrete, the *BCP* renders the body of Christ more abstract. As the word of God becomes more accessible, the flesh of God becomes more ineffable. As Christ's real presence is reoriented away from gaping wounds and bleeding flesh and toward the realm of the divine, Christ's body recedes from sensory perception. These parallel movements – from the fleshly to the spiritual and from perceptibility to abstraction – are apparent throughout the prayer book, but are especially evident in an intriguing, but oft overlooked passage: the Black Rubric, which was added in 1552, removed in 1559, and then reinstated (however controversially) in 1662. The rubric targeted the congregant's bodily gestures, particularly the acts of kneeling and gazing, in order to deflate the physical adoration accorded the Eucharist. It reads, in part:

Whereas it is ordeyned in the booke of common prayer, in the administration of the Lordes Supper, that the Communicants knelyng shoulde receive the holye Communion: whiche thyng beyng well mente, for a sygnificacion of the humble and gratefull acknowledging of the benefites of Chryst, geven unto the woorthye receiver, and to avoyde the prophanacion and dysordre, which about the holy Communion myght els ensue: Lest yet the same kneelyng myght be thought or taken otherwise, we dooe declare that it is not ment therby, that any adoracion is doone or ought to bee doone, eyther unto the Sacramentall bread or wyne there bodily received, or unto anye realle and essentiall presence there beeyng of Christes natural fleshe and bloude. (Cummings, 2011, 667)

The Black Rubric places both the body of Christ and the body of the laity within new theological and semiotic fields. Kneeling, for example, no longer avers the 'real and essential presence' of 'Christes naturall fleshe and bloude' but instead becomes a disembodied 'signification' of internal humility as well as an acknowledgment that the divine body of Christ transcends tangible apprehension. The rubric reforms both the theology of Christ's body in the sacrament and the meaning of the layperson's gestures, and both reformations witness the movement from the physical to the spiritual. Kneeling can no longer signify adoration, lest it be associated with the 'prophanacion and dysordre' of the Eucharistic gazing that defined the medieval liturgy (Duffy, 1992). As Richard Hooker put it, 'in kneeling there hath been supersticion' such that 'sitting agreeth better to the action of a supper' (Hooker, 1597, 5.68).

It should come as no surprise, then, that the Black Rubric concludes with a forceful reiteration of the reformed Eucharistic theology, itself defined according to a Calvinistic distinction between spiritual and carnal eating:

For as concernynge the Sacramentall bread and wyne, they remayne styll in theyr very natural substaunces, and therefore may not be adored, for that were Idolatrye to be abhorred of all faythfull christians. And as concernynge the naturall body and blood of our saviour Christ, they are in heaven and not here. For it is agaynst the trueth of Christes true natural bodye, to be in moe places then in one, at one tyme. (Cummings, 2011, 667)

The rubric directly repudiates the doctrine of transubstantiation, for the agency of Christ's flesh now inheres in its spiritual efficacy and not in its substantial reality. Christ's 'true natural bodye' is abstracted such that it is properly relocated outside earthly time and space, 'in heaven and not here.' In this respect, it reiterates the Eucharistic theology of 1549, in which the following directive punctuated the consecratory prayers: 'These words before rehersed are to be said, turning still to the Altar, without any elevacion, or shewing the Sacrament to the people' (Cummings, 2011, 31). Removed from the visual plane of adoration and the ontological category of physical matter, Christ's sacramental body was redefined less as flesh and more as a sacramental sign 'for us to fede upon spiritually, to our endless comfort and consolation' (Cummings, 2011, 23). The text of the communion service distinguishes physical flesh from spiritual food, for in the sacrament 'we spiritually eate the fleshe of Christ, and drinke his bloud' and in doing so 'we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we bee made one with Christ, and Christ with us' (Cummings, 2011, 22). Cranmer's chiasmus links the ecclesial body of the laity to the heavenly body of Christ not so much to equate them as to imply that sacramental grace is conferred through the profession of individual belief. This is where the reformed 'communion' differs from the traditional 'Eucharist': instead of seeing Christ's body changed through a miraculous transformation of substance, it regards the sacrament as spiritual food that transforms the recipient in faith rather than in flesh.

Flesh, Resurrected

The *BCP*'s attempt to reform the fleshly imagination of early modern England did not go uncontested. In addition to the pronounced energies of recusancy and some retention of traditional belief within the church, many secular institutions reactivated the fleshly performances and incarnational grammars of the medieval past, or at least saw in them a rich aesthetic resource. James Simpson and Brian Cummings have made such trans-temporal reactivations the subject of a heuristic called the 'hydraulics of culture.' 'If one powerful aspect of a culture is depressed,' they argue, 'it will resurface later, one way or another, in disguised form, as the return of the repressed' (Cummings and Simpson, 2011, 6). In the context of the present essay, then, if the *BCP* attempted to depress the fleshly materialism of traditional Eucharistic devotion, the energies of the flesh (both liturgical and aesthetic) could resurface in other venues, post-Reformation.

Where might such resurfacing occur? For one, public dissection, itself highly ritualized in the anatomy theater, was a popular spectacle of fleshly materialism that provoked curiosity about the body's internal and external contours (Sawday, 1996; Nunn, 2005). As Andrea Carlino has shown, foundational texts like Andreas Vesalius's *De humanis corporis fabrica* (1543) constituted 'a watershed in the history of modern anatomy', its memorable title page an 'iconic manifesto of the new anatomy' (Carlino, 1999a, 44). Contrary to his precursors, Vesalius insisted that anatomy students have greater access to cadavers, and this need for fleshly contact was reiterated at the level of the book itself, which displayed the corpse more prominently than did earlier texts. Moreover, at the same time that the *BCP* diminished textual ornamentation and imagistic iconography, anatomy books like Vesalius's used 'splendid and detailed illustrations' to detail a new pedagogy of the body (Carlino, 1999a, 39). Like the *missale*'s iconographic initials, for example, the *Fabrica* boasted depictions of dissected flesh, corpses, surgeons and mythological scenes meant to 'convey information intended to complement the text' and to 'show gestures, behavior, and aspects of the anatomical discipline' (Carlino, 1999a, 216). As time went on, such books would even be bound in human skin and others, known as 'flap books,' would create an interactive reading experience in which layers of paper, when lifted up, revealed vivid illustrations of the body's internal contours (Carlino, 1999b).¹⁰

In addition to these anatomical demonstrations, the early modern public theater insisted on the physical vitality of the flesh not only through the obvious relation of the actor's living body to his fictional persona, but also through vivid spectacles of torture, corporeal violence and ritual wounding. Though it did not overtly endorse or refute particular theologies and liturgies, English drama provides one example through which to consider how the flesh of a medieval devotional imagination was reactivated in the postmedieval world, sometimes in astonishingly productive ways. In doing so, the theater can be said to complicate

10 One such example is a flesh-bound copy of the fourth edition of Vesalius's *Fabrica*, dated 1568 and published in Venice, which is housed at the John Hay Library, Brown University,

Providence, RI. The anthropodermic binding of this edition is not original to the 1568 edition but instead dates to the nineteenth century. I am grateful to Holly Snyder and Richard Noble at the John Hay Library for their assistance with this edition.

the reformation of the flesh in the sacramental rituals of the Anglican Church. The stage witnessed the appeal of the physical body even as new liturgical conditions stressed a more widespread de-corporealization of liturgy and sacrament.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is one such drama that makes fleshly materialism the center of its theatrical and political spectacles. In this play, the flesh is doubly coded, situated within the equally myopic settings of pagan Rome and Reformation England. Shakespeare's play, like any play, does not purport to stage Christ's body as a real presence or a Christological analogue. Nonetheless, Caesar's body is staged as a metaphysical entity, as a body murdered in public at the hands of a traitor, as a body whose gasches and wounds were ritually eulogized and exposed to public veneration, and as a body whose flesh captivated the gaze of its viewers. These aesthetic choices recall the fleshly imagination of medieval devotion and demonstrate how the ritual and incarnational grammars of Christ's body could inform what has conventionally been regarded as a pagan drama situated within a post-Reformation theater. Consider Marc Antony's own anatomization of Caesar's corpse, which crosses the planes of dissection and devotion, corporeality and textuality:

For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech
To stir men's blood. I only speak right on:
I tell you that which you yourselves do know,
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

(Shakespeare, [1599] 1998, 3.2.214–223)

Despite his admission of rhetorical lack, Antony figures Caesar's body at the intersection of word and wound, a tension played out repeatedly in the liturgical reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Antony sees Caesar's body as speaking flesh, as a body that can be reanimated through the power of utterance, with his words – his tongue – functioning primarily to regenerate the cold corpse of the slain emperor. To 'put a tongue / In every wound of Caesar' makes word dependent on wound, linguistic comprehension somehow contingent upon fleshly vitality. The body of Caesar – however Roman, however pagan, however far removed from Eucharistic theology – is displayed to the public in terms of an incarnational grammar, with the word pointing always to the speaking wound. Antony's emphasis on the visual perception of Caesar's flesh reminds us of other acts of ritual gazing such as those involved in the anatomical spectacle of

dissection and the liturgical spectacles of relic worship, visual devotion and Eucharistic gazing (Duffy, 1992; Stanbury, 2007).

If the Cranmerian liturgy sought to abstract the flesh and thereby displace the physical vitalism of Christ's body onto a verbal community of common prayer, the theater – both dramatic and anatomical – may well emerge as an institution in tension with this shift. It may also call to mind the problems of historical contingency that problematize cultural reformations like those initiated by the Book of Common Prayer. After all, by the 1630's, opponents of Archbishop Laud's Catholicizing tendencies and critics of the Stuarts' Catholic toleration alike charged Anglicanism and the *BCP* with being too papist. The liturgical reforms that a century prior claimed to repress the fleshly preoccupations of the Middle Ages would now be assimilated to them. The body of Caesar, the flesh of Hamlet, and even the *BCP* itself remind us that even when flesh might be said to melt in one historical moment, it can manifest itself later in another form. Whether we are dealing with pagan Rome or medieval Denmark, Shakespeare's theater delights in anachronism and may be said to inherently resist the crippling strains of periodization that seek a static, rather than hydraulic, model of cultural difference. As both cultural institution and literary practice, the theater becomes a site in which Christ's sacramental flesh might be resurrected, albeit in a different register, as a pagan emperor's wounded corpse, or might even spring up in one of Denmark's graveyards as a skull that had a tongue in it and could sing once.

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