

Shakespeare Reading Paul: Heavenly Fraud in *The Winter's Tale*

A couple of days before the conference in Jerusalem for which this paper was written, I woke up before dawn to avoid the crowds and went down to the Old City to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Under a dark and cavernous rotunda, before the shrine covering the tomb from which Jesus is said to have been resurrected, priests in splendid vestments swung censers, sang prayers and placed communion wafers in the mouths of the few worshippers in attendance. During the performance of that ceremony I sensed the tangible power of their faith. Though I didn't share it, I was alerted to the gravity of the subject of my upcoming talk.

Hermione's apparently miraculous return from death to life during the last scene of *The Winter's Tale* is widely understood by critics as Shakespeare's adaptation of, or midrash upon, biblical accounts of the resurrection of Jesus.¹ The question I wish to consider here is how did the playwright intend his audience to respond to the implications of that extended allusion.

Belief in the truth of the Bible's reports of the resurrection has been required of Christians of all denominations since the formulation of the Nicene Creed in the fourth century CE.

We believe...[Jesus] was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and on the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father...²

Despite minor discrepancies, the four gospel versions produce a generally consistent account. Two or three women, all named 'Mary', come to Jesus' burial place and discover that his dead body has vanished. They encounter one or two angels who announce that he has risen from the dead and who tell them to inform his disciples that he will meet them later in Galilee.³

In none of the accounts is Jesus' actual passage from death to life directly witnessed, but all of them emphasize the wonder produced by his disappearance and the splendor of the annunciatory angels. His return to life is reported first hand in stories of his subsequent reappearance to the disciples in Galilee, stories which detail the disciples' initial incredulity, Jesus' demonstration of his bodily presence, and their subsequent belief.

In I Corinthians 15:3-8, written a generation earlier than the Gospels, Paul states that he has heard reports of the resurrection and of Jesus' appearances to the disciples and 'five hundred brothers and sisters' and that he experienced Jesus' presence as a blinding light and a voice which urged him to become an apostle.⁴

Notwithstanding Scriptural reticence, the drama of the moment of Jesus' emergence from the tomb has often been represented in art, music, and theatre, for example in the painting above the door to the shrine in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in Matthias Grunewald's Isenheim Altarpiece, in Bach's Resurrexit chorus from the B-Minor Mass, and in the Easter Plays of the Chester Cycle.⁵

Numerous parallels link the *The Winter's Tale*'s dramatization of the statue's coming to life at the tomb of Hermione to the Biblical narrative.⁶ These include:

- The numinous setting of Chapel and Cave

- The witnesses' doubt, fear and reverence as they enter the setting⁷
- The reassurance offered to them⁸
- The evidence of the bodily presence of the person returned from the dead that elicits wonder and assent⁹
- The ancient prophecy manifesting divine providence that validates the event¹⁰

The theme of doubt vs. faith is central to Gospel narratives. Jesus' miracles are intended to strengthen the faith of his followers during his life and in the future. Doubts are raised in order to be allayed. In Matthew, the resurrection account is immediately followed by the exposure of a fraudulent attempt by the Jewish priests to discredit it.¹¹ The apostles call the women's first report of Jesus' resurrection 'a feigned thing'.¹² 'Doubting Thomas' demands tactile proof of the resurrection, which Jesus later supplies.¹³

Paul is the Biblical writer who enunciated the doctrine of 'Justification by Faith':

Now if it be preached, that Christ is risen from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? For if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain (1Corinthians 15:12-17).

Shakespeare named the character who presents the miracle of resurrection in *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina. Just before it unfolds, she declares, 'It is required/ You do awake your faith'(V. 3. 94-5).

Audiences of *The Winter's Tale* would expect the concluding scene to parallel the Biblical progression from doubt to faith. However, this is not how it unfolds.

Paulina calls on the statue to come alive:

'Tis time; descend Come,
I'll fill your grave up: stir, nay, come ...away,
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
Dear life redeems you (V. 3. 125-29).¹⁴

The moment of the statue's quickening is announced by Camillo—'she embraces him'-- and Polixenes -- 'she hangs around his neck'—and culminates in Leontes' passionate outburst—'O she's warm'.

As in the Bible, this emotional climax is immediately succeeded by questions. 'If this be magic', says Leontes, weighing the appearance of the miraculous against the possibility of a trick, 'let it be lawful as eating', raising a secondary concern about forbidden witchcraft.¹⁵ Camillo expresses further doubt and need for confirmation: 'If she pertain to life, let her speak too'. His sentence is completed by Polixenes with yet more skeptical questioning: '[and] make't manifest where she has lived,/Or how stolen from the dead'.

Paulina counters their doubts with several persuasive efforts. She presents tentative preliminary evidence—‘but it appears she lives, though she speak not’—followed by a pause, intensifying the suspense—‘Mark a little while’. Then she instructs Perdita to kneel and pray for her mother’s blessing. Finally, announcing the prophecy’s fulfillment, she commands Hermione to complete the miracle: ‘Turn, good lady;/ Our Perdita is found’ (V. 3.151).

Hermione’s first words call for a baptismal theophany from the supernatural powers that presumably have brought her back to life

You gods, look down
And from your sacred vials pour your graces
Upon my daughter's head! (V. 3. 153-55)

She confirms the belief that she was dead until this moment by indicating she has not heard the news spread throughout Sicilia:

Tell me, mine own.
Where hast thou been preserved? where lived? how found
Thy father's court? (V. 3.155-58)

But before her daughter can answer, Hermione discloses that the miracle of her own resurrection was a hoax:

For thou shalt hear that I,
Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved
Myself to see the issue (V. 3. 158-61).¹⁶

Paulina immediately diverts attention away from this revelation with an invitation to celebration

There's time enough for that;
Lest they desire upon this push to trouble
Your joys with like relation (V. 3. 162-164).

along with a complaint about her widowhood that drives the final moments of the play to comic conclusion.

Does *The Winter’s Tale’s* ending cast doubt upon the Bible’s resurrection narrative and on Paul’s authority? Critical studies analyzing the scene don’t address this question directly.

According to Julia Reinhard Lupton, the presentation of a fake miracle as happy ending can be understood as exposing idolatrous elements of Catholic ritual and reviving them in the afterlife of secular theatre.¹⁷ Huston Diehl sees the scene's 'dialectic of wonder and skepticism' as a defense of a specifically Protestant, self-consciously illusionary theatre against both Catholic superstition and Puritan anti-theatricalist attack. She emphasizes a distinction between Paulina's holy fraud and the criminal fraud of Autolycus, the play's rogue character who cheats simple peasants by selling them ballads about preposterous marvels.¹⁸ Eric Mallin iconoclastically maintains that Autolycus 'deploys just such tricks and feints as Hermione and Paulina pretend to put to spiritual ends'. But he does not suggest that Shakespeare might have applied this kind of skepticism to the Bible itself.¹⁹

That possibility is at least tentatively supported by notorious utterances attributed to Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare's friend and putative co-author. According to admittedly questionable written testimony by the playwright, Thomas Kyd:

First it was his custom ...in table talk or otherwise to iest at the devine scriptures gybe at princ[es], & stryve in argum[en]t to frustrate & confute what hath byn spoke or wrytt by prophets & such holie men...² That for me to wryte a poem of S^t Paule's conversion as I was determined he said wold be as if I shold go wryte a book of fast & loose [i.e.about con men], esteeming Paul a Jugler.²⁰

As an author who wrote scripts requiring actors to read between the lines in order to discern the subtext, it's likely that Shakespeare scrutinized biblical passages imaginatively and critically--as evidenced, for instance, in a soliloquy by Richard II:

...thoughts of things divine.../...do set the faith itself/Against the faith as thus: 'Come little ones',/
And then again,/'It is as hard to come as for a camel/
To thread the postern of a small needle's eye'
(V. 5. 12-17).

In *Richard III*, the villain delights in dissembling reverence for Scripture, while letting the audience in on his treachery.²¹

Shakespeare takes a special interest in the writings of Paul, though his name is mentioned only in blasphemous oaths uttered by Richard.²² In *A Midsummernight's Dream*, Nick Bottom's wondrous recollection of being transformed into an ass and having sex with the divine Titania parodies Paul's description of his mystical union with God.²³

The Merchant of Venice's plot, setting the villainous Jew, Shylock, against virtuous Christians, parallels Paul's revision of the Hebrew Bible in his Epistle to the Romans, setting Old Testament law against New Testament sacrifice, faith and grace.²⁴ However Shakespeare undermines the claim of New Testament supersession by exposing Paul's devious use of allusion to make his arguments and by creating sympathy for the several "old" fathers betrayed by their young. And he undermines the play's happy outcome by displaying the hypocrisy and cynicism of Bassanio, Portia and Lorenzo.²⁵

In *The Winter's Tale*, naming the outspoken feminist protagonist, Paulina, mocks the misogynistic comments directed toward her early in the play by King Leontes, comments paraphrased from Paul's condemnation of female authority and public expression.²⁶

In addition to making ironic allusions to Paul, Shakespeare's adaptations of Biblical stories emphasize the widespread use of trickery by authoritative figures, including God. Jesus says to his disciples: 'Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and innocent as doves'. (Mt. 10:16) Paul explains the story of the incarnation of Jesus as a disguise: 'Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made like unto men, and was found in shape as a man' (Phil. 2:6-7).

This kind of trickery was observed and sanctioned by early modern writers. Erasmus, for example, noting Paul's tendency 'to hide one's real feelings for a time and simplify, soften, or even defer the truth in the hopes of gaining souls', said "'it is no blameworthy 'deceit' [focus]; it is rather a sort of holy cunning [sancta quadam vafricie].'"²⁷ And in *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Richard Hooker stated that 'the Church under hand, through a kind of heavenly fraud...taketh therewith the souls of men as with certain baits'.²⁸ Systematic use of deceit was consistent with theories of monarchy espoused by King James, whose private motto was 'He who does not know how to dissimulate does not know how to reign'.²⁹

Such dissimulation occurs when Shakespeare's Henry V disguises himself as a common soldier, Henry Le Roi in order to gauge the spirit of his troops and to encourage them on the night before battle. In *The Tempest* godlike Prospero remains in hiding for most of the play as he interrogates, disciplines and educates his rebellious subjects and family members. In *Measure for Measure*, 'there is so great a fever/on goodness that the dissolution of it must cure it' (III. 2. 223-24). So in order to restore a corrupt social order, Duke Vincentio applies 'craft against vice'(III. 2 .277).

The most sensational of Shakespeare's heavenly frauds is faux resurrection. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, it is employed by Friar Francis to reveal that the apparent death of Hero attributable to the violent jealousy of her fiancé Claudio was a ruse to bring on repentance and rekindle love: 'One Hero died defiled, but I do live,/And surely as I live, I am a maid' (V. 4. 66).

In *Measure for Measure*, the Duke facilitates the transformation of Isabella from a self-righteous vengeful virgin to a tolerant, forgiving woman willing to accept his proposal of marriage by staging the false resurrection of her brother, Claudio. In an aside, he informs the audience that '... I will keep her ignorant of her good,/To make her heavenly comforts of despair,/When it is least expected' (IV. 3. 118-19).

King Lear's Act IV, scene 6, includes an emotionally wrenching incident of false resurrection. Masquerading as the mad Tom o Bedlam, Edgar follows the request of the blinded Gloucester to lead him to Dover where the old man wishes to end his life by jumping off a cliff. The son deceives his father into believing he is on the extreme verge with vivid description of the environs. Gloucester drops to the ground, whereupon Edgar, adopting a new dialect and persona, tells him of the miracle he has just witnessed: the old man's return to life after his mortal plunge and uses it as evidence of the gods' benevolence. As a result of this deception, Gloucester abandons his suicidal resolve.³⁰

As in *The Winter's Tale*, along with the characters, the audience is subjected to the deception, in this case by means of the theatrical convention of imaginative participation in scene-setting with clues provided by verbal descriptions. Shakespeare makes us imagine Gloucester's fall and death as 'real', reimagine it as prelude to a miracle, and then discover it as the young man's trick.

Intrigued by the possible theological implications of Shakespeare's staging of false miracles, 23 years ago, with the permission of Church authorities, I directed a performance of *The Winter's Tale* by students at California Polytechnic University inside Mission San Luis Obispo. The first three acts were presented in an austere colonial Spanish meeting hall, the fourth act's pastoral was set in the Mission gardens, and the final chapel scene brought players and audience into the sanctuary built in 1779, the final four minutes of which can be accessed [here](#),

In the course of this short sequence, one can observe that the audience's response goes from gasping in wonder at the funerary statue of Hermione coming to life before their eyes to genial laughter at the proposed marriage of Paulina and Camillo to participatory rejoicing in the theatrical ritual with enthusiastic applause. Producing the play in this sacred space led me to appreciate Shakespeare's daring in raising the suggestion of heavenly fraud while sympathetically recreating the central mystery of Christian faith.

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¹ For Shakespeare and midrash, see Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 14-16 and Alison Jack, *SCM Core Text: The Bible and Literature*, (London: SCM Press, 2012), pp. 35 ff. For 'adaptation,' see Randall Martin: '...the adaptive mode, as modern theorists have shown, is intertextually dialogic...aims for an "open book" that resists interpretive closure and reconceives source-use and reception as starting-points for a process of interdependent re-creation,' cited from 'Paulina, Corinthian Women, and the Revisioning Pauline Ideology in *The Winter's Tale*,' in *Shakespeare, the Bible and the Form of the Book: Contested Scriptures*, ed. by Travis DeCook and Alan Galey, (Abington-on-Thames: Routledge, 2012), p. 58. Numerous critics have discussed *The Winter's Tale*'s allusion to the resurrection. S.L. Bethell claims the play 'stag[es] a vivid, emotionally engaging narrative of the restoration of Hermione, her coming back as from the dead, ...[as] a carefully prepared symbol of spiritual and actual resurrection... .' *The Winter's Tale, A Study*, (London: Folcroft Press, 1947), p. 103. G. Wilson Knight declares that Shakespeare's 'final plays celebrate the victory and glory, the resurrection and renewal, that in the Christian story and in its reflection in the Christian ritual succeed

the sacrifice.’ *Shakespearean Production*, vol. 6, (Abington-on-Thames: Routledge, 1936, reprinted 2003), p.158. Marjorie Garber asserts that ‘this makes the scene a visibly Christian one.’ *Shakespeare After All*, (New York: Random House, 2005), p. 850. Stephen Orgel states, ‘There is certainly something in this...the very fact that Paulina claims to have kept the statue not in her gallery but in a chapel makes the religious association explicit. It is also difficult to believe that the emphasis...on the tenets...of Pauline Christianity—does not account for Paulina’s name.’ *The Winter’s Tale*, ‘Introduction,’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 59-60.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicene_Creed>[accessed June 26, 2017]

³ Luke reports that Peter follows the women to the tomb and sees no Angel but only the empty grave and strips of linen.

⁴ All Biblical citations are to the Geneva translation.

<<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2015>> [accessed June 26, 2017]

⁵ Grunewald:< <https://www.wikiart.org/en/matthias-grunewald/the-resurrection-of-christ-right-wing-of-the-isenheim-altarpiece-1516>>; Bach< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDNKBo9TKWA>>; Chester:<http://chestermysteryplays.com/history/history/texts_iframe.html > [accessed June 26, 2017]

⁶ All citations to Shakespearean texts refer to: Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, Rebecca Niles, eds., *Shakespeare's Plays, Sonnets and Poems* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d.), [accessed June 25, 2017]. www.folgerdigitaltexts.org.

7

I am ashamed: does not the stone rebuke me
For being more stone than it? O royal piece,
There's magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjured to remembrance...

...

O royal piece,
There's magic in thy majesty, which has
My evils conjured to remembrance and
From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,
Standing like stone with thee (V. 3. 42-48).

echoes the Marys and the disciples in the presence of the angels and of the returning Jesus

The women were shocked, So they went into the¹sepulcher, and saw a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a long white robe: and they were sore troubled (Mark16:5).

And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth... . But they were abashed and afraid, supposing that they had seen a spirit...(Luke 24:5-37).

⁸ ‘Start not; her actions shall be holy as
You hear my spell is lawful ...’ (V. 3. 130-131)

echoes

‘But he said unto them, Be not so troubled’ (Mark 16:6).

9

Then he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do-doubts arise in your hearts? Behold mine hands and my feet: for it is I myself: handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them *his* hands and feet. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them *his* hands and feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb,⁴³ And he took it, and did eat before them (Luke 24:38-43).

10

Hermione is chaste;
Polixenes blameless; Camillo a true subject; Leontes
a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten;
and the king shall live without an heir, if that
which is lost be not found. ... (III. 2. 142-46)

echoes

And he said unto them, These are the words, which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all must be fulfilled which are written of me in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, And said unto them, Thus is it written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day (Luke 24:44-46).

11

Now when they were gone, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the high Priests all the things that were done. And they gathered them together with the Elders, and took counsel, and gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this matter come before the governor to be heard, we will persuade him, and so use the matter that you shall not need to care, So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is noised among the Jews unto this day. (Matthew 28:11-15).

¹² ‘But their words seemed unto them as a feigned thing, neither believed they them’ (Luke 24:11).

¹³ ‘Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou believest: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and have believed’ (John 20:29).

¹⁴ In doing so she confirms her repeated and emphatic earlier insistence

the queen, the queen,
The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead,
...
I say she's dead; I'll swear't (III. 2. 196-199).

¹⁵ Distinguishing true miracles from witchcraft is also a persistent concern in the Bible, for example the story of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24).

¹⁶ As hinted earlier by the second Gentleman's statement that Paulina 'hath privately twice or thrice a day, ever since the death of Hermione, visited that removed house...' (V.ii.103-5)

¹⁷ Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'The Winters Tale and the Gods', in *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 176-218.

¹⁸ Huston Diehl, "'Does not the stone rebuke me?': The Pauline Rebuke and Paulina's Lawful Magic in *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, ed. Patricia Badir and Paul Yachnin (Farnham UK: Ashgate, 2008), p. 82.

¹⁹ Eric Mallin, *Godless Shakespeare* (New York: Continuum Books, 2007), p. 70.

²⁰ < <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/accusations-against-christopher-marlowe-by-richard-baines-and-others#sthash.vD68d0SG.dpuf>.> [Accessed June 26, 2017] OED: 'Jugler: i.e. One who entertains or amuses people by stories, songs, buffoonery, tricks, etc.; a jester, buffoon. (Often used with implied contempt or reprobation.) or One who works marvels by the aid of magic or witchcraft, a magician, wizard, sorcerer (*obs.*); one who plays tricks by sleight of hand; a performer of legerdemain; a conjurer'. See also, Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 45-6 and David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004), pp. 328-30.

21

But then I sigh, and with a piece of scripture
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends, stol'n forth of Holy Writ
And seem a saint when most I play the devil (I. 3 .332-336).

22

Villains, set down the corpse or, by Saint Paul,
I'll make a corpse of him that disobeys (I. 2. 37-38).

Or, by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot,
And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness (I. 2. 43-4).

By holy Paul, they love his Grace but lightly
That fill his ears with such dissentious rumors (I. 3. 46-7)).

Off with his head! Now, by Saint Paul I swear,
I will not dine until I see the same (III. 4. 77-78).

By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have struck ... terror to the soul of Richard (V. 3. 229-230)

²³ For instance, Jan Kott, *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1987). In *The Comedy of Errors*, two contradictory utterances of Paul in Ephesians about the status of women are grafted onto opposed positions articulated by Luciana and Adriana.

²⁴ According to Frank Kermode and others, the play is about ‘judgement, redemption and mercy; the supersession in human history of the grim four thousand years of unalleviated justice by the era of love and mercy... And all the time it tells its audience that this is its subject; only by a determined effort to avoid the obvious can one mistake the theme of *The Merchant of Venice*’. ‘The Mature Comedies,’ in John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, editors, *Early Shakespeare* (New York: Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 3 Capricorn Books, 1966), p. 224.

²⁵ “‘Proofs of Holy Writ’”: Allusion and Irony in *The Merchant of Venice* and Paul’s Letter to the Romans, in Marx’, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, pp.103-125.

²⁶ Randall Martin observes that the origin of this ‘cheeky’ decision in naming Paulina may be found in Shakespeare’s discovery of the [1599]Geneva gloss to I Corinthians 14[:34] : ‘disorder was in the church that women usurped what was peculiar to men’, implying that priestesses and prophetesses like her were influential in early Christian communities. ‘Revisioning Pauline Ideology in *The Winter’s Tale*’, in *Shakespeare, the Bible and the Form of the Book: Contested Scriptures*, ed. Travis DeCook and Alan Galey (Abington: Routledge, 2012), p.61.

²⁷ Cited by Randall Martin in ‘Shakespearean Biography, Biblical Allusion and Early Modern Practices of Reading Scripture’, in *Shakespeare Survey* Vol. 63 2010, p. 217. See also Robert D. Sider, ‘Historical Imagination and the Representation of Paul in Erasmus’ Paraphrases of the Pauline Epistles’, in *Holy Scripture Speaks: The Production and Reception of Erasmus’ Paraphrases of the New Testament*, ed. Hilmar M. Pabel and Mark Vessey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 104.

²⁸ Vol. 5, ed. Ronald Baynes, (London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 161. Cited by Jeffrey Knapp, *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.34.

²⁹ C.H. McIlwain, *Political Works of James I* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1918), p. 307.

³⁰ ‘...therefore, thou happy father,/ Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours/
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee...I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear/Affliction till
it do cry out itself/ “Enough, enough”, and die’ (IV. 6. 89-95).

The tragedy ends with another illusory resurrection. As the old king holds the lifeless body of Cordelia, an image which recalls the iconography of the dead Jesus, Lear experiences despair:

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never! (V. 3. 369-372)

Yet his final words imply that he sees her miraculously reviving: ‘Do you see this? Look on her, look, her
lips,/ Look there, look there!’

However, Albany’s succeeding command to remove both bodies from the field and the stage--‘Bear them
from hence. Our present business/Is general woe’--imply to the audience that Lear’s final hope was mere
fantasy (V. 3. 374-387).