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DEMETAPHORIZATION, ANATOMY, AND THE SEMIOTICS OF THE REFORMATION IN EARLY MODERN REVENGE TRAGEDY

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ABSTRACT

Reformation theology induced a profound thanatological crisis in the semiotics of the human being and the body. The Protestant Reformation discontinued numerous practices of intercession and communal ritual, and the early modern subject was left vulnerable in the face of death. The English Renaissance stage played out these anxieties within the larger context of the epistemological uncertainties of the age, employing violence and the anatomization of the body as representational techniques. While theories of language and tragic poetry oscillated between different ideas of *imitatio* (granting priority to the model) and *mimesis* (with preference for the creative and individual nature of the copy), the new anatomical interest and dissective perspectives also had their effects on the rhetorical practices of revenge tragedies. In the most shocking moments of these plays, rhetorical tropes suddenly turn into grisly reality, and figures of speech become demetaphorized, literalized. In a double anatomy of body and mind, English Renaissance revenge tragedy simultaneously employs and questions the emblematic and poetic traditions of representation, and the ensuing indeterminacy and ambiguity open paths for a new mimesis.

Keywords: revenge tragedy; thanatological crisis; demetaphorization; anatomy; Reformation.

1. Ambiguity, anatomy, and the English Renaissance stage

A passion seems to prevail deep inside the protagonists of English Renaissance revenge tragedies which almost surpasses the drive to avenge the wrongs that had been done against them. They excel in performing a revenge as total, as

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penetrating as possible, as if they could never be content and filled with the excitement caused by the death of their adversaries. A curious and rhetorically beautiful example of this passion is Pandulpho's cry of anger in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*: "let him die, die, and still be dying" (*Antonio's Revenge*, 5.5.76). His exclamation takes place in the scene where the Duke is not simply murdered in the end, but put to a meticulous and slow process of torturous dying. The power of the theatrical scene is not merely due to the anticipation of imminent murder. This prolongation of death is a representational technique that posits the audience in an *in-between condition* where the iconographic and moralizing traditions of the *memento mori* and the *ars moriendi* are used and crudely ironized at the same time, and the theatrical effect emerges as a result of the interplay between the simultaneous employment and unsettling of these traditions. This ambiguity between encoded iconographic or emblematic commonplace and its dislocation is characteristic of revenge drama, and it is the result of a gradual transformation of the repertoire of Christian iconography under the impact of Protestant iconoclasm. As Huston Diehl argues in his discussion of the morality plays (Diehl 1985: 190), the Protestant stage had to face the challenge of using a rich heritage of iconographic and emblematic commonplaces in a Protestant setting that prohibited the direct representation of Christ and the saints. This prohibition was often bypassed with an emphasis on the artificial or earthly nature of the representation (the figure of Christ among representations of *vanitas* is just a man-made representation and not Christ himself), or replacing, for example, the divine image of Christ and his sufferings with a cup of wine, allegorically standing for Christ's blood and, indirectly, for the Eucharist itself. In this way, the image could not be mistaken for the divine object it signified, and thus it could present no grounds for idolatry and could not provoke Protestant criticism. However, in this transformation of Christian iconography, the separation of the image and its signified became gradually greater and greater. By the time of the tragedies of the Renaissance, the iconographic commonplace was very often enveloped in ironic or satirical connotations, and it functioned as a semiotic and theological scrutiny much rather than as didactic moralizing (Kiss 1995: 67–78).

Thus, the staging of death becomes a representational issue in a "period characterized by a crisis of representational practice" (Holmes & Streete 2005: 1).[2] The uncertainties of the above in-betweenness are the results of the semiotic

[2] This representational crisis is perhaps the most explicit sign of the general epistemological crisis of the early modern period. The concept of this crisis was posited by W. R. Elton already in the 1980s, and became a substantial inspiration for new approaches to questions of knowledge, subjectivity and ambiguity in the English Renaissance. See W. R. Elton, "Shakespeare and the Thought of His Age" in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, edited by Stanley Wells (1986: 17–34).

questions that characterized this crisis in general, and the early modern attitude to death in particular. In what follows, I set out to investigate the reasons behind the staging of this passion for the prolonged performance of horrible deaths. I will argue that the causes of this obsession with the dying process of the body can be found just as much in contemporary representational questions as in the spectators' appetite for gory spectacle, and they are reflected in a number of contemporary interrelated cultural practices including the rituals for the dead and anatomy, as well as rhetorical and religious controversies. As a medieval legacy, the English Renaissance stage relies on a multiplicity of iconographic traditions – *memento mori, exemplum horrendum, ars moriendi* and *danse macabre* representations, to name only the most important ones – but these are employed in dramatic situations that scrutinize epistemological questions, uncertainties that pertain to the accessibility of authentic knowledge, and already anticipate the emergent dilemmas of modernity. In this simultaneously emblematic and realistic theatre – halfway between the representational logic of the motivated, liturgical symbol and that of the photographic illusion of verisimilitude[3] – violence, abjection, mutilation, and the production of corpses are representational techniques that participate in the new investigation into the meanings of the body. However, the spectator of these performances is situated not only in between old and new representational techniques, but also in between the living and the dead, in between presence and absence. The staging of death in revenge tragedies repeatedly becomes a performance of dissection, a prolonged penetration of surfaces and borderlines, and in this performance, early modern ideas about anatomy and poetry, dissection, and rhetorical practice are curiously mixed.

One of the best known, most shocking, and yet, in my belief, only partially understood examples of the anatomical interest in early modern tragedy is when Lear calls for the dissection of his own daughter to investigate her interior and find the irregularity that has hardened her heart. "Let them anatomize Regan"[4] – any student or scholar of Shakespearean drama will be familiar with this cry of anger, nevertheless, I believe readers of the play generally miss the real point of the scene. When we are not immersed in the dynamics of a live performance, we tend to forget about the fact that Regan is still very much alive, and what the

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3 For a description of the gradual transition from the emblematic into the photographic theatre, the writings of Glynne Wickham are still seminal. See his *Early English Stages. 1300 to 1600. Volume Two 1576 to 1660, Part One* (1963).

4 This part is given as prose in the Folio, with emphasis placed on 'Anatomize' and 'Nature' with capital letters: 'Then let them Anatomize Regan: See what / breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in Nature that / makes these hard-hearts.' (Rr4^{r}) The Quarto attempts verse lineation (G4^{r}). See Robert Clare, 'Quarto and Folio: A Case for Conflation', in *Lear from Study to Stage: Essays in Criticism*, ed. James Ogden & Arthur H. Scouten (1997: 93).

mentally unbalanced old king wishes for is a live dissection of his ungrateful child. Images of corporeal violence, torture, and death permeate early modern tragedy and the Shakespearean oeuvre in particular, but how are we to understand this imagery of vivisection?

Richard Sugg observes that "Renaissance writers were immensely eager to exploit the imaginative resources of anatomy. Vivisection, by contrast, was never mentioned. Although in fact occurring earlier than usually thought as a literal, English-language term, the word did not appear until the very end of the seventeenth century" (Sugg 2007: 160). However, this is true only in part. If we look carefully at the dramatic output of English Renaissance literature, we will realize that the image of vivisection is recurrent, even if it is not yet identified with an English-language term. The idea of anatomization in general, and *anatomia vivorum* in particular, informs the imagery and dramaturgy of early modern tragedy, and its staging addressed particular sensitivities of the audience in relation to ideas of corporeality and dying.

I would like to look at one of the greatest philosophical achievements of the age to throw light on the contemporary vogue of anatomy and the way in which anatomy also becomes reflected in a rhetorical attitude. In *The Advancement of Learning*, first published in 1605, Francis Bacon deems it important and necessary to devote several pages to the idea of anatomy, in which the statements themselves amount to a rhetorical anatomization, a verbal dissection of the topic itself. While Bacon welcomes anatomy, he objects to their not being carried out more often and with greater, more penetrating attention:

> In the inquiry which is made by Anatomy, I find much deficience: for they inquire of the parts, and their substances, figures, and collocations; but they inquire not of the diversities of the parts, the secrecies of the passages, and the seats or nestling of the humours, nor much of the footsteps and impressions of diseases. The reason of which omission I suppose to be, because the first inquiry may be satisfied in the view of one or a few anatomies; but the latter, being comparative and casual, must arise from the view of many. … And as for the footsteps of diseases, and their devastations of the inward parts, impostumations, exulcerations, discontinuations, putrefactions, consumptions, contractions, extensions, convulsions, dislocations, obstructions, repletions, together with all preternatural substances, as stones, carnosities, excrescences, worms, and the like; they ought to have been exactly observed by multitude of anatomies.
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> (*The Advancement of Learning*, 105)

It is apparent from this reproach that anatomy is already a well-known practice in Bacon's time, and that the public, often including the "professionals themselves", were too quickly satisfied with the performance of anatomy as a one-time public spectacle, a form of entertainment which was comparable to that on offer in the public playhouses and was gaining a similar popularity very

rapidly. Bacon calls for meticulous and thorough anatomical observation and an ardent repetition of the practice. In his serious consideration of the topic he also adds, curiously, that a real, truly useful anatomy would be the live dissection, because the subtleties are not visible on the cadaver:

> And for the passages and pores, it is true which was anciently noted, that the more subtle of them appear not in anatomies, because they are shut and latent in dead bodies, though they be open and manifest in life: which being supposed, though the inhumanity of *anatomia vivorum* was by Celsus justly reproved; yet in regard of the great use of this observation, the inquiry needed not by him so slightly to have been relinquished altogether, or referred to the casual practices of surgery; but might have been well diverted upon the dissection of beasts alive, which notwithstanding the dissimilitude of their parts may sufficiently satisfy this inquiry.
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> (*The Advancement of Learning*, 106)

One might think that Bacon is being ironic here with the minutely detailed listing of ailments and deformities, but, as it turns out in the larger context of his argumentation, he is wholly serious in his dissective rhetoric. This is especially noteworthy since, some thirty pages earlier, Bacon invests 'poesy' with a strikingly similar diagnostic capacity, while also equating it with the theatre where, he quickly notes, we should not remain for too long:

> In this third part of learning, which is poesy, I can report no deficience … But to ascribe unto it that which is due, for the expressing of affections, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholding to poets more than to the philosophers' works; and for wit and eloquence, not much less than to orators' harangues. But it is not good to stay too long in the theatre.
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> (*The Advancement of Learning*, 80)

The connection between early modern tragedy and public playhouses, and the practices and perspectives of anatomy reveals that the idea of *anatomia vivorum* is not that far-fetched, especially when we focus our attention on the imagery of revenge dramas. Bacon's rhetoric employs a meticulous enumeration both in regard to anatomy and poetry, and his lines explicitly, and sometimes implicitly, address the idea that both anatomy and poetry subject their objects of study to a meticulous scrutiny; that the body is a common concern for both anatomy and poetry; and that the theatre is a space where the scrutiny by both anatomical and poetic representations can be displayed. I contend that the revenge tragedy stage was the most intensive location for this *combination of 'poesy' and anatomy*. The dissective nature inherent in English Renaissance tragedy can be read as an answer to the epistemological uncertainties of early modern culture, it is grounded in the emergent anatomical habits of the mind, and it participates in the poetico-rhetorical debates that arose in the context of a representational

crisis originating in the religious changes of the Reformation. This emergent culture of anatomization was the background to the rhetorical and theatrical representations of the corporeal, penetrated, dying human body. I will argue that the scenes of violence and bodily penetration in English Renaissance revenge tragedy are more than protracted scenes of painful death, punishment and torture. The body functions in these plays as a surface that can be used as an epistemological laboratory where deeper forms of knowledge, new experience are revealed. The penetration of this surface brings the spectator to the borderline between life and death in a prolonged period of time when the 'real presence' of the body can be displayed and scrutinized. The establishment of this presence, this affirmation of immediacy is a constitutive effort of the stage, but this effort always also presents questions about the power of language to create this presence. In this way, early modern rhetorical and anatomical ways of thinking get interrelated and certain practices of revenge tragedy, such as the demetaphorization of tropes, can be interpreted in the context of this relationship as attempts at greater theatrical effect and immediacy.

Out of the many turns in critical theory and cultural studies, the corporeal or corpo-semiotic turn has been one of the most influential in the field of Shakespearean scholarship. Findings in the poststructuralist semiotics of the speaking subject and the performance-oriented semiotic approaches to the representational logic of the early modern emblematic theatre[5] have been working in tandem with research by cultural historians into the emergence of anatomization and philosophical inwardness.[6] These developments lent novel perspectives to the interpretation of the representational techniques of violence, corporeality, and dissection on the English Renaissance stage. In Maddalena Pennacchia's words: "…the reflection of corporeality affects the whole realm of Renaissance culture, from politics (with the question of 'the King's two bodies'), to religion (with disputes on the Eucharist), to science (with the

5 The works of Alan Dessen have been groundbreaking in emphasizing the importance of establishing a performance text on the basis of the playtext by reconstructing the circumstances and the *representational logic* of the stage for which the play was intended. See his *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (1984) and *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (1995).

6 The works of new historicists and cultural materialists already laid special emphasis on the relationship between the body and the emergence of early modern subjectivity – see, e.g., Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body. Essays on Subjection* (1984). Partly inspired by this new interpretive perspective, a great deal of critical literature has dealt with the changing notions of the body, dying, and inwardness, more and more specifically focusing on the analogies between early modern anatomy and the public theatre. See, e.g., Spinrad (1987), Maus (1995), Sawday (1995), Hillman & Mazzio (1997), Neill (1997), Carlino (1999), Schoenfeldt (1999), Marshall (2002), Nunn (2005), Owens (2005), Zimmerman (2005), Hillman (2007), Garbero, Isenberg & Pennacchia (2010), Waldron (2013).

creation, in anatomy, of two complementing paradigms…). This 'obsession over corporeality' meant, in a theatrical perspective, also an enhancement of the iconic value of bodies on stage" (Garbero, Isenberg & Pennacchia 2010: 23). The imagery of the penetrated, mutilated, and scrutinized human body began to be understood within the larger framework of early modern cultural practices, ranging from the social spectacles of torture to the vogue of anatomy theatres and the rhetorical habits of an emergent modern subjectivity. With the body in the focus of interpretive attention, the tradition of English Renaissance revenge tragedies is also being reinterpreted.

Margaret E. Owens argues that "[o]f all the subgenres of tragedy, the revenge play stands out as the one which is most acutely responsive to changes initiated by the Reformation" (Owens 2005: 205). These changes were of a semiotic nature, as Robert Knapp, among other scholars participating in the semiotic turn, observed as early as 1989: "…the basic issue is a semiotic one: what kind of a sign is a human being, how does that sign relate to the will of both speaker and hearer, and who is to be credited with the intention which any sign presumably expresses?" (Knapp 1989: 104). The literature of the period seems to return regularly with growing intensity to the fundamental question: is the human being an active or a passive sign? Is it writing or being written? If it is a sign with a motivated meaning, created by God in His own image, is this image a faithful replica of the divine, or is it at least capable of becoming one? If it is active, is it capable of self-mastery and getting to know its own interior meanings? These questions are inseparably intertwined with the new ideas of Reformation theology about the representational and imitative relationship between God and the human being – ideas which provoked a continuous rethinking of the nature of representation in the early modern period.

One of the recurring dissective acts in revenge tragedies is the penetration of surfaces in an epistemological attempt to arrive at the level of truth beyond the façade of the surface. This surface is, most often, the skin that covers the body of the human being, but this skin is not only a dermatological means of protection and the penetration is not simply a sensationalist attempt to appeal to the sentiments of the audience. It is also metaphorical of the surfaces in general that separate us from forms of knowledge that have been hitherto inaccessible to us. The obsession of early modern tragedy with the skin and its repeated penetration has been investigated by much recent criticism.[7] Maik Goth examines in great length the practices of "the performative opening of the carnal

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[7] T. S. Eliot was indeed quite right in his "diagnosis" of Webster in his "Whispers of Immortality" when he claimed that "Webster was much possessed by death / And saw the skull beneath the skin". https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52563/whispers-of-immortality (accessed on 10th July 2018).

envelope", and he lists the many instances of "killing, hewing, stabbing, dagger-drawing, fighting, butchery" as forms of skin penetration in Renaissance tragedy (Goth 2012: 140).[8] Indeed, early modern culture stages the "violent but calculated transgression of the outside into the vulnerable interior of the body" (Goth 2012: 144) to find out, in Norbert Elias's terms, what is the container around the human being, how the skin functions as a frontier, and what is locked up in this container of the *homo clausus*. Elias describes the questions that surround the formation of the new subjectivity of early modernity: "Is the body the vessel which holds the true self within it? Is the skin the frontier between 'inside' and 'outside'? What in the human individual is the container, and what the contained?" (Elias 2000 [1939]: 472) In the light of this quest for the "true self", I think it is necessary to expand Goth's argument. Skin penetration is also a metaphor, a sign of the new early modern inwardness, and it carries an epistemological stake in an age when the *homo clausus* is being constituted by the simultaneous discourses of an unsettled medieval world model and a nascent modernity. Embedded in the typically anatomizing imagery of revenge tragedies, skin penetration foregrounds a fear of the unknowable nature of reality as well as the anxiety with which the early modern subject strives to discern what is on the other side of that skin.

The imagery of the *skin* as a generic metaphor for the surface of things which conceals true depth proliferates in the tragedies of the period. In his *Production of Presence*, Hans Gumbrecht also posits the idea that material and bodily surfaces characterize the epistemological disposition of early modern culture:

> For the new type of self-reference that posits that humans are eccentric to the world, however, this world is primarily – and perhaps we might even say exclusively – a material surface to be interpreted. To interpret the world is to go beyond its material surface or to penetrate that surface in order to identify a meaning (i.e., something spiritual) that is supposed to lie behind or beneath it. Conversely, it also becomes more and more conventional to think of the world of objects and of the human body as "surfaces" that express deeper meanings.
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> (Gumbrecht 2003: 25)

The skin of the body functions in revenge tragedies as the surface that hides these 'deeper meanings', as the threshold beyond which the spectators in the public anatomy lessons as well as in the public playhouses are excited to witness some uncovered, real presence.

It should be noted that it is not so much the presence or the ultimate departure of the body that is foregrounded in these plays, but much rather the *process* of the body becoming lifeless or absent (and the absent body often

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[8] For the changing concepts of the skin in Tudor England, see Tanya Pollard (2010: 111–112).

becoming present again in the form of ghosts), as if revenge tragedies were playing not only with the fundamental binary of surface and depth, appearance and reality, but also with the passage from presence into absence, from absence into presence. This passage is thematized in the systematically prolonged instances of death. Just to list a few instances other than the obvious example of *Hamlet* (c. 1600), we encounter such scenes in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1600), Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1605), Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (1610), Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613), and Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633). We have in these plays a combination of the utmost physical and spiritual, psychic torture, a peculiarly double anatomical investment, but the emphasis is on the process itself. The performance aims to position us on the borderline, the passage from life into "the undiscovered country", on the verge of inside and outside: on the very *skin of existence*.

What is it that fuels this early modern interest in the penetration of skins, bodies, and the dissection of the interiority of the human being? The intellectual, religious, and ideological changes at the turn of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries induced a profound corporeal and thanatological crisis in early modern conceptualizations of the body.[9] In semiotic terms, the meanings of existence, the suffering and the dying process of the body were once subsumed into a motivated relationship between the subject and the figure of Christ, and this was also grounded in the understanding of Christ in typological symbolism as the primary *figura* which also generates forms of existence. Now these meanings were made open to uncertainties and to the new anatomizing customs of vision and thinking. The Protestant Reformation discontinued practices of intercession as well as a number of ceremonial rites of mourning and prayer, and thus the early modern subject was left vulnerable in the face of death. The severance between life and what followed became more radical, producing a discontinuity which had previously been eased into forms of communication and mediation before. As a result of Protestant attacks on festivities and public rituals, the earlier communal forms of dealing with death and the dead were gradually transferred to the theatre. Tobias Döring argues that "[t]he activities of the emerging theatre companies can be seen in this perspective as offering their paying audiences licensed substitutes for the occasions in former civic and religious culture which were now banned or barely tolerated" (Döring 2006: 60).[10] Even if the early Anglican Church did not

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9 Michel Neill (1997: 15, 102) talks about the "early modern crisis of death" and the "reinvention of death".

10 Neill (1997: 102–140) discusses the early modern thanatological changes specifically in the light of anatomical practices.

adopt everything from the theological changes of the Reformation, and did not straightforwardly reject the metaphysics of the Eucharist, it did reject the corporeal transubstantiation of the communion. Thus, the former transcendental guarantees for the link between the Absolute and any corporeal, worldly presence or human bodily reality became more and more uncertain. An all-pervasive absence looms in the deep structure of revenge tragedies, which function as communal laboratories that stage repeated attempts to come to terms with the loss of the body as it had been known. As Owens puts it:

> …what is being mourned in revenge tragedy is mourning itself, namely, the system of consoling rituals that had been available up until the consolidation of Reformed piety. Moreover, this loss was irreducibly corporeal. Revenge tragedy mourns not only a faith but the body that served as the fulcrum of that faith, the real Presence in the Eucharist.
>
> (Owens 2005: 212)

At the same time, the growing popularity of public anatomy disseminated images of the dissected and inwardly scrutinized body. While arguing that "In early modern London, public interest in human dissections and playhouse dramas developed nearly simultaneously", Hillary M. Nunn explains that:

> …early Stuart playwrights capitalized on the similarities between anatomical and commercial theatres to add new layers of meaning to both the dramatic portrayal of physical mutilation and the act of witnessing such staged violence.
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> (Nunn 2005: 2, 4)

The English Renaissance stage, now under the influence of the anatomizing habits of the mind, was simultaneously playing out the curiosities and anxieties of the age. Instead of the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, the real presence of the human body is demonstrated in the dissective performance which posits the body in the centre of attention through the staging of the protracted process of dying. In so doing, English Renaissance revenge tragedy responds to the demands of the contemporary public and satisfies their desires, verbalized eloquently in the surprisingly anatomical rhetoric of Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*. The revenger assumes the role of the anatomist to open up what had always been under very strict religious coding. As Jonathan Sawday elucidates: "The human body was indeed a temple, ordered by God, whose articulation the divinely sanctioned anatomists were now able to demonstrate" (Sawday 1995: 75).

The tortured and dissected victims of Renaissance revenges and murders testify to this need for the *anatomia vivorum*, which appears to be the best method not only to examine the workings of the corporeal fabric while still alive, to create theatrical effect by intensifying the feeling of the presence of the

somatic which is common to all of us, but also to catch the moment of the departure of the life-giving spirit from the human being, from the body – that is, to finally witness the presence of that which makes us human and to see how its absence makes us equal to dead matter.

2. Demetaphorization and anatomy

This corporeal semiotics has its effects on the rhetorical practices of revenge tragedies as well. A typical example of this is when, in the most shocking moments of these plays, what had been active as a rhetorical trope suddenly turns into grisly reality, and figures of speech become "nightmares into which characters awaken" (Kendall 1989: 312). Revenge tragedy, as a combination of poetry and anatomy, cuts into the workings of language as well. The literalization of the figurative is an example of the many strategies employed by early modern drama to test the limits of semiosis, to investigate the relationship between language and reality and to devise new ways of signification – attempts that inevitably entail the questioning of earlier tenets of poetics and models of imitation. Drawing upon an expansion of Rosalie Colie's notion of unmetaphoring,[11] I will look at instances of the revenge dramaturgy when the figurative unexpectedly turns brutally literal and anatomical. Dissection in the rhetoric of the revenge play contributes to the production of even more shocking theatrical effects. I will refer to the rhetorical and corporeal performance of the body in a selection of revenge tragedies because it is the staging of the dissected, tortured, dying body which most frequently employs this technique that I will call *demetaphorization*. I will then focus on one particular scene in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* to demonstrate how the merging of the emblematic *tableau* of the body with the rhetorical strategy of demetaphorization establishes an ambiguous, in-between situation, an in-betweenness which I introduced at the beginning of this paper. This ambiguity certainly has to do with the indeterminacies of the early modern theatre already

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[11] Colie (1974: 11) argues that "[t]he notion of unmetaphoring is simple enough, really: an author who treats a conventionalized figure of speech as if it were a description of actuality is unmetaphoring that figure." According to Colie, this strategy may be at work on several levels of the text, and even the plot may turn out to be an extended unmetaphoring of an earlier tradition. This is the case in *Othello*, where the figurative death of the lovers in the sonnet convention turns real: "In this play, one conventional sonnet-ending is reached, with the metaphorical death in fact unmetaphored. Love literally dies, then; the act is irreversible, Desdemona and love cannot be revived or recalled" (Colie 1974: 164). My understanding of demetaphorization goes beyond Colie's unmetaphoring in that I intend to draw attention to the uncontrollable signifying capacity of language which might produce tropological effects when not intended, but which might just as well display non-tropological meanings in opposition to the automatism of a conventional metaphorical understanding.

discussed above, the "irresolution" explained by David Bevington: "the diversity of aim between realistic expression of factual occurrence and the traditional rendering of a moral pattern inevitably produced an irresolution in the English popular theatre" (Bevington 1962: 261). I believe, however, that there is more to this ambiguity, and it has to do with Renaissance concepts of metaphorical expression and their problematization in early modern tragedy. Early modern rhetorical definitions of metaphor draw on Aristotle's reliance on the relation between metaphor and the field of the visual. This is what we find, for instance, in Richard Sherry's *Treatise:*

> Metaphora. Translatio, translacion, that is a worde translated from the thynge that it properlye signifieth, vnto another whych may agre with it by a similitude. And amonge all vertues of speche, this is the chyefe. None perswadeth more effecteouslye, none sheweth the thyng before oure eyes more euidently, none moueth more mightily the affeccions, none maketh the oracio[n] more goodlye, pleasaunt, nor copious.
> *Translacions be diuerse*.
> i. Some fro[m] the body to the mynd, as: I haue but lately tasted the Hebrue tonge, for newely begunne it. Also I smell where aboute you go, for I perceyue.
> (*Treatise*, C. iiii.)

Thus, in Sherry's view, the metaphor performs an act of "translacion" which establishes a bridge between the sight of the object and the mind. In his first example he posits that the translation "from the body to the mind" produces a very expressive representation. From this perspective, it is arguable that the demetaphorizing strategies of the Renaissance stage attempted to discard this bridging act of "translacion" and short-circuit the distance between image and word. Henry Peacham also discusses the sources of metaphorical expression, and among the human senses he defines the faculty of sight as the most important:

> As the sight among the rest of the senses is most sharpe, and pierceth furthest, so is it proved most sure, and least deceived, and therefore is very nigh to the mind in the affinitie of nature, so farre foorth as an externall sense of the bodie may be compared to an internall vertue of the mind.
> (*Garden of Eloquence*, C2^{v})

Peacham stresses the importance and excellence of visual perception which, just like the anatomical scalpel, sharply penetrates the objects of sight to draw them into the mind. This attempt at immediacy has its most extreme manifestation in the act of demetaphorization, when the power of the corporeal metaphor is employed, but from this foundational effect language is pushed further on to a direct contact with the material, with the promise of unmediated presentation,

the promise of presence. The question of absence and presence is at the very heart of representation in the theatre which attempts to conjure the presence of that which is not present on the stage. This question of presence, with its most heated locus in debates on Reformation theology, is unavoidably evoked and brought into play on the Renaissance stage with religious and philosophical overtones, echoing arguments ranging from the theological issue of the presence of the Divine in the Host to the question of the human body being (in modern terms) an icon, an index or a symbol of God, to the scholastic and humanist debates about the primacy of *imitatio* (copying) or *mimesis* (representation) in the practice of writing.

Corporeal and mental dissection in early modern tragedies, with *anatomia vivorum* as its extreme but recurring manifestation, aimed at establishing a presence of the body in an age when the status of this body was becoming more and more dubious. Vindice in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is not content with rotting the Duke's mouth with poison and nailing his tongue to the ground with a dagger. He proceeds to impose spiritual horror upon the soul of the Duke, who has to watch as he is being cuckolded by his bastard son, while his eyes are being pressed from their sockets. The dissection of the body is coupled here with the probing of the soul in a double anatomy that turns the death bed of the iconographic tradition into the operating table of the public anatomy theatre. It takes two hundred and six lines of suffering from the deadly effects of the poison on his visor for the discoloured and decaying Brachiano in *The White Devil* to be finally strangled to death. His passing away is theatricalized in a scene which is just as protracted as the murdering of the Duchess of Malfi or the slow dying of the fatally poisoned Hamlet. Even in *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, a play which is more an exercise in rhetorical and philosophical sophistication than a proper revenge tragedy, the killing of Montsureau is extended in time in a rather awkward scene where he constantly hesitates whether he should undertake the challenge from Clermont or rather just surrender with the utmost stoicism and wait to see what happens.

These scenes put us in an in-between realm, on the thin line of demarcation between life and non-life as if we had been invited to witness the exiting of the soul. However, when we make an effort to restore these emblematic scenes to the original representational logic of the early modern stage, we might often be puzzled to see how the figurative connotations of the emblematic spectacle are suddenly turned into brutal physical reality. Hearts do break, ulcers are exposed to the eye, hands are really lent, bodies do turn into dust, and brains are poisoned – not only rhetorically with scorpions and memories, but physically as well. They are soaked in blood and they reveal, in an imagery of disease and bodily inwardness, the realm beneath the skin, and they perform the operation Philip Sidney describes so anatomically in his *Defense:* "Tragedy… openeth the

greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue" (*Defense of Poesy*, 27). Much recent criticism has dealt with this anatomical imagery in Sidney's poetics, but, in my reading, the emphasis in this statement is not so much on the image of the ulcer and wound, which are metaphors that are demetaphorized and turn real in revenge tragedies. I would rather lay stress on the idea of the tissue. As an epistemological attempt to gain deeper knowledge, the scalpel of English Renaissance tragedy removes the surface layer of our social and very corporeal reality to reveal the interiority, the depth. The dissective and diagnostic capacity that Sidney attributes to tragedy rhymes perfectly with Bacon's elaboration on poesy and anatomy. The poet's pen shares the potential of the anatomist's scalpel, and revenge tragedy puts both instruments to work in the representational and communally curative space of the theatre.

The most intense instances of demetaphorization occur within this dissective imagery. In the moment when Hamlet learns that the skull in his hand belonged to Yorick, the familiar image of the *memento mori* turns into the crude reality of the remains of a body part, one which had once belonged to a beloved person. The commonplace skull is suddenly transformed from allegorical and moralizing reminder into real presence in his hands, and Hamlet's reaction is quite peculiar. He produces an anatomical reconstruction of Yorick's face, redrawing the lips and facial gestures of the jester:

> Alas, poor Yorick!
> … Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know
> not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your
> gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment,
> that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one
> now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen?
> Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let
> her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must
> come; make her laugh at that.
>
> (*Hamlet*, 5.1.184–194)

The same effect emerges when we learn from Vindice, in his lengthy performance of a metatheatrical prologue with a skull in his hand, that this very skull is Gloriana's and that Vindice must have taken elaborate measures (digging, cleaning, etc.) to have this *thing* as an ornament in his study. Images of body parts proliferate in this prologue, but the real shock befalls the audience at the point of demetaphorization, when the revenger proclaims that the traditional *memento mori* instrument in his hand belongs to his poisoned love. Fully immersed in this demonstration and contemplation of death, Vindice performs a retrospective autopsy of Gloriana's face:

> Four ex'lent characters – Oh that *marrowless* age
> Would stuff the *hollow bones* with damned desires,
> And 'stead of heat kindle infernal fires
> Within the *spendthrift veins* of a dry duke,
> A parched and juiceless luxur! Oh God! one
> That has scarce *blood* enough to live upon,
> And he to riot it like a son and heir?
> Oh, the thought of that
> Turns my abused *heart-strings* into fret.
> Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,
> My study's ornament, thou *shell of death*,
> Once the bright *face* of my betrothed lady,
> When life and beauty naturally filled out
> These ragged imperfections;
> When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set
> In those unsightly rings – then 'twas a *face*
> So far beyond the artificial shine
> Of any woman's bought *complexion* …
> … Be merry, merry;
> Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks,
> To have their costly *three-pil'd flesh* worn off
> As bare as this …
>
> (*The Revenger's Tragedy*, 1.1.5–47, emphases mine)

The interrelated images of corporeality establish a framework in which these scenes reveal an anatomical nature. Looking at it from this perspective, Hamlet's philosophizing over Yorick's skull turns out to be just as dissective as Vindice's opening soliloquy in which he instructs the skull to begin its progress. Sidney's ulcers are curiously echoed in Vindice's words later when, in the central revenge scene of the play, he promises to increase the suffering of the Duke by combining physical with mental torture:

> Puh, 'tis but early yet; now I'll begin
> To stick thy soul with ulcers, I will make
> Thy spirit grievous sore: it shall not rest,
> But like some pestilent man toss in thy breast.
>
> (*The Revenger's Tragedy*, 3.5.170–174)

The revenge stage also demonstrates that these ulcers are not only physical but mental, too, and they are equally at work in the characters and their audience. In revenge dramas, which most of the time work as tragedies of consciousness,[12] the anatomization of the body is taking place simultaneously with the anatomization of the mind, and we are bearing witness to a dissective

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[12] For the idea of tragedies of consciousness which focus on mental activities even more than actions in the plot, see Bayley (1981: 164).

representation of mental and physical processes. However, in order to heal, tragedy and tragic poetry need to operate on the living, too – anatomy has to affect the live audience in order to show forth and heal the ulcers in our collective social body. *Anatomia vivorum* also works as the dissection of the live audience in the theatre. It is the aspect of this double anatomy in revenge tragedies that aims not only at dissecting the tragic subject both mentally and physically, but also at removing the tissue of blindness from the eyes of the audience so that they can see the cost at which their early modern subjectivity is being constituted.

Anatomy and demetaphorization, thus, work in tandem, and we find perhaps the most systematic network of these two techniques in *Titus Andronicus* (1594), where characters and even the spectators often *lose their tongue* in the face of horror, and nobody *lends a hand* to Titus at the beginning to devise his stratagem of vengeance, but we are taken aback when Lavinia's tongue is literally lost and Titus really lends his left hand as a letter.[13] How can we explain, then, this persistent technique in the light of the above strategies of double anatomy and thanatological scrutiny? I would like to turn to a scene in *Titus Andronicus* to demonstrate the complexities of this representational technique.

When Titus has his severed hand returned to him, together with the heads of his two sons, as a grotesque letter with a "return to sender" stamp on it, he makes a resolution to find "the cave of his revenge". In line with the traditional dramaturgy of the revenge play, he embarks upon an endeavour which necessitates role-playing and time management. This is the point when his revenge is launched, and he starts out by distributing roles. He sends Lucius to the Goths to raise an army, he and Marcus leave the stage each with a severed head in hand, and Lavinia is also involved in the stratagem. She is told by Titus: And, Lavinia, thou shalt be employed in this; / Bear thou my hand, sweet wench, between thy teeth (*Titus*, 3.1.280–81).

Lavinia's involvement is represented by an exorbitant *stage tableau*, the interpretation of which requires the codes of the emblematic stage. The daughter here places the severed hand of the patriarch in her mouth, which is empty since her tongue had been torn out by Tamora's sons. In this way, in the topsy-turvy world of the play, the emblem of patriarchal power will fill a specific absence – it is inserted in the place of feminine discourse, replacing the tongue of the woman. The grotesque nature of this representation imposes a great challenge on modern actors and directors, and even editors have tried to

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[13] Albert H. Tricomi (1974: 11) says that "Shakespeare subordinates everything in *Titus*, including metaphor, to that single task of conveying forcefully the Senecan and Ovidian horrors that he has committed himself to portraying."

neutralize the gruesome effect by skipping the reference to Lavinia's teeth or mouth. As Erika T. Lin explains, "[e]ven though the First Folio and all quarto editions of the play indicate that the mutilated Lavinia should carry the hand out between her teeth, directors frequently cut this portion of the scene. Editors, for their part, often alter the speech so that Lavinia carries out the hand between her arms instead" (Lin 2012: 137). Since the general literary and theatrical "rehabilitation" of the play in the seventies, critics have rarely failed to comment on the function of "theatrical dismemberment" in the play as "a kind of efficacious performance" (Lin 2012: 137). In her massive monograph, Mariangela Tempera argues that Shakespeare's intention here was to bring all the traditions of the representation of horror to a climactic peak: "Lavinia could carry the hand between her stumps … Shakespeare, however, chooses to turn her appallingly mutilated body into a joke that is at the same time sick and highly sophisticated. … Here, the hand does serve any practical purpose, there is no reason for returning it, other than having it become the centerpiece in a parade that outdoes all the sources for stage horror that Shakespeare had before him" (Tempera 1999: 91). New performance-oriented semiotic approaches interpret this scene as a concentrated *tableau vivant* of disorder, a cosmic emblem of chaos, or as the second rape of Lavinia.[14] Absence meets absence here, but I contend that it is not enough to translate this complex visual representation as a scene where Lavinia gets a new tongue, where the discourses of male power and patriarchal culture are finally and irrevocably enforced upon her. This interpretation would only argue that the sign of fatherly power takes the place of the feminine tongue and will speak for her, muting and raping Lavinia for the second time, irrevocably assimilating her into the patriarchal order. In my reading, Shakespeare's corporeal imagery here leads into a more complex system of ambiguity which also communicates a message about the power of the signifying system.

Let us return briefly to the examples of Renaissance theories of the metaphor. While Sherry does not consider metaphors "from the mind to the body", it is interesting to see that Peacham does. He says the following:

> …and now next I will observe those translations that are taken from the mind and applyed to the bodie.
> From the mind to the bodie.
> From things in the minde to the parts of the body, as to call a wound angrie, or wofull: a tongue malicious, and also when we say, a pitifull eye, a liberall hand, a wise eare. Now these words angrie, wofull, malicious, pitifull, and wise, do belong properly to the mind, yet by this forme of speaking, they signifie passions and properties of the bodie.

[14] See, especially, Fawcett (1983), Green (1989), Smith (1996).

> An example of holy Scripture, "whatsoever mine eyes desired I let them have it." [Eccles.2.] Here Salomon attributeth desire to the eyes, which is a word properly belonging to the mind and not to the eyes, which are parts of the body.
> Also in like sense he saith, "The eye is not satisfied with light, nor the eare with hearing" [Eccles.1.]: by the eye and (end) eare he understandeth the desire of the mind kindled by those senses.
>
> (*Garden of Eloquence*, sigs, C4^{r}-C4^{v})

Peacham considers the "translation from mind to the body" an important rhetorical technique, but he argues that all these poetic representations are, after all, properties of the mind – they are under the control of reason. In *Titus Andronicus*, however, the elements of language that are supposed to be firmly integrated into the metaphorical order of discourse are all of a sudden demetaphoricized and start living their own independent life as if they had been released from under the constraints of a governing mind. Demetaphorization participates in the overthrowing of the general mind/body and masculine/feminine hierarchy in the play. Lavinia here becomes the source of a new language which is needed by Titus in this cosmic chaos. "Thou map of woe, that thus dost talk in signs" (*Titus*, 3.2.12) – as Titus says a little later. Lavinia's body becomes a map which will help Titus find 'the cave of his revenge', the drive energies for his vengeful action. We should notice, though, that this is again an instance of radical demetaphorization, since Lavinia has really been transformed into a map, but not only metaphorically, and not simply because her identity has been unerasably and figuratively stamped with the stains of violence. With the hand in her mouth, she literally becomes a signpost, a roadmap, a tool that indicates directions for her father. This map of directions helps Titus see how to cope with the new world order – he needs a new language, and thus he has to reform the foundations of semiosis. Titus has to change for this, he must learn a new alphabet, and he has to give up his former proud concepts of father, general, and politician – or else he will never outdo Tamora:

> Thou shalt not sigh, not hold thy stumps to heaven,
> Now wink, not nod, nor kneel, nor make a sign,
> But I of these will wrest an alphabet,
> And by still practice learn to know thy meaning.
>
> (*Titus Andronicus*, 3.2.42–45)

The scene where we witness Lavinia with Titus's hand in place of her tongue, then, might not be a second rape by the father, but rather the advent of a new discourse. It is true that Lavinia speaks, figuratively, through the symbolic prosthesis, but she speaks a new language – a language that can compete with the intruding Tamora, a language that feeds from the body, one which brought to the surface the suppressed modalities of signification from the unconscious of

the early modern subject. Until recently, the presence of these modalities of signification have been ignored and suppressed in the history of the staging and reception of the play by the dominant ideology of the bourgeois photographic theatre and its concept of the incorporeal Cartesian ego. The corporal and semiotic turn, with postsemiotic and psychoanalytical theories of signification in its background, produced interpretive approaches that shed light on how the body is involved in the production of meaning in general, and in early modern drama in particular. The body and language become inseparable in *Titus Andronicus*, but, while being intertwined, again and again they also seem to have their own independent performative agency, the linguistic turning into corporeal and vice versa. The emblematic density of the patriarchal hand was crudely demetaphorized in earlier scenes of the tragedy, but now it acquires a new symbolic significance. An ambiguity, a pervasive tension between the figurative and the non-figurative runs through the play, foregrounding the realization that characterizes not only the early modern but also the postmodern understanding of language – the constitution of meaning cannot always be subjected to calculable patterns. Meaning is unfixable and exceeds models that are to be imitated. The complexity and the problematic nature of the scene with her father's hand in Lavinia's mouth are well demonstrated in the fact that it had mostly been ignored even in the "postmodern renaissance" of the play. From the early 1970s on, the general critical attitude gave up trying to prove that Shakespeare did not commit the error of writing the tragedy that T. S. Eliot considered the stupidest and least inspired drama ever. An interpretive and theatrical rehabilitation ensued gradually, resulting in a proliferation of new readings and productions of the play. The hand already shows up in Lavinia's mouth in the 1985 BBC film version, but it still looks more like a piece of rubber than a real hand, and it is not granted any interpretive, thematic function. In 1999, Julie Taymor already devotes short, but very sharp images to the scene, and in this, her film *Titus* can be considered as a turning point in the history of the play's adaptation.

3. *Imitatio* versus *mimesis*

The image of the de- and remetaphorization of the tongue and hand, and the ambiguity created by this representational strategy, will reveal an even more complex meaning when examined in the light of the questions of *imitatio* versus *mimesis*, the topic of a fervent debate among humanists and Renaissance scholars about the role and limits of poetry.[15] I contend that the double anatomization of the early modern subject, the rhetorical tensions resulting from

[15] On the topic of *imitatio* versus *mimesis*, see Vickers (1999), and Holmes & Streete (2005).

demetaphorization and the unsettling of emblematic meanings, and the pervasive corporeal investment of the English Renaissance theatre can be interpreted not only within the general framework of the epistemological crisis of the age, but also within a more specific representational crisis. In this crisis, which rewrote several of the earlier principles of rhetoric and poetics, the status of the model and the copy, the concept of imitation versus representation went through substantial changes. The rhetorical debate and the changes were largely fuelled by the new Protestant understanding of presence. This understanding was, more precisely, an idea of non-presence because, after a rejection of transubstantiation and real presence in the Eucharist by Reformation theology, a direct or immediate presence through any kind of image, device, or representation became more and more questionable. The human subject's access and passage to Christ became more problematic than the connection offered and prescribed by the earlier tradition of the *imitatio Christi* and the *devotio moderna*. As Streete says:

> …in many popular forms of late medieval and humanistic Christocentrism, the relationship between Christ and the subject is conceived of as a form of imitative 'copying' … Underpinning this strand is an understanding of *imitatio* that privileges Christ as model with a significant degree of cultural authority and that posits man as imitative, authorised copy of that model … conceptualizing the imitation of Christ within a Protestant context necessarily entails some reworking of this inherited framework. Imitation is far from being a straightforward matter in early modern culture.
>
> (Streete 2009: 19)

Up to the early modern period, *imitatio* in rhetorical and textual practice did not denote the mimetic representation of an actual reality, but much rather the copying of the classical masters. Although the two terms are sometimes used as synonyms, it is perceivable in general that the concept of imitation favours the idea of the model to be emulated, while the concept of *mimesis* unavoidably includes the element of individual contribution and perspective, that is, the element of *representation*. Imitation as a practice of learning enjoyed a privileged position in humanist rhetoric and literary theory, but we witness in the Renaissance a gradual shift from the dominance of imitation to a growing preoccupation with the authority of mimesis as representation. This is, of course, part of the large-scale metamorphosis of the understanding of authority as such. Robert Weimann describes this process as follows:

> …authority, including the authorization of discourse itself, was no longer given, as it were, before the writing and reading began, the act of representation was turned into a site on which authority could be negotiated, disputed, or reconstituted. Modern authority, rather than preceding its inscription, rather than

> being given as a prescribed premise of utterances, became a product of writing, speaking, and reading, a result rather than primarily a constituent of representation.
>
> (Weimann 1996: 3)

These changes had their roots in the Protestant reconfiguration of the supposedly direct imitative connection between Christ as model and the human subject as copy, between the Absolute principle as origin and the human being as an imitative image that is in a direct, motivated and active, reciprocal relationship with this origin.

> Protestant reconfiguration of Christ is the most complex manifestation of this shift, one that has broader implications that go beyond the supposedly narrow confines of theology. Textuality is no longer the precondition for *imitatio* but rather a product of representative and performative practice. The tension between *imitatio* and mimesis becomes the constitutive yet, crucially, generative focus of early modern representational practice.
>
> (Streete 2009: 25)

What we see here is that the fundamental changes brought about by the Reformation in early modern culture did not only result in a thanatological crisis — they also had a determining effect on literary theory. When we investigate the practice of double anatomy in English Renaissance revenge tragedies in the light of these changes, we must bear in mind that the revenge play itself was a problematization of the relationship between model and copy, since the *imitatio*, the mechanical copying and rewriting of Seneca gradually turns "via mimesis", already by the time of *The Spanish Tragedy*, into a transgression of the classical rules of the genre. The persistent onstage violence in revenge tragedy is inspired by the Senecan model, but, at the same time, this violence is also a subversion of classical decorum. In a similar manner, the tradition and authority of classical medical texts is simultaneously presented and subverted by the practice of anatomists from the early sixteenth century on: "…the increasing distance between physicians and their books in images of dissection suggests that anatomists began to re-examine the relationship between textual authority and experiential knowledge." (Carlino 1999: 9–20; Nunn 2005: 9). The early modern anxieties about authority and subversion, original model and copy, traditional and new epistemology and theology are all being played out in the rhetorical and anatomical practices of English Renaissance revenge tragedy.[16] The repeated

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[16] These anxieties all have to be considered when we aim to theorize the "poetics of desire" in English Renaissance tragedy, where the psychoanalytical constituents of desire are always working together with the cultural desires to compensate for the losses of the early modern subject. For a version of this poetics of desire, see Luis-Martínez (2002: 29–62).

opening of "the carnal envelope", as well as the indeterminacy manifest in the demetaphorizing instances of language are signs of the realization that the early modern subject can no longer safely rely on given, calculable, set clichés and strategies of knowledge and language, patterns that are to be imitated or copied. In our current poststructuralist and postmodern theoretical framework (which often displays striking similarities to the early modern dilemmas), we might even posit that demetaphorization functions in revenge tragedies as an instance of the Real penetrating the skin of the Symbolic. These instances suggest that no human attempt at symbolization can fully incorporate material reality into our discourses, while language, on the other hand, will always have a power, an independent agency that goes beyond the speaking subject's attempt to control its performative figurality. Thus, we can finally understand demetaphorization as a rhetorical technique that uses the anatomized body as a medium to stage the traumatic kernel of the nascent modern subject. In this kernel, as postsemiotic theories of subjectivity have posited, the body and language possess an agency that resists the human subject's attempt at mastery.[17] Embedded in the uncertainties and ambiguities of the early modern epistemological and representational crisis, revenge tragedy opens up the earlier models of rhetoric and subjectivity for negotiations that go beyond imitation and fixation, towards a new mimesis.[18]

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[17] Revenge tragedy stages this traumatic kernel in a decisive historical period when modern subjectivity as an experience of radical alienation and split is being born. As Slavoj Žižek (2000: 157) argues: "Modern subjectivity has nothing to do with the notion of man as the highest creature in the 'Great Chain of Being', as the final point of the evolution of the universe: modern subjectivity emerges when the subject perceives himself as 'out of joint', as excluded from the 'order of things', from the positive order of entities."

[18] Jonathan Dollimore describes this as "a manifestation of the struggle in that period between residual, dominant and emergent conceptions of the real … in short, idealist mimesis versus realist mimesis" (Dollimore 1984: 4, 82). I would like to add that this new, realist mimesis simultaneously represents the advent of an incurable wound, an irreparable loss at the heart of the human being, which will be constitutive of modern subjectivity. The new mimesis emerges at the cost of losing the earlier guarantees of meaning and language.

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