

McCoy, Richard C. "A Wedding and Four Funerals: Conjunction and Commemoration in Hamlet." *Shakespeare Survey*. Ed. Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 04 Oct. 2001. 122–139. Web.

Richard McCoy's article "A Wedding and Four Funerals: Conjunction and Commemoration in Hamlet" discusses the role that religion played in England, and Hamlet's manifestation as two bodies in Shakespeare's play. He begins with the specifics, outlining the arrangements that were made for funerals, then detailing the significance of individuals' want for remembrance. His interpretation is based off Queen Elizabeth's rule, and the cult-like influence that she had. The article begins in chronological order and follows the reign of Elizabeth to James. All the while, McCoy drops comparisons to the acts of burial or ghost appearances in *Hamlet*. He argues that despite the variation of religion and funeral procedures, there will always be a want for a grand memorial with an undeniable union between the real and imaginary.

McCoy describes the Protestant Queen Elizabeth's feeling of being haunted by Catholic influence and ritual. Her beliefs included predestination, along with the abolishment of purgatory and traditional Catholic practices. Elizabeth focused on "shifting attention from religious ritual to civic ceremony and courtly pageantry" (McCoy 126). McCoy writes that the effect was a transfer of power from the body of Christ to the monarchy. He explains each English monarch's focus on sanctuary: Henry VII's yearn for canonization, King Edward's focus on the altar in his chapel, and Mary Tudor death following the elevation of Eucharist. McCoy writes that there began a "shift from intercession to commemoration" (McCoy 123). He notes that when a monarch dies, politicians must deal with two bodies (the deceased and the successor). McCoy uses King James as an example, as he vowed to abstain from any "ceremony of our own joy... as long as her body is above ground" (McCoy 134).

In terms of the play, McCoy writes that of all four funerals in *Hamlet*, the final one is the most significant. With a powerfully difficult tale for Horatio tell, the play becomes its own living monument to Hamlet since no eulogy could ever do Hamlet justice. McCoy believes that the Prince of Norway's interruption signals a transfer of power from Hamlet to Fortinbras. Hamlet's rights of memory become Fortinbras' rites of war. Fortinbras claims his own rights of memory instead of honoring the rights of the deceased Hamlet. Although Fortinbras has the last word, McCoy justifies Hamlet as the character that dominates all of modern memory.

McCoy highlights the importance of recognizing the conjunction of form and cause. In the beginning, the men could see but not hear the ghost, while Gertrude couldn't see his form at all. Therefore, only by connecting form and cause could the king's true manifest appear. McCoy also defines conjunction as being synonymous with the Eucharist, seen in Hobbes *Leviathan's* transformation from a parasitic image into a unified body of communion. Hamlet even compares his father to the incarnate Christ, with the ghost's union of both a spiritual and physical body. In the final act Hamlet manifests a second body by becoming a ghost, twice announcing, "I am dead" (5.2.285 & 290). The similarity to his father is voiced in his cry, "Remember me" (1.5.91). Despite the impossibility of a relationship with God or saints, interactions between the living and dead are inescapable. McCoy concludes that recognizing the conjunction of the actual and imaginary is the source for all literature and life.