

## Be Not Faithless But Believing:

Bouchard, Gianna

*License:*

Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND)

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Bouchard, G 2008, Be Not Faithless But Believing: Illusion and Doubt in the Anatomy Theatre. in M Bleeker (ed.), *Anatomy Live: Performance and the Operating Theatre*. MediaMatters, Amsterdam University Press, pp. 93-110.

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

### General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

### Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.



Anatomy

Live:

*Performance and the Operating Theatre*

Edited by Maaik Bleeker

*Amsterdam University Press*

# **‘Be not faithless but believing’: Illusion and Doubt in the Anatomy Theatre**

*Gianna Bouchard*

Michelangelo Caravaggio’s painting of 1603, titled *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, depicts one scene from the New Testament biblical narrative concerned with the resurrection of Christ, described in detail in the Gospel of John. Following his crucifixion, Christ appears to the disciples and reveals the wounds of the crucifixion as proof of his identity, death and resurrection. For reasons not articulated in the narrative, Thomas, another disciple, was not amongst them for this visitation. Unable to accept on faith what his fellow apostles describe, Thomas demands proof of his own before acknowledging the truth of the resurrection: ‘Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe’ (John 20:25). He desires to touch and explore Christ’s wounds and only by thus invading the body interior, by mimicking the trajectories of the penetrating objects through firstly vision and then tactility, will Thomas concede the miracle of the resurrection. For Thomas at least, seeing is not fully believing.

Some eight days later, Christ again appears to the disciples, and Thomas, this time amongst their number, is invited by Christ to dispel his scepticism: ‘Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands. And bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless but believing’ (John 20:27). Here, there is a strange aporia in the text, for it is not clear whether or not Thomas does touch any of the wounds or whether the sight of the dead Christ embodied is simply enough to dispel his doubt. He moves instantaneously from seeking tactile empirical evidence to articulating a rhetoric of belief: ‘My Lord and my God’ is his only reply, according to the narrative (John 20:28). In religious iconography of the scene, however, the aporia in the text is often negated in favour of a Thomas who is compelled to make contact with the wound. Caravaggio likewise makes no bones about the aporia – Thomas impinges upon the marks of the crucifixion by plunging his finger into the spear wound on Christ’s torso, guided there by the touch of the resurrected man himself and embedded in the flesh.



Copyrighted image

*The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, Michelangelo Caravaggio (1603). Courtesy Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg.

spectre of what illusions this body might contain. The revived dead body confounds normative expectations and understandings, so what could possibly be inside this body? What does Thomas actually locate with his finger inside the wound? Does he find the illusory infinity of the vanishing point, held within an illusion of embodied flesh?

Connections between illusion, depth, focus and spectatorship in the operations of perspective make it easy to align with theatrical practice in sharing similar concerns. Usually conceived of as a pictorial technique, perspective is addressed by performance studies academic Peggy Phelan, as she interrogates this same picture for resonances with theatre theory and practice (Phelan, 1997, pp. 23-43). Phelan describes perspective as a 'theatrical technology and a technology of theatre' because it 'supports the economy of substitution that drives Western theatre itself'. For Phelan, 'the 'as if', the illusionary indicative that theatre animates, allows for the construction of depth, for the 'invention' of physical interiority and psychic subjectivity' (ibid, p. 27). Associating this optical invention with its concomitant notions of depth and interiority, Phelan neatly makes a connection, both philosophical and historical, between perspective and the study of anatomy at this time that sought knowledge through revelation



of corporeal depth and the internal, and the study of psychology. Through establishing the illusion of perspective in representation, the quest for knowledge of all interiors was perhaps initiated, coalescing around the vanishing point or punctum at the centre of an apparently distant horizon. Ironically, then, the illusion of perspective is suggested as the foundational technology to inaugurate a resolutely non-illusory field of knowledge, that of anatomical science.

Thomas tests the potential illusion of the resurrection by plunging his finger into the space of the wound, but is he not also testing the illusion of representation by trying to access its interior? The spectator's belief in the illusion depends upon such a test that can manifest this resurrected body as having substance and presence. By inserting his finger into the represented wound, Thomas also accesses the supportive mechanisms of illusion at work in the image that appear to provide interiority for this body. He confirms the illusion of perspective in this move that suggests volumetric space on a two-dimensional plane. I want to suggest that Thomas's finger prevents the dissolution of this illusion by plugging the wound and denying full, unmediated sight of it, for what would it reveal if it were offered to sight? In the painting, one can only get a glimpse of the blackness within its parameters, the insinuation of an emptiness that would radically destabilize meaning if made fully visible. Its flat blackness, the blank of the void, would signify pure absence inside the representation, capable of destroying illusion and offering only a hole in the body and the image. If representation may come undone by the hole at its figurative centre, so too might belief in the resurrected Christ. The image creates doubt, even as its narrative supposedly negates it, by presenting a wound that is suspiciously capable of manifesting absence within the resurrected body, where such loss could not be recuperated by the representation.

The narrative of the life of Christ and his role as Saviour depends upon his death, resurrection and return to God, the Father, in Heaven. His embodied return after death is a necessary prerequisite to the disciples' faith in his message and their future ability to continue the mission of disseminating Christianity. It is not clear what constitutes the reclaimed body, but it must act as a prop for the persuasion of men into religious faith. In other words, the body needs to be made present to sight, bear the proofs of untimely death and appear more substantial than a metaphysical entity. Luke's Gospel goes into some detail about this displayed body when Jesus appears in Jerusalem to a gathering of the disciples. They instantly mistake him for a 'spirit', but Christ reasons that a 'spirit hath not flesh and bones' (Luke 24:39). Still apparently unconvinced by this vision, Jesus says: 'Have you anything to eat? / And they offered him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. / And when he had eaten before them, taking the remains, he gave to them' (Luke 24:41-43). At this point, the disciples do concede the miracle of the resurrection and are converted to belief. These acts



all apparently substantiate this body as a definite presence and make it an object of display for rhetorical ends, a persuasive prop, through the overcoming of various tests that materialize the body of Christ in an acceptable and convincing manner.

Thomas is subsequently delivered to belief, in a separate episode from the scene described above, through an act of persuasion that appropriates two main methods – demonstration and crediting. Belief in the resurrection is encouraged through the availability of Christ's body to sight and touch, a manifest demonstration of this body's thwarting of death. Crediting comes initially through the vision of Christ but more significantly via the touch of the wound where its reality is tested in the moment of tactile contact. Christ's 'body' can be interpreted as the prop, through which persuasion operates to dispel scepticism in the metaphysics of resurrection. The body as prop, identified as the site/sight for the production of certain knowledges, reverberates around the anatomy theatre and the theatre itself, where bodies are likewise materialized for specific epistemological ends. Although such bodies and the arenas in which they appear are ideologically different in many ways, they share this desire to make the body present in order to create meaning and 'show' various things. In each case, the body is animated and performed in order to persuade and convey knowledge, or certain 'truths'.

To suggest that performing bodies, the corpse on the dissecting table and the resurrected Christ, in these discrete instances, are all definable as props is to read them, to some extent, as theatrical objects with material presence in the moment of performance or display. They are located within their own spectatorial arenas (for all these bodies are looked at in the first instance), to be acted upon and variously animated to enable the establishment of particular discursive structures and narratives within their own economies. The idea that these bodies are animated or energized by functioning as props in their own fields will be developed here through a reading of Andrew Sofer's work, *The Stage Life of Props*, in which he suggests that props 'take on a life of their own in performance' (Sofer, 2003, p. 2). Sofer's rhetoric of animation and vitality seems particularly pertinent to these bodies that are on the cusp of such activity and are clearly much closer to metaphorical animation than objects.

For Sofer, the prop exists in a 'state of suspended animation' when noted in a text, from where it 'demands actual embodiment and motion (...) in order to spring to imaginative life' (ibid, p. 3). What then constitutes a prop and differentiates it from other stage scenery and furniture is Sofer's criterion of 'manipulation', whereby an actor must intervene in the object by moving it or altering it in some way, thus animating its presence (ibid, p. 12).

The corpse to be dissected within the theatre of anatomy is fundamentally a pedagogical prop, utilized by medical science to educate and elucidate through



visual elaboration and proof. Through these demonstrations, the body, as a knowable, biological entity with distinguishable parts and functions, becomes revealed and visible to the spectator. Unable to display itself, the cadaver is anatomized and manipulated by the dissector, who intervenes in the flesh in order to make its significant features visible and persuade spectators of the knowledge embodied therein. Following Sofer, the corpse is here altered from being a mere dead body to the repository of anatomical knowledge and authority in the medical arena through the work of the anatomist. Metaphorically, the cadaver is activated by these procedures that transfigure it into a useful and valuable source of information.

Christ's embodied presence as a resurrected body may also be conceived as a theatrical prop, engaged with by the disciples within the scene of revelation and supposed conversion. His body and consciousness persuade the disciples of the truth of the return through sight and then by undertaking certain activities that dismiss its possibility of being ghostly, rather than corporeal, such as talking and eating. Staged by Caravaggio in this painting, Christ's restored body is not enough for Thomas, the sceptic. He finds its presence insufficient and requires touch as the final guarantor of returning from death, and thereby animates the body through his own intervention. Manipulating this body, like Sofer's theatrical props, in order to test its materiality, Thomas, figuratively, gives Christ a life of his own by setting the body into motion in time and space. The penetrative finger into the body rouses its position within the frame from a mere questionable representation to something more vital and substantial. Persuading and convincing through its presence and solidity, the body simultaneously props up the Christian faith and its key tenet in the narrative of resurrection. Detached from the flesh, because dead, and yet in the flesh somehow, Christ is an ambiguous figure, troubling representation because of his liminality.

Part of the subversive nature of this image is whether Thomas's intervention and animation of this body does convince him and, in turn, the spectator, of resurrection. What exactly does get animated here, except more doubt? By interrogating the interior of the body, it seems that the wound itself is stimulated to produce destabilizing effects within representation and the structure of belief explored here. To what end is the flesh manipulated? Sofer mentions the notion of the 'recalcitrant prop', the one that 'goes awry and eludes (...) the actor's control' (Sofer, 2003, p. 24). This is the theatrical prop that does not behave as it should, either intentionally or not, and is especially applicable to the corporeal examples being discussed here. To some extent, all of these bodies, whether corpses in the anatomy theatre, Christ's resurrected body or the theatrical corpse to be considered next, are recalcitrant in their ability to undermine the operations of illusion and representation that they are positioned within. The anatomy theatre corpse is refractory in its allegiance to the processes of



death and decomposition that always circumscribe the dissector's actions. The prop must be engaged with in certain ways and order so that its recalcitrance is negated as far as possible; the abdomen was dissected first, then the head and finally the limbs, following the order of putrefaction and therefore allowing the anatomist to stay ahead of decay that would otherwise render the body useless. Caravaggio has established Christ's body as similarly recalcitrant in that it does not deliver what one might expect of it.

Theatrically, the corpse is usually represented by an actor behaving as if dead, mimicking the stillness and flaccidness of the cadaver on stage. As such, the body becomes a theatrical prop, animated by the other performers who circulate around it, perhaps move it and often address it through rhetorical speech. The theatrical illusion sometimes requires the present-absent in the scene in order to put flesh on the bones of the illusory. The insubstantial and intangible made manifest in the representation may have the ability to stabilize and perpetuate the illusion. Of course, there is another paradox here in that representation requires the spectre, corpse and the resurrected to be physically realized. Caravaggio's Christ is as substantial as the disciples around him, while the corpse must be 'played' by actors in all their fleshy presence. The illusion of insubstantiality must somehow be sustained, for these figures are not wraiths but made of flesh and blood. Hence the need in theatre for them to become objects of proof and persuasion, where their paradoxical nature can be circumvented in order to deliver something else – the illusion of death and resurrection, materiality and wounding. Theatre is the site and sight of the imagined scene. It does not exist, except as a construction and representation of the imagined artefact or figure as an embodied thing. It materializes subjects and objects, fleetingly in time and space, and the spectator witnesses both the illusion and a 'certain kind of *actual*, of having something before one's vision' (States, 1985, p. 46). The troubling body in theatrical representation, that is the one that is pretending to be dead, appears to test the manifestation of the theatrical.

The bodies being interrogated here are all problematized by their status as in-between figures: between resurrection and ascension for Christ; between representational death and actual life for the actor playing dead; and between death and entering medical discourse for the anatomized corpse. They are all in the process of crossing or switching from one state to another in their theatricalized scenes. This transit is partly between history and mythology, whereby figures become transformed by and within representation and, to some extent, are in excess of themselves through the process. For instance, Caravaggio's Christ, Thomas and disciples were life models, painted to depict biblical, even divine, figures by standing in as these icons to uphold the narrative; their representations shifting between their personal, everyday histories and Christian mythology. Likewise, the corpse on the anatomy table in the early mod-



ern period was the body of a newly executed criminal, whose punishment was thought to continue beyond death. This transgressive body, marked by capital punishment for its crimes, was transformed by medico-scientific discourse into a demonstrative prop, capable of showing universal anatomical truths and standards. The marginalized and socially rejected criminal became the privileged centre of attention and knowledge through anatomization, standing in as an appropriate and acceptable representative of all men (for these were, invariably, male bodies). These transgressive bodies become imbued with power in certain ideological arenas, where their bodies signify in excess of their materiality and normal social status. As Babcock argues, 'what is socially peripheral is often symbolically central' within cultural processes of 'symbolic inversion' (Babcock, 1978, p. 32).

A similar notion of the stand-in or substitute pervades Caravaggio's painting, as it does the very concept of theatre. Theatre is predicated on the appearance of the disappeared through substitution within the theatrical frame: the actor for the person, the costume for clothes, and make-up for the ravages of old age. Jesus stands in for God in the biblical narrative, as his incarnation in human form, able to live as a man amongst men but still divine in essence (Phelan, 1997, p. 25). Doubting Thomas stands in for those who might be sceptical of the religious story, especially the notion of resurrection. He tests the body of Christ as no one else in the text is permitted to, and his resultant conversion should persuade the reader to have faith also. Thomas is a stand-in, but there is more at stake here than simple substitution. These figures do not merely stand in for others as substitutes, but more complexly, they also behave as intermediaries, acting between subjects. Christ is the intermediary between God and man, whilst Thomas acts between the spectator and the object of doubt. Unable to see and touch for ourselves, Thomas is our interpolator in this discourse.

The wound in Caravaggio's painting is, arguably, both a stand-in and an intermediary. It is the intermediary of belief, operating between Thomas and his ideological structures, the most direct route to conversion, in the biblical narrative at least. It also substitutes for a more traumatic version of a wound, more in keeping with the horror of crucifixion. Caravaggio establishes a wound extraordinary in its physiological accuracy aligned with its surprising lack of evidential trauma. As Thomas pushes his finger into the opening, the skin above it creases as though it is not big enough to accommodate this intrusion and is forced to stretch at the margins. This veracity is simultaneously challenged by the absolute negation of injury pathology around the wound – there is no bruising, no swelling, and no detritus. Its most startling absence though is that of blood. All signs of body fluid contamination have been omitted to leave the wound sanitized and visible to an unnatural degree.



Following the anatomical work of Vesalius and the publication of his seminal text, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* in 1543, anatomy texts and illustrations went through something of a revolution, according to Martin Kemp (Kemp, 1993, p. 85). Anatomical subjects began to be illustrated through a 'new technique of naturalistic representation' during the early modern period (ibid, p. 85). Similarly to Caravaggio's wound, these images also erase all extraneous matter and fluids, substituting instead an ideal, aestheticized wound and viscera. The wound is an intermediary between inside and outside and as such is the in-between object of an unstable partition. These images, predicated on realism, reconstitute these boundaries by eliminating traces of abjection around the object. They seemingly cannot afford to leak at their borders, or display an excess of substance and so take on anti-realist representational strategies.

Such a statement is clearly paradoxical, as the visceral is always messy and excessive and to show this authentically would mean incorporating all of its disorder. So, the alleged realism of these pictures involves aestheticizing the body and draining it of fluids and superfluous matter. At the moment of representation, abundance and leakage are halted and negated, action is denied, and time is halted. The realism that these images are predicated on contains within its operations the rupture of anti-realism, in order to maintain the illusion. The representation of truth, supposedly the foundation of realism, is usurped at its very heart by the idealized wound. In this state, it is apparently able to intermediate between Thomas and Christ, between structures of belief and between embodied understandings, but it resolutely fails to deliver final meaning. The wound's aestheticization disconnects it from both normal, temporal relations and any normative pathological functioning, so that the body is thrown into flux. It renders the body ambiguous as it seems dead and alive, conscious but not entirely biologically animate.

Theatrically, the wound appears on-stage in various guises, but in realism it is most often simulated with fake blood and the pretence of trauma. It might be evoked through rhetorical devices and made the subject of the narrative, where language describes its presence, standing in for its messiness and abjection. Wounds are simulated and constructed through various means, and the spectator is duly expected to willingly suspend their disbelief in the artificiality of it all, in order to enter into the imaginary space of the theatrical. Even though manifestly pretend, they are staged, sometimes in highly convincing and complex ways, to maintain the illusion of reality being forged within the remit of realism. Alternatively, the real wound is inflicted and suffered in the uncompromising performance arena of live art, where artists incise their own bodies, and the spectator witnesses blood, trauma and pain that is authentic and, at times, brutal. Between the two modes, of pretence and reality, rests a wound such as the one found in Italian theatre company Società Raffaello Sanzio's 2001 pro-



duction of *Giulio Cesare*, that troubles in its intermediate position and will act as a final case study.

The production of *Giulio Cesare* by Società Raffaello Sanzio stages various bodies that should not be there. Extraordinary, transgressive bodies substitute for normative ones in the casting, which then challenge representational systems and discursive structures within the text by their very presence on stage. Inevitably, these bodies also confront the spectator with their unexpected and unusual conditions. Given significance and marked, in some cases, by medico-science, they disrupt the theatrical frame by coming into public and being on the stage. Their otherness is offered by director Romeo Castellucci as a literal and metaphorical rendering of the narrative and its ideologies; bodies to be read in all their materiality and difficulty within the frame of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

By claiming that the bodies of the actors in the production should not be there, I am making reference to their anomalous presences on the stage. Nick Ridout, analyzing the use of animals and children in the work of Società Raffaello Sanzio, articulates the problem thus:

We know whom we expect to see on stage. We expect to see actors. This needs saying: we do not even expect to see human beings, in all their diversity, but, as their representatives, a kind of group apart, more beautiful perhaps, more agile, more powerful and subtle of voice. Creatures who have been chosen on the basis of some initially desirable attributes, which they have subsequently honed and refined by means of professional training. So when we get something else, it appears as an anomaly, and a worrying one at that. (Ridout, 2004, p. 58)

Castellucci has employed bodies in *Giulio Cesare* that are other than what is expected of actors, thus drawing attention to the materiality and physicality of those bodies in a very explicit manner. They are entered into systems of representation that cannot deny their 'irreducible materiality', but instead they offer a direct challenge to them, failing to be totally taken into those representational economies (ibid, p. 60).

Julius Caesar, in this production, is played by a fragile and physically decrepit old man who is weak and disturbingly still on the stage. The other actors appear to nurse him and care for him, as one would a patient in a hospital. In his nakedness there is a vulnerability to his presence that is shocking, and which undermines not only the supposed physical presence of Caesar but also his ideological position as ruler of a great empire.

Cassius and Brutus are played by two males in Act One but are then replaced by two females in the Second Act, both of whom are anorexic and obviously so. Their bodies are wasted and skeletal, painful to observe as they appear also too

fragile and vulnerable for the work of the theatre and the parts they have to play. They perform within a stage space that is a reconstruction of a devastated theatre auditorium, with ruined drapes and burnt-out seating, and somehow match that wasteland with their own disintegration and echo of loss. Metaphorically, they carry the guilt of Caesar's murder within them, that eats away at their dignity and selfhood, and Castellucci literalizes this in their physical beings.

The final character and the most important for this analysis is that of Mark Anthony, who is played by an actor who has had a laryngectomy. This operation involves the surgical removal of all or part of the larynx. The actor has a permanent wound, or stoma, in his neck that is similar to the aestheticized and ideal wounds described in anatomical illustrations previously and that Caravaggio has depicted on the body of Christ. The wound's borders have been reconstituted in such a way as to negate any abject substances, yet the stoma remains a direct opening into the interior of the body. On the neck of the actor, it looks like a black hole that becomes animated by the movement of the actor's throat as he 'speaks'. The actor, Dalmazio Masini, is the most unlikely figure to be cast in a role that demands so much from the voice, in terms of power, stamina, inflection and technique.

His is a voice that must persuade through his use of language, it needs to regain the confidence of the crowd and incite that crowd to violence and revenge

Copyrighted image

Dalmazio Masini as Mark Anthony in *Giulio Cesare* by Societas Raffaello Sanzio. Photo: Gabriele Pellegrini. Reproduced with permission of Societas Raffaello Sanzio.



on behalf of Caesar. This actor must deliver one of the most familiar speeches from Shakespearean texts and swing the tide of the play against the treachery of the murderers. The scene is set in Ancient Rome, where rhetoric and oration were highly prized and celebrated skills, learnt and practised in order to enter into the public and political arena. So, the subversion of this particular wound is twofold – it undermines the context of the narrative, and it destabilizes the work and ideology of the actor. This is speech that has been absented and then revived through a technique that requires painstaking practice. It struggles to emerge from this body and is constituted in a physical process far removed from normative techniques that only serve to draw attention to the work that is being done within the actor to make speech, an ability and expectation that the spectator takes for granted. The laryngectomy, revealed on the actor's neck, materializes and embodies the act of speaking in a stark and dramatic way. By association, however, attention is not just drawn to this particular actor's speech but to the construction of voice and sound by every actor in the production.

For De Certeau, bodies 'become bodies only by conforming to (...) codes' that are socially constructed for disciplinary ends so that our carnal beings adhere to a certain physicality and dynamic in the world (De Certeau, 1984, p. 147). Castellucci's cast overtly demonstrates such laws by breaking and confronting them; they are not contained by them but remain resistant to their power, existing outside of and somewhat distanced from their economies. These are bodies that have not capitulated to those demands; they have failed or simply cannot respond to the codes as required. They frustrate the codes and taunt them by entering the theatrical frame and making themselves public and visible.

De Certeau suggests that 'at the extreme limit of these tireless inscriptions (...) there remains only the cry', when something else escapes – 'the body's difference, alternately *in-fans* and ill-bred, intolerable in the child, the possessed, the madman or the sick' (ibid, p. 148). Perhaps these staged bodies are that cry made physical, with people who are unable to conform, or in the case of the anorexics, this is the extremity of inscription, where the physical body is exhausted and sickened by the codes. These bodies that have failed to represent society to itself through its laws and inscriptions are entered into a representational system that exaggerates their 'cry' and the fragility of the body in the face of all these various codes. They have bent to this social will and are crumbling beneath it. That they can uphold the theatrical edifice throughout the performance is made questionable by their sheer vulnerability, which might not withstand all the representational forces at work. This is theatre on the brink of collapse.

Ridout's actors, who are 'a kind of group apart', a group in excess of the normative in their beauty, stature, presence or other 'desirable attributes', have been replaced here by those at the opposite limit (Ridout, 2004, p. 58). Obviously



delineated and marked by medico-scientific discourses, they are pathologized and marginalized by them: obesity, anorexia, geriatrics and laryngectomies are all means of describing the body and its condition, its care and status through those specific languages and values. Each trauma or medical transgression heightens awareness in the spectator of the context of medicalization that now surrounds every body in the West. They are instantly read as bodies that are subject to medical discourse and intervention, whether they confront it or have been marked by its procedures. This is how bodies are made sense of in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, and this perception is simultaneously challenged by the alternate understandings of the body in the narrative of the play.

Two ideologies are made to meet in the phenomenal presentation of bodies within the theatrical system. De Certeau's conception of juridical politics confronts medical politics through the text and material bodies circulating within the same representational frame (De Certeau, 1984, p. 142). This is the same juxtaposition that can be found, to a lesser extent, in the Caravaggio painting, with Thomas, the medic, opposing the body of Christ, inscribed by penal codes. The bodies are subject to these two different inscriptions of the law in *Giulio Cesare*, one metaphorically and representationally in the juridical notion of the body politic and the other physically in medical markings. Underneath this tension, however, is the sense that both systems of coding, the juridical and the medical, are intended to inscribe and circumscribe the body in particular ways, according to social codes, which allow the body to represent society to itself, in De Certeau's terms.

The characters in the Shakespeare play – Caesar, Mark Anthony, Brutus and Cassius – all represent or stand in for groups of people in relation to certain power dynamics. Caesar represents the Roman Empire; Mark Anthony represents Caesar and those who support him and, in the future, will represent Rome; whilst Cassius and Brutus represent those who conspire against that power and its embodiment within a single male figure. As such, they each represent the body politic, signifying a collective in excess of their individual bodies, and yet, they are marked in the performance by singularity, made unique by their wounds and pathologies. These anomalies draw excessive attention to themselves, and the body politic is thus circumvented by their extraordinary physical exceptions, and they remain in excess of representation, which seemingly fails to recuperate these bodies and incorporate them into its systems. They stand firm in their 'irreducible materiality' (Ridout, 2004, p. 60). This is surely the downfall of Caravaggio's painting, in which Christ's body should represent something in excess of itself that is divine and holy, yet this moment is made ambiguous by the wound, in its curious materiality that ruptures the representation.



Castellucci deliberately employs these bodies in all their specificity to embody certain ideologies underpinning the text. Dalmazio Masini's surgically altered body is used to draw attention to the creation of speech and its importance to the narrative in terms of persuading the crowd of the treachery involved in Caesar's untimely death. The wound in his neck animates this discourse by emphasizing the labour involved in vocalizing thought and language. In this way, Castellucci stages this wound as a prop to structures of rhetoric and their construction in the body. It also works to displace the locus of power from the authorial text into the actor's body, which then works to articulate the text in particular ways. The text as some transcendent and metaphysical force in the theatre is situated within this material body that struggles to speak it coherently and forcefully. The wound once again destabilizes the illusion of realism, where speech is supposed to be spontaneous and natural, by instead rupturing and making apparent the very instruments of its production. Castellucci employs this recalcitrant prop to heighten this revelation by allowing it to be made visible in the theatrical frame.

Describing the wound on Masini's neck as a recalcitrant prop refers to its unstable status that makes it the source of potentially unexpected occurrences. It may elude the actor's control at any point, and the spectator bears witness to this constant battle in the actor. He is continually striving and labouring to make the wound and the remains of his speech organs obey his desires and requirements. Speech is not guaranteed in this process, or indeed sound in any definable or recognizable pattern. The voice that emerges is strange and sounds somewhat synthesized or non-human. It is made recalcitrant by its very precarious operations that make the voice insubstantial and liable to disintegration or failure.

Recalcitrance does not simply reside in the pathologized voice of this particular actor, however, as the wound makes explicit the fragility of all voices in the theatre. They are expected to be so much 'more' than the voice of the everyday – one only need consider the range of vocal techniques and training manuals for the actor to recognize this imperative. Behind the realist façade of effortless and 'natural' speech lays a mastery of technique and intense labour that may, similarly, break down and reveal its own illusions. The voice that cracks, which cannot be heard, that runs out of breath, that becomes dysfunctional, all resonate across this wound. What is made apparent is that the articulation of text and dialogue in performance is always labourintensive for the actor and inherently unstable. Both body and voice are pushed to the extreme limit of their capabilities in Castellucci's theatre, and we fear their subsidence into stasis. The capacity for theatrical undoing is central.

It seems appropriate to consider the presence of this wound in its particular scene – that of rhetorical argument. Rhetoric is constructed to influence and

Copyrighted image

Dalmazio Masini as Mark Anthony in *Giulio Cesare* by Societas Raffaello Sanzio. Photo: Gabriele Pellegrini. Reproduced with permission of Societas Raffaello Sanzio.

convince audiences of particular opinions or knowledge. Once more then, we have a wound that is staged in a scene of doubt and persuasion. Mark Anthony must convert the crowd to belief in the injustice of Caesar's murder in order to incite them to take revenge and seek justice. He does this, as we have seen, in the play by evoking the wounds of Caesar through rhetorical language and in utilizing the body as prop to these arguments. In the performance of *Giulio Cesare*, the wounds on Caesar's body are substituted for Mark Anthony's stoma, which is made visible to all.

The substitution is heightened by blood and death being symbolically draped round Mark Anthony, as he hangs the theatre curtain over his shoulder, like a makeshift toga. Its plush redness and weight of velvet imply the imperial body and significance of Caesar, whilst the use of the curtain as part of the theatrical apparatus blurs the boundary between the real and fictional elements of the theatre. In the realist theatre, the curtain distinguishes the real world of the auditorium from the illusory space and time of the stage. It demarcates those borders and also plays a part in the revelation of the illusion, as it is raised on the scene, invoking a moment of 'lo and behold' for the spectator. It reveals the aperture through which we view the action and behind which the illusion is constructed. What usually contains and frames the illusion is deliberately



drawn into the theatrical moment to become part of the representation, as if the stage can no longer hold the edges or maintain its integrity. Might the red curtain be the wound or rupture in the economy of realist theatre, aggressively bisecting fiction and reality?

The actual wound, the stoma, stands in for all the wounds on Caesar and substitutes his multiple injuries in one, permanent stoma that makes it difficult to articulate Anthony's viewpoint. It echoes with these other gaping mouths and finds it almost as difficult to speak, not through excess but through absence and loss. Loss of the larynx, loss of wholeness, loss of actorly gravitas and beauty, however, do not remain as an absence within the theatrical frame, for this body and its wound saturates representation with the actual. As an intermediary between character and actor, between Anthony and Masini, the wound produces an actor doing the work of acting in an embodied and physical manner. It destabilizes illusion by manifesting its internal, bodily constructions on the part of the performer. Drawing in the curtain, as cleaver between stage and world, puts into flux other theatrical illusions as the actor envelops himself in its folds.

Within this production we are not sure if Anthony's speeches do persuade because there is no crowd assembled on the stage to hear and react to him. Anthony and his wound, instead, confront the spectators in the auditorium by standing at the front of the stage and using direct address. Doubt is transferred elsewhere within this scene, and I would argue that it lingers with the audience through the presentation and display of this particular actor's body. This wounded, suffering body draws the spectator towards it in visceral and empathic relations, reflecting all our bodies, their frailty and eventual breakdown. Yet, these bodies are emphatically hopeful too, that such things can be overcome. This is a wound that provides relief and has become a means of replacing diseased parts, too pathologized to continue within the body. The body has been re-educated to cope with alterations in its constitution and has found a substitute for normative speech formation. The wound is both a *memento mori* and a *memento vivante*.

As in the anatomy theatre, the wounded and opened bodies laid out in this essay for analysis act as props to various acts of persuasion and demonstration. Their incisions and interiors are staged to deliver certain truths, even though they are embedded within structures of illusion that underpin their representational framings. I have argued that the opened body in these circumstances is seemingly unable to maintain the illusion and either destabilizes its operations or ruptures it, and thereby fails to deliver truth, knowledge and/or belief. Instead, the anatomized body can expose other processes at work within these moments, such as the labour of voice production in *Giulio Cesare* or the liminality of these bodies, as both transgressive and substitutable figures.

**Gianna Bouchard** is Senior Lecturer in Drama at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK. She has published in *Performance Research* and is Reviews Editor for the same journal. She was awarded her PhD from the University of Surrey, Roehampton, in 2006. This project was titled *Performing the Anatomised Body* and was an interrogation of the interface between the performed body and the medicalized body, funded by the AHRC. Its focus was on representations of the wounded and opened body in art and performance. Her wider research interests include contemporary theatre and performance (particularly live art), experimental theatre and interdisciplinary art practice.

## Notes

- 1 Michelangelo Caravaggio (1603) *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, Preussische Schlösser und Gärten, Berlin-Brandenburg, Potsdam, 107 x 146, oil on canvas.

## References

- Babcock, B., *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*. Ithaca, 1978.
- Certeau, M. de, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Translated by Steven Rendall.) Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1984.
- Kemp, M., 'The Mark of Truth: Looking and Learning in Some Anatomical Illustrations from the Renaissance and Eighteenth Century'. In: *Medicine and the Five Senses*. Bynum, W.F. and R. Porter (eds). Cambridge and New York, 1993.
- Phelan, P., *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*. London and New York, 1997.
- Ridout, N., 'Animal Labour in the Theatrical Economy'. In: *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 57-65. 2004.
- Sofer, A., *The Stage Life of Props*. Ann Arbor, 2003.
- States, B., *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater*. Berkeley, 1985.