THE FACE OF DEATH:
PRINTS, PERSONIFICATIONS AND THE GREAT PLAGUE OF LONDON

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2001

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Art History)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

February 2009

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a mass-produced broadsheet printed during the Great Plague of London (1664-1666), which unites the textual modes of poetry and medical prescription with imagery and statistical tabulation, titled *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us*. The central woodcut on the broadsheet presents a view of London as a bounded expansion, and relegates the images of death, particularly registered in the personification of Death, to the outskirts of the city. This visual separation of the city from the plague sick (and the plague dead) is most profoundly registered on the border of the broadsheet, which is adorned with *momento mori* imagery. The ordered presentation of the plague city is likewise established in the mortality tabulations on the sheet. These tabulations, which were culled from the contemporaneous London Bills of Mortality, make visible the extent of the disease in the city, while simultaneously linking the plague to the poor London suburbs.

Of particular interest are the representation of faces on the broadsheet – the face of the dead, the face of Death and the face of the city – and how these images relate to the plague orders imposed on the city population by the Corporation of London. These orders sought medically and legally to contain, and spatially to control, the larger social body of London through enacting a kind of erasure upon the identities of the sick and dead. These erasures registered themselves in material form as a kind of facelessness, a motif found on the figure of Death and in the skull-faces of the dead. This motif visually registers the various anxieties expressed towards the faces of the plague-sick by many contemporaries living in plague-London, an anxiety about those who visibly displayed the signs of their contagion and, more threatening still, about those who were asymptomatic. An increasing understanding of the plague as both visible and controllable in the early modern city of London was continuously being challenged by the conflicting belief that plague was a disease of invisible extension and manifestation. This variance is deeply registered in the ambiguous depiction of the plague-dead in the frame of the sheet.

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Death stares us continually in the face in every infected person that passeth by us, in every coffin which is dayly and hourely carried along the streets.

– John Tillson, 1665[1]

INTRODUCTION

Under what circumstances is an understanding of the face undone, and how and why might this undoing occur? In *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Age*s, Valentin Groebner describes a trend beginning in the late medieval period in which certain faces provided the bodily site of violent identity alteration.[2] Groebner develops the idea of defacement, or *ungestalt*, in order to illustrate how certain discursive forms and behaviours functioned to describe and / or inscribe a sense of formlessness upon certain bodies in order to draw boundaries between the mutually overflowing encounters of order and disorder.[3] For Groebner, the arenas of these encounters are most often situated on the battlefield or in various courts of justice, and thus this sense of *ungestalt* seems to him most strongly associated with organized forms of violence.[4]

It is my contention that there are other contexts and means by which the face of a person, as a visible site of subjective identity, is intentionally compromised, or "undone," particularly in reaction to other kinds of mass mortalities. I propose that an urban outbreak of epidemic illness may be one such context, and might therefore prompt organized attempts to perform facial erasures on certain bodies. In the case of the Great Plague of London, which provides the site of my study, numerous primary sources

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[1] John Tillson, "Letter to William Sancroft, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, dated September 14, 1665, London," in *The Historical Sources of Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year*, ed. Watson Nicholson (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1919), 148.

[2] Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 11-16.

[3] Ibid., 12, 151.

[4] Ibid., 65. Groebner is drawing from the work of Roland Barthes, who is quoted as noting "that every society develops techniques of control in order to fix fluctuating signifiers and combat the terrors of uncertain signs." See Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 32-51.

suggest that there was unease felt towards certain faces in the population, specifically the faces of the plague-sick.[5] As Jacque Roland wrote in 1630, those whose "face changes completely, [whose] eyes become red and wild… temples drawn… nostrils enlarge… [whose] nose becomes pointed, the mouth, from which exudes a cadaverous odour, hangs half open… [whose] skin becomes spotted with red, violet and black pustules and marks,"[6] providing the increasingly strained public with a catalogue of symptoms that were listed over and above the underlying face of the sick. Indeed, the facial markers of their subjective identity became literally masked under the excesses of these plague indicators.[7]

Yet of greater concern still to many commentators from this period were those asymptomatic sick, those infected people who circulated among the general population, knowingly or unknowingly, and who displayed no outward sign of their infected state.[8]

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[5] What is now known as the Great Plague of London was primarily contained to the year of 1665, although it began in the previous year and would continue to a lesser degree in 1666, with individual cases of plague mortality being reported up to 1679. As the last outbreak of bubonic plague in the city of London, it retains this title, however, two previous outbreaks were likewise known as "the Great Plague" in their time (1563 and 1603), until they were overshadowing by subsequent epidemics. See Paul Slack, *Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985), 54, 69.

[6] Jacques Roland. *Antiloiminie, ou Contre-peste, oeuvre chirurgicale qui traite des moyens de préserver et de guarir chacun de sa maladie pestilentielle* (Rouen: Printed by the author, 1630), 16-18. Translated and quoted in Lawrence Brockliss and Colin Jones. *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 37.

[7] I am not the first to notice this trend. As Colin Jones notes in the context of the plague in France, it "seemed not only to carry off the lives of the affected but also to efface their individuality, to blot out their identity." See Colin Jones, "Plague and its Metaphors in Early Modern France," *Representations* 35 (Winter 1996): 98. See also William Boghurst, *Loimographia: An Account of the Great Plague of London in the Year 1665*, ed. Joseph Frank Payne (London: Shaw, 1894), 21-22.

[8] See Samuel Pepys comments on June 17th and August 28th, in Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, (New York: Hayes Barton Press, 1912); Nathaniel Hodges, *Loimologia: Or, an Historical Account of the Plague in London in 1665: With Precautionary Directions against the Like Contagion*, trans. John Quincy (London: E. Bell, 1720), 98. Jewish Vegetarians, *Golgotha; or a Looking Glass for London and the Suburbs thereof: Shewing the Causes, Nature and Efficacy of the Present Plagues; and the most Hopeful way for Healing. With an humble Witness against the Advice and Practice of Shutting-up unto Oppression. Both now and formerly experienced to Encrease, rather than Prevent the Spreading thereof. By J.V. Grieved by the Poor, who Perish Daily hereby* (London: Printed for the Author, 1665), 12; Thomas Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (London: Printed for George Calvert, 1667), 10. Although later and fictional, Daniel Defoe's novel on the Great Plague makes repeated reference to the fictional narrator's concern for those plague sick that "yet did not show the Consequences of it in their Countenances." Daniel

This concern around the readability of the faces of the plague-sick is reflected in the significant increase in the publications of physiognomic treatises during English plague years, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century.[9] As Martin Porter has demonstrated, these English physiognomy texts focused in part on how to identify the faces of the plague-sick, and indeed, many of the authors of these treatises likewise wrote pamphlets on the plague.[10] The following study explores how the anxiety registered between these two faces of the plague-sick – the visibly and the invisibly sick – was manifested in both visual and textual forms. Moreover, I will demonstrate how many images of the plague-dead – those absolutely removed from the London population and interred beneath the cityscape – were conflated with the plague-sick, and subsequently were rendered in an ambiguous fashion. My focus on the representation of faces in the Great Plague makes my study unique in the vast body of scholarship that has already been written on this event.

This essay, then, focuses upon pestilential death as it was visually articulated and encountered during the Great Plague of London, specifically in how this pandemic interacted with the locus of the face. I have chosen to focus upon the moment of London's Great Plague because it is at this late date that we see the final florescence of some unusual visual manifestations associated with the disease, and that have in turn provided visual focal points for my research. As such, I have situated my exploration

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Defoe*, A Journal of the Plague Year: Being Observations or Memorials of the Most Remarkable Occurrences, as well Publick as Private, which happened in London during the last Great Visitation in 1665. Written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London*, ed. Louis Landa (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 191, 202. In actuality, it is likely that only very small portions of the infected were asymptomatic. The majority of the cases of "sudden death" seem to be reported at the beginning of city epidemics, possibly indicating the presence of a septicemic strain of plague that quickly runs its course. See Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 8.

[9] Martin Porter, *Windows of the Soul: Physiognomy in European Culture, 1470-1780* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 100.

[10] Ibid., 103.

between two seemingly synonymous figures that were dispersed in printed form throughout the London cityscape during this last outbreak: between the skull-faces of the plague-dead and the skeletal personification of death.

The object of my study – a single-sided broadsheet produced for sale in London in early November, 1665 (FIG. 1) – draws much of its textual content from the contemporaneous Bills of Mortality: official listings of death that were made for weekly sale in London during the height of the epidemic (FIG. 4).[11] The production of broadsheets (sometimes referred to as broadsides) assumed a massive scale in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of London; they were, as Julius Ruff notes, "the primary news source" for this period.[12] "In England," as Ruff elaborates, "even the size of early broadsheets often replicated the nine-by-twelve-inch folio sheets of royal proclamation."[13] The very form of early broadsheets, then, was designed to give its contents the kind of legitimacy associated with the orders of the monarchy. The significance of this form by 1665, however, was mainly vestigial; indeed, following the English Civil War, most broadsheets were printed without royal sanction.[14] In this way, they differed greatly from the Bills of Mortality, which were not only royally sanctioned, but printed at the monarchy's express direction.[15] Formally, the official Bills of Mortality mimicked the single-sheet form of the broadsheet; unlike most broadsheets, however, the

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[11] Stephen Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press, and Public Health in Seventeenth-Century London," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2004): 510. See also: Richelle Munkhoff, "Searchers of the Dead: Authority, Marginality, and the Interpretation of the Plague in England, 1574-1665" in *Gender and History* 11, no. 1 (1999): 6.

[12] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.

[13] Ibid., 17.

[14] More profoundly, the events of the Civil War had severely compromised the traditional legitimacy of kingship, particularly in their challenge to the divine-right theory. See Robert Appelbaum, *Literature and Utopian Politics in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201.

[15] Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 513.

printers of the Bills made use of both recto and verso sides for the detailing of their subject matter: the anonymous (that is to say unnamed) numbers of the London-dead, broken down by parish and manner of death.

An interest in the Bills mortality tabulation can be traced in the lengthy title of the broadside that is at the centre of my study: *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us: A True Relation of Seven Modern Plagues or Visitations in London, with the Number of Those that were Buried of All Diseases;* viz *the First in the Year of Queen Elizabeth, Anno 1592. The Second in the Year 1603 the Third in (That Never to be Forgotten Year) 1625. The Fourth in Anno 1630. The Fift in the Year 1636. The Sixt in the Year 1637. And 1638. The Seventh this Present Year, 1665* (FIG. 1).[16] As the title suggests, most of the space on this broadsheet is dedicated to listing mortality totals from other plague years, as well as those of the present year (broken down by month). These totals were likely taken from the official Bills of Mortality. A viewer could, then, compare what was happening in the city at the time of the broadsheet's production, to what had happened during previous outbreaks, and moreover, could use this sheet to predict what was likely to occur in the future.

Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us (London 1665),[17] produced for mass-consumption by the literate portion of the London population, unites the textual modes of poetry and medical prescription with statistical tabulation and printed woodcut images,

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[16] Three copies of this series of broadsheets can be found in the British Library Print Room. *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us: A True Relation of Seven Modern Plagues or Visitations in London, with the Number of Those that were Buried of All Diseases; viz the First in the Year of Queen Elizabeth, Anno 1592. The Second in the Year 1603 the Third in (That Never to be Forgotten Year) 1625. The Fourth in Anno 1630. The Fift in the Year 1636. The Sixt in the Year 1637. And 1638. The Seventh this Present Year, 1665*, (London: Printed for Francis Coles, Thomas Vere, and John Wright, 1665).
[17] I will always clarify this abbreviated title through the inclusion of its place of production and date, as several other broadsheets are also known by the same name.

all on a single sheet.[18] In its complex conjunction of these multiple discursive forms, the programmatic layout of this broadsheet oscillates between London-the-place and London-the-population: between numbers and images of the dead (and threatened) London populace, and the image of London as a bounded, circumscribable place, constituted through the listing of its infected parishes. The multiple (arguably excessive) modes being presented in this broadsheet, in their relations and disjunctions, parallel "the constant negotiation of a shifting and dangerous urban terrain," that according to Joseph Monteyne was required of the denizens of plague-wrought London.[19] The following study seeks to explore this terrain without necessarily defining (and thereby attempting to contain) it. As will be demonstrated, London (as both population and place) was being conceived of during this last plague as something in need of mapping, while simultaneously, as something exceeding the means of any cartographical exercise: that is, as a place and population made distinct by both visible and invisible topographies. Similarly, while Lawrence Brockliss and Colin Jones quite rightly suggest that plague was the "most visible" of illnesses in early modern Western Europe, I will demonstrate that it was simultaneously understood as an invisible disease, one of unclear extension and oftentimes of ambiguous manifestation.[20]

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[18] While it is difficult to determine literacy rates in mid-seventeenth-century London, not least of all because many contemporaries viewed literacy as the ability to read Latin, it is estimated that thirty percent of men and ten percent of women comprised this category. J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1550-1760* (London; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 277-278.

[19] Joseph Monteyne, *The Printed Image in Early Modern London: Urban Space, Visual Representation and Social Exchange* (Ashgate: Burlington VT: 2007), 98.

[20] By visible, Brockliss and Jones are referring to the fact that "the plague" was by far the most frequently referred to illness in the textual materials that come down to us from this period. Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 43. I switch between the words "disease" and "illness" with specific intent here, for as Mary Lindemann notes, "disease is a biological entity; illness a perceived condition." See Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 8.

Indeed, prior to the seventeenth century the term "plague" was used somewhat indiscriminately to describe any kind of large epidemic outbreak, and it in turn was often referred to as simply "the sickness" or "the infection," meaning that it was being discussed as a kind of archetype of disease.[21] As Jones notes, "the fact that the very word for plague…came to be attributed to any extreme form of pestilence, epidemiological disaster, noxious prodigy or human catastrophe signals the power the term packed."[22] It has been noted by several historians that, for people living in the late medieval and early modern periods, an understanding of the nature of the plague was clouded by the simultaneous occurrence of three different strains of plague – bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic – each with its own symptomology and method of transmission.[23] Such indeterminacy in the nature of the illness led to several theories of transmission, two dominant ones being of note.

The first of these, and the older theory, argued that the plague was transmitted by the circulation of bad air, or miasma.[24] The second theory of transmission held that the

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[21] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 25. In her small book on the metaphors of cancer and tuberculosis, Susan Sontag notes that "any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. First the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, pollution, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease…it becomes metaphor. Then, in the name of the disease… [it] becomes adjectival….And the disease (so enriched with meanings) is projected onto the world." See Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 58.

[22] Jones, "Plague and its Metaphors," 98.

[23] Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 19, 28-29; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 8-9. Bubonic plague is now understood to be an often deadly infection caused by the bacillus *Yersinia pestis*, which is likely primarily transmitted to human hosts by the bite of an infected flea (*Xenopsylla cheopis*) that is hosted by the black rat (*Rattus rattus*). See Graham Twigg, "Plague in London: Spatial and Temporal Aspects of Mortality," Epidemic Disease in London: A Collection of Working Papers given at the Symposium 'Epidemic Disease in London: From the Black Death to Cholera' held at the Institute for Historical Research, 19 March 1992, http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/epipre.html#pref.

[24] As Philip Ziegler notes, "This concept of a corrupted atmosphere, visible in the form of mist or smoke, drifting across the world and overwhelming all whom it encountered, was one of the main assumptions on which the physicians of the Middle Ages based their efforts to check the plague." See Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 14. Also see Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 45; Andrew Wear, "Making Sense of Health and the Environment in Early Modern England," In *Health and Healing in Early Modern England: Studies in Social and Intellectual History*, ed. Andrew Wear (Aldershot, Hampshire; Brookfield, Vt: Ashgate, 1998), 137.

plague was contagious in nature, and was transmitted through personal contact with the sick and their possessions, particularly their clothes.[25] Prior to the period in question these two theories were typically held as mutually viable and amendable to the other;[26] however, by the early seventeenth century, English authorities increasingly upheld the theory of contagion over that of miasma in order to defend their policies of population containment.[27] The ascendancy of the theory of contagion, at least at the level of state and city policy, will be something that I will return to later in my discussion.

A tracking of the events and movements of the plague has been well documented by such scholars as Walter Bell, Lloyd Moote and Dorothy Moore, Stephen Porter and Paul Slack.[28] Until quite recently however, scholars have focused almost exclusively upon tracing the epidemiological and demographic histories of these events, of both the Great Plague itself, as well as more broadly upon the second pandemic beginning in the 1340s.[29] Slack's book is the exception in this case, in that it also works towards a redefinition of English urban environments as places primarily constituted through

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[25] People, and the objects most closely associated with their bodies (such as clothes) were considered contagious, particularly through touch and breath/inhalation. See Margaret Healy, "Discourses of the Plague in Early Modern London," Epidemic Disease in London: A Collection of Working Papers given at the Symposium 'Epidemic Disease in London: From the Black Death to Cholera' held at the Institute for Historical Research, 19 March 1992, http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/epipre.html#pref; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 11.

[26] Most major European cities responded to plague outbreaks by trying to dispel the perceived miasmatic air while simultaneously attempting to reign in the perceived sites of contagion. Likewise, plague was often understood to be both natural and supernatural in origin. See Lindemann, *Medicine and Society*, 102-103, 44.

[27] Ann Carmichael charts a similar order of events in Florence, leading her to argue that it was the Florentine plague controls that led to a promotion of theories of contagion there, and not vice versa. See Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor,* 130. See also Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 202-203, 208.

[28] Walter Bell, *The Great Plague of London in 1665* (London: The Bodley Head, 1951); Lloyd A. Moote and Dorothy Moore, *The Great Plague: The Story of London's Most Deadly Year*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004); Stephen Porter, *The Great Plague* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1999); Slack, *Impact of Plague*.

[29] For a good overview of the events and impact of the initial outbreak, see Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970). For the outbreak of the second pandemic in England, see Colin Platt, *King Death: The Black Death and its Aftermath in Late-Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

continuous shifting between periods of stability and periods of crisis.[30] This interpretation

was in turn challenged by such scholars as Steven Rappaport and Ian Archer, both of

whom demonstrate that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of London were more

often than not the site of implicit rather than explicit social conflict.[31] For while the threat

of a popular uprising seems to have been palpable for many living in post-Restoration

England, actual large-scale protest in this period seems to have been limited to the

occasional food or anti-improvement riot.[32] Despite this, the perceived danger of the

disorder made possible during a plague epidemic was of particular concern to the

Corporation of London in the mid-seventeenth century.[33]

Joseph Monteyne's recent publication, *The Printed Image in Early Modern*

London, can be situated within recent scholarship that focuses on the early modern

cityscape as a place imagined and partially informed through the production and

dissemination of popular printed materials.[34] In his book, Monteyne explores the

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[30] Slack, *Impact of Plague*. This work built upon the highly influential book he coauthored with Peter Clark: Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972).

[31] Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). The very good historiographical overview of English urban studies by Mark Jenner and Paul Griffiths was an invaluable guide to me, and flagged me to these books. See Mark S. R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths, "Introduction," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, eds. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner, 5-6 (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[32] Buchanan Sharp, "Popular Protest in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay, 273 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Keith Wrightson, *English Society: 1580-1680* (London: Routledge, 2003), 181-182; J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 113.

[33] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 78; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 302. The Corporation of London is the official name given to the city's municipal governing body, which encompasses the Lord Mayor's office, the Court of Aldermen and the Common Council. The parishes that intersect the city were initially ecclesiastical divisions, but overtime the parishes gained civic responsibilities (most notably with the Poor Law of 1601, which required the parishes to provide funds [through taxation] for the upkeep of their unemployed poor). In 1665, the various parishes of the city were independent administrative entities that, nonetheless, submitted to the direction of the Corporation.

[34] Examples include: Rose Marie San Juan, *Rome: A City out of Print* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

intersections of print culture and the movements of people and ideas within the city, including the altered plague city.[35] In his chapter on the plague in London, Monteyne explores the contemporary importance of anatomical vision in representations of the plague city. Although his study is quite distinct from mine, our research intersects in our secondary focus on the official Bills of Mortality. These Bills have also provided the focal point of recent research by historical scholar Stephen Greenberg, who investigates the details of their manufacture and sale.[36]

Indeed, the contemporaneous production and distribution of these Bills of Mortality is of high significance to my project, in particular how their "caution to read the city like a text" as Monteyne observes, "forms the chiasmus between the everyday world of bodies and the imaginary totalizations of science."[37] This likely accounted for much of the popularity of the Bills (and those broadsides that appropriated their mortality tabulation): in their use as a kind of statistical map of the city, giving their possessors a guide to the dangerous terrain of the city. More than this, however, the wide-scale production of these Bills of Mortality and their related broadsheets is suggestive of both an underlying attempt to contain the city by way of specialized census-taking, and a simultaneous engagement in the construction of an understanding of the population of the sick – a population which was increasingly conflated with the population of the London poor.[38]

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[35] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 73-112.

[36] Stephen Greenberg, "The Dreadful Visitation: Public Health and Public Awareness in Seventeenth-Century London," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 85, no. 4 (1997): 391-401; Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 508-527.

[37] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 98.

[38] See Justin Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," Epidemic Disease in London: A Collection of Working Papers given at the Symposium 'Epidemic Disease in London: From the Black Death to Cholera' held at the Institute for Historical Research, 19 March 1992, http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/epipre.html#pref.

It should not be surprising that the kinds of facial erasure that are examined in my study were performed most regularly on the faces of the London-poor. Economically (and therefore socially) vulnerable, Patricia Fumerton has demonstrated the degree to which the experience of poverty in early modern England was accompanied by the continuous potential for unsettled (that is to say itinerant) living.[39] This tendency towards an unsettled living pattern allowed a degree of flux in the subjective identities of the poor that was absent in the (more grounded and stable) middle and upper classes.[40] The various identities assumed by the London poor meant, of course, that they were more vulnerable to the violent identity re-inscription that accompanied the label of "plague-sick." Alternately, representations of individual English poor in both the visual and literary arts tended towards generic caricature, as is particularly registered in the genres of rogue pamphlets and cony-catcher tracts (emerging in the early sixteenth century).[41] Both of these tendencies – the economics of multiple and fluctuating identities and the rhetoric of homogenized and caricaturized masses – heightened the poor's potential for systematic identity alteration.

Research on the history of the plague in other western European cities has proven quite useful in my own study. Jones, who studies the plague tracts produced in early modern Paris, suggests that for the French, "the cultural visibility of the plague was not so much about body count…as about how the language of the disease could be used to talk about and connect up with wider social concerns."[42] The significance of the language

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[39] See Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), xii-xiv.
[40] Ibid., xiv-xvi.
[41] See Craig Dionne, "Fashioning Outlaws: The Early Modern Rogue and Urban Culture," in *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, eds. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, 33 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).
[42] Jones, "Plague and its Metaphors," 101.

used in discussions of the plague in London is something that will also be examined in my study. Moreover, I would like to suggest that in London, where the official Bills of Mortality were produced for weekly sale both within and without the city (the sheer scale of their production indicative their popularity), the continuous reproduction of the "body count" in printed statistical form can be viewed as a language unique to the plague city: a reading of the city as a quantifiable place.[43]

Additionally, Ann Carmichael's well-known study of late medieval and early modern Florence has also proven useful, not only in demonstrating the causal link that was forged between the populations of the Florentine poor and the Florentine sick, but also in suggesting that early Italian plague controls led to a promotion of contagion theories in Florence (and not the reverse).[44] Her analysis impacts not just my work, but also earlier studies on London plagues, particularly those of Justin Champion and Slack.[45] As Slack notes, by 1603 "the correlation between poverty and plague" in London was "already a cliché" repeated in many treatise and pamphlets.[46] Indeed, in mid-July of 1665, both the London *Public Intelligencer* and *The Newes* would connect these ideas in their mutual condemnation of "poverty and sluttishness" as primary factors in plague contagion.[47]

By focusing primarily on the *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London 1665) broadsheet, and secondarily on the London Bills of Mortality and their associated history,

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[43] That is to say quantifiable in the number of its dead (as the living population was not regularly counted).

[44] Ann G. Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor in Early Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 130.

[45] Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," 35-48; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 239-242.

[46] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 239.

[47] *The Newes*, 20 July 1665, quoted in Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 153; Roger L'Estrange, *The Public Intelligencer*, 21 July 1665, noted in Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," 35. This kind of rhetoric is very different from that of the fourteenth century, which generally ascribed the plague to the sins of the city, and not to any particular economic group.

my research addresses how certain plague imagery visually registers specific attempts to totalize, to reduce to notions of "sameness," certain understandings of the individual body, the social body, and the cityscape, particularly where these three intersect. It is no coincidence that the broadsheet that provides the focus of my study combines plague imagery with both statistical and textual discursive modes.

By shifting Groebner's idea of defacement (as that which occurs in war or judicial process) into another space and a very different form of mass bodily injury - that of the city under the specter of pandemic plague – I am forced to adjust his terms. Unlike Groebner's analysis, one of the agents of actual defacement in my study is that of *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterial basis of the plague that works by attacking from within the bodies of the sick.[48] As such, the violent moment of defacement in my study will often be marked instead by a process working from within the body of the plague-infected. Because of this distinction, I developed a new term in order to describe what it is that I am seeing occur within plague London: how certain movements within the city (bodily, legislatively, visually and textually) in turn developed a certain material form of "facelessness" – the manifest form of defacement – a facelessness that I see reoccurring in certain visual motifs.

At their core, these associated phenomena underscore the kind of facelessness that was being visually and textually reiterated during this last modern plague, a sort of *ungestalt* penetrating throughout a London that was increasingly seen as a place in need (and incapable) of containment. What particularly strikes the reader when reviewing the

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[48] *Yersinia pestis* attacks the cellular structure of its human host, and causes an inflammation in nervous tissue. Typical symptoms include a fever, headache, vomiting, general pain, delirium and finally (if the infection proves fatal), coma. Symptoms on the exterior of the body include blisters, which transform into carbuncles, swelling of the lymph nodes, and subcutaneous spots (orange, black, blue and purple) often referred to by contemporaries as "tokens" of the plague. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 8.

records of these late London plague years is the tendency of the city to become defined primarily within its role as an enclosure (or an enclosure within enclosures).[49] This spatial trend towards increased containment can be seen as related to another tendency seen in the plague city's dwellers, who likewise seem to have expressed a heightened concern for bodily enclosure, enacted through repeated coverings of their bodies and their faces. It is my suggestion that such enclosures and coverings during plague outbreaks were adopted for more than just practical reasons of physical protection against infection.[50] More than this, I suggest that there is a sense of concealment that is being engaged with in such activities, concealment related to a pervading sense of the body as a container under crisis. Moreover, it is my contention that such attempts at re-containment were often located in the face, but expressed primarily within a negative value, through repeated acts of symbolic defacement upon those who succumbed to the plague. It is an exploration into this facelessness motif, this visual and textual construction of the subjectively-empty visibility of the dead and dying that pierced the fraught cityscape of London, to which I now turn.

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[49] Many kinds of "typical" urban activities, such as street commerce and public gatherings, were curtailed by the London authorities during the plague. The kinds of activities that were prohibited grew to its most extensive during this final outbreak. See Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 116-117.

[50] Enclosures of various kinds were repeatedly ordered by the authorities as a safety precaution against the spread of infection, beginning in 1517 and culminating in the elaborate regulations of 1665. Corporation of London, *Rules and Orders: To be Observed by all Justices of Peace, Mayors, Bayliffs, and other Officers, for the Prevention of the Spreading of the Infection of the Plague* (London: Published by Proclamation by Order of the Government, 1665), printed in J. F. D. Shrewsbury, *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 539. See also Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 304; Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 116-123.

THE FACE OF THE CITY

By late November of 1665, some two weeks after the printing of *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London 1665), the epidemic in London was in decline, as was to be expected with the onset of colder weather.[51] The woodcut image of London on this sheet (located just below the title) depicts the city as a walled extension, closed-off from the various activities that seem to encircle it (FIG. 2). This image of the city as a stable, impenetrable stronghold seems perhaps a fitting depiction to present on the eve of the end of what would prove to be the last major plague epidemic in England. The seeming solidity of the city, presented as it is in a dense, built-up expansion, is enclosed off from not just the action depicted in the foreground, but more profoundly, from the orderly listings of the plague-dead in the mortality tabulations that encompass the image. These ordered quantifications of the massive mortalities generated by the plague, much like the stable image of the cityscape, seems to suggest that the 1665 plague was marked by successful pestilential containment by city authorities. It is only in the woodcut border of the sheet, in which the skeletal bodies of the plague-dead are rendered visible to the gaze of the viewer, that this sense of total containment is compromised and made untenable. As I will demonstrate, the history of the plague's extension in 1665 London was not the occasion of successful city policy, but rather, precipitated a breakdown in the perceived order of the city, a disintegration that is made most palpably evident in the images of the exposed and ambiguously situated plague-dead found in the broadsheet's border.

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[51] Hodges, *Loimologia*, 5; Pepys, *Diary*, 30 November 1665; Twigg, "Plague in London," 1.

Long before "the sickness" arrived on the shores of England in 1664, reports of its deadly extension across continental Europe were the cause of some concern.[52] News of the plague's movements in Europe was certainly reason for alarm if not surprise: the plague had appeared in epidemic form several times already that century.[53] Indeed, since its initial re-entry into Europe in 1347, the bubonic plague had re-swept the continent in epidemics of varying fatality on the average of once a generation.[54] The cyclical quality of the plague has been underlined by some scholars as the primary reason why this particular illness became so archetypal in the minds of late medieval and early modern Europeans: because its return was perceived of as inevitable.[55]

Some scholars have disagreed with categorizing the plague as cyclical in nature, and argue that the plague likely became endemic to the British Isles at some point after its initial re-introduction in the mid-fourteenth century (by continuing to exist amidst the local wild rat population).[56] Reports of the occasional plague death in England during non-plague years was not that unusual – indeed, when the first few plague deaths in late 1664 were published in the London Bills of Mortality, they did not seem to be the cause

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[52] The plague following a similar path as it had during its initial incursion into Europe in the 1340s – from Asia, traveling west in epidemic form. The reports reaching England in the late 1650s, early 1660s were alarming: 300,000 dead in Naples in the summer of 1658, half that amount again in Venice. During the next four years, it would decimate the people of Spain, France and Germany in turn, when finally in 1663, it arrived in the regions bordering the Baltic and North Sea. See Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 52.

[53] S. Porter, *Great Plague,* 27.

[54] Ibid., 27; Shrewberry, *A History of Bubonic Plague*, 222. The only periods of any length that saw a non-reporting of the disease were 1612-24 and then again from 1654-64. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 68.

[55] It wasn't until another plague epidemic threatened the English shore again in the 1720s that coherent and thorough preventative measures were taken prior to its arrival. To Charles Mullet, this indicates that the plague was no longer understood as inevitable by the early eighteenth century (and indeed, likely due to strict shipping quarantine, the English were able to stave off this last wave of the second pandemic). See Charles Mullet, "The English Plague Scare of 1720-23," *Osiris* (1936): 486, 516; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 47; Maximillian E. Novak, "Defoe and the Disordered City," *PMLA* 92, no. 2 (March 1977): 241.

[56] Joseph Monteyne, "Anatomizing the Social Body: Representations of Plague in London, 1665." MA Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1993; Twigg, "Plague in London," 15-17. Twigg suggests that climate change may have been more responsible for epidemic outbreaks in England rather than arrival of new strains from abroad.

of any great concern.[57] The occurrence of continuous (albeit minimal) fatalities from the

plague during non-plague years in early modern England supports the hypothesis that

plague was endemically present on the British Isles from sometime after mid-fourteenth

century onward. While this constant presence of the plague in an endemic form is

important to note, it is necessary to underscore that plague *epidemics* were generally

understood to be imported from the continent, as physician Nathaniel Hodges noted:

"once every twenty years; as if after a certain interval, by some inevitable necessity, it

must return again."[58] Indeed, as Slack argues, "the unique impact of the disease lay

largely in the fact that it was at the same time a common occurrence and an unpredictable

one."[59] The plague was likely understood as both cyclical and continuous in its incidence,

a dualistic quality that undoubtedly reinforced notions of this illness as *the* illness by

which all others were measured.

The extension of the plague in the city of London was made publically visible

through the dissemination of the London Bills of Mortality, which provided the weekly

mortality figures of the city, broken down by parish and ailment. These Bills (and the

statistical collection of the parish clerks[60]) were one of the few precautions the London

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[57] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 52. A comet that was sited by many in the sky over London in December of 1664, however, did garner much attention, and this was later credited as either portent to or partial cause of the subsequent plague (depending on the writer). Boghurst, *Loimographia*, 11, 20; Theophilus Garencières, *A Mite Cast into the Treasury of the Famous City of London: Being a Brief and Methodical Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Symptomes, Remedies and Preservation from the Plague, in this Calamitous year, 1665* (London: Printed by Thomas Ratcliffe, 1665), 8; Pepys, *Diary*, 6 April 1665; Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 29; John Gadbury, *London's Deliverance Predicted: in a Short Discourse Shewing the Causes of Plagues in General and the Probable Time (God not Contradicting the Course of Second Causes) when this Present Pest may Abate* (London: Printed by J. C. for E. Calvert, 1665), 6.
[58] Hodges, *Loimologia*, 3.
[59] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 78.
[60] Parish clerks were responsible for tabulating the numbers of the dead in their parish, organized by cause of death. Older women, usually poor widows, were hired by clerks for the gathering of such data (they were hired to determine the cause of death). Plague doctors, alternately, were more generally concerned with the diagnosis of the illness, rather than in its (often) final result. See Munkhoff, "Searchers of the Dead," 1-2. Within three hours of a reported plague death, the parish clerks were to notify the deputy of the ward or an

civic government did have in place in order to anticipate any potential pestilential outbreak.[61] For while England did not yet take a regular population census – as was now being done in some other European countries – the Privy Council had been tracking plague deaths since the early sixteenth century.[62]

Although the first few plague deaths reported in the Bills in the winter of 1664 and 1665 seemed to have garnered only minor comment,[63] by early spring of 1665 it became increasingly apparent to parish clerks that the plague was now spreading among the London populace.[64] By early summertime, the plague had become an acknowledged epidemic. In a population of 500,000 normally residing within London, it is thought that nearly 100,000 had died by years end.[65] The vast majority of the deaths were among the poor, who seemed to have been particularly vulnerable to infection, unable as they were to leave the city for the countryside, and typically living in far more squalid and tightly cramped conditions than the homes of the rich and middle classes, conditions that were thought of as ideal breeding grounds for the transmission of the plague.[66] When, in 1662 and again in 1665 John Graunt suggested a causal link between the urban environment of

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alderman. Weekly totals needed the authorization of London's mayor. Such strict official processing underscores how much the Corporation of London both wanted to reveal as well as to control the listings of the weekly dead. See Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 82. See also David Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), 294.

[61] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague,* 20; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 148.

[62] With these Bills, London was following the example set by Milan and Venice. Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 14. See also Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 509.

[63] The first plague death was reported in the parish of St. Giles-in-the Fields in December, 1664. Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 46.

[64] The plague epidemic began in earnest in St. Giles-in-the-Fields, arguably the poorest parish in London, and located just outside of the city walls. Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 46.

[65] This high figure is even more significant when one realizes that, to quote two medical researchers, "the figure of twenty percent masks a far deeper crisis because of the huge number of Londoners had fled to the country to avoid the infection" as indeed, as many as forty percent are thought to have fled. According to their recalculation, the mortality rate in London that summer would have been around one third of the population total. Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 10-11. See also S. Porter, *Great Plague*, 27.

[66] S. Porter, *Great Plague*, 6.

the city and the deadliness of the epidemic,[67] he was merely reaffirming what many had already concluded: that the polluted plague city was best abandoned by those with enough money to flee.[68] This trend towards flight can be traced in the foreground of the broadside's woodcut, with the depiction of Londoners in flight from the city, and in the far right corner, an image of villagers guarding against their arrival (FIG. 2).

This depiction of an armed confrontation between English villagers and fleeing Londoners is a partial reflection on the economic and social strains that this practice of flight engendered. Indeed, the partial abandonment of the city by the rich and the upper middle classes during each of the major seventeenth-century London plagues (but particularly following the plague of 1625) was the source of much tension in the city, a topic that Monteyne explores in his recent publication.[69] This tension stemmed in part from a perception that those fleeing plague London were behaving in a manner deemed uncharitable: abandoning their fellow Londoners in a time of great need.[70] Thomas Dekker's pamphlet *A Rod for Run-awayes,* perhaps the most well-known of this type of

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[67] John Graunt, *Reflections on the Weekly Bills of Mortality for the Cities of London and Westminster, and the Places Adjacent: But more especially, so far as it Relates to the Plague and Other most Mortal Diseases that we English-men are most Subject to, and Should be most Careful against in this our Age* (London: Samuel Speed, 1665), 39-40. Graunt also suggested this in 1662: John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations mentioned in a Following Index, and made upon the Bills of Mortality; with Reference to the Government, Religion, Trade, Growth, Ayre, Diseases, and the several Changes of the said Cit*y (London: Thomas Roycroft for John Martin, James Allestry and Thomas Dicas, 1662), 113, 141-143. See also Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," 35-36.

[68] Medicine was understood as only occasionally effective in the treatment of major ailments; during the plague, the best advice physicians could give was to leave the city. Roy Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England, 1660-1850* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). Indeed, members of the College of Physicians were notorious for following their own advice; contemporaries were often scathing in their rebukes of this behaviour, physicians being perceived as owing a greater responsibility to the public. It is telling that the College was robbed during the absence of the majority of the fellows in 1665. See Margaret Pelling, *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London: Patronage, Physicians and Irregular Practitioners, 1550-1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 48; Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 20; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 30, 194.

[69] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 85-94.

[70] Ibid., 84.

literature, scathingly criticizes those who, through their selfish flight from the plague city, involuntarily work to "undoe others."[71]

The frontispiece of Dekker's pamphlet attempts to construct another argument against flight from the city, one based in the perceived dangers of the countryside (FIG. 3). Here, a large and menacing skeletal figure dominates the scene; this is the personification of Death imaged as an animated human skeleton, a depiction that was predominantly associated with plague death in seventeenth-century London. This figure of Death also appears in the foreground of the woodcut image on *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London 1665), a detail that I will examine more thoroughly in next section. Death is portrayed on Dekker's frontispiece as standing astride a set of unburied coffins that have been left abandoned outside of the city of London. Death's attention is directed to the right, towards a cluster of panicked Londoners attempting to gain sanctuary from an unidentified group of villagers, who sharply reprimand the city dwellers to "keepe out;" the fleeing Londoners are thus trapped between the extended weapon of Death and the densely packed series of lances held up by the villagers. The repercussions of their decision to flee the city are made evident in the bodies of the dead that are strewn in the wake of Death. Flight from London is being portrayed here, as it is in the 1665 broadsheet, as not merely against the precepts of Christian charity, but also an exercise in futility, and a very dangerous exercise at that.

The condemnation of flight from plague-wrought London stemmed from an understanding that with the departure of the middle and upper classes went a large

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[71] Thomas Dekker, *A Rod for Run-Awayes: Gods Tokens, of his Feareful Judgements, Sundry Wayes Pronounced upon this City, and on Severall Persons, both Flying from it, and Staying in it. Expressed in many Dreadfull Examples of Sudden Death* (London: G. Purslowe for John Trundle, 1625), 8.

portion of the city's wealth, leaving their "poore afflicted brethren"[72] in a very precarious financial position.[73] London authorities in turn understood that such an abandonment of the city by the wealthy, and the subsequent hardship their departure caused to the sick-poor, threatened the overall stability of the city.[74] Henry Petowe's pamphlet, *The Countrie Ague*, speaks to the economic fragility of the plague city when he assumes the voice of London personified and berates those Londoners (particularly the poor suburbanites) who, with "exclamations and horrible showtings," expressed their disapproval of the fleeing upper classes.[75] While most pamphlets criticized the practice of flight in an attempt to stem it, Petowe's reprimand focuses on easing the tensions that were provoked by such a widespread practice; implicit in the appeasing language of his pamphlet is an understanding that the presence of these groups, who possessed a significant portion of the city's wealth, was necessary for the economic (and therefore social) stability of the city.

The discrepancy of plague infection between the poor and the middle and upper classes, however, was more than just a simple reflection on the difference between those who fled London and those who stayed. Prior to the seventeenth century, the prevalence of plague fatalities seems to have been highest in those parishes located within the city

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[72] Henry Petowe, *The Countrie Ague. Or, London her Welcome Home to her Retired Children: Together, with a True Relation of the Warlike Funerall of Captaine Richard Robyns, One of the Twentie Captaines of the Trayned Bands of the Citie of London, which was Performed the 24 day of September last, 1625, in Armes, in the Time of this Visitation which the Rumour in the Countrey went Currant, that London had not People enough left Alive to Bury her Dead* (London: Printed by B. Alsop and T. Fawcet for Robert Allot, 1625), 4.

[73] *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665); see also Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 89.

[74] It must be remembered that the 1665 plague epidemic occurred only a few years after the English Civil War and the following Interregnum. As Monteyne notes, there were constant rumours during the 1665 plague of uprisings being staged by old Commonwealth men and religious dissenters. These tensions led to the Five Mile Act – which removed all dissenting clergy from five miles of any major city – as well as the banishment of all former officers and soldiers of the Parliamentary army to a distance of twenty miles from London. See Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 79.

[75] Petowe, *Countrie Ague*, 9.

walls, clustered in the centre parishes; by 1603, however, the pattern of infection appears to have changed, with the highest number of plague deaths being reported in the predominantly poor parishes located outside of the city, in the suburbs, or inside the city but near the inner margins of the city walls.[76] This new association of the plague with the (poor) outskirts of the city is made evident in central woodcut of *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London 1665), which locates the drama (and the presence of Death itself) outside of the city walls.

While the Londoners who fled from the 1665 plague were predominantly from the richer, more central city parishes,[77] it would be a mistake to overemphasize the impact that this alone made in the dispersion of fatality rates. As Slack elaborates, "what needs to be explained is not a change in the social incidence of the plague but the fact that that incidence became more visible on the ground….not only between one house and one street… [but] between different parishes and whole areas of a town."[78] By 1665, the plague was both in actuality and in perception "a *morbus pauporum*."[79] The simple equation between poor living conditions and the prevalence of an infectious disease, however, masks the degree to which mortality rates were likely influenced by other social factors, including the controversial practice of quarantining the plague-sick (along with their families) in their place of residence.[80]

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[76] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 154-155. By 1665, nine of the ten most affected parishes were outside of, or along the margins of the city walls. All ten least affected parishes were clustered in the city centre.

[77] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 94. As Monteyne notes, the departure of the upper and middle classes from the central London parishes was higher in the plague year of 1665 than in any year previous.

[78] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 164.

[79] Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," 42.

[80] Ibid., 48. Champion notes that contemporary social practices also was likely the cause of a gender discrepancy in the mortality rate, with female mortality rising some three percent above that of males, likely due to their role as caretaker of the sick. Other occupations likewise saw unusually high mortality rates, again underscoring the role the social (in addition to the biological) in determining the spread of the disease. See Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 193.

In contrast to the systems established in many French cities and Northern Italian city-states, London lacked any permanent public health organization.[81] Because of this failure in pestilential planning, at the onset of each new epidemic the Corporation of London typically found it necessary to shift much of the administrative responsibilities generated from the plague onto its numerous city parishes, which struggled in turn to respond.[82] Consequently, when the first booklets of English Plague Orders were printed by declaration of the Privy Council in 1579, it seems that London was one of the only English cities that failed to implement them with any consistency, a failure that may have influenced the introduction of penal sanctions to the Orders in 1604.[83] The parishes, aided by the city (and ultimately directed by the Crown and Privy Council), focused on the identification, quarantine and final accounting and disposal of the plague-infected and plague-dead.[84] Policies that focused on the containment of the plague-sick, and not on their treatment, were validated by the Privy Council's declaration of 1578, which stated

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[81] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 14-15. The reasons for this lack of a centrally-organized public health body in England are numerous; I will highlight only a few here. Firstly, English authorities tended to respond conservatively to policies developed on the Continent in general; in the same fashion, England was comparatively late in adopting any coherent and centrally-organized plague policies of containment and quarantine, which were first established in Northern Italy. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 47; Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor*, 3. Secondly, Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries of England from 1536-1541 also led to the destruction of all the medieval hospitals in England. And while the monarchy did shortly thereafter establish five royal hospitals for the population of London (St. Bartholomew and St. Thomas for the sick-poor, St. Mary of Bethlehem for the insane, Christ for orphans and Bridewell for miscreants), the fact that English physicians, apothecaries and barber-surgeons were incorporated meant that they, and not the crown, controlled their activities. Likewise, English Common Law and its prohibition against monopolies confounded early attempts to centrally organize English medical professionals. Lindemann, *Medicine and Society*, 130; Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 11-12. Thirdly, the rapid population growth of London as the English capital city may have exasperated attempts to organize the city's defenses against pestilential outbreak, particularly as this swift growth resulted in the majority of the population being located outside of the walls (starting in the early seventeenth century). See Peter Burke, "Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century London," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay, 33 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 84-85.
[82] Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, *Orders Conceived and Published by the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen of the City of London, Concerning the Infection of the Plague* (London: Printed by James Flesher, 1665), 1-4.
[83] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 209, 213, 211.
[84] Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 516; Mullett, "English Plague Scare," 496.

that it was the plague-sick who were ultimately responsible for the spreading of the infection, as the plague was to be understood as contagious in nature.[85] This stance was strongly reinforced in 1604 with the criminalization of the plague-sick as potential murderers.[86] These London Plague Orders – which detailed the processes for the hiring of plague workers, ordered the identification and quarantine of houses of the plague-sick, and banned most kinds of public gatherings – were made permanent in 1609, and were reissued with only minor modifications in 1636, 1646 and finally in 1665.[87]

Although the Lord Mayor ordered the burning of large fires throughout London in the first week of September of 1665 in an attempt to dispel the plague miasma thought to be hovering over London (a practice cut short by the onset of late summer rains), the shutting-in of the plague-sick and the hasty, large-scale disposal of the plague-dead, combined with the widespread prohibitions against public gatherings strongly suggests that at the level of city authority, it was an understanding of plague as contagion and not miasma that was being primarily disseminated.[88] Interestingly, an overview of the chronology of the London Plague Orders makes it clear that the theory of plague as primarily contagious in nature was propagated by London authorities only *following* their initial enforcements of household quarantine. This order of events suggests that the ascendency of theories of contagion at the level of municipal and state government seems

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[85] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 202-203, 208.
[86] Ibid., 40, 211-212, 276. Slack notes cases of infected people breaking quarantine being whipped, fined and stocked, but in terms of any plague-sick being convicted as felons, it seems that this was purely a bluff by the Privy Council.
[87] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 215. Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, *Orders Conceived*, 1-12.
[88] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 176-178. Likewise, butchers were required to practice their trade outside of the city. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 45.

to have originated in part from a need to validate their practice, beginning in 1568, of shutting-in the sick in their homes.[89]

London's controversial policy of household quarantine, in conjunction with prohibitions against public gatherings and the compilation of demographic information during London plague years may, then, have initially stemmed from latent fears of unrest in the disrupted (and potentially politically disruptive) plague city, particularly through an association of the plague-sick with the London-poor.[90] As Slack elaborates, "it was becoming possible to view the plague…as the particular problem of certain social groups and localities. From there it might spread and threaten respectable society; but it had identifiable origins which must be attacked if epidemics were to be controlled."[91] As such, the championing of the theory of contagion by city authorities in the mid-seventeenth century must be understood within the context of these suspicions and the related attempts by the Corporation of London to control the movements of the London population, particularly once the plague was understood as an illness primarily visited upon the city-poor.

Despite popular censure against the policy of shutting-in the plague-sick, those who were found to possess the "tokens" of plague were ordered quarantined inside their homes with their families and any live-in household workers for a forty day period.[92] The doors of the quarantined families were marked with a painted red cross and that well-used

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[89] Slack, *Impact of Plague* 206. Carmichael suggests a similar chronology in her study of the plague in Florence. See Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor*, 130.

[90] Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," 35; Healy, "Discourses of the Plague," 23, 28; Margaret Pelling, "Skirting the City? Disease, Social Change and Divided Households in the Seventeenth-Century," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, eds. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner, 164 (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).Likewise, Lindemann has noted that the plague played a major role in the formation of poor relief in London. See Lindemann, *Medicine and Society*, 164.

[91] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 195.

[92] Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, *Orders Conceived and Published*, 8.

plea "Lord Have Mercy Upon Us", and these homes were guarded by an increasingly strained city watch. When the epidemic of 1665 began in earnest in late spring of that year, the Privy Council quickly commissioned the building of three additional pest-houses, bringing up the city total to five; at the height of their use in late summer of that year, it is likely that only some 600 plague-sick were quarantined in these pest-houses at one time, a capacity far too low to be of any significant impact.[93] This meant that household quarantines were the primary means by which the Corporation of London and the city parishes attempted to segregate the plague-sick from the healthy population. The failure of the Privy Council to provide adequate pest-houses likewise meant that the onus for enforcing and maintaining household quarantine was thrust primarily onto the parishes, which were charged with ensuring that the homes remained locked for the full length of their quarantine (and that the inhabitants be provided for in terms of supplies), and were also charged with providing the searchers, dead-cart purveyors, parish clerks and gravediggers.[94]

Neither the city nor parishes of London provided the general public with any kind of regulated medical care during the 1665 plague, their focus being limited to policies of containment. Indeed, the notion of healthcare as something requiring public policy is an idea that has slowly developed beginning in the middle ages, and has a complex history

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[93] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 222-223, 277. As Moote and Moore have noted, there is little information available in regards to life and death in these houses, particularly as the three new facilities failed to report their deaths for inclusion in the Bills of Mortality, and the two pre-existing houses reported numbers that are thought by many to be unreliably low. See Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 191. The reasons for these lacunae are unclear, but may be related to the administrative pressures placed on these far too small facilities (which likely buried the dead unaccounted and *en-masse*). Plague deaths among Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Jews were also not recorded, but for different reasons. Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 194.

[94] Vanessa Harding, "Burial of the Plague Dead in Early Modern London," Epidemic Disease in London: A Collection of Working Papers given at the Symposium 'Epidemic Disease in London: From the Black Death to Cholera' held at the Institute for Historical Research, 19 March 1992, http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/epipre.html#pref, 57.

of which the history of the plague forms only a small part.[95] For 1665 London, healthcare was still very much a family affair. And although there had been attempts to implement a standing city corps of plague doctors to attend early modern London in anticipation of epidemic outbreaks (as was practiced in France), and while the College of Physicians likewise recommended that a number of its members be retained for such purposes, these policies remained by-and-large unenforced.[96] In the 1665 plague, it is thought that only somewhere between ten and thirty physicians continued to reside in London during the epidemic's peak in the late summer.[97] As a result, several pamphlets were printed for the express purpose of providing the London populace with plague remedies that they could then administer to sick family members. These pamphlets were aimed particularly at the London-poor, which typically could not afford to hire medical professionals.[98] One particular broadsheet notes that its production stemmed from a realization that "it is impossible for all the physicians now in London effectually to attend the cure of this sickness in person."[99] This particular broadside was printed expressly for the poor, and

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[95] Lindemann, *Medicine and Society*, 155. Lindemann notes that while continuous reoccurrence of plague provided much of the impetus to the development of public health boards in London, this development over time also depended on factors associated with economic growth, guild expansion, population density and governmental expansion. See Lindemann, *Medicine and Society*, 157-158.

[96] A French physician living in London, Dr. Louis Du Moulin, proposed in 1641 to the House of Commons that city-employed plague doctors be hired for the city of London, citing practices already established in Paris, Rome, Leon, Bordeaux, Venice, Padua and Amsterdam. In 1630, the Privy Council had also passed a proposal, made by the College of Physicians, that a similar corps be hired. While both of these proposals were passed, they failed to be implemented. F.N.L. Poynter, "A Seventeenth-Century London Plague Document in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 34, (1960): 365-366; See also Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 215.

[97] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 246. It is estimated that even more barber-surgeons and apothecaries remained in London during the 1665 plague, but still too few to aid the majority of the plague-sick. See Thomas Douglas Whittet, *The Apothecaries in the Great Plague of London 1665: The Sydenham Lecture for 1965* (London: Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, 1965), 3.

[98] Mary Lindemann, "Confessions of an Archive Junkie," in *Theory, Method and Practice in Social and Cultural History*, eds. Peter Karsten and John Modell, 162 (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

[99] Thomas Cocke, *Advice for the Poor by Way of Cure and Caution* (London: Printed for Joseph Leigh, 1665).

was placed in bundles at the doors of suburban churches for distribution.[100] Indeed, most broadsheets, pamphlets and books on the plague attempted to redress this need for medical care, and therefore contained (usually) inexpensive recipes for treatment of the plague somewhere within their text. *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London 1665) conforms to this standard, and to the left of the central woodcut image prescribes to its readers "a cheap medicine to keep from infection: Take a pint of new milk, and cut two cloves of garlick very small, put it in the milk and drink it morning fastings, and it preserveth from infection."

With the Corporation of London's focus on population containment, these forced enclosures within the home were, then, often akin to a death sentence, and not just to the person initially identified as plague-sick, but also for the members of their household, who were typically forced to share in his or her quarantine. To underscore this point, it should be noted that the forty-day confinement period began anew with each additional household member that succumbed to the disease;[101] reports show that some houses remained in a state of quarantine for several months on end, oftentimes until the whole household was dead, a telling outcome for a disease that is thought to normally have a mortality rate of only around sixty percent.[102] Not surprisingly, there seems to have been numerous concerted attempts at hiding the signs of infection from the plague when it

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[100] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 108. Tellingly, the order for the printing of this broadside came from an individual – the Duke of Albemarle – and not by the direction of the Privy Council or the Corporation of London.

[101] Hodges, *Loimologia*, 7.

[102] Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 9. For contemporary accounts, see: Hodges, *Loimologia*, 7; Pepys, *Diary*, 8 August 1665, 4 September 1665; Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 37, 42-43. The disease that I am referring to is plague in its bubonic form, likely the sole strain in 1665 (the other strains have higher mortality rates). Lindemann, *Medicine and Society*, 40.

occurred.[103] This trend towards concealment of the disease seems to have been of sustained concern to many living in plague London, and was cited by some as reason enough to change this policy of shutting-in: that it encouraged, as Samuel Pepys describes, "many for fear thereof [to] hide their sores, and (after a sweat or two) their sickness also, and go daily about their business…mingled to much more danger every way."[104]

By mid-summer, several commentators noted that the streets of London, normally pitched to over-flowing, had become comparatively deserted with the exception of the ever present dead-carts, which could no longer be restricted to nighttime pickups alone.[105] This emptying of the city streets was due not just to the mass exodus of the upper and middle classes, nor the quarantining of the plague-sick, but also to other decrees that were enacted in order to contain the poorly understood disease (and implicitly the poor population). On 4 July 1665, London's mayor proclaimed "That none be suffered to sing or cry ballads in the streets, to sell by way of hawking any goods or commodities whatsoever."[106] Moreover, all public gatherings (excluding those at churches) were forbidden, homelessness was criminalized, and all schools and law courts, public houses and coffee shops were ordered closed.[107] While these measures ostensibly protected against the perceived contagious nature of the disease (through breath and touch), as I have demonstrated, these restrictions were equally (if not more so) based in a desire to control the movements of the (possibly seditious) plague city inhabitants, which

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[103] Jewish Vegetarians, *Golgotha*, 12; Munkhoff, "Searchers of the Dead," 1; *Shutting up Infected Houses*, 5.
[104] Jewish Vegetarians, *Golgotha*, 12. See also *Shutting up Infected Houses*, 5.
[105] Pepys, *Diary*, 12 August 1665. See also Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 42.
[106] Quoted in Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 115. While trade continued in the city, itinerant sellers were prohibited from practicing their profession.
[107] Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, *Orders Conceived and Published*, 11-12; Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 116-117.

were comprised primarily of the poor. In addition to these constrictions, public funerals were banned, and the dead were for the most part disposed of hastily and anonymously in mass graves.[108] Many commentators from the Great Plague mention the ever-present sound of the church bells "made hoarse with continual tolling" of death knells for the increasingly unidentified dead, a sound that was mimicked by the jingling bells of the city dead-carts.[109]

The alienated death of those who succumbed to the plague, particularly those who died in quarantine, was of particular concern to contemporaries, death being normally a communal affair in the mid-seventeenth century of England.[110] Indeed, as Clare Gittings observes, the "importance of funerary rituals in early modern England is underlined by their being denied to those deemed outside of the community: certain criminals, suicides and infants dying before baptism."[111] The unseemly and often insensible death of the plague-sick, particularly in their final removal from the larger community, ran counter to ideas of the "good death:" a death in which the fatally-ill person remained lucid, calm, and was faithfully-attended until his or her demise.[112] As Brockliss and Jones have commented, the death bed was normally meant to be the site of a "carefully orchestrated ritual ordered by the dying person and aimed to secure salvation,"[113] a custom that was

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[108] Ibid.,123-124.

[109] Hodges, *Loimologia*, 18. See also Pepys, *Diary*, 30 July 1665; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 297; Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 42. More disturbing to one parish priest in St. Giles-Cripplegate, the hardest hit of the parishes (losing upward of half its population), was the silence that descended when the ringing of the death knells became too impractical to continue. See Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 129-132, 183.

[110] Lucinda McCray Beier, *Sufferers and Healers: The Experience of Illness in Seventeenth-Century England* (London; New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 5, 246.

[111] Clare Gittings, "Sacred and Secular: 1558-1660," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings, 169 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[112] This tradition of *ars moriendi* (art of dying well) can be traced back in England to the anonymous fourteenth-century *Book of the Craft of Dying*, which argued that "for a man to die well and soundly he must know how to die." Quoted in Platt, *King Death*, 100. See also Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, 22; Wear, "Making Sense of Health," 124.

[113] Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 70.

profoundly compromised by both the quarantine and the dying plague victim's typically unconscious state. The ban on public funerals only heightened the anxiety surrounding plague-death; it is not surprising that this prohibition was one of the first Orders to be regularly broken in 1665.[114] For Post-Reformation London, the official annexation of purgatory (and therefore the practice of intercessory prayer) meant that the rituals surrounding the death, wake and burial of an individual became the primary means of reconciling loss for grieved friends and family members.[115] The development of more individualized funerals beginning in the early modern period (particularly among the elites) can be understood in part as a general reaction to this declension in post-funerary rites.[116]

The hidden and ignominious death awaiting the plague-sick, and the anonymous shunting of the plague-dead to mass-graves via the dreadful dead-carts were quite understandably seen as nothing less than horrible to a population accustomed to tending to their sick and dead. The corpses of the plague-dead, made wholly abject and therefore ejected from city by cover of darkness were funneled through city streets as a horror placed in extreme opposition to the un-diseased. This abject threat to the individual was buried under the landscape *en masse*. For the sudden overtaking of the city by the corpse, that which Julia Kristeva describes as "the most sickening of wastes,"[117] can be seen as threatening the identity, system and order that various official structures were continually trying to re-impose. Such treatment of the plague-dead was the source of sustained

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[114] Pepys, *Diary*, 12 February 1666. Pepys makes comment here on the events of the previous summer. See also Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 298.

[115] Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, 40; Barry Reay, "Popular Religion," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Barry Reay, 104 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, 243.

[116] Gittings, "Sacred and Secular," 147.

[117] Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3-4.

concern to Londoners, their relationship to the dead steeped in a tradition that saw "physical death as an extended and graduate process," an understanding of death that can be traced in the practice of the wake.[118]

It is not surprising, then, that as governmental attempts to contain the plague-sick increased as the summer of 1665 drew to an end, their actual ability to enforce their increasingly strict rules were compromised. Public funerals, after several months of successful suspension, resumed, occasionally pulling large crowds.[119] The controversial practice of shutting-up houses ceased to be practiced in late August, and indeed, there is one record of several city watchmen breaking-open the locks and removing the markers on the quarantined house they had been set to watch.[120] The concerted attempts of some parish priests to accurately record the names of their dead parishioners in community log books seems to have ceased in the heaviest hit parishes by early August of that year.[121] Perhaps the most telling event is recorded in the Lord Mayor's waiting book, dated 22 September 1665, in which he makes note of an angry group of London men who attempted to lock him in his mayoral residence, an act that can be seen as a kind of quarantine-carnivalesque.[122]

The Privy Council's extreme attempts to control the fragile plague city through the forced segregation of large portions of its population would ultimately prove futile, a

[118] Katherine Park suggests a profound difference in the historical viewing of death between northern and southern Europeans, the latter of which "envisaged physical death as a quick and radical separation of body and soul," with both groups' mortuary rituals reflecting this understanding. See Katherine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, no. 50 (1995): 115.

[119] Pepys, *Diary*, 12 February 1666; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 298.

[120] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 299.

[121] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague*, 181. Likewise, the burials of the plague-dead began to exceed the abilities of the parishes to contain them (around mid-August), and led to the digging of common pits, some of which were made on unconsecrated ground. Harding, "Burial of the Plague," 55.

[122] Cited in Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 299. The subversive possibility of plague has been compared to carnival by Jones, who says the plague city is like "carnival…without the fun." Jones, "Plague and its Metaphors," 109.

failure anticipated with the mid-summer abandonment of the city by the King and Court.[123] While the London Orders tell the tale of "an absolutist utopia,"[124] their eventual disregard by the vast majority of the population of London throws these Orders into another light: as constructs of Groebner's "fiction[s] on control."[125] As Pepys noted in his diary with dismay, once the shutting-in of houses ended, the previously elite-held space of the London Exchange (the heart of all English finance) became overrun by "plain men all."[126] No longer tidy and contained, the streets and public houses both within and without of the city walls became, for pamphleteer Thomas Vincent, the site of "the well…mingling among the sick."[127] In the face of such failures, the London Plague Orders issued in 1665, and the increasingly strict Orders of 1666, begin to seem like overcompensations made by a government in fear of losing its ability to govern. It is telling that the Orders received their only major rewriting in 1666 following the failures visited on the Corporation of London during the previous summer.[128] Although never actually enforced – the plague of 1665 would prove London's last bubonic epidemic – the 1666 Orders dictated the end of household quarantine and ordered for the development of an extensive series of pest-houses outside of the city, to which the plague-sick would be, upon discovery, forcibly removed. The Privy Council and Corporation of London had

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[123] King Charles II and his Court left the city in July, as did the Privy Council and some members of the plague committee. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 223.

[124] Jones, "Plague and its Metaphors," 116.

[125] Groebner's study of identity papers in late medieval and early modern Europe focuses on how these documents exclaim an administrative order that is lacked. I see the Plague Orders, in their shrill demands for order, similar in their overcompensations. See Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe,* trans. Mark Kyburz and John Peck (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 219.

[126] Pepys, *Diary*, 14 September 1665.

[127] Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 36.

[128] Corporation of London, *Rules and Orders*. Also see Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 304.

learned from their missteps of the previous summer and would no longer allow those identified as plague-sick to remain within the city.

> Imagine, then, that all this while, Death, like a Spanish leaguer, or rather like stalking Tamburlaine, hath pitched his tents (being nothing but a heap of winding-sheets tacked together) in the sinfully polluted suburbs. The Plague is muster-master and marshal of the field; burning fevers, boils, blains, and carbuncles, the leaders, lieutenants, sergeants, and corporals; the main army consisting, like Dunkirk, of a mingle-mangle, *viz*, dumpish mourners, merry sextons, hungry coffin-sellers, scrubbing bearers, and nasty grave-makers; but indeed they are the pioneers of the camp, that are employed only, like moles, in casting up of earth and digging of trenches, Fear and Trembling, the two catch-poles of Death, arrest everyone. No parley will be granted, no composition stood upon, but the alarum is struck up, the tocsin rings out for life, and no voice heard but "Tue, tue, kill, kill."
>
> - Thomas Dekker, 1603.[129]

THE FACE OF DEATH

This visibility of the plague-infected in Dekker's metaphor is registered in both the symptoms that mark the unwell – those "leaders, lieutenants, sergeants, and corporals" of Death – as well as in the upsurge of various trades associated the plague, in the "dumpish mourners, merry sextons, hungry coffin-sellers, scrubbing bearers and nasty grave-makers."[130] The military attributes ascribed to the visible symptoms of the plague are suggestive of the destructive violence done to the visages of the sick. Likewise, the economic underpinnings of the plague, made evident in Dekker's writings through his reflection on its trades, suggests a kind of conflation between the workers of Death personified – here being the markers of the plague – and the various businesses that profited as a result of the plague epidemic. Dekker's description of plague death as a "stalking Tamburlaine" conflates the physiological conditions of the disease with the political practices associated with tyranny, particularly in its indiscriminate desire to "arrest everyone" that enters into its "camp." This description given by Dekker evokes not only of the then-unclear transmission of the plague, but also the emergency Orders set

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[129] Thomas Dekker, "The Wonderful Year," in *Three Elizabethan Pamphlets*, ed. George Richard Hibbard, 183 (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969).
[130] Ibid., 183.

in place in the plague city, particularly those regulations that attempted to circumscribe the movements of its population.

The visibility of the plague-dead was greatly aided through the published tabulations of the London-dead, broken down by parish and ailment, in the highly organized London Bills of Mortality, which, in their tidiness, were so different from Dekker's nightmare-scape. *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London 1665) (FIG. 1) takes the mortality tabulation that constitutes the majority of its text from the official Bills of Mortality (FIG. 4), which were printed by the order of royal and municipal authorities.[131] Greenberg has suggested that the publication of these figures beginning in the plague year of 1603 indicates that the authorities considered a population instructed on the extent of the plague would regulate their movements accordingly, and thus was one of the best measures against further spreading of the disease.[132] Monteyne, in turn, has suggested that the popularity of these Bills was based in their provision of "a statistical map of the urban centre and its population…a way of imposing conceptual order on the disorder being wrought by the disease."[133] More than this, these Bills made visible the demographic dispersion of the plague, making it clear to readers that the plague was primarily an illness visited upon the poor outer parishes of London.

Purchased by the typically affluent London literate, these Bills take the form of statistical tables, with ordered mortality listings broken down by parish on the recto and disease on the verso. While the verso side is organized alphabetically, the recto of the

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[131] Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 513.

[132] Although 1603 is the date of the first weekly published Bills of Mortality, John Graunt notes that the years 1592, 1593 and 1594 also saw the publication of Bills of Mortality, but their publication was likely sporadic, of small-scale and based on his dismissal of them, possibly not weekly. See Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations*, 6. See also Greenberg, "Dreadful Visitation," 319. These Bills were printed despite fears that they would negatively impact international trade. See Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 148.

[133] Monteyne, "Anatomizing the Social Body," 53.

Bills further organizes the parishes into four categories: those within the walls, those without, those in the outlying districts of Middlesex and Surrey, and finally, those farthest away in the Liberties and Westminster. Such an organization functions to construct a hierarchy among the parishes, whereby the importance of a parish decreases the further it moves away from the (perceived) centre of the city. This hierarchy is reinforced in the space given to each parish subset on the broadside, with more than half of the space dedicated to listing those parishes inside of the city walls. Despite this attention paid to the inner city, the Bills make it evident that the majority of the fatalities (and indeed, London's population) were located in the outlying suburbs. This weekly publication of the statistical linkage between the London-poor and the London-sick can, then, be seen as attempts to validate the Privy Council's policy (and the city of London's enforcement) of household quarantine, particularly in the London suburbs. Likewise, their highly ordered unembellished appearance (barring the predominantly placed parish clerks' seal) can be seen, much like the London Plague Orders, as fictions of control (FIG. 4).

These Bills of Mortality, and their abstract quantifications of the nameless dead, were distributed on a massive scale during the plague (despite the high mortality rate of those employed in the printing industry).[134] These bills would in turn be used by John Graunt in 1662 in his *Natural and Political Observations Mentioned in a Following Index, and Made Upon the Bills of Mortality*, a text believed to have inspired the practice of modern demography.[135] For historical demographers, the inception of demographic studies by Graunt and his disciple William Petty provided the statistical foundation by which the social sciences – those various fields dedicated to the analytical study of people

[134] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague,* 182.
[135] Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations.*

and their culture – could be founded.[136] There is a telling overlapping of dates between Graunt's study and the foundation of the Royal Society of London in 1660, which focused in turn on the analytical study of nature; the formal techniques of both the study and the institution necessarily rely upon the reduction of subjects into objects of study. On the conceptually-related mass-distributed Bills of Mortality, the true subjective import of the sick and dying are reduced to an echoing church bell, counting out, metronome-like, the now-anonymous dead, condensed to mere sanitized figures for political addition and analysis.

By 1665, these Bills had acquired the uniform and ordered appearance that was described above. Printed by the parish clerks and subsidized by the city government, these double-side printed quarter-sheets were used to list out the number of city deaths from the week previous, and were distributed for sale every Thursday by various bookstalls throughout London.[137] The final tabulation of each weekly Bill was subject to the approval of London's mayor prior to printing,[138] giving the Bills of Mortality an official sanctioning likely absent from the production of the *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665) broadside. For while in theory, the monarchy still held a monopoly on all English printing, in actuality, the government's ability to control the information being printed – particularly in London, the centre of English printing activity – had been severely compromised following the disruption of control that accompanied

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[136] Yu Xie, "Demography: Past, Present and Future," in *Journal of American Statistical Association* 95, no. 450 (June 2000): 670.

[137] Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 510. The price of the Bills was affordable to all but the very poor, being sold for just a penny a sheet and four shillings for a yearly subscription. See Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 80.

[138] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 82.

the English Civil War beginning in 1641.[139] The post-Restoration government attempted to re-establish control over London printers with the Parliamentary Licensing Act of 1662, but this act proved to be unsuccessful in its enforcement.[140]

In his studies on the historical appearance of these sheets, Greenberg notes that the ephemeral nature of these prints meant that the majority were likely discarded shortly after their purchase.[141] The fleeting utilitarian value assigned to these broadsheets means that they, much like their abstracted contents – the problematic corpses of the London plague – were quickly and commonly reduced to the category of refuse. As well as having an ephemeral form, their contents were also considered of only fleeting and often of questionable value by their readers, and the listed mortality rates generated a sort of incredulity somewhat at odds with the obvious popularity of the sheets. The source of readers' doubt stemmed in large part from the common belief that the searchers of the dead under-reported plague-deaths, either from ignorance or dishonesty.[142] There were also suggestions that some groups were not considered of equal matter for accounting: for Samuel Pepys, who in the last week of August read that some seven thousand had died that week in London, there was fear that "the true number of the dead this week is near ten thousand, partly from the poor that cannot be taken notice of...and partly from the Quakers and others that will not have any bell ring for them."[143] While uncertainties may

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[139] Greenberg, "Dreadful Visitation," 392; Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 526; Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 15.

[140] Greenberg, "Dreadful Visitation," 394; Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 13.

[141] Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 526.

[142] The Orders specified poor, old and single or widowed women (typically those receiving charity) to the role of searchers of the dead. Not surprising given the already marginalized role of these women in London society, many writers on the Great Plague discussed these searchers as either incompetent and/or easily bribed (for the concealment of the disease). See Munkhoff, "Searchers of the Dead," 1-2. See also Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations*, 19-20, 45-46.

[143] Pepys, *Diary*, 31 August 1665. Pepys also noted that certain religious denominations were not being counted (as they had separate burial grounds).

have in turn led Pepys to exaggerate the extent of the under-reporting, it is clear that for him and many of his contemporaries, the Bills of Mortality were both a source of information as well as a font for mistrust, and that there was a general sense that the true extent of the plague was somehow being obscured in them.

Beginning in June of that year, single-sheet broadsides on the plague were printed and sold on a massive scale to an increasingly anxious populous. As Moote and Moore note, "the grim processions of gyrating skeletons printed from woodcuts during past great visitations now reappeared in broadsheets that kept coming off the presses… flood[ing] the town."[144] The most popular (or mass-produced) kind were topped with some variation on the words "Lord Have Mercy Upon Us," a phrase that echoed the one used to mark out the doors of quarantined houses.[145] Typically, they contained recipes for the making of plague-remedies, as well as tracts criticizing those negligent in donating money for plague relief. Notably, they also often listed burial totals from previous London plagues, in addition to the current figures tabulated by the more austere Bills of Mortality.

Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us (London, 1665) is one of these kinds of popular broadsides (FIG. 1). The primary textual content of the broadside – the mortality totals from other plague years, as well as those of the present year, broken down by month (both undoubtedly derived from the London Bills of Mortality) – takes up the majority of the space on the sheet, which is encased by a three-sided border. The top-side of this border contains the first word of the title, and the largest word on the sheet, "London," declaring the broadsheet's object of study. Flanking this word is a depiction of

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[144] Moote and Moore, *Great Plague,* 182.
[145] A red cross was also used to signify houses under plague quarantine. See Lord Mayor and Alderman of London, *Orders Conceived*, 8.

a pulled winding-sheet or shroud[146] on one side and a closed coffin on the other. The

descending sides of the frame expose to the viewer the stylized and sterilized contents of

these closed containers – skulls, crossbones, and fully-articulated skeletons – as well as

the tool most frequently used in their final internment – shovels.

Such subject matter is typical of *momento mori* imagery, and indeed, the poem

located in the centre of this sheet connects to this tradition in concluding that "Each

spectacle of death and funerall, puts thee and I in mind, we must die all."[147] It is of note

that the author mentions the spectacle of funeral, as by November (the date of printing)

the ban on such ritual gatherings was already three months broken. Other depictions of

skeletal remains were employed during the Great Plague on a vast range of printed forms:

on numerous broadsheets, advertisements for medicines, on the frontispiece of books,

and, most famously, on the cover of the final tabulation of the 1665 Bills of Mortality

titled *London's Dreadful Visitation* (FIG. 8).

It is interesting that the frontispiece to this officially-controlled document is

embellished with the very things that it, and more particularly the practices associated

with it, had attempted to contain (through quarantine) and conceal (through the practice

of night burial, the ban on public gathering, and the nonrepresentational listing of the

plague-dead). That there was an already well-established tradition of the *momento mori*

motif in England can in part account for this choice in imagery on the document.[148] More

than this, however, the imaging of isolated skulls and bones in an almost decorative

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[146] This practice of double-tying shrouds, which seems to have begun in the fourteenth century, allowed for easier movement of the corpse, particularly for burials without coffins. See Rosemary Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer and Plague: 1150-1380," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings, 99 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).
[147] *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665). See Appendix 1 for the poem in its entirety.
[148] Platt, *King Death*, 151.

manner is suggestive of a kind of constructed detachment from these figures of the dead,

a kind of objectivity that is further evident in the practices used in the creation of the

Bills. The intersection of bones with shovels – the tools used in their burial – is found

twice on the frontispiece, creating a kind of utilitarian crossbones different from the more

typical skull and crossbones imaged the top of the frontispiece. These intersections of

body fragments with the tools used for their concealment parallels the functional

reduction being performed on the dead, particularly in how this reduction also functioned

as a kind of erasure. An understanding of the plague-dead becomes reduced in this

meeting – bone with tool – to the purposes to which they can be used; for the Bills of

Mortality, this use is in providing a quantifiable grid of the plague city (as both place and

population), in charting out the dangerous cityscape of plague-London.

The bottom of *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665) (which lacks

a frame) is delimited with the burial numbers recorded from the week of publication,

broken down by parishes affected and the total number of plague-related deaths, followed

by the names of the publishers: London stationers and printers Francis Coles, Thomas

Vere, and John Wright.[149] Although a conservative estimate has it that between three and

four thousand of these sheets were produced for sale,[150] only a handful of them have

survived to the present day, a fact that underscores the ephemeral quality of the sheets. In

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[149] Markman Ellis identifies three printers and stationers of the same name as the "Ballad Partners," a partnership that dominated the ballad broadsheet market in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The three that produced this 1665 plague broadsheet are the descendents of these London stationers; along with William Thackery, they continued to dominate the market through to the end of the century. Markman Ellis, *Eighteenth-Century Coffee-House Culture: Volume 1* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006), 73-74; Lance Bertelsen, "Popular Entertainment and Instruction, Literary and Dramatic: Chapbooks, Advice Books, Almanacs, Ballads, Farces, Pantomimes, Prints and Shows," in *The Cambridge History of English Literature: 1660-1780,* ed. John J. Richetti, 73 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[150] I base this figure on that given by Greenberg in his estimate on the production of a related broadside. See Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 517-518.

one of the extant broadsides now in the British Library, it is evident that the owner

retained the sheet for several months, adding new mortality totals to the margins as the

year progressed (FIG. 5). Indeed, it is likely that these broadsheets were given extra space

in the margins for expressly this purpose.[151] The poem on the broadsheet itself argues for

this practice of individual accounting when it reminds its readers to "let all infected

houses be thy text, and make this use, that thine may be next;" that is, that the reader

make careful note of those houses (and those parishes) prominently marked with the

signs of their contagion. That this poem on the broadside is framed not just by the

momento mori imagery found in the border but also by the mortality totals of previous

plague years suggests that this document was intended in part to act as a warning against

certain places in the city, in the same fashion as the red cross and the phrase "Lord Have

Mercy Upon Us" (significantly echoed in the title of the broadside) did through their

highly visible placement on quarantined houses.

Within the frame of the broadside and directly below the title is a small

rectangular illustration of a cityscape (FIG. 2).[152] The image of a town or city was often

depicted in plague imagery, because, as Christine Boeckl notes, "the bane was considered

a castigation for the whole community."[153] In the scene depicted, the walled city of

London pushes up against its outer suburbs and sprawls in a compact line across the

middle and upper registers[154]; the one visible gateway into the city is depicted as closed

and is watched over by a city guard. If the name of this city was not already identified in

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[151] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 98.
[152] To the immediate right of this image is a recipe for a "cheap medicine to keep from infection," consisting of a draught of milk with diced garlic. *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665).
[153] Boeckl, *Images of Plague*, 47.
[154] By the beginning of the seventeenth century the greater half of London's population resided outside of the old city walls. Burke, "Popular Culture," 33.

the title it would still be recognizable to Londoner's *via* the presence of Old St. Paul's

Cathedral in the centre of the cityscape, locating this view to north of the city, and

interestingly for the 1665 outbreak, the site of the plague's first incursion into the city.[155]

     This image is very similar to one found on an earlier broadsheet titled *Lord Have*

Mercy Upon Us (London, 1636), and indeed, it is very likely that the printers of the 1665

sheet used this example as their prototype (FIG. 7).[156] Although stylistically very similar,

the 1636 broadsheet displays a somewhat different image of London: still situated to the

outside and north of the city, the 1636 vignette features two city gates, both of which are

shown as open (if guarded). For Monteyne, the open city gates of the 1636 broadside

functions to construct an image of London as fundamentally uncompromised in its trade

activities, an idealized imaging of the city that is in some tension to the disordered flight

that encompasses the cityscape.[157] There is a suggestion, then, that with these open gates

the city remains, even at the height of a plague epidemic, an economically viable capital

city. The closed and more expansive city of the 1665 broadside forgoes this construction

of economic security in favour of a depiction of London as a site of total containment, a

construction no less fictitious than the view presented in 1636.

     In the sky above this cityscape (in both the 1636 and 1665 broadsheet) appears the

upper torso of the Angel of Death encircled in an ominous cloud formation, his arms

extended over the city, clasping a sword in his right hand and a flail in his left, here

meant to be read as symbols of divinely generated violence (manifested through the

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[155] The 1665 epidemic entered the city through the outlying parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, located against the northwestern portion of the city walls. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 152.

[156] *Lord Have Mercy Upon Us: A Speciall Remedy for the Plague* (London: Printed by R. Young and M. Flesher, 1636). Monteyne also suggests that this broadside is the progenitor of the 1665 sheet, and he is undoubtedly correct as they are nearly (but not quite) identical. See Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 96-97.

[157] Monteyne, *Printed Image*, 97-98.

plague). Despite this weaponry, the intention behind his gesture is unclear, as the Angel of Death was thought of as God's primary agent in both the initiation and cessation of plague epidemics.[158] His appearance here also suggests a causal connection between the Great Plague and those outbreaks of urban pandemic as recorded in the Bible, particularly the two great plagues of the Old Testament: that of the Israelites under King David and of the Egyptians under the Pharaoh Ramses.[159] This connection is made more evident in a contemporaneous broadsheet also titled *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (Edinburgh, 1665), in which the city of London is depicted as undergoing a pelting of heaven-sent fire and brimstone, recalling the punishment of the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and also in an allusion to the end of days (FIG. 6).[160] This sense of plague as a divinely just punishment for the breaking of God's laws or commands was historically *the* fundamental interpretation of the ultimate cause of the plague (beyond questions of

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[158] The Angel of Death was often envisioned as God's agent for both the initiation and cessation of plague outbreaks. See Christine Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology*, (Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2000), 52.

[159] In the plague of the Israelites, God directs the Angel of Death to both begin and end the visitation. What is particularly interesting about this biblical plague is that God's cursed the Israelites because of David's attempt to count his people. Indeed, this story gave John Graunt pause in his study on the population of London, stating that he "had been frightened from that misunderstood example of David, from attempting any computation of the people of this populace." Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations*, 119. See also Boeckl, *Images of Plague*, 52. The image of the Angel of Death on the broadside draws from a long tradition of such depictions, not just of biblical plagues but also of the plague that will occur at the Apocalypse. A very interesting early depiction of the Angel of Death bringing the disease to the Egyptians can be found in the early medieval Ashburnham Pentateuch (Paris, Bibl. Nat. MS nouv. acq. lat. 2334, f. 65v). Another common trope was a comparison of plague-wrought London with Jerusalem under siege. See Novak, "Defoe and the Disordered," 252.

[160] *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us*: *A True Relation of Seven Modern Plagues of Visitations in London, with the Number of those that were Buried of all Diseases; viz. the First in the Year of Queen Elizabeth, anno 1592. The Second in the Year 1603. The Third in (that never to be forgotten Year) 1625). The Fourth in anno 1630. The Fifth in the Year 1636. The Sixth in the Year 1637 and 1638. The Seventh, this Present Year, 1665* (Edinburgh: Printed by a Society of Stationers, 1665). There was a great demand for the mortality figures for the city of London throughout the British Isles, and as such, the London bills were widely distributed (probably through itinerant booksellers) and also produced outside of the city (as evidenced by this broadsheet). Greenberg, "Plague, the Printing Press," 510.

miasmatic or contagious transmission), and can be traced back in England to the

beginning of the second pandemic in 1347.[161]

By 1665, however, this emphasis on the plague as a heaven-sent chastisement for

the sins of the city seems to have declined in intensity. Previous epidemics in London had

been accompanied by a royal command that the population of the city engage in weekly

fasts, in an attempt to appease the wrath of God through a mass mortification of the

flesh.[162] By 1665, however, this weekly fast was changed to a monthly deprivation.[163]

This decreased emphasis on the divine generation of the plague can also be traced in

Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us (London, 1665). Very likely based, as noted

previously, on a 1636 prototype, the only major textual difference between the two

broadsheets is found in the supplicating prayer, which is absent from the 1665 version;

instead, the additional space on the 1665 broadside is dedicated to an expansion of the

mortality lists. This decreased emphasis on the role of the divine as a factor in the Great

Plague of London was in part related to a general trend away from religious fervor

following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660.[164] Moreover, the plague had

historically been deemed a punishment of God in large part because the seemingly

random nature of the plague seemed to defy any other kind of explanation.[165] This idea of

plague as an expression of divine will testifies to the unpredictable and uncontrollable

character of plague epidemics, at least as long as they were seen as unpredictable and

uncontrollable. As the extension of the plague became something more easily predicted,

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[161] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 26; Ziegler, *Black Death*, 39.
[162] Roy Porter, *Bodies Politic: Disease, Death and Doctors in Britain: 1650-1900* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 38.
[163] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 244.
[164] Ibid., 244.
[165] Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 67; S. Porter, *Great Plague*, 7.

and indeed, as it became associated with a particular segment of society, an emphasis on God's role in the plague diminished. The new visibility of the extension of the illness, generated in large part from the Bills of Mortality and their associated broadsheets, provided the populace of London with a sense that the plague could, at least in theory, now be anticipated and tracked.[166] As such, the role given to God as the ultimate source of the plague is concentrated on the 1665 broadside into the appearance of the Angel of Death.

The divinely-made immortal body of the Angel, of which, according to Douglas Trevor, "no aspect…can be vulnerable to decay or corruption,"[167] stands in stark metaphorical opposition to the only too-mortal figures depicted in disarray below it. Located in the barren ground around the closed city are some of the people of London depicted in various scenes: people engaged in praying, abandoned coffins and bodies in winding-sheets strewn on the ground, a carrier of the dead pulling a coffin-laid wagon, people fleeing from the infected city and, in the far right foreground, armed people confronting one of those fleeing Londoners, who desperately hold out what is likely a bill of health.[168]

The chaos outside of the plague city, particularly registered in the detail of the unburied and unattended plague-dead, is in contrast to the depiction of the monolithic walled city of London: the cityscape provides a backdrop to the action in the foreground of the image, while its sealed-off extension simultaneously suggests a removal from these

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[166] Some seventeenth-century theologians also attributed the often unexplainable transmission of the plague to their belief in predestination. See Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 40.

[167] Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 193.

[168] Bills of health, first issued by Northern Italian city states in the early fourteenth century, were issued by the city and declared that the bearer was free of transmittable disease. Groebner, *Who Are You*, 176.

scenes of disorder in way that is quite different from the 1636 prototype (where the city is depicted as both open and partially circumscribable). Indeed, the various visual elements in the 1665 broadsheet seem somehow disconnected from each other, with the cloud-ensconced Angel in the sky, the closed expansive city of London on the skyline and the desperate Londoners in the foreground, each circumscribed within their own individual moments of drama. The image of the plague-dead left abandoned also speaks to the breakdown in administrative controls that began in mid-August that year, particularly in the poor and populous outlying suburbs.[169] The separation of each of the various players in the image, however, reflects less on the ultimate breach of the Orders, and more on their rhetorical emphasis on the necessity of population separation and containment; the broadsheet thus depicts an image of a very orderly disorder.

The plague-sick, who in French and Italian iconography are often rendered through the raising of an arm (to denote the swelling of buboes),[170] seem, at first blush, to be unrepresented in this woodcut. For many residing in London during the 1665 outbreak, however, it was particularly the invisibility of some of the plague-sick that was the source of concern.[171] The anxiety around the potential invisibility of the plague is likely related to early modern notions of identity, which for Groebner's was "a matter of what appeared on an individual's skin;"[172] that is, that the physical exterior of a person was meant, at least in theory, to be an accurate reflection of the contents within. The ailment of the plague, which according to Galenic medicine was affected through humoral imbalance, should have clearly registered itself in the appearance of the plague-

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[169] Harding, "Burial of the Plague Dead," 55.
[170] Boeckl, "Plague Imagery as Metaphor," 986.
[171] Jewish Vegetarians, *Golgotha,* 12; Hodges, *Loimologia*, 98; Pepys, *Diary*, 17 July 1665, 28 August 1665; Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 10.
[172] Groebner, *Who Are You*, 97.

sick, something that was thought often not to occur. And even for those displaying symptoms, the noted tendency of an illness that Hodges describes as "put[ting] on sometimes one, and at others another appearance" made the plague a difficult ailment to identify and describe.[173]

In this context, then, we can situate the marked increase in publications of physiognomic treatise in England beginning in the sixteenth century.[174] As Martin Porter has demonstrated, these treatise were published in the greatest numbers during English plague years, despite a general decrease in other kinds of (non-plague related) publications.[175] Porter argues that this phenomenon signals "an understanding of plague as distinctly physiognomical, so far as particular temperaments…and particular families…were thought to be more susceptible to developing the plague [than others]."[176] Moreover, many of the authors of these English physiognomic publications also wrote on the plague, and indeed, dedicated sections in their treatise to the physiognomic study of the illness.[177] The interest in these physiognomic studies during English plague years signals a preoccupation, at least among the privileged literate, to become educated in reading the ambiguous faces of the plague-sick and the potentially plague-sick. The fluctuating visage of the plague-sick that was of such concern to Hodges likely accounts for the popularity of these publications: as emerging from a widespread desire to learn how to see that which was considered visually problematic. In this sense, then, the ambiguity of appearance associated with the plague-sick can be traced in *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665) in the striking absence of their direct

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[173] Hodges, *Loimologia*, 87.
[174] M. Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 100.
[175] Ibid., 101.
[176] Ibid., 104; See also Boghurst, *Loimographia*, 24
[177] M. Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 103-104.

representation; that there are no figures that clearly demonstrate the symptoms of the plague speaks to both the official attempts at quarantine and concealment (marked with the closed city) and the popular conception of the plague as somehow ambiguous in its appearance (marked in the visible absence of the plague-sick).

The regulations that were subsequently imposed on the city following the plague outbreak, particularly the policy of shutting-in the plague-sick, are thought by some epidemiologists to have aggravated mortality rates among the London-poor.[178] The idea that this policy of shutting-in the plague-sick may have increased rather than decreased mortality was likewise suspected by some contemporaries, as evidenced in one private organization's claim that the practice was "ruine to many."[179] Indeed, more than any other policy adopted by the London civic government (or lack there-of), none was so highly criticized as this practice of shutting-in, for both its perceived inhumanity and ultimate ineffectiveness at containing the plague.[180]

It is interesting to note, then, that the plague-sick were described by many commentators as being already-dead, a significant conflation between life and death for a disease which had a high, but certainly not an absolute mortality rate. Such conflations may, in fact, have worked to ease anxieties around the practice of quarantining the sick, a practice less offensive if the plague-sick were viewed, as they were by Thomas Vincent, as naturally accompanied by "grim Death, the King of Terrors."[181] Indeed, as another

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[178] Champion, "Epidemics and the Built Environment," 48; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 320.

[179] Jewish Vegetarians, *Golgotha*, 8, 12. See also *The Shutting up Infected Houses as it is Practised in England Soberly Debated: By Way of Address from the Poor Souls that are visited, to their Brethren that are Free. With Observations on the Wayes whereby the Present Infection hath spread. As also a Certain Method of Diet, Attendance, Lodging and Physick, Experimented in the Recovery of many Sick Persons* (London: 1665), 3.

[180] Boghurst, *Loimographia*, 55, 57; Jewish Vegetarians, *Golgotha*, 8; Hodges, *Loimologia*, 6. *Shutting up Infected Houses*, 3; Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 12.

[181] Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 11.

contemporary described the disease: "its poison is so rapid, and it slips so subtly into the body, that it is one and the same to feel oneself affected and to see oneself placed in the tomb."[182] The conflation of the plague-sick with the plague-dead validated practices normally considered to be violations against the social order, particularly that of household quarantine. This blurring between the sick and the dead can be observed in the visual and literary slippage that often occurred between these two categories, which often described the sick as already-dead. In this sense, the abandoned (but still concealed) corpses of the plague-dead depicted in the woodcut can also be seen as stand-in images for the un-imaged plague-sick, who are so very visibly absent.

The dichotomy between the sky-bound immortal Angel of Death and the small, frantic Londoners displayed in the foreground likewise speaks to the universal human potential for disease, particularly through the figures' opposition. An understanding of human flesh as the sign of humanity's fallen condition (registered through its ultimate decay) has a long tradition in Western Europe.[183] This Christian convention, with roots in the early middle ages, would find itself reaffirmed in the contemporaneous work of Robert Hooke, whose 1665 published *Micrographia* would finally display to the world what Roy Porter summarizes as "the Augustinian vision of man as a sack of shit, by revealing the teeming mass of repulsive bugs and grubs feeding off of it."[184] This Angel of Death can therefore be seen as both a sign of impending death (by plague) as well as a

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[182] Isaac Quatroux, *Traité de la Peste* (Paris: Printed by the Author, 1671), 2, as quoted and translated in Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 39-40.

[183] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 2-4; R. Porter, *Bodies Politic*, 63.

[184] R. Porter, *Bodies Politic*, 41; Robert Hooke, *Micrographia, or, Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies made by Magnifying Glasses, with Observations and Inquires thereupon* (London: Printed by Joseph Martyn and Jason Allestry, 1665).

display of its corporeal opposite, impermeable as the Angel is in his perfect humanoid form.

The pendant to this frontally-posed body of the Angel is a figure located almost directly below him in the lower foreground, posed with its back to the viewer: this is the image of the personification of Death itself.[185] It is depicted holding its arms extended in a posture that mimics the cursing/blessing gestures of the Angel that faces it; unlike the Angel however, there is no ambiguity in its intent – it is Death personified, and so its only activity is death. Also unlike the Angel, who is perfect in form, this Death figure is depicted denuded of all fleshy tissue; it too is humanoid, but it is rendered in a state of extreme exposure, with all of humanity's problematic flesh stripped from its body. Rendered in extreme opposition to the Angel, who is wholly impervious to decay, Death personified is depicted as a figure entirely permeable to death and its resultant decomposition. The ethereally-located Angel works in conjunction with this grounded Death figure, respectively symbolizing the cause and the effect of the plague. They act as frames to the threatened plague city, which is bounded here not just by walls, but by the attention of these two figures.

As though presenting these objects to the city, Death wields a giant arrow in its left hand and a large running hourglass in its right, historically well-known images of plague (and more generally death) and finite-time respectively.[186] These weapons of Death, much like the figure itself, act as pendant pieces to the tools of judgment

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[185] I have chosen to describe Death in a gender neutral fashion, as this figure is lacking in any kind of gender indicators (such as clothing) thereby, in my opinion, making it (I believe intentionally) unclear. England typically genders Death as male, however this isn't always the case. There are also interesting geographic variations. For a good discussion on this topic, see Karl Siegfried Guthke, *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5-7; 25-26.

[186] Christine Boeckl, "Plague Imagery as Metaphor for Heresy in Rubens' the Miracles of Saint Francis Xavier," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 992.

brandished by the Angel: indeed, they can be seen as the Angel's tools of implementation through the figure of Death. The arrow as a symbol of plague, which Boeckl demonstrates as having roots in ancient mythology, suggests a sudden, divinely-sent and therefore seemingly inexplicable death.[187] The running hourglass, in contrast, can be understood as more generally symbolizing the finite time of all mortal creatures.

The image of the personification of Death as an animated skeleton threatening the closed city of London in both 1665 and 1636 broadsides is possibly based on an image produced during an earlier seventeenth century outbreak: the frontispiece of Thomas Dekker's *A Rod for Runaways*, which was described in the previous section (FIG. 3). Here, the threatening skeleton of Death is clearly fore-grounded, and is depicted frontally with its face in three-quarter profile. While this figure of the personification of Death likely inspired the depiction of the same figure on *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665) (via the 1636 prototype), the artist of this later woodcut has reversed the positioning of the skeleton, placing its attention away from the viewer and towards the city and the directing Angel of Death. Thus, it is the skull-faces in the frame of the broadside that are made the surrogate face of this figure, whose true face remains concealed: the face of Death becomes reflected (though its absence) in the faces of the dead. Likewise, through extreme opposition, the impervious face of the Angel can be seen as a mirror – as both a reflection and an inversion – on the hidden face of Death.

Indeed, the absence of the face of Death in the 1665 woodcut, or rather, its registration in the proxy face of the Angel of Death interestingly parallels the Corporation of London's attempts to conceal the subjective losses incurred by the plague. Much as the face of the Angel reflects an inversion on the absent face of Death – its complete

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[187] Ibid., 992.

invulnerability negating the concealed (but totally exposed) face of Death – so too do the mortality tabulations found on the broadsheet function to both register and paradoxically conceal the true subjective import of the Great Plague. The face of Death presented in the woodcut of the sheet is made perfect: it is the wholly complete face of the Angel that has been removed from the messy, material-bounded (corpse-enclosing) ground. It is only in the addition of the corpse-strewn border (which is lacking in the 1636 prototype) that this impervious façade is challenged, as I will demonstrate in due course.

The imaging of Death personified was quite rare in England prior to the early modern period; it only occasionally appeared as subject matter in illustrations of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, where it was typically depicted as a fully-corporeal crowned male.[188] Only one English depiction of the personification of Death outside of this apocalyptic tradition is known from the medieval period: pictured in an early fourteenth-century bestiary now held in the manuscript collection at Westminster's Abbey, Death is shown as a benevolent winged-corpse wrapped tightly in a shroud, eagerly being greeted by the dying man to whom he appears (FIG. 10).[189] Interestingly, someone has attempted to erase the face of this Death figure, suggesting that even this relatively benign image was seen as some how transgressive in its treatment of this subject matter.[190] It is not surprising then, perhaps, that while representations of the personification of Death predates the mid-fourteenth century and the so-called Black Death of Europe, the figure's import, and interest in its import, was vastly expanded only following the cycle of several plague epidemics in Europe. The particular form that Death takes in *Londons Lord Have*

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[188] Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer," 93.

[189] Ibid., 93.

[190] For a good discussion on such manuscript erasures, see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 19.

Mercy Upon Us (London, 1665), and the one that would become so strongly associated with the plague in seventeenth-century England – that of a menacing, animated skeleton – seems to have generated in part from the tradition of depicting animated corpses in *momento mori* types of imagery, such as in depictions of the *Three Living and the Three Dead* (FIG. 9).[191]

The legend of the *Three Living and the Three Dead*, which predates the onset of the second pandemic, tells of three young aristocrats who, when out for a ride in the countryside, encountered their own animated corpses who had appeared to remind them of the fleetingness of life. When depicted, the cadavers of the young men were typically depicted in various states of decay, and not as skeletons, which for one scholar demonstrates the degree to which bodily death was historically seen as a gradual process by the English.[192] A related visual and literary motif, the *Danse Macabre,* was developed in the mid-fifteenth century of France and features similar iconography, typically depicting living people of various ranks engaged in a dance with their own decaying corpse – a theme that, like the *Three Living and the Three Dead*, speaks to the inevitability of death for all persons, regardless of their station in life.[193]

The skeletal personification of Death that was disseminated so widely in seventeenth-century London, particularly during plague years, expresses this idea of universal death – the inevitability of death for all persons – not through a representation

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[191] The popularity of these types of images actually decreased following the Black Death, something Boeckl attributes to the developing concept of purgatory and intercessory rites. Boeckl, *Images of Plague*, 73-74. They would, however, regain in popularity, and were joined with other *momento mori* motifs like the *danse macabre*. See Philip Morgan, "Of Worms and War: 1380-1558," in *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings, 125 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[192] Horrox, "Purgatory, Prayer," 94.

[193] A variation on the *Danse Macabre* image located in the Cemetery of the Innocents (Paris) is known to have been painted on cloister walls of old St. Paul's Cathedral in 1430. Morgan, "Of Worms and War," 125-126.

of different social figures, but through a complete removal of all its fleshy form. Unlike

the earlier representations of the legend of the *Three Living and the Three Dead* and the

literary and visual motif of the *Danse Macabre*, the Death of *Londons Lord Have Mercy*

Upon Us (London, 1665) expresses its total domination over humanity through the

removal of all its subjective (and religiously problematic) flesh, becoming a kind of

generic Death figure, an "it" that is applicable to all. The transformation of the figure into

a representation of common Death, of course, means that the figure simultaneously

became the image of anonymous Death: both nameless and faceless.

This subjectively-empty Death, appearing as it does on the *Londons Lord Have*

Mercy Upon Us (London, 1665) broadside, is only too fittingly placed with its attention

towards London, but particularly the poor outlying suburbs of London, where the city

policies of quarantine, mass burial and mortality quantification were most widely

practiced. Indeed, the numerical registration of these policies on the broadside in the form

of mortality totals works to create an understanding of these suburbs as the problematic

centre of (individually unidentified) plague death. These policies – abstractly recorded in

the broadside's plague mortality totals – can be seen as informing the facelessness motif

of the sheet, which can be found both in the denuded Death figure, and even more

significantly, in the numerous skulls located in the border of the broadsheet.

Indeed, there is something disjunctive about the various surrogate faces of Death

distributed on the broadside, between the perfect face of the Angel and the skull-faces of

the dead, the later of which have been relegated to the frame of the sheet. Indeed, the

placement of these proxy faces seems to parallel the kind of statistical mapping of

plague-London that is being disseminated on the sheet – between the safe (and contained)

inner city and the dangerous (and compromised) suburbs. The skull-faces, in their

fluctuation between depicting Death personified and the skulls of the nameless, alternate

between smooth surfaces and penetrable openings, allowing, through various access

points, a view into the emptiness that they contain within. This motif is related to the

tradition of depicting Adam's skull, which was typically used to denote the common

origins and therefore common mortality of all persons.[194] Imagined, then, as symbols of

humanity's universal mortal fate, they are depicted literally without faces. These empty,

commonly-possessed and ultimately (through death and their commonality) totalized

faces, in their constant dissemination throughout the cityscape of plague-wrought

London, make manifest an anxiety about those that were being defaced (particularly

through their conflation with the menacing skeleton of Death).

    This defacement was enacted not just through the facial over-scripting of *Yersinia*

pestis, it was also through the policies enacted by the various legislative bodies of

London that ensured that the plague-sick and the plague-dead (often treated as the same

group) were reduced to simply these categories: that their identities assigned to them in

the plague were erased and rewritten as merely a mark on a door, a number in tabulation,

a faceless skull. It is in this context that the kinds of *momento mori* imagery discussed

above and registered so dramatically on *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London,

1665) became so widely dispersed in London. That the empty skull-faces seemed to fill-

in the increasingly empty space of the London cityscape is particularly evocative when

we remember that, according to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the face of a city itself

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[194] See Horst W. Janson, "The Putto with the Death's Head," *The Art Bulletin* 19, no. 3 (1937): 423-449.

is both commonly held and preternaturally *viewing us*: that there is a sense of continual

surveillance emanating from such empty object faces.[195]

In plague-quarantined London, Pepys describes himself as "jealous of every door

that one sees shut up, lest it should be the plague; and about us two shops in three, if not

more generally shut up."[196] More than just a preternatural sense viewing, then, these

plague marked houses (with their multiple windows and doors) both controlled the

movements of the plague-sick, while their unmoving (and inhabited) presence in the city

engendered an unnerving sense of watching and awareness, a sense that was paralleled in

the continual presence of the city watch (which, in the 1665 woodcut, is notably located

by the closed entrance into London). Thomas Vincent speaks to this sense of malevolent

observation when he describes how "people pass[ed] by them [the quarantined houses] so

gingerly, and with such fearful looks, as if they had been lined with enemies in ambush,

that wanted to destroy them."[197] It is as though the buildings that marked the presence of

the plague-sick in the city assumed the very aspects of that which they were meant to

contain: that they re-presented the invisible faces of the plague-sick.

This relates to what Deleuze and Guattari call the "inhuman" process of

facialization, whereby the "face" of a landscape is linked to the constructed face of the

individual. They base their notion of landscape in their ideas of the rhizome: something

that is not fixed and singular but connected, multiple and moving.[198] This rhizomatic

landscape is conceived of as a space that has been (and continues to be) de-territorialized

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[195] Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003)*,* 103.
[196] Pepys, *Diary*, 16 August 1665.
[197] Vincent, *God's Terrible Voice*, 31-32.
[198] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, 24-25 (London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

and re-territorialized in a fashion similar to (and in conjunction with) the face.[199] Deleuze and Guattari put forth the notion that the face is engendered by an "abstract machine of faciality," mechanized through the conjunction of two axes: signifiance and subjectification.[200] Because of this, all faces are in fact "inhuman" in their origins and as such are "produced by a necessity that does not apply to human beings 'in general.'"[201]

The face, then, is produced through an absolute de-territorialization of the body, a process in which it "removes the head from the stratum of the organism…and connects it to other strata, such as signifiance and subjectification."[202] This abstract machine is the white wall / black hole system that is engaged with under certain regimes of signs.[203] This system is registered not only on the face of an individual, then, but on the face of a building (particularly as it alternates between façade and multiple openings). As Deleuze and Guattari elaborate, "even a use-object may come to be facialized…you might say a house…is watching me, not because it resembles a face, but because it is taken up in the white wall / black hole system."[204] It is not just the human face that undergoes facialization, but also "the landscape, which is not just a milieu but a de-territorialized world."[205]

The face becomes a landscape, then, and the landscape, a face.[206] Because the constructed faces of people and objects are in a continual state of flux (territorialized, de-territorialized and re-territorialized continuously), it is important to locate the face that

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[199] Ibid., 172.

[200] Ibid., 167-168.

[201] Ibid., 170.

[202] Ibid., 172.

[203] Ibid., 167. This system is notably a characteristic of, but not limited to, the totalitarian signifying regime. See Ibid., 115.

[204] Ibid., 175.

[205] Ibid.,172.

[206] In their own words: "All faces envelop an unknown, unexplored landscape; all landscapes are populated by a loved or dreamed-of face…." Ibid., 172-3.

was being constructed and presented as the predominant visage of the sick. The actual

faces of the plague-sick, which were overwhelmed not just by the manifest symptoms of

the plague but also by the discourses that enveloped them, were submitted to the process

of an ultimate de-territorialization. Ian Buchanan describes de-territorialization as "the

process whereby the very basis of one's identity, the proverbial ground beneath our feet,

is eroded, washed away like the bank of a river swollen by floodwater-immersion."[207]

The plague-sick, who were often conflated with the plague-dead, were ascribed the same

subjectively-empty status the cessation of life precipitates (in an absolute, that is to say

final de-territorialization). That the English historically viewed the physical death of a

person as a gradual process (one only complete with the final decomposition of the flesh)

only seems to have aided this equation between the sick and the dead (both being allowed

a certain element of flux). What is particularly interesting here is that the symbolic (and

actual) violence that was being done to the faces of the plague-sick seemed to result in

the generation of surrogate faces, located on both the houses of the quarantined and in the

depictions of the plague dead.

Indeed, the continuous oscillation between London-the-place and London-the-

populace on the *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665) broadside

reinforces my suggestion that the identities of the plague-sick / plague-dead were being

constructed, in part, in and through the policies of household quarantine, night (mass)

burial and in the quantification of the unnamed dead. The skull-faces of the dead, which

are marginalized on the broadside, are each made generic through their total lack of a

fleshy face – the substance that signified individual mortal life to early modern

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[207] Ian Buchanan, "Space in the Age of Non-Place," in *Deleuze and Space*, eds. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert, 23 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

Londoners. This facelessness motif, which is so prevalent on this sheet and on associated publications like *London's Dreadful Visitation,* seem to speak to plague policies that violently altered the identity of plague victims, particularly through an over-scripting on those sites that are most associated with individual identity, such as the face (and the name). In plague-bounded London, the de-territorialization / re-territorialization of the faces of the plague-sick / plague-dead would parallel that visited on the city, as it became a place primarily defined in its function as an enclosure: at least at the level of city policy, it became the site of closely surveyed (and as object-faces do: surveying) containment.

Interestingly and somewhat conflictingly, the unidentified artist of the broadside has attempted to make each of these skull-faces of the dead somewhat unique (FIG. 11). Although rendered in a rough fashion, each of the skulls – both articulated and disarticulated – either gapes or grimaces at the viewer. Like much of the imagery on the broadside, then, these skull-faces are not simply an expression of one idea, and indeed, render to the eye more than just the generic and anonymous face of Death. While these facial differences should not be confused with an attempt to render a sense of individuality to any of these skulls, the effort given in carving these skulls at various angles and aspects – indeed, in giving them kinds of expressive faces – suggest to me a partial resistance to this facelessness motif.

More than this, the shifting faces of the plague-dead in this broadside speak to the uncertainties felt by many Londoners living in the city during the Great Plague, particularly in their anxieties around the proper recognition (and perceived dissimulation) of the plague-sick, who were thought to be so difficult in accurately identifying. These various grimacing skull-faces on *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665), in

their bordering of the plague mortality totals, also seem a reflection on the distrust many Londoners felt towards the reporting of these figures, believing as many of them did that the Bills, and their associated broadsides, only made the extent of the epidemic partially visible. The hidden face of Death, then, made proxy in the border through a rendering of various (different) aspects, seems to speak to the only too-real possibility that the plague had, by late November, slipped the bounds of governmental tracking and become something that could not be truly accounted nor contained.

ADDENDUM

What of the other faces of London? I wish in my last word not merely to reiterate the argument made in previous sections, but rather to open-up the discussion through the consideration of an as-yet unmentioned figure that is today so popularly associated with early modern plague epidemics: the figure of the plague doctor. Indeed, it is not the plague doctor as a person who I wish to discuss, but rather the costume that was worn by this seventeenth-century figure (FIG. 12).

Concerns around the proper identification of the plague-sick can be traced in the numerous signs that were developed to identify clearly those who regularly interacted with them. As Slack writes, numerous regulations were developed to this end, including that their "contacts should carry distinguishing marks, badges on their clothes or sticks in their hands, if they went out into the streets."[208] Particularly, it was the plague doctor in his odd, ungainly and other-worldly garb that still seems to haunt the modern imagination.[209] Ostensibly, the unusual attire of the plague doctor was created in order to protect him from contracting the plague during his daily rounds with patients.[210] Covered from head to toe, the garment was also dipped in a scented wax in order to prevent the penetration of miasma, which also explains the "beak" of the doctor, the tip of which was usually stuffed with aromatic herbs and oils as further protection against the dangerous "fumes" of the infected.[211] The final essential component of this garb, the doctor's wand, allowed him to examine his patient while still keeping a relatively safe distance from him

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[208] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 45.
[209] The costume of the plague doctor is still a popular choice of attire during various carnival celebrations around the world, particularly at the annual Venetian *carnivale*.
[210] Bell, *Great Plague,* 85-86.
[211] Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 42.

or her.[212] The costume of the plague doctor, then, can be seen as an ultimate attempt at full bodily containment.

Designed by French doctor Charles Delorme (personal physician to King Louis XIII) in the early seventeenth century during the epidemic at Marseilles, this plague doctor attire was quickly adopted for use by many European physicians (likely in part because it unwittingly acted as adequate protection for them against plague-transmitting fleas).[213] Although documentation on the use of the plague doctor's costume during the Great Plague of London is lacking, due no doubt to the widespread departure of the majority of the city's physicians, it can be assumed that it, like other Continental prototypes, was worn by the likes of Nathaniel Hodges (one of the few physicians who remained in London during the plague).[214]

Their unearthly, disturbing appearance was intended to protect more than just the physician; several plague doctors noted its effectiveness, through fear, in warning people indoors. Moreover, Charles Delorme himself is known to have underscored its usefulness in encouraging the viewer to fear (and presumably then repent) the punishment that they were considered to deserve, and were now enduring in the form of plague from a vengeful God.[215] Using the garment to inspire fear in the viewer is a telling feature of the outfit in that, as Sheila Barker has noted, psychological turmoil (or agitation) was thought

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[212] Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 42; Iqbal Akhtar Khan, "Plague: the Dreadful Visitation Occupying the Human Mind for Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 98, no. 5 (May 2004): 274.

[213] Khan, "Plague: the Dreadful Visitation," 274-275. Fox, "The Politics of Physicians." 7.

[214] Unfortunately, all historical references to the plague doctor costume in London are made after the Great Plague of 1665. However, as noted above, the costumes used by other plague workers in England were based on adopted Continental (particularly French) models. It is extremely likely, then, that London plague doctors (of which there are a few documented) employed a variation on the costume described above. See Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 271.

[215] See S. Porter, *Great Plague*, 79.

to be a major contributing factor in transmission of the disease.[216] The potentially damaging effect of the garb when placed upon the body of a healer is suggestive of a change in the doctor's role in the city during such pandemics: from an individually recognizable and hirable physician whose aim was to heal to that of a veiled, interchangeable and anonymous agent of population control.

Thematically, the costume's alien face suggests a connection to the facelessness motif that was being promulgated in various forms throughout the plague city. The reflection of the eyes of the doctor refracted behind his crystal glasses and murkily viewing outwards upon those whom he visited would certainly have disturbed those far-gone in fever, likely causing them to hopelessly oscillate between the objective and horrible "face" and the roving, penetrating, subjective gaze.[217] That this horror-face could then pronounce a judgment that would in turn reduce them, the patients, to one of the nameless numbers used in plague tabulation would undoubtedly have increased their sense of confusion, alienation and fear.

Indeed, there seems to be an interesting mirroring effect between these two faces, between the smooth projected "face" of the doctor and the inflamed, oozing and increasingly unrecognizable face of the plague-sick that were his patients. Covered and inaccessible behind his mask, the plague doctor presents a totalized and totaliz*ing* face, imposing a quantifiable number upon the hideous (*ungestalt*) and deformed (now defaced) face of the patient / corpse. The corpse, wholly abject and therefore ejected from city by cover of darkness (when still practical) was funneled through city streets as a

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[216] Sheila Barker, "Poussin, Plague and Early Modern Medicine," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no. 4 (December 2004): 660-661.

[217] Martin Porter notes that the use of crystal glasses was adopted by Charles Delorme as a way to protect himself against infection by gaze, the gaze of others also considered a means of transmitting the disease. See M. Porter, *Windows of the Soul*, 104.

horror, what Kristeva would describe as "that [wholly] being opposed to the I."[218] This

threat to the individual was buried under the landscape *en masse*, as anonymously (and

abstractly) as possible. For the sudden overtaking of the city by the corpse, what Kristeva

underscores as "the most sickening of wastes," can be seen as threatening the identity,

system and order that various social and linguistic structures were continually trying to

(re-)impose.[219]

A connection can be observed, then, between the enveloped object-face of the

plague doctor and the commonly depicted denuded skull-faces of the dead, particularly in

their appearance on *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665). The plague

doctor, a figure instrumental in the correct identification of the plague-sick, was a

physical reflection (through his masking) on the anonymity that would be imposed upon

his patients with his diagnosis of the plague. The costume, which was meant to contain

not just the body of the plague doctor, but through fear, the denizens of London, was the

corporeal expression of policies of containment that were (unsuccessfully) practiced

during the Great Plague of London. In donning this garb, in its complete envelopment of

the doctor within, there is a sense that the physician then *becomes* the plague doctor, only

by this veiling of his subjectivity by the highly recognizable and generic costume, a result

that is reminiscent to that achieved in the facelessness motif.

That this costume was then meant to terrify its viewers in order to prompt the

practice of self-enforced population containment reinforces the notion that the political

order of the plague city was perceived to be very frail by its various administrative

bodies. That the majority of the plague-sick – the plague-poor – would have been unable

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[218] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1-2.
[219] Ibid.,, 3-4.

to afford the tending proffered for sale by these pestilential doctors seems to suggest that the adoption of such a visibly threatening garb was meant particularly as a warning to the city poor. For ultimately, it was upon the faces of the plague-infected poor that this sense of facelessness was most frequently inscribed. These abstractions of the plague-sick and plague-dead, undoubtedly related as they were to the pressures of practically managing the affairs of a city under the grips of a deadly pandemic, speak also to the medical exigencies of the Great Plague of London, which resulted in an attempt to control (and conceal) the porous boundaries existing between order and disorder, through the erasure and re-inscription on the identities of the plague-sick / dead.

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FIG. 1: *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665).
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FIG. 2: *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us*, detail (London, 1665).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 3: *A Rod for Run-Awayes*, frontispiece (London, 1625).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 4: Bill of Mortality, 18 - 25 July 1665 (London, 1665).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 5: *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1665).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 6: *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (Edinburgh, 1665).
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FIG 7: *Lord Have Mercy Upon Us* (London, 1636).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 8: *London's Dreadful Visitation* (London, 1665).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 9: *The Three Living and the Three Dead*; Psalter of Robert de Lisle
(ca. 1330, England)
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 10: Death takes a Soul; *Bestiary* (England, 1270-1290).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 11: *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us*, border details (London, 1665).
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

FIG. 12: Model of a plague doctor.
Image withdrawn due to copyright.

APPENDIX
"Poem" from *Londons Lord Have Mercy Upon Us: A True Relation of Seven Modern Plagues or Visitations in London, with the Number of Those that were Buried of All Diseases; viz the First in the Year of Queen Elizabeth, Anno 1592. The Second in the Year 1603 the Third in (That Never to be Forgotten Year) 1625. The Fourth in Anno 1630. The Fift in the Year 1636. The Sixt in the Year 1637. And 1638. The Seventh this Present Year, 1665*. London: Printed for Francis Coles, Thomas Vere, and John Wright, 1665.

Reader, what ever thou art, rich or poor
Rowse up thy self, for Death stands at the door;
If God says strike, he must and will come in
For death we know is the reward of sin.
His very breath is so infectious grown,
He poysons every one he breaths upon;
He is the Rich-man's terrour, makes him flye,
And bears away his baggs, as loath to die.
What shall the Poor do that behind do stay?
Death makes them rich, by taking them away.
But what shall Poor men do, that here do live,
'Tis surely fit the Rich should comfort give,
And weekly Means unto them still afford:
Oh such Rich men shall be rich in the Lord!
Death startles all, but more the guilt of sin,
Which sinful man long time hath lived in,
Doth make them fearful of that punishment
Due unto sin, for time that's evil spent.
Oh why was this not thought on long ago!
When God expected our Repentance so?
Seventeen years since, a little Plague God sent,
He shoke his Rod to move us to repent:
Not long before that time, a dearth of Corn
Was sent to use to see if we would turn:
And after that, there's none deny it can;
The Beasts did suffer for the sin of man:
Grass was so short and small, that it was told,
Hay for four pounds a Load was daily sold.
These Judgements God hath sent even to cite us
Unto Repentance, and from sin to fright us.
Oh stubborn *England*! Childish and unwise,
So heavy laden with iniquities:
Return, return. unto thy loving Father,
Return I say with speed, so much the rather,
Because his Son thy Saviour pleads thy cause,
Though thou hast broken all his holy Lawes:
Say to thy self, My sins are cause of all

Gods Judgements that upon this I and do fall,
And sin's the cause that each one doth complain,
They have too much, sometimes too little rain:
Say to thy self, this Plague may be removed,
If I repent, as plainly may be proved
By *Niniveh*, that City great and large,
For God hath given upon his Angels Charge,
To strike and to forbear as he sees fit;
If it be so, then learn thou so much wit,
To use thy best endeavour to prevent
A plague, which though mayst do if though repent!
Let all infected Houses be thy *Text*,
And make this Use, that thine may be the next!
The *Red Crosse* still is us'd, as it hath bin,
To shew they Christians are that are within:
And *Lord have mercy upon us* on the door,
Puts thee in mind, to pray for them therefore.
The *Watchman* that attends the house of sorrow,
He may attend upon thy house to morrow.
Oh where's the vows we to our God have made!
When death and sickness came with axe and spade,
And hurl'd our Brethren up in heaps apace,
Even forty thousand in a little space:
The Plague among us is not yet removed,
Because that sin of us is still beloved.
Each spectacle of Death and Funerall,
Puts thee and I in mind, We must die all.