The medium of the media themselves (news, the press, tele-communications, techno-tele-discursivity, techno-tele-iconicity, that which in general assures and determines the spacing of public space, the very possibility of the res publica and the phenomenality of the political), this element itself is neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes. It does not belong to ontolology, to the discourse on the Being of beings, or to the essence of life or death. It requires, then, what we call . . . hauntology.
Jacques Derrida (1994: 50–1)

Photography has killed editing. Period. (Someone has to tell the editors.)
Randall McLeod (1999: 72, 154)

That would be scann’ed.
Hamlet 3.3.75

Signing Your Own Death Warrant: Hamlet’s Specters of Provenance

“A Hamlet in Flames,” an episode of a British television series entitled The New Adventures of Charlie Chan (1957), begins with a prologue about the provenance of a rare book: a Nazi officer steals an imaginary First Folio of Hamlet (dated 1603) from its present owner, a French count, in whose castle the Nazi is now billeted.

The Nazi occupier forces the count to “sell” what I will henceforth call the Fauxlio Hamlet for a fraction of its market value and demands that he sign a bill of
sale backdated to 1937 in exchange for his life. (Figure 12.1(a)). After the count leaves the room, the Nazi owner of Hamlet signs an order for the count’s execution and telephones it in. The “bill of sale” establishing the edition’s provenance occurs in occupied France in 1940. Flash-forward to Belgium, 1957. The ex-Nazi has now put the Hamlet Fauxlio up for sale. In the prologue, the count had rather archly asked the Nazi officer if he were sure about the 1937 date. Now we discover why. The count had not owned the edition until 1940. The bill is therefore evidence of a criminal transaction.

Charlie Chan (J. Carrol Naish), accompanied by his “Number One” son, Barry (James Hong), is called in to investigate. Shortly after he examines the Fauxlio, it is stolen, and the bookshop where it was kept is burned; the Nazi officer is murdered by friends of the count who find him out through the bill of sale; Chan discovers the murderer; and the Fauxlio is returned to the police who will in return send it to the British Library.

An intriguing subplot involving Barry develops within this rather prosaic Chan episode. Barry wants to photograph the Hamlet edition, one of only three remaining copies, to provide a facsimile edition for the college he attends (Figure 12.1(c) and 12.1(d)) He manages to begin doing so, but is called away by the thief.
impersonating the police to come to his father’s aid. The thief then steals the book that the son has left open and unguarded. At the end of the film, after the Fauxlio is in the hands of the French police, Barry thanks the police captain for letting him photograph the entire faux Folio. Adding a somewhat comic touch to the ending, Barry takes out a gun he recovered at the crime scene, which Chan tells him to return to the police (Figure 12.2(a)). Barry obliged, but the gun accidentally goes off and the bullet hits his camera, sitting on the police captain’s desk. Picking up the remains of shattered camera from the floor, Barry discovers to his dismay that the entire roll of film is ruined: every photo has a hole through it (Figure 12.2(b–d)).

I begin with this account of “A Hamlet in Flames” not because of the episode’s aesthetic merits (which are few) but because it raises broad questions about what D. A. Greetham calls “textual forensics” (1997), questions which turn on the facsimile and photography: a murder involving a rare imaginary edition of Hamlet and a subplot about literally shooting film of it becomes a kind of crime scene after the real crime of murder in the main plot has been committed, when subplot and main plot merge in an epilogue. The evenly and neatly distributed holes in the undeveloped roll of film evince a kind of cinematic seriality, a punctuation of the otherwise blank, scrolling space of undeveloped film.
Just the Facs(imiles), Ma’am

The Charlie Chan *Hamlet* Fauxlio has a curious status: it is a film prop that has no extra-filmic referent; furthermore, the facsimile stage prop stands diegetically outside of evidence, subject neither to legal nor to textual forensics within a television series about a detective. The bill of sale is the evidence, not the *Hamlet* edition; and the edition cannot be photographed and used as textual evidence by scholars either. The title page of the *Hamlet* edition is undated (the son says it was published in 1603), in contrast both to the conspicuously dated bill of sale the count signs and to the prominent dates establishing the years of the narrative events, 1940 and 1957. The *Hamlet* First Fauxlio is haunted because it cannot be read or reproduced and entered into evidence or laid to rest, just given a sendoff across the “Franglish” Channel. Initially, the Charlie Chan *Hamlet* Fauxlio is haunted by the bill of sale tying the rare book to its dead, true owner. But by the end of the episode, the edition of *Hamlet* is itself haunted: with the count dead and the Nazi exposed, its provenance has become spectral. The edition will be sent to the British Library, but only because it has reached the end of the line, fully resistant to reading as an image or as a text, a backing that backs up nothing. Narrative closure is figured by a medium that does not provide closure: the roll of film cannot be developed and hence cannot be sequenced, developed, divided into photo-facsimiles of pages to be studied; just as no one in the episode who reads the edition ever gets beyond the title page. Unanchored in a kind of “dead waste *Hamlet,*” the Charlie Chan *Hamlet* Fauxlio floats between the zones of auratic genuine Quarto and First Folio *Hamlets* and their re/productions as film props and textual facsimiles. On the basis of this *Charlie Chan* episode I hazard the generalization that a criminological textual forensics depends on what I call a “hauntographology,” a supplemental, spectral backing of evidence that is not itself regarded as evidence: textual forensics is always “textual faux-rensics.”

Un/Editing *Hamlet,* the Media of Adaptation, and the Un/Evident Facsimile

Though not an adaptation in the strict sense of the word, “*Hamlet* in Flames” provides a productive introduction into questions about text and film that are perhaps best raised under the rubric of film adaptation studies. Since the mid-1990s, criticism of Shakespeare film adaptations has divorced attention to the film from attention to the text in order to analyze the film as a film and on its own terms. While in many ways a salutary turn, the divorce that made it possible has come with a price; namely, that one reads a film the same way one would read a literary text, namely, by historicizing it. Moreover, film adaptations and print editions are both regarded the same way, as divisible units, material things, commodities.
It is worth putting some deconstructive pressure on the distinction between a facsimile edition and a modern edition from the perspective of film adaptation studies. Paradoxically, the facsimile is related to a specific medium (lithography, photography, digital scanning) yet is a reproduction that appears indifferent to its media platform (whether the image is analogue or digital does not matter, whereas video and Blu-ray editions of a film do matter because they produce vastly different image and sound qualities). Necessarily engaged with media translations (language also being understood as a medium) and technologies, “hauntographology” allows us to put text and film into dialogue without returning to unproductive comparisons between original and adaptation because it raises philosophical, philosophical, and technological questions about the limits of a “textual forensics” of print editions and film adaptations with respect to their ontology, media specificity, and legibility. Hamlet’s hauntographology involves a “film forensics” that exceeds, I will show, any crime scene graphology that reduces evidence to so-called material traces.

This chapter makes two broad claims: the first concerns cognitive problems in un/editing Hamlet (textual forensics and the facsimile); the second concerns how these cognitive problems become a political problem of reading that arises when the sovereign is dead but not gone, when the referent is indistinguishable from spectrality (neither here nor there, neither alive nor dead) and when spectrality becomes co-extensive with techno-tele-media, or what Jacques Derrida calls “spectrographics.” When referent effects are indistinguishable from spectral effects in Hamlet editions (language in the play is itself mediatized through print) and film adaptations (the skulls in Branagh’s film), a strong sense of narrative closure does not arrive because the ending can only repeat/echo the structure of the “wait and (what did we/what will we) see” beginning of the play.

The end of Hamlet reroutes this structure through Horatio, Hamlet, and other “txt” messengers. Fortinbras tries to decide Hamlet’s optative future past (“he would have proved most royal”), but Fortinbras’ decision itself requires a decision, when read or acted, because it involves a crux (does he say “royal” or “royally?”). Even when edited, Fortinbras’ decision only defers questions of a forensics sort – who is guilty of what? – about the past as answerable only in the future. Horatio’s account of what has happened is announced as a prequel – “So shall you hear” (5.2.335) – that could also serve as a sequel. The logic of Horatio’s deferral of an answer derives from the logic of reference in the play: referents are produced both through spectral media effects (notes, writing tables, skulls, and so on) and through testimonies of eye-wit/less/nesses who may or may not report aright what happened (or didn’t) in Hamlet.

The continual deferral of questions of cognition in Hamlet, I maintain, registers the play’s serial structure (the ending echoes the beginning; the mousetrap repeats the dumb-show; “twice two months” becomes “twice two hours”; the Second Quarto becomes the First Folio, if we assume, as most editors now do, that the First Quarto is less reliable). This serial structure is not reducible to a
textual forensics “crime scene” in that editing and reading are not quantitative (do we have all the empirical evidence we need to draw a correct and just conclusion?). Techno-tele-media do not function in Hamlet as they (may seem to) do in courts of law: they do not exorcize media from evidence so as to make possible a juridical decision about provenance, ownership, restitution, restoration, and the return of property (see Burt, 2012a). By trying to reconstruct a narrative about what did or did not happen in the composition, transmission, and printing of Hamlet Quarto 1, Quarto 2, and Folio from an extratemporal standpoint, editors repeat the serial structure of each of Hamlet’s multiple editions whether they wish to edit relatively conservatively, at will, or somewhere in between. Since characters in Hamlet cannot look back without looking forward to a time of revelation that never arrives, since the sovereign’s decision itself is spectralized, sovereignty can at most forestall perdition; it cannot provide salvation. Branagh attempts (and fails, perhaps deliberately), I maintain, to give his Hamlet narrative closure by adding a two-part epilogue first showing Hamlet’s funeral and then showing the destruction of Old Hamlet’s statue. As a coda to this chapter, I will return to the cognitive problems of editing Hamlet in order to show how the “techo-tele-media” (Derrida, 1994: 79, 102) network and paradoxically both weakened and strengthened spectralized sovereignty of Hamlet complicate the delivery of what Derrida calls the a-utopian promise of a democracy “to come” (see Burt, 2012b, forthcoming).

**Pointing the Finger: Film Prints and Finger Prints**

Unlike textual criticism, which philologically reconstructs texts through a forensics model to determine the genesis, if not the origins of a text’s publication, film adaptation studies takes literature – a modernized and edited text – as its point of departure. Film philology as such does not (yet) exist. The facsimile is nevertheless crucial to our sense of what an adaptation is, if an adaptation is not to be devalued as a secondary version, a copy of a model. Thompson and Taylor distinguish facsimile editions from modernized editions in terms of their relative readability “When the edition is more than a facsimile but intended for use by general readers, students or actors, it is one of an editor’s duties to correct obvious errors in the text” (2006a: 540). The contrast Thompson and Taylor draw is well illustrated by Stephen Booth’s (1979) edition of Shakespeare’s Sonnets which prints a facsimile of the 1609 Quarto in parallel with a modernized text. Yet facsimiles of pages of Shakespeare Quartos and Folios are far from being excluded in most editions even if their number usually falls short of Booth’s complete facsimile edition. The cost of reproducing images on paper does not account for the fact that Booth’s edition is not the default for editing and criticism. Even though facsimile editions of Shakespeare’s works have been available online for some time, they are usually not read together with a modernized edition created by a critic at his computer screen and printed text (to create a virtual, Booth-like edition) nor are facsimile editions
assigned in Shakespeare classes or cited by critics even though some Arden editions include facsimile editions. 5

Why, then, do modern Shakespeare editors almost universally use facsimiles in their paratextual supplements to produce readable (less error-ridden) editions? 6 While textual matters such as spelling, punctuation, quotation marks, and so on get the immediate attention of ("anti-" or "un-")editors and literary critics, facsimiles of facsimiles or facsimiles of pages of genuine Shakespeare editions tend to be used uncritically as evidence by editors and by anti-editing scholars to edit, "unedit," conflate, or deconflate editions of Shakespeare’s plays: the facsimile, like the film still or screen capture in film criticism, serves in all cases as an unexamined backup for positivist and empiricist notions of textual forensics and textual evidence. 7

This point holds true as well for props like the Charlie Chan Hamlet Fauxlio and facsimiles of non-existent editions such as the Reproduction in Facsimile of HAMLET from the First Folio of 1623. This facsimile of a non-existent edition of Hamlet requires not only the inclusions of paratextual pages from the First Folio but also the addition of new paratexts in the form of an introduction and a textual apparatus. Yet no one would think to call this or any other facsimile a forgery or a fraud. Some textual critics might even consider teaching it, along with online and print facsimiles, in a class concerned with editing Hamlet. There is no such thing as a "fauxsimile" (or a fake prop). By the same token, there is no such thing as a genuine facsimile (or a genuine prop).

What consequences for film adaptation studies (and textual criticism) follow from textual faux-rensics? Before we can answer that question, further preliminary questions need to be raised: Why has the widespread reproduction of facsimiles of print editions and in criticism escaped critical attention from bibliographers and philosophers? Why is there as yet no history of the facsimile? Why has the facsimile escaped historians of the book? Why, in short, do editors, textual critics, and deconstructive critics tend to put on hold the ways in which Hamlet editions and film adaptations are penetrated by textual and visual media, as facsimiles (that also serve to "prop" up their arguments)? Now let me return to the question at the top of this paragraph. Two consequences follow: first, the concept of unediting is subsumed by the broader concept of unreading (see Burt 2012c and Burt and Yates, 2012, forthcoming); second, the definitive edition or complete works are always in crucial ways unfinished and incomplete (not because any edition is provisional but because the moment when one stops editing — the moment one stops reading — is necessarily a moment of crisis, if not madness: one must make a decision that cuts out or cuts off variants or meanings by implicitly declaring an editorial or interpretive state of emergency. In editing, the state of exception, or suspension of the rules of evidence, is the norm. 8 Though facsimiles often reproduce details of specific pages, facsimiles are not themselves considered by editors to be readable as details, clues, or symptoms, or even other kinds of mute speech that might bear on one’s reading of a particular edition or work of criticism. One might say that the purpose
of facsimiles is precisely to block reading by making reading unnecessary not only for the editor but also for the reader of the edited text. Whereas graphic designers have debated whether typography and page layout should be invisible to the reader or draw attention to themselves, they have not debated facsimiles since they are supposed to be visible. And like any technology, facsimiles become visible when they break down, when the image quality is so degraded as to require apology or comment.

Facsimiles in modern editions are generally taken to be self-evident because they are there to be looked at, not read, if they are to serve as evidence. Standing in for the text as thing, facsimiles are hidden reproductions that become invisible while seeming to present the already visible referent. Facsimiles gain their rhetorical power by seeming to present the original, to make it edible and tasty, not just to reproduce it. The apparently self-evident definition of an edition as a material, physical text (a book or DVD) widely adopted in book history is, like that of the stage prop, guaranteed only through hallucinations of past readers and genuine texts, hallucinations made possible by the facsimile’s translation of language into image.

Handwriting and printed text are translated into indexical icons; facsimiles of images become “graphic” illustrations. As such, facsimiles constitute the limits of the forensics, the possibility of identifying a specter. As Derrida writes of ghost hunting in *Specters of Marx*, “one must have the ghost’s hide and to do that, one must have it. To have it, one must see it, situate it, identify it. One must possess it without letting oneself be possessed of it. But does not a specter consist insofar as it exists, in forbidding or blurring this distinction? In consisting of this very indiscernability?” (1994: 132). The indistinctness of the facsimile foregrounds the “hauntographological” groundless grounds of *Hamlet* editions and adaptations. On the one hand, the facsimile is like a ghost that may be identified since it is there on the page just waiting to arrest you; but, on the other hand, it is like a ghost you cannot bust since you see what it shows, not it itself. The facsimile is an image, but it functions like a metonymy since a page stands implicitly for the whole text. (You seem to get the whole thing at a major discount.)

**Hamlet’s Photo-Finish**

Although Shakespeare’s works are not always the subject of Randall McLeod’s highly influential and random essays on “un-editing,” they will be the focus of my discussion not only because McLeod uses an unusually high number of photographs, facsimiles, diagrams, and on one occasion even a drawing, but also because his essays have been often overlooked both by editors and textual critics (Burt and Yates, 2012, forthcoming). Why? Because his reliance on facsimiles both reinforces the norms of textual forensics and relentlessly resists the norms of editing and reading: McLeod “photoquotes,” to cite his neologism, images of printed pages not to produce a
better edition of a literary text or to produce a new, closer or somehow more accurate reading of a literary text.

In his (dis)seminal essay, “Un-Editing Shakespeare,” McLeod initially links textual evidence to the medium that conveys it in a positivist manner typical of modern editors:

For us to witness the vast difference between the evidence of text conveyed by facsimiles and what stands revealed as editorial rumors and irrelevant improvements of it, is immediately to unedit Shakespeare. Thus the camera anchors our perception of Shakespeare’s text in historical evidence untrammeled with ideal projections of its meaning. Beginning over a century ago facsimiles of Shakespeare’s earliest editions started to bypass the compositorial and editorial bottlenecks between textual evidence and consumer, and to present the authoritative texts very much as they appeared to Shakespeare’s contemporaries (McLeod, 1982: 37, my emphasis in bold).2

McLeod’s initial positivist proposition that facsimiles anchor textual evidence and reveal rumor gives way to a concession that photographs may sometimes lie. McLeod subtly corrodes the positivism of his first assertion even further as he continues: “In the age of letterpress, from the cradle of printing to this century, when photo- and photo-electronic technology is transforming it ‘beyond recognition,’ textual transmission from manuscript to print or from print to reprint involved an approximately linear processing of text; it was read (absurdly) bit by bit, or (semantically) phrase by phrase, left to right, line by line; and remembered in these small units by a compositor, who reconstituted it in an array of types, from the faces of which a new version of the text was eventually printed. Such processing is atomistic, sequential, and linear; but the textual object exists as a simultaneous whole, a thing in itself – but a thing – however tradition dictates our unraveling it” (1982: 37, my emphasis). If “textual transmission . . . involved approximately linear processing of text,” its medial transmission has transformed that process “‘beyond recognition’.” In later essays on Renaissance literature, McLeod grants even more importance to facsimiles and “photoquoting,” yet at the same time he permanently defers reading the text in favor of “gazing” at it: the book becomes a roll of film, a reel of celluloid, that he projects as “a magic lantern show” (1991: 66). The text as thing cannot be unraveled, just blown up into non-radioactive fragments at which one may gaze but not reconstruct and narrate, put into a temporal sequence, like the enlarged photos that possibly establish evidence of a crime developed by an art photographer in Michelangelo Antonioni’s Blow-Up (1966).

As the reader may have already glimpsed, the facsimile in the “A Hamlet in Flames” episode entirely empties out the positivism that McLeod, like the less critical editors he writes against, assumes clings to the facsimile. For editors and un/editors, the facsimile serves as an unexamined referent for textual reference. There may be no textual authority, that is, but the photograph always has an unquestioned authority, however suspect its truth-value may be (Didi-Huberman, 2004: 299–71).
The crime scene detected by textual forensics has to exclude from evidence the media condition that makes its narratives possible: the reproducibility of its photographic exhibits and, more broadly, the media that deliver reference effects. For editors and un/editors, the facsimile serves as an unexamined referent for textual reference. If necessary, permissions are given for copyright reasons, usually in endnotes, and sometimes the photographer is credited, but the provenance and dimensions of the text are only rarely given. The date of the photograph is never given, even when it is reproduced to establish a date as in the case of a painting that may be a forgery or part of diptych. The facsimile props up historicism, as it were, because it appears as a transparency, not an apparition, to the reader and editor. Although textual critics and editors tend to see their work as fundamentally opposed, their common use of facsimiles is one instance of their shared empiricist and historicist criminological practices of “textual forensics.”

The excess of specters haunts Marchz’s salvific sequel. A visual echo of 33 A.D., the time Jesus tells Hamlet to set his time machine for, appears on a large screen at the back of the stage just as Hamlet starts the machine, namely Leni Riefenstahl’s 1933 film *Triumph of the Will* (Figure 12.4(a) and (b)). Adolf Hitler appears in the
Figure 12.3 Spirit photographs: W. Fitz-Hugh Smith. (a) "The Master" and (b) "Shakespeare." 1901.

Figure 12.4 *Hamlet*. Dir. Andrew Fleming. USA: Focus Features, 2008.
second of three shots, as if “Heiling” Jesus and Hamlet. This footage, however, is effectively hidden both because of its brevity and because our attention is directed to the action in the left side of the frame. Hamlet 2 splits the screen in half, letting in, though effectively making invisible, a spectralization that haunts the apparently successful revisitation of Old Hamlet that would exorcize past traumas. A negative of negation, a “NotSee” res-insurrection of two world historical crime scenes, the Riefenstahl footage links the crucifixion of Jesus and the Holocaust, structures the narrative sequencing of Hamlet and Hamlet 2 as unhappy play and then happy sequel (as a do-over of the play) even if it is not evident and not evidence. The silent and invisible God Jesus addresses at the end of the stage production is the flip side of the footage from Triumph of the Will. The negative of negation is in turn negated as theological evidence, however, the ghost of Old Hamlet does not spectralize enough: he appears as a father speaking entirely new lines, but he cannot double as an invisible and inaudible and never incarnated higher Father (Figure 12.4(c) and (d)).

“Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour, / stalk hath he gone by our watch.”

The vigilance of the watching guard, the very watch of consciousness, is also a mad-dened watch or timepiece that, turning on itself, does not know how to guard or regard the hour of this “dead hour.” It is delivered over to another time for which the timeclock and the calendar are no longer the law . . . Dates have become unhinged” (Derrida, 1995: 19).

The Instants of Hamlet’s Death: The Spectralization of the Specter

Before turning to Kenneth Branagh’s Hamlet, we need first to work through the status of spectrality in Hamlet and that means engaging Jacques Derrida’s account of the play in Specters of Marx. As Derrida observes, dating is a problem from the beginning of Hamlet. How many times has the ghost appeared before the play begins? When did Old Hamlet die? There is no “crowner’s” (coroner’s) (5.1.4) report for Old Hamlet’s death as there is for Ophelia, just a “forged process” given out by unnamed sources to “the whole ear of Denmark” (1.4. 36–37). No death certificate is ever issued, and, as Derrida points out, the desire to produce one only grants the dead even greater power over the living. Derrida’s brilliant account of the specter and power of the techno-tele-media is limited, however, by his rather narrow focus on the ghost of old Hamlet and Hamlet’s response to him in the first Act of Hamlet. Derrida’s area of concerns in Hamlet includes the “visor effect” of seeing without being seen, even though the Ghost’s helmet is raised; the becoming corporeal of the Ghost; the disjunctive temporality of “the time is out of joint”; and the first time and its repetition.

Indeed, Derrida’s separates his deconstructive account of media spectrality from his account of specters in Hamlet. Media “spectralize,” according to Derrida.
Moreover, spectrality is not defined by the return of the dead but extends to media: the experience of ghosts is not tied to a bygone historical period, like the landscape of Scottish manors, etc., but on the contrary, is accentuated, accelerated by modern technologies like film, television, the telephone. These technologies inhabit, as it were, a phantom structure. Cinema is the art of phantoms; it is neither image nor perception. It is unlike photography or perception. And a voice on the telephone also possesses a phantom aspect: something neither real nor unreal that recurs, is reproduced for you and in the final analysis, is reproduction. When the very first perception of an image is linked to a structure of reproduction, then we are dealing with the realm of phantoms (Derrida, 1989, 61).16

Despite his often philological close and acute readings of variants between texts, Derrida reads Hamlet without any attention to the history of its editing or to its media.17 Derrida cites each of the four French translations he uses, but he does not cite the English edition from which he quotes in English. Moreover, when he cites indented passages from his unidentified English edition of Hamlet, he always cites the text without modernizing the spelling and punctuation. When Derrida discusses Hamlet in the body of his text, he tends to modernize the text. The English translation of Spectres de Marx does not supply any bibliographical information about the English edition Derrida uses and introduces some minor errors of its own: the translator changes Derrida’s attribution of “the time is out of joint” from Hamlet to Hamlet, assigns the line a page of its own, and omits Derrida’s last note to a French translator (Derrida, 1993: 19 154 n1).

My hauntographological reading of Hamlet editions and adaptations puts through a call to Hamlet that Derrida put on hold in Spectres of Marx.19 If we understand the Ghost’s spectrality in Hamlet as a problem of reference arising from an irreducibly linguistic link between sovereignty and the image of the King, we may also understand that the sovereign’s power to decide the exception is necessarily a power both weakened and strengthened by the spectralization of the already spectral royal image.20

Hamlet wants grounds to prove that Claudius is guilty because he comes to doubt whether the spirit he encounters is his father. But just what is the Ghost? The Ghost is in one sense a simulacrum, repeatedly referred to as being “like” the King: “In the same figure, like the King that’s dead” (1.1. 40); “Look’s a not like the King” (1.1. 42); “Is it not like the King?” (1.1. 59); “Comes armed through our watch so like the King” (1.1. 109). The Ghost is referred to with gendered and neutered pronouns: “it” recurs frequently and used interchangeably with “him.” Similarly, “ghost” and “spirit” are used interchangeably. Horatio tells Hamlet he saw his father (“I think I saw him yesternight; / Saw? who? / My lord, the king your father. / The king my father!” 1.2. 188–90). Yet Horatio then qualifies his assertion by seeming
to correct himself: “A figure like your father” (1.2. 198). Hamlet offers a number of names for the Ghost: “That I will speak to thee: I’ll call thee Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!” And the Ghost does not distinguish between referring to himself as a spirit and as King: “I am thy Father’s spirit” and refers to himself in the third person before speaking in the first person: “Our last King, / Whose image even now appeared to us” (1.1. 79–80).

The Ghost spectralizes the specter, making the Ghost’s referent in excess of any identification of his body or spirit by collapsing both into an image. Consider Horatio’s line “Our last king, / Whose image even but now appeared to us.” The adjective “last” rather than “late” works in two contradictory ways: on the one hand, it opposes king to image in order to differentiate them, making “image” synonymous with “ghost” and “spirit”; on the other hand, “last” does not limit the referent of “image” to the meaning of “ghost” since the last King had an image before he was murdered. Moreover, Claudius is technically the last King of Denmark. The image that “even but now appeared” would thus be the same image they had seen before, that would have appeared earlier.

This spectralization of the ghost’s referent as an image returns after Hamlet is dead in Fortinbras’ speech about him at the end of the play: “Bear Hamlet, like a solider to the stage / For he was likely, had he been put on, to have proved most royally” [First Quarto; Folio has “royall”]. The political force of the spectralization of the specter becomes clear as “like” takes the form of a simile and hence a concrete referent: “soldier” becomes the default model for Hamlet’s corpse from the perspective of the ghost of a Hamlet that would have proved to have been.

Fortinbras’ sovereignty over the play is of course limited. When does the play end? Many film adaptations, including Laurence Olivier’s (1948) and Gregory Doran’s (2009) stop at Horatio’s “good night sweet Prince / And fights of angels sing thee to thy rest” (5.2. 344) and reduce Fortinbras to a specter by omitting his role entirely. Fortinbras’ sovereignty is spectralized in the Second Quarto and Folio editions. Consider the crux in the Folio and Second Quarto in Horatio’s lines “Of that I shall also cause to speak / And from his mouth whose will draw on [no] more.” Is it “draw on” or “draw no” more? As Horatio becomes Hamlet’s mouth-piece (“Not from his mouth” (337)) Horatio’s delivery is subjected to static interference: is Horatio referring to Hamlet’s death or to Fortinbras’ right to succeed? This toggle switch of the palindrome “no” and “on” put the editor on call waiting. Moreover, it self-deconstructs Horatio’s last lines, both commanding and advising Fortinbras:

Let this same be presently performed
Even whiles men’s minds are wild, lest more mischance
On plots and errors happen (5.2. 346–8).

Horatio’s ability to prevent more mischance and errors from happening depends on a performance that must wait until the play is over, even if that ending happens
“presently.” What is it that Horatio wants to be performed, exactly? The noun for the demonstrative adjective “this,” namely, “same” has no clear referent: are we to infer that Horatio means a dialogue between Horatio and Fortinbras based on their mutual partly-line conversation with the noblest of the audience? And how will its performance act in an apotropaic manner? Whatever prophylactic purpose Horatio thinks will be fulfilled if “this same” is “presently performed” not only involves yet another deferral, but also is put on hold by the text’s unreliable tele-textual-phonics, subject to interruptions in the form of a cruxes. The on and off “on” and “no” crux registers Hamlet’s self-corrupting textual status, a status arising from its, perhaps hasty, translation from one medium platform to another: stage to page or manuscript to page, and so on, calling up the possibility that Horatio is part of a cover up.

Fortinbras is mostly on stage during what may reasonably be considered the play’s epilogue: he occupies a weakened place in the narrative structure already weakened by the play’s lack of clarity over the moment of Hamlet’s death. In their note to Hamlet’s “I am dead” (5.2. 317), Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor write “If Hamlet is already dead when he kills the King, this may be Shakespeare’s solution to the moral dilemma of the blood-guilt of the successful revenger” (2006: 457, n.317). Even if we accept the possibility that a dead person can commit murder, the final moments of the play leave the moment of Hamlet’s death open by multiplying them: “Horatio, I am dead” (5.2. 322); “O, I die, Horatio” (5.2. 337); “He hath my / Dying voice” (5.2. 340); the stage direction that follows “The rest is silence.” [Dies] (5.2. 342); and the letters “O, o, o, o” that the First Folio inserts between Hamlet’s final word, “silence,” and “Dyes.” Are the letters “O, o, o, o” the addition of a previously missing stage direction? Or have they been added with the reader of the Folio in mind? In any case, only an editor can produce the moment of death in the form of a stage direction, “Dies.”

Hamlet’s spectralization of the specter of the King extends from the Ghost to Claudius, young Hamlet, young and Old Fortinbras, and the King of England: all are caught up in a discourse and telephonic network in which the medium of the image – text as facsimile or as a prop – interrupts transmissions and in which life and death are not reducible to the distinction between organic and inorganic matter or to questions of forgery, counterfeiting, rumor, process, and so on. The multimedia-capable fauxsimile structures the hauntographological status of all sovereigns in the play, living or dead, bloats Hamlet’s narrative structures in ways that forestall closure because they make decision impossible. Hamlet’s pronouncements of his death cannot be distinguished from announcements of it.

Kenneth Branagh’s “Definitive Film Adaptation”

of Hamlet (1996)

Having put through a hauntographological connection of media spectrality to the text(s) of Hamlet, we may now turn to Kenneth Branagh’s William’s Shakespeare’s
Hamlet's Hauntographology

Hamlet (1996) to examine how the film produces referent effects by bringing back the dead in ways that both tighten and loosen the hold the martyr/sovereign has over the living. More broadly, Branagh’s film will make it possible to see how facsimiles of Shakespeare editions in scholarly and popular publications resemble props in film and video adaptations of Shakespeare plays, in advance: like facsimiles, props are referents without a referent. Branagh’s inset film-within-the-film sequences in his Hamlet (sometimes working as a flashback, sometimes as a hallucination, as in the Player King’s speech) are more like the facing-page images in Folger paperback editions than they are in illustrated editions.

I will limit my discussion to three sequences in the film: the gravedigger’s scene; the engraved “Hamlet” seen at the beginning and end of the film; and the supplementary epilogue of Branagh’s own invention making Hamlet into a Jesus figure. Consider Branagh’s inset sequence in the gravedigger scene. A shot of Yorick still alive playing with Hamlet as a child follows the gravedigger’s identification of Yorick’s skull by the buckteeth that still remain in it: baring his teeth in imitation of the buckteeth of the skull, the gravedigger (Billy Crystal) hands the skull to Hamlet. In the next shot, a face-on close-up of the skull held in Hamlet’s left hand begins with “alas poor Yorick” and then dissolves into a match-out close-up of Yorick’s face (and the buckteeth of the actor – Ken Dodd – who plays Yorick) in the last of Hamlet’s many flashbacks.

The testimonial force of the flashback diminishes the longer it continues beyond the initial match-out cut, illustrating a story in excess of the memories Hamlet relates to Horatio. As he does frequently in the film, Branagh comes out of the flashback the same way he got in, with a match-out from Yorick’s face to his skull. The flashback device has by this point been further drained by Branagh’s frequent recycling of the same footage in different flashbacks or illustrations of different speeches in the film.

As if anticipating the exhaustion of this match-out device, Branagh has the gravedigger conspicuously exhume more skulls than the play demands. The gravedigger has lined up a neat row of six skulls on ground level at one edge of the grave he has just dug. In the next three shot reverse shots of the gravedigger and Hamlet, the number of skulls mysteriously decreases. We understand why when we see the gravedigger furtively put the last two skulls into a sackcloth bag to his right, leaving only Yorick’s in front of him. In a kind of vanishing act, Branagh disappears an excessive number of skulls, leaving the viewer to wonder what the gravedigger will do with his sack of skulls.

Branagh both heightens and exhausts the cinematic ways he produces reference effects in the double epilogue. In the first epilogue, Hamlet is carried out of the palace and given a full military funeral (Figure 12.5).

Branagh returns to Laurence Olivier’s Hamlet (1948), the film he apparently regards as his rival, for a final time here (Figure 12.6).

In Olivier’s long epilogue, Hamlet is not a messianic figure. His corpse instead passes by the empty chair and lingers again over the shot of the King and Queen’s
Figure 12.5 *William Shakespeare's Hamlet*. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1996.

Figure 12.6 *Hamlet*. Dir. Laurence Olivier. USA: Universal Pictures, 1948.
bed we saw near the beginning of the film. In the final long shot, Hamlet is put “most high” with nowhere to go but “The End.”

By contrast, Branagh turns Hamlet into a martyr whose death seems clearly meant to be viewed as redemptive (a chorale and full orchestration version of the theme music plays on the soundtrack to cue us). Branagh’s salvific epilogue works only by leaving things open: Hamlet has to have an open casket funeral if we are to see him as a martyr Prince, a messianic figure resembling Jesus (as the red color “drains out” of the corpse like blood). In order to provide a stronger sense of closure, Branagh separates the shots of Hamlet’s funeral in Olivier’s version from the shots of the bed and the chair that return like ghosts. Branagh ends the second epilogue by returning to the opening shot of the film: the name “Hamlet” bookends the film and introduces an additional linear narrative structure by ending the destruction of Old Hamlet’s statue. The title of the film, “Hamlet,” follows two paratextual shots, first “Castle Rock Presents” and then “William Shakespeare’s” printed in red against a black background. The first shot of the film shows the name “Hamlet” carved on stone. The sound of a bell chiming begins with the first shot and continues into the third shot, when we discover, as the camera slowly tracks left from “Hamlet” and the camera racks the palace behind the statue into focus, that the film title becomes diegetic as a name on a statue. In response to Bernardo’s question “Who’s there?,” Branagh cuts to a medium close-up of the head of Old Hamlet’s statue, and we are to infer that the name “Hamlet” we saw as the film’s title appears on the bottom of this statute, and a few shots later, we understand that the ghost is indeed in the statue when the hand on the sword moves. Branagh’s integrated and very brief paratext makes the title do double work, assigning it first to Shakespeare and then to the statue.

The second epilogue showing the destruction of Old Hamlet’s statue, as I will demonstrate presently, marks clearly how difficult it is for Branagh to dis/place Hamlet, link the title and name of Hamlet to an image of Hamlet or the name of an author. On the one hand, the opening sequence and the second epilogue provide narrative structure: just as we move from reading Hamlet as the title and then as the name of the statue, so we move from the (animated) statue at the beginning of the film to its destruction at the end. On the other hand, Branagh always keeps the shot of the name “Hamlet” separate from shots of the statue. In the film’s opening sequence, Branagh does not show Hamlet’s face and name in the same shot, instead filming it (and the guards frequently as well) only in close-up and soft focus. Even before we see the head of the statue, the slow tracking shot leaves “Hamlet” a “wounded name” (5.2. 328) by momentarily making legible words within the name “Hamlet” that may be read as unwitting commentary on the film, first “Ham” and then “Ha.”

An inverse corollary covering of the wounded name occurs in the second epilogue. The film cuts to the same shot of Hamlet’s name at the base of the statue that we saw at the beginning of the film in the statue title at 18:52–3; and then 1:18:55–6.
and 1:18:58 showing pieces of the statue falling in front of its base as the film crosscuts the shots of the engraved name "Hamlet" with shots of the soldiers putting nooses around the head, knocking the head with a hammer twice, and smashing parts of the statue, including the hand holding the sword we saw move near the start of the film (Figure 12.7).

At 1:19:04, the statue’s head falls to the ground and lies horizontally, taking up almost the entire screen. At 1:19:10, the last shot of the film fades to black.

The pieces that we do see fall no longer resemble the body parts – arms or hands – we just saw being smashed. But neither Hamlet’s image nor his name is destroyed. No shot of the head being struck off appears: we only see it being hammered twice in close up. The name of Hamlet is left intact. The name of the father, "Hamlet," is not scratched out, just hidden by the head of statue (rather than matched to it) that, like Hamlet’s corpse when carried out of the palace, has its eyes open, suggesting that its “perturbed spirit” (1.4) has at best been arrested above ground and whose sovereignty can be read as both weaker and more powerful than ever. Unlike Olivier, Branagh does not end his film with the words “The End.”

In the experience of the end, in its insistent, instant, always imminently eschatological coming, at the extremity of the extreme today, there would thus be announced the future of what comes. More than ever, for the future-to-come can announce itself and in its purity only on the basis of a past end: beyond, if that’s possible, the last extremity . . . is there not a messianic extremity, an *eschaton* whose ultimate event (immediate rupture, unheard-of interruption, untimeliness of the infinite surprise, heterogeneity without accomplishment) can exceed, at each moment, the final term of a *phusis*, such as work, the production, the *telos* of any history? (Derrida, 1994: 37).
Spectrographies and Textual Faux-rensics: Return of the Pre-Crime Seen, or No End to Editing Hamlet

At the end of his “Little [Kleine] History of Photography,” Walter Benjamin makes a remark about crime scenes based on his understanding of the task of the photographer:

It is no accident that Atget’s photographs have been likened to those of a crime scene. But isn’t every square inch of our cities a crime scene? Every passer-by a culprit? Isn’t the task of the photographer – descendant of the augurs and haruspices – to reveal guilt and to point out guilt in his pictures? The “illiteracy of the future,” someone has said, “will not be ignorance of reading or writing, but of photography.” But shouldn’t a photographer who cannot read his own pictures be no less accounted an illiterate? Won’t inscription become the most important part of the photograph? (1999: 527).

Photography has to become a kind of writing for it to become readable, according to Benjamin. I conclude this chapter with a glance at the role photographs play in the remarkably “unedited” Third Arden edition of Hamlet. The edition was published in two volumes: one titled Hamlet (2006a); the other Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623 (2006b).

Both covers have the same design, apparently based on a beautiful silver nitrate photograph of the dead Ophelia, underwater, dressed in a smock and holding in her left hand, a branch with flowers, near her crotch, in a shadowy area of her smock. Ophelia’s head is not fully in the shot; a black band at the top of the cover branding the book “The Arden Shakespeare” crops her face at her open mouth. Ophelia’s cropped body serves as an icon of (blocked) mourning by simulating a very old kind of black and white photography. The covers of both volumes of Hamlet double as works of art and (possibly) crime scenes.

In addition to the subtitle, The Texts of 1603 and 1623, the two volumes differ in two key aspects: the cover of Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623 is a photographic negative of the unsubtitled and undated Hamlet cover. Hamlet is in white type and Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623 is in black type. The bleached or faded version of Ophelia’s image on the cover of Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623 looks like a photographic “negative” of the Hamlet cover. Do these covers show the publisher’s (and perhaps the editors’ too) “crime scene”? Perhaps. The “negative” cover makes it clear that the branch Ophelia appears to be holding has been photoshopped into the “positive” cover image. Yet the covers would probably never be entered into evidence precisely because book covers are generally not read, in Benjamin’s sense, except by reviewers. Moreover, the Arden covers are only readable because there are two of them, a positive and a negative. The covers of the Arden Hamlet Third Series phenomenalyze the spectralization of the specter in Hamlet, giving the three editions a new linear sequence in which one edition haunts the other’s haunting image of
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Ophelia. Yet the covers undo any textual forensics in ways that ultimately reflect politico-juridical movements, because any textual forensics depends on images or facsimiles that have no real status as evidence. The mismatch between titles (Hamlet) and image (Ophelia) provide a last example for the purposes of this chapter on Hamlet’s hauntographology: split into a negative and a photograph, Ophelia’s death remains, as it does in the text(s), an open case, or what Benjamin would call the media of the involuntarily remembered image:

On the knowledge of the memoire involuntaire. Not only do its images come when they are summoned, but they appear rather as images that we have never seen before we remember them. This is clearest in the case of images in which – as in some dreams – we see ourselves. We stand before ourselves just as we once stood in an originary past (Urvergangenheit) but as we have never stood before our gaze. And precisely the most important images – those developed in the darkroom of the lived moment – are the ones we get to see. One could say that our deepest moments, like some cigarette packs, are given to us together with a little image, a little photo of ourselves. And the “whole life” that is said to pass before the eyes of the person who is dying or those people who are hovering in danger of dying is composed out of precisely these little images. They present a rapid succession, like those precursors of the cinematograph, the little booklets in which we, as children, could admire the skills of a boxer, a swimmer, or a tennis player in action (Benjamin, “From a Small Speech on Proust Given on My Fortieth Birthday.” Cited by Agamben, 1999: 159).

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NOTES

3 On “techno- tele-media,” see Derrida (1994: 79–81, 102); for Derrida, “media power” is always and above all a “signifying power.”
5 See the facsimile of the 1600 Quarto of Henry the Fifth in the back of Tom Craik’s 1995 Arden edition and Quarto facsimiles in 2H6, 3H6, The Merry Wives of Windsor, and The Taming of the Shrew (A Shrew) Arden Third Series editions. Ann Thompson tells me that the forthcoming R&J will also have a Q facsimile, explaining that the facsimiles “are, apart from anything else, a good way to prevent the textual notes being completely clogged with Q variants, but the rationale is different in each case” (Email, January 5, 2011).
Whenever I use the word “facsimile” in this chapter, I exclude the sometimes interchangeably used “diplomatic facsimile,” or transcription, and the photograph of a text. I am interested in what Randall McLeod (1994) aptly calls the “photoquoting” of facsimiles in the textual apparatus of modernized editions.

See the “unedited” two-volume Arden Third Series edition of Hamlet (Eds. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor) for example. The editors use facsimiles of sample passages (536–9). In their introduction, Thompson and Taylor list the ways in which Shakespeare’s texts can be edited: “1. A photographic, or diplomatic, facsimile of a particular copy of a particular printed book . . . ; 2. An old-spelling, or modernized, edition of such a copy of Hamlet; 3. An old-spelling, or modernized, edition of an ‘ideal’ . . . printed edition of a text . . . ; 4. An old-spelling, or modernized, edition of the reconstructed text of a lost manuscript assumed to lie behind a printed edition . . . ; 5. An old-spelling, or modernized, edition of a play (e.g. Shakespeare’s Hamlet).

I explore other consequences regarding cinema in Burt (2012c forthcoming).

On a trial held in 1862 involving fraud, Hamlet, and spirit photography, see Kaplan (2008: 215–16; see 254, n.14 for references to newspaper accounts of the trial).

Accounts of the holocaust are typically accompanied by assertions that the crimes cannot be adequately represented on film, photography, and literature. See, for example, Derrida (2008: 26, 80). For more on the Nazis and Shakespeare, see Burt (2005).

Derrida (1994: 185, n.20) notes that “it is not clear whether the Ghost’s ‘foule crimes’ that happened in his ‘dayes of Nature’ were his or not.” See also Derrida (1995: 14–40).

Even if there were a coroner’s report for Old Hamlet’s time and cause of death, the report would not set the time for Hamlet, just as the coroner’s report about Ophelia doesn’t settle anything for Laertes. On the sentence “I am dead,” see Blanchot and Derrida (2000: 68).

I allude here to Margreta De Grazia (2007), a study I take to be a failed attempt to exorcize the “materiality” of the text from all spectrality, if not all editing. On the “x without x” formulation De Grazia uses in her title, see Blanchot and Derrida (2000: 88–9); the “community without community” see Derrida (1997: 37, 46–7, n.13; 1999: 250–2); where Derrida explains the meaning of his formulation “messianicity without messianism” see Derrida (1999: 265, n.29 and 267, n.69, where the translator supplies a helpful commentary on Derrida’s phrases “death without death” and “relation without relations(s)”; and see Derrida’s discussion of what he calls a “materiality without matter” (2001b).

In broader terms, this would mean putting through a call from Avital Ronell’s, Telephone Book (1989), which I take to be a reading of Hamlet, to Derrida’s reading of Hamlet in Specters of Marx (1994).

See Carl Schmitt’s formulation, “sovereign is he who decides the exception” (1985: 3). See also Schmitt (2009) and Derrida (1997: 165, 169–70, n.2). See also Derrida’s (1997) discussions of the “The Phantom Friend Returning” and the “Specter of the Political” in chapters four and five, respectively.

See also the somewhat paradoxical line Horatio offers near the end of the First Quarto: “I’ll show to all the ground, / The first beginning of this tragedy” (17. 120–1).

On the sentence “I am dead,” see Blanchot and Derrida (2000: 68); and on the spectral


24 The first of many such mirroring repetitions is seen in the opening shots of the name “Hamlet.” The camera tracks left the first time we see it, and then tracks right at the same speed the second time we see it. Branagh also repeatedly circles the actors in a given scene with the camera in a long take. The device works less and less well to insure a visual referent for the language of the play. The recycled film clips-within-the-film do not match the framing play-within-the-play structure of *Hamlet*, itself famous for the puzzling replication of the dumb show by *The Murder of Gonzago*. Branagh clumsily tries to produce fact-similes through his interpolations whereas Shakespeare produces the Mousetrap as a faussimile of the dumb-show, itself a re-enactment of Claudius’s murder.

25 See Marc Shell (2006) for a discussion of Hamlet being a “little ham” akin to Porky Pig. See also the citations of Hamlet in *The King’s Speech* (dir. Tom Hooper, 2010), a film about King George VI learning not to stutter.

26 See Marc Shell (2006) for a discussion of Hamlet being a “little ham” akin to Porky Pig. See also the citations of Hamlet in *The King’s Speech* (dir. Tom Hooper, 2010), a film about King George VI learning not to stutter.

Reviewers occasionally do “read” book covers, and “in reviews, of the two volume Arden Third Series *Hamlet*, have tended to comment on (a) the featuring of Ophelia and (b) the positioning of her hand. If you look at that hand on the Q2 cover you will see that the design is not in fact based on a photograph.” Email to the author from Ann Thompson, December 20, 2010.

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