‘The brazen head lies broken’: divine destruction in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*

If early modern image-makers and spectators did not have a fully formed notion of ‘completeness’, how exactly did they understand works which were defaced, ruined or destroyed? At various points in this book I have considered iconoclasm as a productive mode of interacting with spectacle in which ‘new’ images are produced as a result of image-breaking. Does this understanding of iconoclasm as a transformative process mean that iconoclasm cannot contain ‘full’, total destruction, that the destruction of images always produces spectacle? Literary critics often understand early modern England as the scene of destruction, shaped extensively by waves of ‘revolutionary violence against the image’ stretching across the early sixteenth century until at least the mid seventeenth century.1 Ernest B. Gilman, for example, argues that English poetry of this period is shaped by iconoclastic sentiments; similarly, James A. Knapp has written on a post-Reformation English ‘iconoclasm sensibility’, ‘iconophobic sensibility’ and ‘iconoclastic and iconophobic atmosphere’.2 Certain scholars have suggested that early modern English writers mobilised iconoclasm in the defence of literary work.3 Most pertinently for the present discussion, Diehl argued that in attempting to ‘reform’ the stage in line with a new, Protestant aesthetics, English dramatists engaged in an iconoclastic act of self-destruction.4 There is, then, widespread agreement that destruction was important for late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English culture. But what does destruction mean in a context in which completion is conceptualised as transgression?

To begin to answer these questions, this chapter will explore image-breaking in Robert Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (first performed c. 1589), which presents an instance of onstage iconoclasm in the supernatural destruction of a demonic brazen head, a quasi-magical figure that had been depicted in English literature since at least the twelfth century.5 Set in the reign of Henry III, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* draws on the sixteenth-century fable that the historical Roger Bacon (c. 1214–92?) was a magician who made a talking brazen head which disintegrated because Bacon failed to hear it speak.6 This legend circulated via the prose romance, *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon* (c. 1555), the
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earliest surviving printed edition of which was published in 1627. In this prose romance, the head falls ‘downe’, and following the event of ‘a terrible noyse, with strange flashes of fire’, is found ‘broken and lying on the ground’ when the smoke clears. In contrast, Greene’s play shows the destruction of the head by a disembodied ‘hand’ wielding a ‘hammer’ (xi.74SD). In comparison with the prose version of the story, then, the drama centres more overtly on the iconoclastic means by which the head is broken.

Mark Dahlquist suggests that the onstage breaking of images in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay is unusual, since the portrayal of the destruction of idols was prohibited under the terms of the 1559 injunction against the depiction of religious subjects in drama. While Dahlquist is right to point out the sensitivity surrounding onstage depictions of image-breaking, he exaggerates the rarity of iconoclasm in early modern English plays when he says that ‘the destructive act itself was very rarely depicted, discussed, or even referred to in the drama of the period’. As we have seen, image-breaking is alluded to in Campaspe, and there are other examples of violence against images in plays across the period. At the conclusion of Philip Massinger’s The Picture, for example, the Bohemian knight, Mathias, who uses a magical portrait to spy on his wife, Sophia, while he is abroad, declares that he will ‘surrender vp’ the picture ‘to a consuming fire’. In an earlier play, Anthony Munday’s Fedele and Fortunio, image-breaking is shown onstage, as Victoria, her servant Allia and the witch Medusa, disguised as ‘Nunnes’, burn and ‘prick’ a ‘waxen Image’, which has also been inscribed with Victoria’s name, and the names of spirits, as part of a love spell. This act of ritualised image-breaking significantly recalls instances in which images of Elizabeth I were dissolved in corrosive substances and defaced with abrasive materials in ritualised ‘image magic’.

Violence against images of authority remained a concern in the early seventeenth century, as suggested by the example of Ben Jonson’s Sejanus, His Fall, first performed in 1603–4 and first published in quarto in 1605 with significant alterations, according to Jonson’s epistle to the reader. Jonson appeared before the Privy Council ‘for his Sejanus’, accused of ‘popery and treason’, and Ian Donaldson speculates that ‘the original acting text’ of the play may have included ‘even more daring and inflammatory material’ than is evidenced by the surviving printed editions. It does not seem coincidental that this apparently seditious play is so preoccupied with iconoclasm. Near the conclusion of the play, Sejanus declares that he will ‘throw … on the earth’ the ‘juggling mystery’ of an altar bearing a statue of Fortune, lines taken by most critics and editors to indicate an iconoclastic moment during which Sejanus ‘sweeps the altar clean’ (5.193–4SD). In addition to this possible onstage display of iconoclasm, we hear that the ‘head … is ta’en off’ the statue of Sejanus which is set up by the emperor Tiberius in Pompey’s theatre’ in the early stages of the drama (5.35). The head had been seen to be spouting ‘smoke as from a furnace’, and when removed,
'there leapt out / A great and monstrous serpent!' (5.30–7). Sejanus believes that the monstrous eruptions from the statue are an artificial ‘imposture / To stir the people’, but when ‘a new head’ is ‘set upon’ the statue, ‘a rope is … found wreathed about it’, and ‘a fiery meteor’ is seen ‘in the troubled air’ (5.216–20). The alterations to Sejanus’s statue align with symbols of supernatural intervention, so that the destruction of the sculpture echoes the destruction of Sejanus, who once was ‘whole’ and ‘next to Caesar did possess the world’, but becomes ‘torn and scattered, as he needs no grave / Each little dust covers a little part’ (5.838–41). Although it can therefore be said that Dahlquist overestimates the ‘rarity’ of iconoclasm on the early modern stage, the example of Jonson’s play suggests the extent of early modern associations between subversion and the depiction of image-breaking.

Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay is a forerunner to Sejanus in that Greene’s play approaches image-breaking as a supernatural act. The onstage breaking of the brazen head is an apparently divine event during which ‘a lightening flasheth forth, and a hand appears that breaketh down the Head with a hammer’ (xi.74SD). A reading of the magic hand and hammer as divine is encouraged by the fact that disembodied arms were often used to symbolise divine action in emblems. For example, the first emblem in Henry Peacham’s Minerva Britanna (1612) is dedicated to ‘my dread sovereign James’, and symbolises the king’s divine right in the depiction of ‘a secret arme out stretched from the skie’ that ‘in double chaine a Diadem doth hold’ (figure 24). Significantly, disembodied arms are also deployed to signify authorial intervention; the title page to Peacham’s emblem book shows a hand emerging from behind a curtain to write on a scroll ‘MENTE VIDE BOR’ (‘by the mind I shall be seen’) (figure 25).

If the disembodied hand could signal both divine and authorial intervention in emblematic contexts, then it may be possible to attach similar dual meanings to the breaking of the brazen head in Greene’s play. In other words, supernatural image-breaking in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay might comment on earthly processes of image-breaking as much as it reflects a divine position on the making of demonic automata. In this way, the supernatural iconoclasm in Greene’s play arguably functions in the same manner as does supernatural image-making in the legend of St Luke, but with a reversal of the message of that legend. Where the legend of St Luke depicted a miraculous act of painting in order to legitimise pictorial representation as a profession, the breaking of the brazen head serves as a divine act of iconoclasm that recommends image-breaking as a means of interacting with visual representations. Furthermore, just as the legend of St Luke places divine ‘completion’ out of mortal hands, so Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay suggests that full destruction is the preserve of the divine. As a result, Greene’s play recommends image-breaking as a mode of interacting with the visual world, but does not consider earthly iconoclasm to be capable of total erasure.
Image-breaking as a means to an end

The observation that iconoclasm may not necessarily lead to total erasure is significant for studies of the early modern period, given the continuing influence of Collinson’s view that early modern England moved from ‘iconoclasm to
iconophobia’. In his discussion of iconoclasm in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Dahlquist adopts a modified view of Collinson’s definition of ‘iconophobia’, understanding this condition as ‘a fear of idols, usually associated with religious anxiety, such that the destruction of idols ... can serve as a ritual exorcism of religious doubt’. In Dahlquist’s view, then, Greene engages with image-breaking
as a means to spiritual purification via the cleansing erasure of idols. This argument also, importantly, hinges on the suggestion that iconoclasm in Greene’s play sidesteps religious controversy because it is directed against technology, which was associated by many of Greene’s contemporaries with ‘atheism’, rather than against idols in the sense ‘narrowly identified with the Catholic Church’. For Dahlquist, the cleansing role of technological iconoclasm in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is signalled by the relationship between image-breaking and the resolution of the play’s love plot. This plot concerns a love triangle between Edward Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, Margaret, an innkeeper’s daughter from the fictional ‘merry Fressingfield’, and Prince Edward (i.6). Lacy and Margaret fall in love when the former is sent to woo the innkeeper’s daughter on behalf of the prince, who spies on the lovers at a distance using Bacon’s ‘glass prospective’ (vi.5). We do not know precisely what this property looked like, but Ian Wright suggests convincingly that it is meant to be understood as ‘a lens, probably in fact a lens-system, a kind of telescope’, of the sort that may also be used in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

A source of disorder throughout the play, the ‘glass prospective’ enables Prince Edward to take a glimpse of Margaret and Lacy’s love that sends him into a jealous, tyrannical rage. A confrontation scene between the prince, Lacy and Margaret follows that significantly resembles Alexander the Great’s confrontation with the ‘loving worms’, Apelles and Campaspe, in Lyly’s play. At first, Prince Edward chastises Lacy, telling him that he ‘canst not shroud’ his ‘trait’rous thoughts’, since ‘Edward hath an eye that looks as far / As Lynceus from the shores of Grecia’ (viii.3–4). Bolstered by the experience of looking through Bacon’s magic mirror, Edward here idolatrously envisions himself as a divine, all-seeing viewer. When Alexander is confronted with his mortal limitations in *Campaspe*, his humiliation is tempered by the deference of subjects who acquiesce passively to his orders. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, by contrast, Edward’s order that ‘Lacy shall die as traitor to his lord’ is met with defiance from Margaret, who demands to be killed with Lacy so that their ‘carcasses’ may be joined ‘in one tomb’ (viii.89–111). Realising his limitations, the prince revises his position:

> Is it princely to dissever lovers’ leagues,  
> To part such friends as glory in their loves?  
> Leave, Ned, and make a virtue of this fault,  
> And further Peg and Lacy in their loves.  
> So in subduing fancy’s passion,  
> Conquering thyself, thou get’st the richest spoil. (viii.116–21)

This assertion of royal self-mastery echoes Alexander’s similar conquering of passions at the conclusion of *Campaspe*. Edward’s assertion of self-control marks one of the earliest signs in Greene’s play that the magical spectacle with which
Bacon is associated must be rejected. The omniscient vision that seemed to be offered by the prospective glass is revealed here to be a source of distraction from the royal duty to which Edward now returns with purpose, announcing that he must ‘go see and view my wife’, Eleanor of Castile, to whom the historical Edward was indeed married (viii.148).

It is significant that Prince Edward’s Alexander-like moment of self-realisation occurs midway through Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay. As Dahlquist points out, the love plot is not resolved until after the breaking of the brazen head and the ‘glass prospective’. Playing on the metaphorical link between mirrors and self-reflection, Dahlquist understands Bacon’s breaking of his glass as an act of ‘interior’ iconoclasm, ‘figured as the natural playing out or the result of the primary worldly iconoclasm effected by God’ in the destruction of the brazen head. The need for this removal of idols is made particularly urgent by an incident in which two young scholars, Lambert and Serlsby, ‘stab one another’ having witnessed their fathers fighting to the death ‘within the glass’ (xiii.36–71SD). Distraught at this violence, Bacon ‘repents’, and uses the ‘poniard’ that killed the scholars to smash ‘the cause efficiat of their woes’ (xiii.80–5). Following the destruction of the brazen head, the removal of the ‘glass prospective’ cleanses the national community depicted in the play, enabling the harmony of the final scene, in which Lacy is presented with Margaret alongside Prince Edward and Eleanor of Castile. Although the climactic restoration of order rests in part on the presentation of these couples, Deanne Williams points out that Bacon’s final speech emphasises ‘singularity’ in a flattering reflection of the status of Greene’s monarch. This flattery is made explicit when, at the request of Henry III, Bacon prophesises a glorious future for England ruled by Elizabeth, who is figured here as a ‘matchless flower’ and ‘Diana’s rose’ (xvi.56–62). Bacon is thus incorporated into the smooth operation of divinely ordered hierarchy, practising state-sanctioned magic ‘for England’s sake under the eyes of the king’. Like Campaspe, Greene’s play can be seen to use image-breaking in the presentation of characters’ self-reformation and the evocation of celebratory Elizabethan iconography.

James Simpson suggests that iconoclasm is ‘rarely a single or a containable act; it triggers multiple, further acts’ halted only through ‘stabilization’ made possible by ‘the erection of an alternative idol, an idol capable of disguising and disowning its status as idol’. Following Simpson, it could be argued that the conclusion of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay stabilises the wave of iconoclasm that it stages via the setting up of Elizabethan iconography as a ‘new’ idol. In the prologues and epilogues to Campaspe, audience members are invited to examine ‘to the proof’, and to rework like ‘wax’ the play that concludes with the projection of an Elizabethan ‘idol’ in Alexander’s self-mastery (Prologue at the Blackfriars, 17; Epilogue at the Court, 18). In contrast to Campaspe, there is no surviving prologue or epilogue for Greene’s play, although Philip Henslowe’s
‘Diary’ records that a payment was made to Thomas Middleton in December 1602 ‘for a prologe & A epeloge for the play of bacon for the corte’ that are now lost.29 There is, therefore, no surviving evidence as to whether the audience were encouraged to rework, reshape or reimagine that which they viewed as were spectators watching early performances of Campaspe. Aside from the absence of prologues and epilogues for Greene’s play, however, there is reason to suggest that the ‘idol’ set up at the end of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay is far from stable. It is not clear that Elizabethan iconography was ‘capable of disguising and disowning its status as idol’, in Simpson’s terms, since, as noted above, iconoclasm was directed against the image of Elizabeth.30 Moreover, Dahlquist notes, the 1559 injunctions against the playing of religious matter were in part motivated by a desire to also limit ‘iconoclastic Puritanism, which Elizabeth regarded – correctly, as it would turn out – as a serious threat to the authority of the English crown’.31

In addition, the technological concerns of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay are not fully extricable from political contexts. As Jessica Wolfe has shown, new technologies, such as fantastical timepieces, were popular at the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts, and machinery could be used to support as well as to challenge state ideology.32 It cannot therefore be assumed that the technological inflection of image-breaking in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay creates a containing buffer against possible political and therefore religious ramifications. In this light, Greene’s play associates unstable monarchic iconography with iconoclasm directed against aspects of post-Reformation culture implicated in Elizabethan government. The ‘idol’ presented by Bacon’s climactic prophecy is too vulnerable to contain the iconoclasm of which it is the end product. Furthermore, the uncontainable nature of iconoclasm in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay is in fact suggested by the dynamics of Dahlquist’s argument. If Bacon’s smashing of his ‘glass prospective’ is made possible by the supernatural breaking of the brazen head, then this suggests a view of iconoclasm as an instructive practice that encourages repeat performance.

**Iconoclastic praxis**

As noted in the previous chapter, paintings of the legend of St Luke worked to legitimise painterly practice. This legend exalted visual representations as divine, but more particularly it exalted and exonerated the process of painting which it portrayed. Similarly, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay calls attention to image-breaking as praxis as much as the play encourages us to notice the image that is broken. As part of this meditation on iconoclasm, Greene considers image-breaking as an unending cycle in which spectators must participate if they are to avoid falling into idolatry.

Like The Winter’s Tale, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay displays an obsession with
the frustration of spectator ability to ‘do something’ with images in the context of the production and reception of unearthly, inexplicable spectacle. For example, visiting Bacon’s ‘cell’ in order to spy on Lacy and Margaret, Prince Edward is instructed to ‘stand there and look directly in the glass’ in order to view events in Fressingfield (vi.10). When Edward becomes agitated at the sight of Margaret and Lacy’s love, Bacon orders the prince to ‘sit still, and keep the crystal in your eye’ (vi.15). Still more agitated, Edward threatens to ‘stab’ the couple and has to be reminded to ‘hold’ his ‘hands’ because Margaret and Lacy are not before him, ‘it is the glass’ (vi.127–8). Edward’s misrecognition of the ‘glass’ for the distant spectacle that enrages him suggests the idolatrous function of this device in distorting perception and misleading the viewer, effects shown to be potentially fatal when the glass is used later in the play by the young scholars Lambert and Serlsby. It is important to note here that the scenes which Edward and the scholars view in the glass are ‘true’ within the ‘reality’ of the play-world; they see events which are ‘really’ happening in Henry III’s England. The problem that the glass presents is that of how spectators should respond to seeing something which should be beyond their vision and which is not physically within their reach. The distortive ‘fault’ in this glass is therefore located in the way in which it allows spectators to see, rather than what they see.

When Bacon breaks the glass he does not engage in image-breaking so much as the breaking of the instrument that makes and mediates images. The breaking of the ‘glass prospective’ is therefore distinct from the breaking of the brazen head, since the latter constitutes a spectacle in itself, although these instances of iconoclasm can be seen as part of the same ‘wave’, in Simpson’s terms. Importantly, the breaking of the brazen head is itself precipitated by an earlier act of iconoclasm against spectacle that occurs as part of a conjuring contest between Friar Bungay and the German magician, Vandermast. Vandermast is visiting Henry III’s court in the train of the Emperor of Germany, and the competition is framed by Greene’s nationalistic concerns, as Bungay boasts that Oxford scholars are superior ‘to all the doctors’ of the ‘Belgic schools’ (ix.17). The Friar begins with a spell that prompts the appearance of a ‘tree’ with a ‘dragon shooting fire’, which is:

the tree leav’d with refined gold,
Whereon the fearful dragon held his seat,
That watch’d the garden call’d Hesperides.
Subdued and won by conquering Hercules. (ix.79–83SD)

The spectacle that Bungay conjures shows the eleventh task of Hercules, in which this mythical figure was required to pick apples from the garden of Hesperides. Greene’s play is here once again indebted to emblematic culture, since the Hercules myth was often depicted in emblem books and appears in decorative schemes from the period. Given the presence of the fire-breathing
dragon, this tableau cannot be considered to be static, but it is a scene of relative calm on the precipice of alteration, since Hercules has not yet entered the mythical garden. Vandermast’s response to Bungay’s conjuring is to ‘raise … up’ a spirit in the form of Hercules to ‘tear the branches’ of the tree ‘piecemeal from the root’ (ix.89–91). As the magical figure of Hercules tears apart the magical tree, Bungay’s spectacle becomes the scene of supernatural iconoclasm.

Greene’s preoccupation with the agency of spectators and image-makers resurfaces at this point as Bungay’s limitations as a ‘learned’ scholar and conjurer are highlighted by his inability to halt the destruction of the tree (ix.101–2). Vandermast, in contrast, is able to ‘set Hercules to work’ and force him to ‘cease’ destruction of the tree (ix.103–33). Vandermast and Bungay are both outdone, however, by Bacon, who triumphs against the German scholar by casting a spell that ‘binds’ Hercules ‘from yielding unto Vandermast’ (ix.143). Bacon’s authority is here centred on his ability to apply prohibition to the actions of mortal and supernatural agents in relation to spectacle, and recalls Paulina’s prohibition on touching the image of Hermione in her ‘chapel’ in The Winter’s Tale (5.3.86). In that play, a lack of physical contact with an image participated in the construction of Hermione’s statue as a figure of ‘unknowable’ perfection; that lack of physical contact also signalled an avoidance of iconoclastic interaction. Bacon’s prohibition on movement in Greene’s play functions very differently, as the iconoclasm of the scene is continued rather than halted by the friar’s interventions. Bacon triumphs in the conjuring contest by erasing the tree, Hercules and Vandermast from Henry’s Oxfordian court; the demon follows Bacon’s orders to ‘transport the German unto Hapsburg straight’, and transports the ‘tree’ offstage at the same time (ix.158–61SD). In The Winter’s Tale, Leontes makes physical contact with Hermione, even though she remains substantially unknowable. In Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, by contrast, Bungay, Vandermast and Bacon conjure spirits and supernatural figures that interact primarily with one another. The spectacle of the golden tree is emphatically material; Belcephon-as-Hercules may ‘tear’, ‘ruinate’ and ‘pull off’ its ‘sprigs’ (ix.91–135). Yet nobody except for Hercules touches the tree, and physical contact with the spirits is, moreover, made only unwillingly when Vandermast is picked up by Belcephon-as-Hercules and transported to Germany. Bacon controls other characters’ abilities to interact with that with which they are confronted, but it is notable that the friar also does not interact physically with the spectacle that he controls.

It could be argued that it is the idea of being able to control people and objects without physical contact that may have made Bacon’s magic so tantalising for early modern audiences. The contest between Vandermast, Bungay and Bacon, for example, presents image-making and breaking as spectacular events occurring on a supernatural plain that is not accessed materially by the scholars of their own volition. At the same time, the presentation of supernatural spectacle
as beyond mortal reach demarcates that spectacle as alarmingly autonomous and self-consuming. The events of the conjuring contest therefore suggest the need for the divine iconoclasm directed against the brazen head, an idolatrous automaton designed to spill over into tangible earthly experience by consuming England in a ‘wall of brass’ (ii.41). The supernatural status of the hand and hammer that break the head therefore meets the supernatural level of threat posed by this item, as well as matching its hellish provenance.

**Making and breaking the brazen head**

Like the carving of the supposed statue of Hermione, the making of the brazen head is a long-term project of ‘seven years’ tossing nigromantic charms’, during which Bacon has ‘fram’d out’ the ‘monstrous head of brass’ (xi.15–17). And like the making of Hermione’s ‘statue’, the process of construction has involved more than one figure; in this instance, Bacon is patron to the protean demon Belcephon, who in this context performs the role of artisan. The practicalities said to be involved in the making of the head are ambiguous, as is hinted early in the play when Bacon tells his fellow Oxford scholars that he has ‘contriv’d and fram’d a head of brass / (I made Belcephon hammer out the stuff)’ (ii.55–6). The use of ‘fram’d’ here especially adds to the difficulty of deciphering the way in which the brazen head is ‘made’. In the late sixteenth century ‘to frame’ could mean ‘to form, shape’, when used in reference to a material object; the *OED* states that from the fifteenth century the verb could mean ‘to make (something); to produce’ especially ‘by uniting parts together; to create’. As noted previously, ‘frame’ contributes to the discourse of divine creation, as demonstrated by an allusion to the moment at which ‘God framed worlde’ in ‘The Historie of Englanede’ in Raphael Holinshed’s *The firste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlance and Irelande* (1577). Kalas points out that ‘frame … recalls God’s framing of mortal flesh even when … used in reference to human artifice or making’, and was also used ‘in a derogatory sense … to describe accusations of supernatural meddling’. The terms through which Bacon describes his framing of the head therefore draw attention to the idolatrous over-reaching of this practice.

Until the latter stages of the play, Bacon does not recognise the idolatry of his actions, and thinks instead that he is engaged in a pursuit that is philosophically and militarily useful to the whole of England. In this sense, Bacon’s ‘framing’ of the head reflects the earliest meanings of ‘to frame’ noted in the *OED*: ‘to do good, benefit’, ‘to be of use, value’ and ‘to gain ground, make progress’. This sense was current in Greene’s lifetime, as during the sixteenth century ‘frame’ was ‘used primarily as a verb to signify an implicitly beneficent activity’. It is possible to speculate that Bacon’s ‘framing’ of this magical object suggests his complicity in the advancement of the project, but not necessarily in material
ways. This speculation is further fuelled by the fact that, from the fifteenth century, ‘frame’ could also be used with an ‘immaterial object’ to mean ‘to devise, invent, fabricate … to contrive’. Furthermore, the only figure unambiguously said to have acted materially in the construction of the brazen head is Belcephon, the demon employed to ‘hammer out the stuff’ from which the head is made (ii.56). Noting the ambiguity of Bacon’s ‘framing’ and ‘contriving’ in comparison with the unequivocal evocation of ‘manual labor’ conjured by ‘hammer’, Todd Andrew Borlik concludes that the friar ‘appears to claim credit for the head’s design, but delegates the task of forging it to a diabolical agent’.

Significantly, in The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon, a devil is not involved in the initial making of the brazen head, which is undertaken by Bacon assisted by Bungay. In this prose romance, a devil is sought at a late stage in the construction process to consult on the animation of the head as a static object. Bacon and Bungay, it is explained:

> with great study and pains so framed a head of Brasse, that in the inward parts thereof there was all things, like as is in a natural mans head: this being done, they were as farre from perfection of the worke as they were before, for they knew not how to give those parts that they had made motion, without which it was impossible that it should speake: many booke they read, but yet could not finde out any hope of what they sought, so that at the last they concluded to raise a spirit, and to know of him that which they could not attaine to by their owne studies.

The nature of the ‘framing’ of the head undertaken is once again ambiguous, and the only physical action unequivocally attributed to the friars is the study of books resulting in the production of a brazen object that in form and content imitates a human head. Although the Bacon and Bungay depicted in the prose romance are magicians rather than sculptors, these characters resemble Pygmalion, in that they call on supernatural forces to achieve the animation of the ‘lifelike’ object that they have produced. In Greene’s play, in contrast, when Bacon draws attention to Belcephon as a manual co-worker in the making of the head, that this work has been hellishly supernatural from the start is emphasised. In addition, Greene leaves unexplained the means by which the head attains speech, and so presents this item as a thoroughly and diabolically unfathomable work that resists mortal intervention.

That the head stands beyond mortal reach is most strongly emphasised in the scene in which it is broken. After seven years in the making, the brazen head is ready to ‘awake’. Bacon, at this point, decides to sleep, and charges his scholar-assistant, Miles, to watch over the head, and to wake his master if the magical figure speaks. Miles, anxious about keeping watch over a demonic head by night, arms himself with weapons for the occasion. Shortly after Bacon has fallen asleep, the head awakes, and ‘with … a great noise … speaks’, saying ‘Time is’ (xi.52SD–3). Miles is startled, but does not wake Bacon as instructed, and, declaring that he
will ‘watch’ the head ‘as narrowly as ever you were watch’d’, drifts off to sleep (xi.59). The head then speaks a second time, declaring: ‘Time was’ (xi.65). Once again, Miles does not wake Bacon, and the situation deteriorates:

Miles Yea marry, time was when my master was a wise man, but that was before he began to make the brazen head. You shall lie, while your arse ache and your head speak no better. Well, I will watch, and walk up and down, and be a peripatetian and a philosopher of Aristotle’s stamp. [Noise again.] What, a fresh noise? Take thy pistols in hand, Miles.

Here the Head speaks; and a lightning flasheth forth, and a hand appears that breaketh down the Head with a hammer

Head Time is past. (xi.68–75)

Everything about this remarkable scene emphasises distance between mortal and supernatural experience. Miles’s pistols seem utterly redundant in comparison with a disembodied, armed and aggressive magic ‘hand’. Miles at this point becomes ‘a figure of human resistance to the automaton’, since he is unable to interpret the head’s meaning, and finds the brevity and content of the head’s statements preposterous.40 Noting that Miles may have been played by Richard Tarlton, ‘renowned for his ability to improvise’, Borlik suggests that the scene endorses distinctions between ‘humans and machines’ through the juxtaposition of ‘the automaton’s laconic utterances with Miles’ prolix soliloquies’.41 While Miles’s behaviour demarcates distinctions between what is ‘human’ and a hellish machine, Bacon’s mortal condition is highlighted when he sleeps throughout the awakening and destruction of the head. As noted above, Bacon is initially associated with the over-reaching imitation of divine omniscience in his possession of the idolatrous ‘glass prospective’. That Miles is required to watch the head because Bacon has remained vigilant for sixty days but is unable to stay awake any longer demonstrates the limitations of the scope of the friar’s vision. The ‘sleepy friar’ Bacon has two mortal, blinking eyes entirely different to the single ‘unblinking’ eye that is depicted on so many early modern title pages (xi.103).42 The divine destruction of the head is therefore facilitated by Bacon’s mortality.

Significantly, the iconoclastic reach of the play extends not only to the magical, speaking head; the brokenness of the brazen head as idol is matched by the brokenness of Friar Bacon as a scholar who aimed to be idolised as a figure of deific power. Awakened by Miles to the news that ‘the brazen head lies broken’, the friar declares: ‘Bacon, the turrets of thy hope are ruin’d down’ (xi.96). In this broken state, and in his subsequent distress at the deaths of the young scholars, Bacon decides to ‘end all thy magic and thine art at once’ by breaking the glass (xiii.79). As noted above, Bacon’s purpose in destroying the glass is the elimination of a disruptive mode of seeing, lamenting that ‘this glass prospective worketh many woes’, and that the ‘glass’ must ‘fade’ in order to ‘end with it the shows / That nigromancy did infuse the crystal with’ (xiii.76–83). The smashing
of the glass also means an end to the ‘splitting’ of the scene presented onstage. Wright points out that Greene was pioneering in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* in presenting the effects of the ‘glass prospective’ as a doubling of the action, a ‘play-beside-a-play’. For example, when the actors playing the young scholars Lambert and Serlsby look in the glass in Bacon’s ‘cell’, the fight between their fathers that they ‘see’ through the glass would have been shown simultaneously on a separate part of the stage (xiii.26–71). When Bacon smashes the ‘glass prospective’, therefore, he ends playgoers’ access to this ‘double’ spectacle, instigating a return to the more conventional limitations of the presentation of one location at a time. At this point it might be argued that the fusion of the ‘split’ scene into the depiction of a single location reflects the trajectory of the play’s narrative towards the evocation of a distinctly Elizabethan ‘singularity’. As noted above, however, that Elizabethan iconography is far from stable, and indeed suggests the possibility of future fracture by opening the way for further incidents of image-breaking.

The unstable ‘singularity’ of Bacon’s speech participates in what Williams, following Paul de Man, identifies as the play’s deconstructive insistence on ‘doubling’ that ‘frustrates the fusion of sign and meaning by producing multiple signs’. Williams refers to an allegoric and melancholic ‘doubling’ that is doubled at the level of the play’s characters, with Bacon mirrored in Vandermast, ‘a figure who recalls Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus’, as well as in ‘Friar Bungay, the bungler’. We might add to this list the doubling stage effects produced by the ‘glass prospective’. In the next section, I discuss this ‘doubling’ as a display of brokenness and fracture that is shown to be revealed by image-breaking. The play therefore suggests that the corrupted fracture of the visual world is always present, although its corruption cannot always be perceived. Bacon may destroy the instrument which provides access to disruptive ‘shows’, but he does not destroy the ‘shows’ themselves, or the pretension to divine omniscience with which they are associated. Greene recommends that all that the viewer may do in such a context is to display and recognise the brokenness of that which they view. The play is therefore fully invested in image-breaking as a productive, image-making process that cannot contain total erasure. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, destruction that entails the removal or ‘ending’ of spectacle is therefore shown to be the preserve of the inaccessible, supernatural world of wholeness.

**Displaying brokenness**

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is highly indebted to emblematic iconography. Building on this observation, it is reasonable to suggest that the play also draws on the modes of interactive reception encouraged by emblem books. To recall this briefly: emblem books require readers/viewers to piece together the verbal and visual elements of an emblem in order to arrive
Divine destruction in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay

at overall meaning. In the emblem ‘Merenti’ (figure 26), in Peacham’s Minerva Britanna, for example, the reader or viewer of the emblem arrives at a meditation on the desert of fame by combining the depiction of a disembodied hand painting a shield with a verbal account of a Trojan captain who writes ensigns ‘of ... fame’ on the blank shields of deserving soldiers once ‘the battle’ is ‘done’.46
Showing a semi-blank surface ‘under construction’, this emblem usefully emphasises again the early modern association between beholding a visual representation and responding interactively to spectacle which is yet to be completed. This mode of interactive spectatorship was certainly perpetuated by emblem books and is likely to have been familiar to early audiences watching Greene’s play. That *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* draws on a context in which spectacle is to be treated as ‘under construction’ is also suggested by the play’s engagement with early modern technology. Most significantly, Kenneth J. Knoespel has shown that treatises on technology from the early modern period function like emblem books, requiring ‘the reader to puzzle out hidden mechanical relations’.47 Jonathan Sawday explains, for example, that in the illustrations in technological books such as Agostini Ramelli’s *Le diverse et artificiose machine* (Paris, 1588), ‘crucial’ elements of the ‘structure’ of machines are not shown.48 In addition to this illustrative incompleteness, machines are impractical, they ‘simply would not “work” in the modern sense of that term’.49 Following Knoespel, Sawday suggests that these incomplete, impractical diagrams were approached as ‘visual exercises’, in which ‘the Renaissance reader is being educated in underlying mechanical principles, discovering the possibility of recombining the structures into new, and unforeseen, patterns’.50

Do these books of machines present an example of the deployment of incomplete images and text in recognition of the transgressive status of completion? That this conclusion is available is suggested by Sawday’s comparison between early modern designers of machines and the poets described by Sidney as makers of things that never were in nature.51 Certainly, the context of early modern machine books encourages a reading of Greene’s play as participating in the strategic deployment of figures of incompleteness identified in the previous chapter. As noted above, Dahlquist finds that the technological nature of the idols in Greene’s play limits the subversive implications of the staging of iconoclasm. In contrast, I propose that Greene plays on modes of viewing associated with early modern technological spectacle in order to recommend iconoclasm as an interactive, productive, non-idolatrous way of seeing.

Greene builds towards this recommendation of iconoclasm partly through an inversion of the dynamics of technological spectatorship. Where technological manuals such as that by Ramelli rely on interactive modes of reception, in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* impractical machines that resist completion are often connected to inactive and therefore endangered spectators as users of these objects. Early in the play, the fool, Rafe Simnell, is disguised as Prince Edward so that the latter can visit Friar Bacon’s ‘glass prospective’ and not be missed at Henry’s court, which has also travelled to Oxford (i.97–101). The disguise does not fool other characters, and Rafe narrowly avoids being ‘clapp’d in bolts’ by a group of Oxford scholars affronted at his attempt to pass for ‘Henry’s son’ (vii.91–4). As part of Rafe’s faulty disguise, he and the prince’s friends discuss
the construction of fantastic machines assembled from the parts of pre-existing objects and animals. Performing the role of the haughty prince, Rafe asserts that he’ll ‘have no more post horse to ride on’, and declares:

I’ll send to the Isle of Ely for four or five dozen geese, and I’ll have them tied six and six together with whipchord. Now upon their backs will I have a fair field-bed with a canopy; and so, when it is my pleasure, I’ll flee into what place I please. This will be easy. (v.4–12)

Rafe’s idea for a flying, canopied ‘field-bed’ mockingly participates in the critique of early modern technological science that Dahlquist argues underpins the iconoclasm of Greene’s play.52 ‘Artificial’ birds were among the miniature automata popular in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; in The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon it is suggested that:

an Instrument may be made to flye withall, if one sits in the midst of the Instrument, and doe turne an Engine, by the which the winges being Artificially composed may beat ayre after the manner of a flying Bird.53

Other imagined machines combined technology and the efforts of living birds as a means by which to achieve flight. For example, in Francis Godwin’s The Man in the Moone: or A Discourse of a Voyage thither. By Domingo Gonzales. The Speedy Messenger (1638), a Spanish nobleman flies to the moon in a contraption powered by ‘Gansas’ (‘a certain kinde of wild Swan’).54 William Poole points out that although the machine described in Godwin’s narrative ‘may sound fantastical to the modern reader, it was less so in the late 1620s’.55 In Greene’s play, however, Rafe’s idea for a flying machine registers as implausible, being a part of the fool’s carnivalesque disguise. Indeed, the account of a geese-powered flying bed emphasises Rafe’s grounded limitations, as he trudges through Oxford wearing ‘boots’ and riding a ‘post horse’ (v.4–14).

The extravagant flying bed is just one of a raft of fantastical modes of transportation and displacement imagined by Rafe and his carnivalesque companions. Drunkenly insulting the Oxford scholars who challenge his identity, Rafe exclaims that he is ‘Edward Plantagenet’ who, if displeased, ‘will make a ship that shall hold all your colleges, and so carry away the Niniversity with a fair wind to the Bankside in Southwark’ (vii.70–3). Since the play was in repertory at the Rose during 1592–94, this joking allusion to the transportation of Oxford colleges to Bankside emphasises the redundancy of Rafe’s shipbuilding project.56 The joke here is extensively directed at Oxford scholars, as later in the scene Miles compares the imagined vessel to ‘Bartlet’s ship … / … full loaden with fools’, an allusion to Alexander Barclay’s The Ship of Fools (1509), an English translation of Sebastian Brant’s Narrenschiff, or the Stultifera Navis (1494) (vii.85–6). The anarchy implied by this allusion is reflected in the dangerous faultiness of Rafe and his companions’ designs. Warren, deferring to Rafe as ‘my good lord’, offers to
construct a ‘pinnace of five hundred ton’ using the ‘cork’ from ‘old pantoffles’ (vii.75–7). The OED explains that during the sixteenth century a ‘pinnace’ was a small boat, ‘often in attendance on a larger vessel’; Warren’s suggestion of a hugely weighty, water-absorbent model of this type of craft reflects the turn of the dialogue towards the achievement of impossible physical feats. Addressing Rafe as ‘my lord’, Ermsby, another friend of Prince Edward, explains that he ‘will have pioners to undermine the town, that the very gardens and orchards be carried away for your summer walks’ (vii.79–81). The drunken friends’ designs are anarchically unsustainable and impractical, envisaging the full-scale uprooting of Oxford University in ways that promise to leave its scholars in dangerous states of suspension. The comedy of these preposterous engineering projects is invested in brokenness, destruction and failure. Where early modern books on machines presented impractical designs for the furtherance of readers’ technological capabilities, Rafe and his friends take the design faults of fantastical machines as desirable feats of engineering.

In his depiction of carnivalesque characters ignorant of the subtleties of early modern technological discourse, Greene also draws on a political function of technological rhetoric that is highly relevant for theatrical contexts. As noted above, new technologies were popular at the Elizabethan court and could be deployed to the advantage of the government. Wolfe explains that William Cecil, Lord Burghley, was the dedicatee of a number of scientific treatises from the period, including a work by the mathematical writer William Bourne on ‘optical glasses’ that was written ‘especially for the Lord Treasurer’.57 Wolfe argues that Bourne offers Cecil ‘guardianship of his mechanical secrets’, and thus enacts and justifies ‘the political techniques of manipulating wonder, the error, or the ignorance of beholders’.58 To support this point, Wolfe refers to the rhetoric of concealment and revelation in Inventions or Devises (1578), in which Bourne purports to reveal the workings of the Baconian brazen head ‘that did seeme to speake’ alongside other ‘strange workes’, such as ‘a Dove of woodde for to flie’.59 The brazen head in Bourne’s account is a fathomable machine that functions like a clock, but which appears unfathomable to bemused spectators.60 As Bourne explains, the head works:

by plummets or by springs, and which might have time given unto it, that at so many houres end, then the wheeles and other engines should bee set to worke: and the voyce that they did heare may goe with bellowes in some truncke or trunckes of brasse or other mettall, with stoppes to alter the sound, may bee made to seeme to speake some words, according unto the fancie of the inventer, so that the simple people will marvell at it.61

For Bourne, the function of a machine is dependent on audience ignorance of its internal mechanisms, and also spectators’ passive acceptance of the impenetrable marvellousness of that function. In contrast, the comedy of Greene’s
play functions in relation to playgoers’ awareness of characters’ comic, ‘simple’ ignorance of the workings of mechanical spectacle. Significantly, Greene’s mocking display of ill-informed approaches to mechanical spectacle forms a part of his exploration of inactive spectatorship as a mode of dissident idolatry. This idolatrous dissidence is strongly evoked by Miles’s responses to the awakening and breaking of the brazen head.

**Miles the idolatrous spectator**

I have previously noted that Miles is a subversively comic figure who stands against the advance of machinery; this subversion can now be recast as a mode of wilfully inadequate spectatorship. When Bacon, exhausted by his conjuring labours, charges Miles with watching the head, he explains that the beginnings of the ‘end’ of the production of this item lie in the moments after the head has spoken:

*This night thou watch; for, ere the morning star*  
*Sends out his glorious glisters on the north,*  
*The head will speak. Then, Miles, upon thy life,*  
*Wake me; for then by magic art I’ll work*  
*To end my seven years’ task with excellence.*  
*If that a wink but shut thy watchful eye,*  
*Then farewell Bacon’s glory and his fame.*  
*Draw close the curtains, Miles. Now, for thy life,*  
*Be watchful, and – Here he falleth asleep.* (xi.30–8SD)

Bacon’s inability to withhold sleep in order to finish his sentence hints at the obliteration of the friar’s work by means beyond his control that is shortly to be presented in the play. Up until the second that he falls asleep, however, Bacon seems in control of events, and is careful to point out to Miles that the ‘task’ of the brazen head will be incomplete at the moment that it speaks, hence the need for the friar to be awoken so as to ‘end’ his ‘seven years’ of work with ‘excellence’. The material completion of the head as a fully functioning object is therefore dependent on Bacon’s activities as a conjurer, activated by Miles’s behaviour as a viewer. Miles has been informed emphatically of the interdependency between his watching the head and its reaching material, functional ‘excellence’.

Miles ignores all of Bacon’s instructions and forgets that although this is a diabolical object constructed by a demon, it cannot perform the expected philosophical and militarily defensive feats without intervention from Bacon. The young scholar thus mistakenly believes that the speaking brazen head is a completed object, and that its limited speech therefore represents an underwhelming achievement. Miles scoffs at the head’s portentous declaration that ‘Time is’: 
Time is? Why, Master Brazen-head, have you such a capital nose, and answer you with syllables, 'Time is'? Is this all my master’s cunning, to spend seven years’ study about 'Time is'? (xi.53–7).

That the head may not be at full working capacity is acknowledged by Miles’s decision to give the demonic construction a second chance, since ‘it may be we shall have some better orations of it anon’ (xi.57–8). When the head declares ‘Time was’, however, the young scholar repeats his disbelief that his master has spent ‘seven years’ study’ to make a head ‘speak but two words at once’ (xi.66–7). Failing to wake Bacon at the crucial moment, Miles forgets, or does not understand, that the head at this juncture is not a finished work, able to ‘tell strange principles of philosophy’, but is still under construction and cannot yet progress beyond the semi-functional stage of speaking ‘two words at a time’ (xi.84–5).

Although Miles responds to the brazen head with a mixture of fear, disinterest and disdain, his investment in the head as a finished object constitutes a mode of idolatry. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ‘finitude’ associated with sacred objects, and the extent to which image-breaking is stimulated by perceptions of images as the perfect, finite and ‘whole’. Despite everything that Bacon has told Miles, the young scholar resists recognition of the brokenness of the head as a semi-constructed item. Miles’s comic admonishment of the head may demonstrate its limitations as a machine, but this attack on the automaton also betrays the young scholar’s misrecognition of the head as something that might speak as he does. In other words, Miles indulges in the collapsing of type with prototype, berating the brazen head for not being sufficiently like a ‘real’ head. When the magic hand and hammer destroy the head, then, this not only prohibits Bacon’s idolatrous, over-reaching designs, it also brings an end to the mode of wilfully disengaged spectatorship pursued by Miles. In this light, Bacon’s breaking of his ‘glass prospective’ responds not so much to the actions of the magic hammer as to the idolatrous inaction of Miles as spectator. The diabolical extent of Miles’s idolatrous outlook is suggested at the conclusion of the play. Cursed by Bacon to live as a vagrant haunted by a devil, Miles approaches the appointed demon as a ‘friend’ and requests (and secures) transport to hell, a place he has ‘desired long to see’, and where he wishes to serve as ‘a tapster’ (xv.33–44).

Miles’s comic failings as a viewer suggest that spectatorship that recognises and exposes the fractured incompleteness of spectacle is the only means of ‘looking’ that avoids idolatry. Just as Campaspe’s portrait teeters on the brink of completion, the brazen head momentarily approaches completion before ‘time is past’ and it is broken by the supernatural agent. The destruction of the head thus seems to be a part of its completion, something which would have been emphasised across the play’s repeated performances in the early 1590s by the material conditions of the performance of this act of magical iconoclasm.
The brazen head used in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* may have been the same property that was used as the brazen head through which ‘Mahomet’ speaks in Greene’s earlier, highly unsuccessful play *Alphonsus King of Aragon* (1588). Philip Butterworth speculates that as a ‘portable property’ the head may have been carried on stage and placed on a post, or hooked to a post in front of a curtain, from behind which the magic hand might emerge. Rejecting the modes of sound effect suggested in Bourne’s account of a brazen head as too complex or even ‘artificial’ for the early modern stage, Butterworth suggests that the impression that the brazen heads in Greene’s plays speak may have been achieved by ventriloquism, or a reliance on audience willingness to act imaginatively, ‘compensating for any lack of precision’. The performance of the brazen head was therefore dependent on the assemblage of spectacle and sound, on the part of either players or playgoers, or both. This potentially discernible ‘split’ in the presentation of the brazen head may have also been reflected in its appearance before and after its onstage destruction in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. The onstage breaking of a property must present certain practical problems for the theatre company if the play is to receive repeat performance, as this play did. Unless a new head was constructed for each performance, the property used must have served as the ‘pre’ and ‘post’ iconoclasm versions of this item. Was the head made so as to ‘contain’ breakage, perhaps splitting in two halves that could be easily reassembled? If the head was smashed onstage regularly, might the ‘pre’ destruction version start to show signs of this history of violence? In short, did the head appear damaged even before the hammer struck? An alternative mode of presenting the destruction of the head might have been to use two properties, switching the first version for the ‘broken’ head when ‘hell’ breaks ‘loose’ and the ‘lightning flasheth forth’ (xi.74SD–76). Even in this instance, however, the brazen head ‘contains’ a split by comprising two different figures that try to pass for a single unit.

Playgoers might not be aware of the mechanical practicalities that contribute to performance, but the play repeatedly draws attention to the ongoing brokenness of the brazen head. If playgoers comprehend Bacon’s explanation that the head is half-finished, then they know that when this item speaks, they hear the voice of a semi-functioning object. This much may have been further emphasised during the performance of the destruction of the head, as it is unclear as to whether the head speaks before, after or at the same time as the appearance of the hammer. The arrangement of the text in the 1594 and 1630 editions has the head speak the lines ‘Time is past’ after it has been broken with a hammer. In addition, Miles tells Bacon that the head speaks its final words ‘with thunder and lightning, as in great choler’ (xi.92–3). It is therefore possible that in early performances the phrase ‘time is past’ was spoken by the head during the process of its destruction or immediately after it had been smashed by the hammer. In such an instance, the spectacle of the speaking broken head would have heightened
the finality of its destruction while also indicating that it was not fully destroyed. In deriving meaning from its own collapse and fragmentation, the broken brazen head would then reflect the late medieval ‘iconography of disintegration’ in depictions of idols, which has led Nicolette Zeeman to suggest that ‘one of the central characteristics of the idol … is its “brokenness”’.67 Evoking a tension between finality and incompleteness, the broken yet still articulate brazen head parallels post-Reformation images that generate new meanings as a result of subjection to iconoclasm.

In the legend of St Luke, divine intervention legitimises the relationship between the image and that which it represents. In Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, supernatural intervention distinguishes the idol from the “‘image,” (eikōn), the truthful representation of an existing thing’, by drawing attention to the brokenness of the idol.68 As a false representation, the idol conceals the split between that which it claims to be or is taken to be, and that which it is. In early performances of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, the brokenness of the brazen head may well have been made visible as well as being explained by Bacon even before this diabolical item became a victim of supernatural image-breaking. Similarly, the ‘glass prospective’ would have always displayed the brokenness of its perspective, even before Bacon recognises this. The dividing up of the scene that may have accompanied the staging of this property would have drawn attention to the incomplete brokenness of vision even as the audience enjoyed the spectacle of multiple displays of action. In breaking his glass, Bacon follows the play’s supernatural iconoclast in damaging an object that has already been shown to operate through the containment of fissure.

Iconoclasm, in this view, articulates the deferential association between mortality and material incompleteness. Understood in this way, the difficulty of limiting iconoclastic behaviour becomes apparent. If we accept mimetic representation as based in splitting, through différences, and understood in relation to an inaccessible pre-lapsarian unity, then all signification contains the transgressive, broken potential of the idol. All signs may be idolatrously misrecognised in such circumstances. This is the fear which informed much Reformation controversy over the abuse of images, as governments debated the degree to which iconoclasm should take place.69 Image-breaking therefore becomes a necessary tool for interacting with images, as spectators avoid misrecognition by drawing attention to the brokenness of that which they view. The total eradication of an image is thus contrary to the function of iconoclasm, since eradication implies that fractured incompleteness is avoidable. As noted in previous chapters, the avoidance of incompleteness is only possible within divine wholeness. An iconoclasm that achieves full erasure, avoiding the production of spectacle even at the moment of destruction, is impossible within mortal realms of cultural production. The unmaking that is involved in iconoclasm therefore risks becoming as conceptually transgressive as is making. It is against this backdrop that Greene
deployed iconoclasm as a means through which to repeatedly recall the ‘truth’ of spectacle. For image-breaking to constantly point to broken spectacle expresses deference to a perceived ‘whole’ picture of destruction beyond mortal fields of visual and tactile experience.

Notes


7 Anon, *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon. Containing the wonderfull things that he did in his Life. Also the manner of his Death, With the Lives and Deaths of the two Conjurers, Bungye and Vandermaur* (London: G. Purslowe for F. Grove, 1627), sig. C3r.


Making and unmaking in early modern English drama


15 The stage direction is an editorial addition by Ayres. See also Williamson, The Materiality of Religion, pp. 87–91.

16 On the divinity of the magic hand and hammer, see Dahlquist, ‘Love and Technological Iconoclasm’, 68–73.


20 Dahlquist distinguishes his understanding of iconoclasm from that suggested by Collinson, who identifies ‘the number of images that are considered objectionable’ rather than ‘depth of fear as the distinguishing feature of iconophobia’, ‘Love and Technological Iconoclasm’, 74, n. 8; Dahlquist refers to Collinson, ‘Iconoclasm to Iconophobia’, p. 8.


27 Kavey, Books of Secrets, p. 47.

28 Simpson, Under the Hammer, p. 85.


30 Simpson, Under the Hammer, p. 85; Montrose, The Subject of Elizabeth, pp. 176–85.

34 Holinshed, *The firste volume of the Chronicles*, sig. 3A1r.
35 Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse*, pp. 86–8. The emphasis is Kalas’s.
36 Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse*, p. 29.
37 See Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse*, p. 8.
40 Williams, ‘*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*’, p. 45.
41 Borlik, ‘More than Art’, p. 142.
42 Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p. 11.
43 Wright, ‘Come like shadows’, p. 216.
45 Williams, ‘*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*’, p. 47.
52 Dahlquist, ‘Love and Technological Iconoclasm’, 69, 73.
58 Wolfe, Humanism, Machinery and Renaissance Literature, p. 63.
59 William Bourne, Inventions or Devises Very Necessary for All Generalles and Captaines, or Leaders of Men, As Wel by Sea as by Land (London: for Thomas Woodstock, 1578), p. 98; see also Wolfe, Humanism, Machinery and Renaissance Literature, p. 63.
60 Borlik considers the brazen head in Greene’s play as a clockwork device in ‘More than Art’, pp. 135–42.
61 Bourne, Inventions or Devises, p. 99.
62 Williams associates Miles’s dissidence with this character’s apparent liking for the ‘verse forms of John Skelton … the voice of dissent’ who is ‘associated with resuscitation of the classical past, radically reformulating it in the interests of cultural and political critique’, ‘Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay’, pp. 45–6.
64 Butterworth, Magic on the Early English Stage, p. 103.
68 Besançon, The Forbidden Image, p. 66.