UCLA
UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

**Title**
The Past Tense of Gender on the Early Modern Stage

**Permalink**
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7gc6z4b4

**Author**
Gottlieb, Christine Marie

**Publication Date**
2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

# The Past Tense of Gender on the Early Modern Stage

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Christine Marie Gottlieb

2016

© Copyright by

Christine Marie Gottlieb

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Past Tense of Gender

on the Early Modern Stage

by

Christine Marie Gottlieb

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Albert R. Braunmuller, Co-Chair

Professor Lowell Gallagher, Co-Chair

"The Past Tense of Gender on the Early Modern Stage" explores how death undoes constructed binaries of gender and sexuality and levels distinctions between men and women, virgins and "whores," gendered bodies and neuter objects. While criticism on death in the early modern period frequently explores the trope of death as a leveler, a simultaneously celebrated and feared challenge to hierarchy, this dissertation argues that theatrical performances of this trope in plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries invent what we would today understand as queer embodiment. The dissertation analyzes the diverse ways in which dead bodies are conceptualized in early modern religious, scientific, and memorial discourses while considering the cadaver's ability to rupture all social constructs.

The introduction begins with Ophelia's transformation into "One that was a woman." The Gravedigger's riddle shows how death destabilizes traditional categories of gender and sexuality as a body transitions from being a "he" or a "she" to an "it." The first chapter shows the unacknowledged but ubiquitous queer implications of death in early modern iconography, funerary art, and anatomical texts. The second chapter considers how the cadaverous performances of skulls in *Hamlet* (1600-1) and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) reveal the gender performativity of skulls in anatomical treatises and *memento mori* iconography. The third chapter analyzes how *Othello* (1604) and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1629-33) critique the conventional anatomical obsession with hymens and wombs as the sole signifiers of female sexuality by shifting focus to the heart: an anatomical, spiritual, and sexual organ that is simultaneously inscrutable cadaverous matter. The final chapter analyzes theatrical resurrections in *The Winter's Tale* (1611) and *The Lady's Tragedy* (1611) in relation to theological debates regarding the gender of resurrected bodies. The staging of dead bodies that return in both plays deconstructs the binary between the aesthetic animation of automata and the "natural" resurrection of embodied persons.

The dissertation of Christine Marie Gottlieb is approved.

Katherine C. King

Claire McEachern

Robert N. Watson

Albert R. Braunmuller, Committee Co-Chair

Lowell Gallagher, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements…………………………………………………………………………….vi

Vita……………………………………………………………...……………………………viii

Introduction: Ophelia and the Past Tense of Gender…………..……..…………..………..……..…1

Chapter 1: Cadaverous Performances in the Renaissance………………..……..……………….22

Chapter 2: Sexing the Skull……………………………………………..………………..…51

Chapter 3: Anatomies of the Heart……………………..…………..……………………………....89

Chapter 4: The Aesthetics of Resurrection……...…………………………………..…..….......159

Conclusion………………...………………………………………………………..………..216

Works Cited……………………………………………………………………………….218

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my committee. I will always be grateful to A. R. Braunmuller, who has served as an invaluable mentor throughout my time at UCLA. Lowell Gallagher has inspired me at every step of the dissertation writing process. Robert N. Watson, Claire McEachern, and Katherine King provided generous feedback and encouragement that I sincerely appreciate.

I am extremely grateful to my friends and colleagues at UCLA, especially the wonderful people in my cohort and the Medieval and Renaissance graduate student community. Special thanks are due to Holly Moyer and Alexandra Zobel for their friendship, support, and countless thought-provoking conversations.

I am thankful for the teaching opportunities I have had at UCLA. The English Department, Writing Programs, Disability Studies, and the Center for Community Learning provided supportive communities that encouraged my growth as an instructor. I would like to thank Chris Mott for his mentorship, enthusiasm, and support and Beth Goodhue for guiding my work in community-based teaching and learning. I am grateful to the faculty members I have had the pleasure of assisting and to the students who have enriched my work.

Dissertation research was funded by a UCLA English Department Dissertation Research Fellowship, a Mellon Foundation Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, and a Harry and Yvonne Lenart Graduate Travel Fellowship. Conference travel related to the dissertation was made possible by travel grants from UCLA's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

Earlier versions of my analysis of *The Revenger's Tragedy* in Chapter 2 and *The Lady's Tragedy* in Chapter 4 appear in a different context in my article, "Middleton's Traffic in Dead

Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*" in *English Literary Renaissance* 45:2 (Spring, 2015): 255-274. I would like to thank *English Literary Renaissance* and Blackwell Publishing.

I am eternally grateful to my family and friends for their love and support: Michael and Delia Gottlieb, Michael Paul Gottlieb, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, Christina Wang, Meghan Gill, Janice Galizia, and the many others who have encouraged me along the way. Thanks for cheering me on!

# VITA

**Education**

University of California, Los Angeles

C.Phil., English, Spring 2012

M.A., English, Fall 2010

New York University

B.A., English, 2006

Minor: Gender & Sexuality Studies

**Publications**

"Pedagogy and the Art of Death: Reparative Readings of Death and Dying in Margaret Edson's *Wit*." *Journal of Medical Humanities*. Web. 19 November 2015.

"Middleton's Traffic in Dead Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*." *English Literary Renaissance* 45:2 (Spring, 2015): 255-274.

**Courses Designed and Taught**

UCLA Department of English

- Critical Reading and Writing: Bodies, Texts, and Selves (Spring 2016)
- Critical Reading and Writing with Service Learning: Literature and Health Care (Fall 2014)
- Critical Reading and Writing with Service Learning: Literature and/as Care (Spring 2013)
- Critical Reading and Writing: Bodies and Parts (Spring 2012)
- Critical Reading and Writing: Ghosts and Memory (Fall 2011)

UCLA Departments of English and Disability Studies

- Studies in Disability Literatures: Shakespearean Disability Studies (Summer 2015)

UCLA Writing Programs

- Composition, Rhetoric, and Language: Identities and Institutions (Winter 2013)
- Composition, Rhetoric, and Language: American Arguments (Fall 2012)

**Additional Teaching Experience**

Coordinator, UCLA Center for Community Learning

- Disability Studies Community Internship (Winter 2016)

Teaching Assistant, UCLA Department of Disability Studies

- Perspectives on Disability Studies (Winter 2015)

Teaching Assistant, UCLA Department of English

- English Literature to 1660 (Fall 2008, Spring 2010)
- Shakespeare for Non-Majors (Fall 2015)
- Shakespeare: Poems and Early Plays (Winter 2009, Spring 2009, Fall 2009)
- Shakespeare: Later Plays (Winter 2010) (Online: Summer 2012, Summer 2013)
- Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon and London (Summer 2010, Summer 2011)
- Theatrical Renaissance (Winter 2012)

**Selected Conference Presentations**

"*King Lear* as Dismodern Tragedy." Paper presented at the British Shakespeare Association's Disability and Shakespearean Theatre Symposium, Glasgow, April 2016.

"Sexing the Skull." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, St. Louis, April 2014.

"Saints and Whores: Anatomizing Female Sexuality on the Early Modern Stage." Paper presented at the 48th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, May 2013.

"Desdemona's Equivocal Corpse." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, Toronto, March 2013.

## Introduction: Ophelia and the Past Tense of Gender

Ophelia's death turns her into a riddle. The Gravedigger tells Hamlet that the grave he makes is for neither man nor woman; instead it is for: "One that was a woman, sir, but, rest her soul, she's dead" (5.1.135-36).[1] The Gravedigger's literalism posits the transience of gender identity by highlighting the body's status as a past-tense woman. Yet gender persists in the present tense through the phrases, "rest her soul, she's dead." Death poses a problem for pronouns. How can a thing, "One that was a woman" in the past tense, also be a *she* that *is* dead? The awkwardness of the commonplace saying is highlighted by the radical dislocation of the subject in the first clause. This phrase does for gendered identity what Hamlet's "I am dead" (5.2.338) does for identity as such.[2] A he, a she, or an I cannot actually *be* dead in the present tense, except insofar as the fantasies of these identities persist after death. Does the "she" in the final phrase refer to the still-female soul? Who is referred to by "her" in the phrase "rest her soul"? Is there still a gendered person in a proprietary relationship to the soul? Is this referring to the antemortem Ophelia, the lingering traces of her identity? This sentence shows syntactically the concurrent cultural processes of ungendering and re-gendering of the dead. The first clause of this sentence conveys the body's status as a neuter object, but this gives way to recuperation through gendered references to the soul and identity. Ophelia-as-corpse embodies the paradox of being and not being.

The neuter pronoun "one" refers to an unnamed body. When perceived solely as matter, neither "man" nor "woman" seems an appropriate term to describe the inhabitant of a grave.

---

[1] All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare,* ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

[2] Howard Marchitello analyzes Hamlet's phrase, "I am dead" in the opening and concluding sections of *Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England: Browne's Skull and Other Histories*.

When the corpse "that was a woman" is identified as Ophelia, the past tense of gender becomes haunted by the persistence of gendered identity. The re-gendering hinted at in the Gravedigger's pronouns flowers into a full-scale reclamation of the body into the realm of gendered identification when the body makes an appearance on the stage, still enmeshed in the gendered social roles and relations Ophelia occupied in life. The dead body still serves as a hypothetical bride in Gertrude's imagination and as contested love object in the rivalry between Hamlet and Laertes. While her rites are maimed, they are nonetheless stably gendered by including "her virgin crants" and "maiden strewments" (5.1.232, 233).

The Gravedigger is a queer theorist of death. His riddles, as well as the skulls he wields as props, unsettle any stable sense of gendered, or even human, identity. In the introduction to *Shakesqueer*, Madhavi Menon writes: "While Shakespeare scholarship has for years been flirting with queer theory, the relationship between the two is less reciprocal than we might expect, and queer theory rarely resorts to Shakespeare as a ground for its formulation" (1). She asks: "can Shakespeare be regarded as a queer theorist, or is he always the object on which queer theory acts in a one-sided relationship?" (5). By considering the Gravedigger as a queer theorist of death, and by tracing other articulations of queer embodiment in works by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, my project explores how death can be, to use Menon's term, "Shaken." Rather than "queering" the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, my project mines the queerness already articulated in their theatrical representations of death. Menon writes: "Reading Shakespeare as queer rather than queered challenges the rule of chronology and identity that has thus far kept his poems and plays from exercising queer agency" (12). Representations of death in early modern theater have "queer agency" in their radical potential to unsettle modern understandings of mortality and sexual difference by dissolving the boundaries between life and

death, male and female, gendered person and neuter thing.

The queer agency of the Gravedigger's riddle presents death as leveling sexual difference. Criticism on early modern cultural responses to death has often focused on the trope of death as a leveler—a simultaneously celebrated and feared challenge to hierarchy that erases human identity and social distinctions. While death's leveling of social hierarchies is frequently cited, my project is the first to explore how death levels distinctions of gender and sexuality. When Hamlet notes that the "fat king" and "lean beggar" are "two dishes, but to one table" (4.3.23, 24), he alludes to the conventional imagery of death as a leveler. It is less commonly noted that men and women, as well as virgins and "whores," are also equally consumed by death—this is what makes the Gravedigger's riddle so radical. By analyzing how this riddle is staged in early modern drama, my project explores the queer resonances of the trope of death the leveler. Death destabilizes traditional categories of gender and sexuality, radically unmarking bodies and unmaking identities as a body transitions from being a "he" or a "she" to an "it." The status of the cadaver as a neuter object, however, exists in tension with strategies that reconstruct the genders of the deceased. By connecting theatrical experiments in representing ungendered and re-gendered dead bodies to similar, but often unrecognized, symbolic strategies at work in anatomy, funerary art, and iconography, I trace the proleptic queer theorizing of death in the early modern period.

Although there have been a number of books on representations of death in early modern drama, few have devoted more than a chapter to the subject of gender. Work that has focused on death as a radically destabilizing assault on the individual can be usefully extended to analyze death's relation to the gendered individual. The perception of death as a simultaneously celebrated and feared challenge to hierarchy, as well as the cultural response to this threat, which

includes enforcing divisions through funerary practices and monuments, has been well documented.[3] Scholarship that explores death's relation to individualism, however, tends to overlook gender as a constituent component of the individual. Because death can be envisioned as a movement out of gender, sexuality, and identity as such, it is also paradoxically a crucial moment for constructing these categories. In the same way that funerary rituals and structures enforced hierarchical distinctions at the moment they were perceived as evaporating, gender distinctions can be underscored, and sexuality can be reified as ontology, in aesthetic representations of death. Since the early modern period is a fraught time for the development of categories of sexual identity[4] and for the policing of gender via bodily functions,[5] the representation of the body's final function and the treatment of the "remains" of the subject are crucial sites for exploring the construction of gender. The fact that gendered identity is attached to dead bodies, and even to parts such as skulls and hearts, illustrates the scope of performative gendering processes.

My project unsettles the biological underpinnings of sexual difference that were emerging in the early modern period.[6] Viewing the dead body as "one that was a woman" challenges the assumption that sex-gender exists as the sum of physical facts to be examined by an anatomist. Instead, it posits gendered identity as phenomenological—gender is lived

---

[3] Philippe Ariès' *The Hour of Our Death* continues to be influential in this field. For English contexts, see Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* and Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy.*

[4] Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* and Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England.*

[5] Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*. Neill describes Renaissance depictions of death as shameful and linked to nakedness, but does not consider how this is related to gender (*Issues of Death* 8-13).

[6] Laqueur's survey of the transition from a "one-sex model" to a "two-sex model" in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* has occasioned debate about the role of anatomy in the early modern sex-gender system. In "Destiny Is Anatomy," Park and Nye consider metaphysical and biological approaches to gender.

experience[7] that ceases to exist when life ceases.

The queer agency of dead bodies is obscured when they are viewed through the anatomist's gaze. Anatomical discourse constructs knowledge from the bodies of the dead rather than exploring the disorientation encapsulated by the Gravedigger's riddle. Anatomy has provided a crucial lens for understanding early modern representations of gender and death, historicizing many plays' intense exploration of bodies. Jonathan Sawday's work on "the culture of dissection" and works influenced by it have alerted us to how anatomy was perceived and troped in the period, as well as the similarities between anatomy theaters and public theaters, both as physical structures and as venues for interrogating the body. Sawday interprets major works of the Renaissance through the lens of the "culture of dissection," an often violent impulse to construct knowledge through breaking another body or thing apart (literally or rhetorically). While Sawday considers the work of anatomists as they map and colonize the body, my project highlights the resistance of cadavers to the anatomists' project. Staging dissection shows the failures and instability of attempts to gain mastery over dead bodies, including the type of mastery aligned with projecting gendered distinctions onto dead matter.

While anatomy is a crucial framework for reading early modern theatrical representations of dead bodies, viewing staged corpses predominantly through the lens of anatomy often leads to essentializing arguments that limit the queer agency of the dead in many plays.[8] Strict anatomical readings of theater are often doubly problematic in the analysis of dead female characters. Since anatomical interpretations stress how the audience's focus is placed imaginatively on the body

[7] For phenomenological theorizations of gender, see Iris Marion Young and Elizabeth Grosz.

[8] Hillary Nunn, for example, aligns perspectivist painting with anatomy, viewing the paint that is externally applied to corpses in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* and *The Duke of Milan* as revealing female bodies' inner secrets. While Nunn describes the scenes as seeking to portray the "true nature" of the dead female bodies, I interpret these aesthetic moves as rejecting essentialist arguments about women's bodies by highlighting the performativity of gender.

beneath the clothes and on the organs beneath the skin, these readings tend to stress the "impossibility" of staging dead female characters.[9] Fully aware that the public theater's abilities and potentials are different from those of anatomy theaters, playwrights can sidestep and critique anatomical scrutiny of the dead body, and draw attention to the uncanny agency that dead bodies wield as objects.

My project resists the impulse to apply antemortem categories of gender to the dead, and instead considers the queer agency of cadavers as ungendered objects. The ways in which the cadaver is re-gendered, in funerary practice, anatomy, or theatrical representation, enable "it," the corpse, to perform notions of ideal or deviant femininity or masculinity. While critics have focused on the female corpse as a cross-gendered performance,[10] the theatrical corpse is always performed in drag. Playing dead means playing neuter. The neuter corpse is usually given the task of performing a gendered role, whether like or unlike the role the character performed prior to death. Similar to the actor playing Rosalind in *As You Like It*, the actor playing dead often performs an interlocking and unstable series of genders at once. Rather than viewing staged female corpses as a failure (in the anatomical paradigm), or a demonstration of lack (in the psychoanalytic paradigm), I view the female corpse onstage as embodying the full potential of performativity. Making explicit, because of theatrical conventions, the contradiction in the term "female corpse," these performances alert us to the inadequacy of applying the adjectives "female" or "male" to dead bodies and show us the radical contingency of gender.

[9] Susan Zimmerman, among other critics, has developed arguments based on theater's failure to represent death and femininity through the living, male bodies onstage. When the anatomical approach is layered with the psychoanalytic concept of fetishization, as in Zimmerman's study, the female corpse onstage becomes further defined by absence. By focusing on the "impossibility" of staging the female corpse, Zimmerman renders the male corpse unproblematic, furthering the conventional bias that considers female bodies marked and male bodies normative, even in death.

[10] Zimmerman considers "cross-dressed corpses" (12).

## The Cadaverous Performance

The provocation of the staging of cadavers–their implicit or explicit ability to unsettle gendered distinctions as well as distinctions between humans and objects–can be understood using Maurice Blanchot's concept of "cadaverous resemblance." In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot considers the cadaver as an image rather than an object: "It is striking that at this very moment, when the cadaverous presence is the presence of the unknown before us, the mourned deceased begins to *resemble himself*. … 'Himself' designates the impersonal being, distant and inaccessible, which resemblance, that it might be someone's, draws toward the day" (Blanchot 257). The English translation is misleading in its use of the gendered pronoun. The "impersonal being" should not be considered male, except insofar as the neuter is masculine by default. The cadaver *resembles itself*, falling away from narrative, symbol, or metaphor. The cadaverous resemblance explodes any fantasy of mastery that discourses such as anatomy attempt to secure.

While it is important to understand responses to death historically, the cadaver is ahistorical—or rather, it shatters the cultural constructs that exist historically. I will use the term "corpse" to describe the dead body enmeshed in cultural narratives—the dead body as it is constructed in anatomical, theological, and memorial discourses and as it is reconstructed through historicist work on the early modern culture of death. Cultural narratives that preserve human identity in the face of death are embedded in the history of the word "corpse," the meaning of which has been reduced from including living human and animal bodies (*OED*, "corpse, n." †1) to "The dead body of a man (or formerly any animal)" (*OED*, "corpse, n." 2). The word "corpse" as it is used now emphasizes the humanity of the dead. Continuing to emphasize the humanity of the deceased involves preserving the gender of the antemortem person. The definition, "The dead body of a man," highlights the persistence of gender difference

and the universalizing of the male subject that I will consider when analyzing the cultural construction of the "corpse."

The word "cadaver," on the other hand, is etymologically connected to falling.[11] The uncanniness of the cadaver is also embedded in the alternative etymology expressed by Alexander Neckam's *De Naturis Rerum*, which considers the word as derived from *caro data vermibus*, or flesh given to worms (Wright xiii). This medieval false etymology remained influential in the early modern period. One of the *OED's* examples for the noun "cadaver" appears to be using the word as a verb meaning to give flesh to worms. The 1524 will states: "I John Terry of Norwich..commende..my body to be Cadaver..to be buried."[12] Sir Edward Coke enshrined this false etymology in his *Institutes*, with significant legal implications that I will discuss in the final section of this introduction. Neither the cadaver conceptualized as the body that falls nor the cadaver conceptualized as flesh given to worms is aligned with the persistence of gendered human identity. Instead, both concepts emphasize the dead body as matter subjected to outside forces such as gravity and vermiculation. I will use the term "cadaver" to trace early modern conceptualizing of the dead body as falling away from signifying systems. This image of the cadaver, present in early modern discourses in precisely the way in which dead bodies are perceived as escaping cultural constructions, anticipates Blanchot's philosophical category of the cadaverous resemblance.

While Blanchot is not writing about theater, his description of the cadaverous resemblance is imbued with theatricality. The corpse is a spectacle that transitions from prop to image before the onlooker's eyes. Blanchot writes: "He who just died is at first extremely close

---

[11] The *OED* gives the etymology as: "Latin *cadāver* dead body, perhaps < *cadĕre* to fall. So French *cadavre*" ("cadaver, n."). While the etymology of "cadaver" illustrates the word's connection to death as a radical break in identity, the *OED* still uses a gendered definition: "A dead body, *esp*. of man; a corpse" ("cadaver, n." 1a).

[12] *Will of John Terry* (P.R.O.: PROB. 11/21) f. 226$^{v}$ qtd. in *OED* "cadaver, n." 1a.

to the condition of a thing—a familiar thing, which we approach and handle, which does not hold us at a distance and whose manageable passivity betrays only sad impotence" (257). However, the dead body as thing soon gives way to something beyond human action and signification: "Presently, there will be—immovable, untouchable, riveted to here by the strangest embrace and yet drifting with it, drawing here under, bearing it lower—from behind there will be no longer an inanimate thing, but Someone: the unbearable image and figure of the unique becoming nothing in particular, no matter what" (257). Blanchot presents a temporal process of ontological change through death: from person to thing to a mysterious "Someone"—an image of annihilation. This is the moment of cadaverous resemblance. Rather than signifying the living person it once was, the cadaver exists in a tautological relationship to itself: "The cadaver is its own image. It no longer entertains any relation with this world, where it still appears, except that of an image, an obscure possibility" (258).

Early modern theater presents an archive of posthumous performances that engage proleptically with Blanchot's concept of the cadaverous resemblance. By staging cadavers, plays make explicit the theatricality implicit in Blanchot's theory. Rather than presenting the movement from person to object to image as a temporal sequence, however, theatrical techniques show how these dimensions exist in oscillation. A staged cadaver can be a posthumous character, a prop, and a significant image simultaneously. Moreover, early modern plays explore how the cadaverous resemblance can be activated not only by the corpse in its entirety, but also by its parts. Yorick's skull is a prop in Hamlet's hands, while also serving as synecdoche for Yorick the person and metonymy for the cadaver: an image of death *par excellence*. My project explores how gender is constructed and dissolved in the oscillations between person, object, and image. While persons are persistently gendered, the gendering of an object makes explicit, at times

satirically, the performativity of gendering. The cadaver as image, however, resists gendering or any other form of symbolic control.

The Gravedigger's phrase, "One that was a woman," conveys the dislocation of the cadaver. The cadaverous resemblance does not persist, however; Ophelia is re-gendered within the same sentence and for the remainder of the scene. She does not stay an impersonal, neuter being for long; her gendered humanity is recuperated. Re-gendering through language and other forms of representation is thus a response to the radical destabilization of the cadaverous resemblance, the ontological problem of the cadaver.

The theory of performativity is useful for understanding the process of re-gendering. Famously, Judith Butler describes the role of gendering in constructing the "human." Birth brings one into gendered language and subjectivity (*Bodies that Matter* 7-8). In a sense, death reverses this process, bringing one out of language, gender, and subjectivity. In contemporary practice, "it" is "girled" through a doctor's utterance and parents' naming (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 7). The Gravedigger's utterance unsexes Ophelia; the uncanny mirror image of "It's a girl" is "one that was a woman." The phrase, "she's dead," signals a recuperation that will be continued by Gertrude, Hamlet, and Laertes. The Gravedigger signals the cadaver's radical break from identity, while the mourners gender the corpse-as-object by connecting it to Ophelia's personhood.

Butler's investigation of bodies that matter focuses on the valuation of life and seeks to change the symbolic system that has rendered certain lives and bodies abject. She asks, "What challenge does that excluded and abjected realm produce to a symbolic hegemony that might force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as 'life,' lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving" (*Bodies that Matter* 16).

While her focus is on life, the final phrase indicates that the heterosexual hegemonic processes do not end there: after death, only certain lost lives are deemed worth grieving.[13] Re-gendering plays a crucial role in re-subjectivizing the dead body, saving certain bodies more than others from the realm of abjection. The queer agency of cadaverous performances, however, levels these constructed differences by rupturing the human signifying system: it collapses all narratives. Moreover, the cadaver as theorized by Blanchot is not abject; it is a "magnified being, imposing and proud, which impresses the living as the appearance of the original never perceived until now" (258). Anti-hierarchical appeals to death the leveler appeal to the cadaver's radical potential to negate social categories, and my project shows how the same potential exists with regard to gender. Performances of the leveling of categories of gender and sexuality in death have the potential to create a queer equality. The cadaver, an image removed from human signifying systems, is always already queer. Early modern theatrical experiments with staging cadaverous objects anticipate both Blanchot's cadaverous resemblance and queer theory.[14]

## Cadavers as Queer Objects, Property, and Artifacts

My consideration of gender performativity of corpses oscillates with my analysis of the cadaver as a unique ontological category. In doing so, I break from conventional work on gender performativity that has no place for ontology. My project reorients gender studies by placing the cadaver—the human body stripped of human identity—at its center. By considering the queerness of the cadaver as an object, my project is aligned with both posthuman theory and

[13] Butler elaborates upon this in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*

[14] My methodology here is similar to Frecerro's in *Queer/Early/Modern*. While Frecerro focuses on textuality when claiming that early modern texts and French theory are proleptically queer, my project focuses on the proleptic queerness of theatrical moments centered on the cadaver.

queer object-oriented ontology.[15] Queer connections between people and things inform my readings of cadavers, cadaverous parts, and resurrected bodies on the early modern stage.

To highlight the thingness of cadavers and their parts, my project incorporates object-oriented ontology, a recent philosophical movement devoted to unsettling anthropocentrism. At the same time, I depart from object-oriented ontology by focusing on (one might say privileging) human remains as a significant subset of objects. There is a clear connection between Blanchot's theory of the cadaverous resemblance and object-oriented ontology. Blanchot alludes to Heidegger's broken hammer, a touchstone for the development of object-oriented ontology,[16] when describing the cadaverous resemblance through an analogy: "a tool when damaged, becomes its *image*" (258). What is important for my project is that the thingness of cadavers has the potential to disorient human subjectivity in a significant way. More than hammers or stones, cadavers and their parts make explicit the thingness of the human body and unsettle culturally received foundations of the human subject. Like all props, staged cadavers highlight the agency of objects. When considered through the lens of the cadaverous resemblance, however, staged cadavers unsettle subject/object distinctions more than the multitude of props and actors they appear alongside.

While cadavers and their parts are ungendered matter, cultural practices that gender these objects result in their being objectified in different ways. For example, it is important to differentiate skulls as cadaverous objects—bare, ungendered things—from the various ways in which skulls are objectified. Ontologically, "male" and "female" skulls are identical: both are

---

[15] Luciano and Chen consider the queer implications of alliances between humans and things in a special issue of *GLQ*, "Has the Queer Ever Been Human?"

[16] In "The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object-Oriented Literary Criticism," Graham Harman describes Heidegger's influence on object-oriented ontology and writes: "The phenomenological method aims to strip away the inessential qualities of things, and to gain an insight into what is really essential about any given intentional object—what it truly needs in order to be what it is" (Harman 186).

equally made of bone. Gendering emerges as a result of "male" and "female" skulls being objectified differently. Skulls are gendered female when they are considered marked as different from normative male skulls. This marking may be coupled with eroticization, which sexually objectifies the body part.

Object-oriented ontology has productively unsettled the anthropocentric models that have dominated philosophical inquiry by emphasizing the ontological equality of all objects.[17] While ontological equality is a noble goal, considering people and their remains through the lens of object-oriented ontology can obscure the historical reality of certain types of bodies being systematically objectified in ways that were legally codified and are still socially relevant. Ian Bogost acknowledges that feminism and object-oriented ontology pose productive challenges to each other. When designing a digital "image toy" for an object-oriented ontology symposium, women and girls had to be filtered out of the Boolean search for "object OR thing OR stuff" (Bogost 98-99). Since objectified women and girls threatened to overshadow other objects with their overwhelming Internet presence, their existence had to be digitally erased. Bogost writes: "the baggage of worldly stuff still exerts a political challenge on human experience that cannot be satisfactorily dismissed with the simple mantra of tiny ontology" (99). Feminist and queer object-oriented ontology must grapple with this worldly baggage, while challenging the subject-object binary and the privileging of the (male) subject.

Legal history reveals some of the ways in which people and things have been unequally objectified as property. While early modern women were considered property,[18] corpses fell

[17] Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis, 2012).

[18] Critics have debated whether early modern women were considered more as properties or persons by the law. Karen Bamford reviews this controversy (164n6) and concludes that rape was primarily defined as the theft of male property, in law and on stage, even though certain definitions may have been "beginning to shift from that of a crime against property to one against the person" (3).

outside of the scope of property law. Legally, dead bodies still cannot be property. While the view of corpses as existing outside the realm of property has impacted Anglo-American law in ways that have become increasingly relevant in the wake of biotechnology and organ donation, laws regarding the corpse as non-property are based on the codified misreading of early modern texts.[19] The 1614 *Haynes* case actually involved the theft of winding sheets, but the judges' statement that corpses were not capable of property was later interpreted to mean not that corpses could not own property, but rather that corpses themselves could not be owned as property. In his *Digest of Criminal Law*, Sir James Stephen cites the *Haynes* case when declaring: "The dead body of a human being is not capable of being stolen" (qtd. in Matthews 197).

The cadaver, as neither person nor property, falls outside the scope of the law. Coke's etymology of the word "cadaver" as *caro data vermibus*, or flesh given to worms (3 *Institutes* 203), which I mention above, occurs in what became a key text in establishing the corpse's non-property status in Anglo-American law. Interring the corpse is figured as removing it from the realm of human property by "giving" it to worms and corruption. Although the etymology is false, the word "cadaver" itself is made to emblematize the dissolution of identity as the body is consumed by worms. The word "cadaver," along with the legal view it buttresses, serves a *memento mori* function, signaling death's inevitable rupture of human identity and property relations. The Gravedigger plays with death's rupture of property relations by claiming the grave he makes as his, rather than allowing it to belong to the corpse that will be buried there.

Despite the law, corpses and their parts have circulated as a species of property, whether as relics, anatomical specimens, or objects of collection. Skulls, no longer cadaverous "flesh given to worms," but rather byproducts of vermiculation, have frequently been used as property.

---

[19] Paul Matthews has demonstrated the faulty basis of the corpse's non-property status in English common law. My review of the *Haynes* case and Coke's *Institutes* is indebted to his article, "Whose Body? People as Property."

They have been claimed as objects of contemplation by the living, and have been used to decorate desks, serve as drinking vessels, and take the roles of props on stage. In "The Skull on the Renaissance Stage: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Props,"[20] Sofer considers skull props as central to early modern understandings of property. He relates skull props' anamorphic oscillation between emblematic, passive objects and active subjects that are capable of stealing the scene to the duality of the word "property," which can refer to material possessions, onstage and off, as well as attributes of persons (67-68). Sofer cites Margaret Jane Radin's interrogation of the term "property" as it applies to fungible objects (which she terms object-property) and non-fungible characteristics of a subject's identity (which she terms attribute-property). While these two meanings of "property" seem to be mapped onto a clear division between objects and subjects, Radin deconstructs this binary and shows the interconnection between object-property and attribute-property. Sofer argues that skulls' oscillating performances of subject and object hinge on the unstable meaning of "property" (70). While gender is not central to his argument, he notes that women were particularly likely to be used and exchanged as property (68).

In the case of skulls, attribute properties can be the lingering traces of the antemortem person: the characteristics of an individual that are imprinted, anatomically or imaginatively, upon remains. Object-property, on the other hand, is a skull's status as property belonging to a living person. The skull on stage is always an object property. The skulls I consider were the stage properties of the King's Men, the imaginative possessions of playwrights, and the dramatic props of actors and characters. "Yorick" is both Shakespeare's creation and Hamlet's prop; the human being to whose body the skull once belonged has been completely effaced. The attribute properties that staged skulls are endowed with, such as names, are roles the anonymous objects

[20] Sofer's chapter, "Dropping the Subject: The Skull on the Jacobean Stage," in *The Stage Life of Props* is an adaptation of this article. Since the article explores the notion of property more fully than the chapter, my references will be to the article rather than the book.

are forced to play. If Yorick has attained the status of a character it is because of the attribute properties with which the prop is endowed. In addition to considering the performative attribute properties that allow dead bodies and their parts to play the roles of actors and the use of dead bodies as object properties, my project considers the cadaver as a third category that is activated when dead bodies and their parts are staged. The cadaver, as a technical term, describes the aspect of dead matter that unsettles any fiction of property or identity imposed upon remains. The use of skulls as props in *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* metatheatrically comments upon the gender performativity that is forced onto the bodies of the dead, the utility of skulls as props, and the queer resistance that skulls exert by not playing any role other than cadaverous matter itself.

Skulls can be viewed as the fungible object-property of the living and are narratively associated with the attribute-properties of deceased persons, but cadaverous materiality cannot belong to anyone and cannot *be* anyone. It exists outside the realm of property (object-property) and identity (attribute-property). Although staged skulls are often viewed through the lenses of property—they literally serve as object property in their roles as props and are metatheatrically endowed with attribute properties in their roles as characters—their status as cadaverous objects has the potential to undo both of these human-centered views of skulls. When playwrights and characters make skulls their props, they attempt to ignore, appropriate, or refashion cadaverous matter. When the skull's cadaverous presence is asserted, it shatters this appropriation. Focusing on dead bodies and their parts as cadaverous objects rather than props highlights their potential to unsettle the culturally constructed foundations of human identity.

My project combines Blanchot's framework and object-oriented approaches to analyze cadavers as things in themselves alongside analyses of narratives that are culturally imposed

upon the bodies of the dead. While object-oriented ontology attempts to unsettle the signifying narratives in which objects are enmeshed, and to circumvent the correlationist views that restrict exploration of things in themselves, "artifaction" describes the narrative strategies that imbue material and nonmaterial objects with meaning.[21] Artifaction attempts to tame cadaverous matter, to turn a post- or un-human object into an object with a human history, an icon or specimen intelligible to human beings.[22] Artifaction involves imposing human-centered meanings, uses, and histories onto cadaverous matter such as skulls, whether this occurs on stage, in anatomy theatres, in curiosity cabinets, or on philosophers' desks. Artifaction reorients the object, using it to prop up anthropocentrism. Gender emerges as an artifact when the skull is linked through narrative to living persons. Object-oriented approaches are highlighted when artifaction strategies fail or fall away, which can happen when cadaverous matter is forced to perform dramatic roles. When cadaverous parts fail to become characters, the attribute properties forced upon the objects fall away and the matter itself takes center stage.

Cultural forces are always at work to reconstruct hierarchical differences that are collapsed in death. The denarrativized cadaver as the disorienting thing itself exists in tension with artifaction strategies, the multitude of narratives, including religious, scientific, aesthetic, and memorial discourses, that are constructed upon the bodies of the dead. My project explores how gender is made and unmade when cadaverous presences are staged, whether this presence takes the form of actual remains, human or animal, or of an actor playing dead. The plays I consider not only narrativize cadaverous remains, making them play symbolic and theatrical

[21] This term is from Marchitello's *Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England: Browne's Skull and Other Histories*. He writes: "Any claim to unmediated access to the thing-itself ... is specious: no object can be accessed except through a process of artifaction that places the thing-in-itself within a signifying narrative" (Marchitello 6).

[22] Marchitello explores the centrality of artifaction to scientific discourse. In a chapter focusing on the artifaction of skulls, he analyzes the narrative strategies that led to the development of phrenology and racial craniology (124-88).

roles in the drama, but also stage the rupture of narrative and meaning that cadaverous presences perform. This theatrical oscillation between narrativized and unnarrativized death is mirrored in my chapters, which analyze the culturally specific practices of early modern England while theorizing the cadaver as a queer object that unsettles social and historical constructs. While early modern discourses are crucial for understanding responses to death, the cadaver itself falls away from these narratives.

My project thus works with the tensions between historically specific responses to death and death as an ahistorical undoing of identity. This flux is embedded in cadaverous performances on the early modern stage, where culturally determined artifaction strategies collide with intimations of the cadaver's potential to collapse these strategies. While death has a history, the queer agency of the cadaver can be considered ahistorical. Recent debates in queer early modern studies have focused on queer theory's relationship to history.[23] At the same time, the semantic flexibility of queer theory allows it to encompass the study of historically and culturally enacted genders and sexualities as well as any and all mobilizations of the non-normative. My analysis of the early modern discourses that shape playwrights' representations of dead bodies considers historical narratives that construct genders and sexualities among the living and translates them to the dead. At the same time, I theorize the cadaver as an object with queer agency that collapses socially and historically constructed difference. To put in in other words, my analysis of the corpse is historicist and my analysis of the cadaver is queer. These approaches are necessarily fused in my project, since cadaverous performances are defined by oscillation between the culturally legible corpse and the radical break of the cadaver.

My first chapter, "Cadaverous Performances in the Renaissance," continues my

[23] In "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," Valerie Traub summarizes and critiques the work of scholars she terms "unhistoricists," including Carla Freccero, Jonathan Goldberg, and Madhavi Menon, whose deconstructive approaches challenge historicization and periodization.

introduction to the queer agency of cadavers in the early modern period. I survey the unacknowledged but ubiquitous queer implications of death in early modern iconography, anatomy, and funerary art, as well as the queer implications of cadavers that return as resurrected bodies. While these representations have often been considered in relation to separate disciplines, such as theology and the history of science, I argue that the queerness of the dead body is a common thread in these interrelated discourses. Non-dramatic texts offer a range of possibilities for representing death that playwrights cite and subvert when staging dead bodies.

The next two chapters focus on theatrical representations of significant body parts that are not explicitly marked by gender: skulls and hearts. Since the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of human beings are conventionally anchored in these organs, staging these parts as cadaverous objects disjointed from the person highlights the queer agency of these parts. In chapter 2, "Sexing the Skull," I continue my discussion of *Hamlet* while shifting my focus from Ophelia to "Yorick." Through this cadaverous prop and quasi-character, the dead body is materially brought onto the stage and made to perform the role of a gendered person. I consider how the cadaverous performances of skulls in *Hamlet* and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* parody the gender performativity of skulls in anatomical treatises and *memento mori* iconography. Staged skulls are cadaverous props that satirize gender roles, property relations, and human identity itself. Chapter 3, "Anatomies of the Heart," challenges the centrality of the anatomical paradigm in criticism on death and gender in early modern drama. I analyze how *Othello* and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* complicate the theatrical signifying system in which violent deaths can symbolically anatomize female bodies to construct or stabilize categories of gender and sexuality, particularly the constructed category of the "whore." While both plays court the anatomical tradition, they ultimately demonstrate dissection's inability to

reveal sexual identity. By shifting focus to the heart, both plays critique the conventional anatomical obsession with hymens and wombs as the sole signifiers of female sexuality. The heart is staged as an anatomical, spiritual, and sexual organ that is simultaneously inscrutable cadaverous matter.

The final chapter, "The Aesthetics of Resurrection," extends my theorization of postmortem queerness to the theatrical trope of resurrection. *The Winter's Tale* resurrects a female character as an aestheticized neuter object by theatrically transforming Hermione into a statue. In Thomas Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*, grave robbing is subversively linked to carnal resurrection. The staging of dead bodies that return in both plays deconstructs the binary between the aesthetic animation of automata and the resurrections of bodies. I consider theatrical resurrections in relation to theological debates regarding the gender of resurrected bodies and show how both discourses imagine queer corporeal afterlives.

While my chapters focus on cadaverous objects, they also consider constructions of sexual subjectivity, particularly female sexual subjectivity. The gendering of cadaverous parts in plays such as *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* illustrate points of contact between objectified women and feminized objects. Plays' explorations of female subjectivity alongside representations of bodies as objects are significant in relation to the emergence of early modern female subjectivity and sexual consent. Competing constructions of women as subjects and objects led to contradictions in rape legislation, which Barbara J. Baines describes: "The law's desire to have it both ways—as a crime against property and as a crime against the person—reveals a crisis in the Early Modern construction of woman's subjectivity: she is both property or passive object and a person invested with agency, with the will and discernment that define consent" (72-73). By staging the erotic use of "female" remains, plays blur the lines

between female subject and feminized object in ways that are significant for the emerging concept of consent.

While my readings of *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* show how the gendering and eroticization of cadaverous parts parody female sexual subjectivity, my readings of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy* show how resurrection allows sexual subjectivity to reemerge. While Gloriana's skull can only parody sexual subjectivity, and Annabella's heart can only trope the inscrutability of an interiorized sense of sexual subjectivity, the resurrected body signals the return of sexual subjectivity, but in a new and queer form.

# Chapter 1: Cadaverous Presences in the Renaissance

In this chapter, I survey non-dramatic discourses that inform my readings of plays in the remaining chapters. First, I analyze how skulls are assigned sexual difference in iconographic and anatomical traditions, as well as the queer implications of *memento mori* practices. My analysis of staged skulls in *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* in Chapter 2 shows how the plays participate in these discourses while parodying them. My section on criminal and saintly anatomies continues my analysis of how sexual difference is constructed in early modern anatomical discourse. In addition to gendering bodies by focusing on the reproductive system, anatomical discourse participated in the construction of female sexuality by marking women as virgins and "whores." I consider how the modes of reading the dead body in punitive and saintly anatomies trouble the distinctions that an anatomical construction of female sexuality attempts to inscribe. Chapter 3 shows how *Othello* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* underscore the impossibility of reading female sexuality anatomically by staging paranoid and reparative readings of female bodies and their parts. Finally, I analyze the queerness of resurrected bodies in theological discourse, as well as the re-gendering of glorified bodies. I consider the queer agency of resurrection monuments, which blur the lines between corpse, stone, and resurrected spiritual body—a blurring that, as my final chapter shows, is central to *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy*.

## The Iconographic Skull

Skulls are both significant relics of individuals and bones that are difficult to differentiate. They embody the tension of the "remains" of the person, existing as both a remnant and reminder of a once-living person and as a leveled object. Skeletal bones represent a

milestone in the process of ungendering, a final stop before the identifiable body becomes undifferentiated dust. While the gendering of skulls incorporates the same performative strategies as the gendering of corpses, skulls display fewer anatomical signifiers in which difference can be anchored than bodies. The construction of the skull's sexual dimorphism, therefore, is more explicitly performative. Images of skulls circulate in iconographic and anatomical discourses, and skulls themselves serve as specimens and objects of *memento mori* contemplation. In addition to serving as a macabre synecdoche for the subject, skulls can signify Death itself. These intertwined significations are activated when skulls appear on stage.

The distinctively female iconographic skull is the anomalous or belated counterpart of the universalized masculine skull. In the iconographic tradition, gender emerges through markers that link skeletons to the gendered roles of living persons.[24] Iconographic skeletons are often marked by physical characteristics (such as hair), costumes, or props—artifacts signifying uncanny connections to living human beings—but unmarked skeletons are conventionally presumed male (Guthke 57). When it comes to anatomical markers, it is typically only female skeletons that are marked; they are often inexplicably breasted (Guthke 119). Similar gendering strategies are applied to the skull, a truncated but equally significant personification of death. Like the skeleton, the skull is presumed male unless marked by gender. Presuming the anonymous skull to be male, as is common, allows the male subject to continue to be privileged philosophically and socially, and disarms the potential of the cadaverous resemblance to disrupt gender and patriarchy alike.

Iconographic works often assign a gender to Death itself. Death often assumes both male and female forms, even within a single work. These inconsistencies show the queerness of

[24] For a historical survey of gendered representations of Death, see Karl S. Guthke's *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature*.

Death, as well as the performativity of gender roles.[25] In the Dance of Death tradition, a personified (and hence gendered) Death can be portrayed as mirroring the soon-to-be-deceased's gender or as the opposite sex in an implied or overt heterosexual encounter. Additionally, Death often occupies gendered social roles, such as king and chambermaid.

The representation of Death as a queer figure, a skeleton that changes gender according to its context, is relevant not only when considering personifications of death, but also when considering representations of dead individuals. Iconographic skulls hover over funerary monuments of men, women, and families, signifying death generally as well as the deaths of individuals. Funerary monuments call the representational power of cadaverous images into question. Do they signify dead individuals or Death itself? A cadaverous representation of an individual is a contradiction, since the cadaver is the annihilation of the individual. Oosterwijk draws a parallel between *Danse macabre* iconography and funerary monuments, writing: "The skeletal dancers represent either Death himself or the dead counterparts of the living—an ambiguity that resembles that of cadavers and representations of the deceased on double-decker tombs" (48). The ambiguity that Oosterwijk notes can also be interpreted as a convergence: the distinction between Death itself and dead individuals is collapsed in cadaverous representations. In both the Dance of Death and funerary monuments, skulls and skeletons are made into mirrors of the living through performative markers of gender, status, and occupation, yet they retain the status of signifying something completely other than the gendered person. The skull cannot represent an individual; it is the anti-individual. "Male" and "female" skulls and skeletons mock the gender and social roles of living humans by performing them as cadaverous objects.

Funerary monuments reinscribe categories of social identity alongside images of skulls

---

[25] In his analysis of Renaissance representations, Guthke argues for interpreting Death as ambisexual, rather than as simply one gender or another (Guthke 123-27).

that unsettle these categories. Memorializing the individual often takes the form of inscribing the deceased's name, status, and gender in stone. Llewellyn writes: "Patrons sought to balance an awareness of individual human mortality with notions of piety and political expediency, which tended to submerge the person into the anonymous repetition of race, caste and family" (95). Gender must also be added to this list, as it is a crucial marker of personhood in effigial representations. The skulls that appear alongside effigies, however, are not assigned gender, race, caste, or family. Skulls embody the undoing of all of these categories. By presenting cadaverous and memorializing imagery simultaneously, funerary monuments both replicate and challenge *memento mori* conventions. They memorialize individuals, while presenting images such as skulls that invite onlookers to contemplate their own mortality (an instruction that epitaphs can reinforce). In practice and in their symbolism, monuments embody the paradox of preservation and decay.

### The *Memento Mori* Skull

The *memento mori* skull conveys the message that death collapses all individuals into one, leveling socially constructed differences. The skull is at once an overdetermined symbol of human mortality and an insentient assemblage of bones. It is the occasion for dialogue between contemplator and object in which existential concerns are answered with profound silence. Michael Neill writes: "A skull, after all, … is at once the most eloquent and empty of human signs. Simultaneously recalling and travestying the head which is the source of all meanings, the seat of all interpretation, the skull acts as a peculiar and sinisterly attractive mirror for the gazer, drawing endless narratives into itself only to cancel them" (*Issues of Death* 234-35). In "Thinking with Skulls in Holbein, *Hamlet*, Vesalius, and Fuller," Gail Kern Paster considers the living's use of skulls as thinking devices as an antidote to the skull's common association with

nothingness. The use of skulls as thinking devices or "cognitive artifacts," however, has a gendered history. While the skull can symbolize the leveling of nothingness, its use as a cognitive device can also reinscribe gendered morality. The image of the young man contemplating a skull is a ubiquitous early modern motif, which is immortalized in *Hamlet*.[26] A notable exception to this masculinist tradition is the iconographic association between skulls and the penitent Magdalen.[27] Skulls, the undifferentiated remains of both men and women, have been associated with philosophizing in relation to men and shame and repentance in relation to women.

Despite this gendered history, *memento mori* contemplation can be read as a queer practice: by contemplating the skull, the *memento mori* practitioner not only identifies across boundaries of bodies and temporality (identifying the living self with the already dead body part of another), but also across the boundaries between persons and objects. Similarly, the "food for worms" motif collapses the ideological hierarchy along with the food chain that places human beings above other animals by removing the distinction between human and meat.

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects*, *Others*, Sara Ahmed considers how philosophers' orientations toward objects such as tables shape their thinking. By considering philosophers' "orientation devices," Ahmed queers phenomenology while incorporating phenomenology into queer theory. When used as orientation devices, skulls can prop up gender differences. Endowing the skull with artifacts of personhood—attribute properties such as a name, occupation, and, crucially for my project, gender—is a way of turning the emptiness of the cadaverous object into an eloquent artifact. At its most powerful, however, the *memento mori*

[26] For a review of the iconographic tradition of young men with skulls, see Roland Mushat Frye's *The Renaissance Hamlet*, 213-220.

[27] François Rigolot analyzes this motif in "Magdalen's Skull: Allegory and Iconography in *Heptameron* 32."

gaze is a shattered gaze that allows the object to disorient the subject. The cadaverous presence of the skull undoes the subject/object distinction, as the viewer contemplates an object that already lurks inside of him or herself and will be revealed when flesh, gender, and all other facets of identity have decayed. The skull's eyelessness mocks the gaze. Its ability to mock subjectivity in its bare materiality and glaring emptiness make it an object with queer agency: it jostles beholders out of their habitual identities.

### The Skull and Skeleton as Anatomical Specimens

The skull was not gendered in early modern anatomy. While death iconography frequently depicts gendered skeletons and skulls, the overwhelming majority of skulls and skeletons in early modern anatomy texts were not marked by sexual difference. Critics have debated the extent to which the few sexed, or distinctly female, skeletons that appeared in anatomical texts impacted the early modern sex-gender system. In "A Woman Down to Her Bones: The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," Michael Stolberg cites such a skeleton to refute Thomas Laqueur's thesis that the "one-sex" model prevailed until the eighteenth century,[28] as well as Londa Schiebinger's account of the appearance of the distinctively female skeleton in the eighteenth century that corroborates this dating.[29]

Even the distinctively female skeleton did not have a distinctively female skull. Early modern attempts to locate sexual difference in skeletons focused on perceived differences in the pelvis, thorax, and cranial sutures. Of these sites, the skull was the most controversial: authorities

---

[28] Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*.

[29] Schiebinger, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in Eighteenth-Century Anatomy."

could not agree whether differences they observed in the number of cranial sutures was the result of sexual difference or simple variation (Stolberg 284).

In "Sex in the Flesh," Laqueur responds to Stolberg and argues that early modern ideology continued to be informed by the Galenic "one-sex" model, despite the appearance of stray female skeletons. Since, as his title indicates, Laqueur focuses on depictions of flesh, he does not tackle the sexing of skeletons or the connection between flesh and bone in representations of sexual dimorphism. Londa Schiebinger responds specifically to skeletal evidence in addressing Stolberg's claim. She argues that while Stolberg has discovered the earliest example of a distinctly female skeleton, he overstates the influence of this representation since the few depictions of female skeletons that existed before the eighteenth century were anomalies that did not gain canonical importance. Around 1730, she maintains, depictions of female skeletons were considered an intervention that became widely popular (309).

In the main source that Stolberg cites, Felix Platter's *De corporis humani structura* (1583) Book 3, Table II,[30] the female skeleton appears in a familiar *memento mori* pose, observing an hourglass. The skeleton is lively but does not, at first glance, appear to be marked by gender. However, the performative construction of gender is at work on the page: "Letters from A to M indicated the various parts or areas of the body where the female skeleton differed from the male" (Stolberg 277). This skeleton is not marked by the external signifiers of femininity that adorn iconographic skulls and skeletons; instead, codified anatomical markings construct sexual difference at the level of the bone. These anatomical differences in skeletal anatomy are not upheld by modern anatomy (Stolberg 291).

While constructing sex at the level of skeletal difference was rare, skeletons were more frequently subjected to overtly performative gendering in early modern anatomy theaters and

[30] The illustration is reproduced in Stolberg's article (278).

texts. Sawday analyzes the iconic roles remains were constructed to play in anatomy theaters and texts. He discusses the skeletons posing as Adam and Eve in an illustration (c. 1610) of the anatomy theatre at Leiden University. The iconographic gender roles of the skeleton are constructed primarily through props: one holds a spade, the other an apple (Sawday 72-74). The skeletons are gendered through their performance of emblematic roles.

## Criminal and Saintly Anatomies

Julia Kristeva writes, "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection" (4). Sexual difference is discursively interwoven into the medical and religious narratives that recuperate the abject corpse. Although skulls were not frequently sexed in anatomy, anatomical discourse was crucial to constructing sexual difference among cadavers. Gendered anatomical illustrations are a crucial part of the culture's response to the threat of ungendering that death poses. This section will consider how anatomies, in both medical and religious contexts, attempt to re-gender the dead and construct gendered subjectivity.

In "Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies," Valerie Traub argues: "gender is produced by anatomical science as a defense against the body's abjection" (46). Anatomy texts construct sexual difference and eroticize female cadavers "as a defensive reinscription of gender in the face of gender's destruction through death" (Traub, "Gendering Mortality" 50). Traub analyzes how the representational strategies of Vesalius, Valverde, Estienne, and Remmelin reveal anxieties about the social construction of gender and its erasure by death the leveler ("Gendering Mortality" 50). The anatomist's work hastens the work of time: "The terms of intelligibility that figure gender difference as an absolute and non-negotiable certainty in living creatures dissipate into the elusive ungendering of death" (Traub 55). Traub argues that to assuage the anxieties of this ungendering, anatomical texts symbolically gender the cadavers on

display through landscape, pose, and props, as well as through mythological, pornographic, and religious imagery. These strategies of symbolic re-gendering are a point of contact between anatomy, iconography, and theater. While most anatomically inflected criticism focuses on the shared desire to expose the body's interior and its essential secrets, both discourses also share the desire to make the corpse perform a gendered role. By playing with anatomy, theater reveals and parodies the symbolic work performed in anatomy theaters and texts.

The uterus was the key locus for constructing sexual difference and its symbolic importance. The uterus was believed to contain "the secrets of women," secrets that could benefit women's health as well as men's curiosity, making it the "privileged object of dissection in medical images and texts" (Park, *Secrets* 26). In early modern anatomical texts, depictions of female bodies serve the sole function of illustrating the reproductive system; all other aspects of corporeality are depicted through the normative male body.[31] Yet the symbolic importance of the uterus made it central: "it came to stand for the body's hidden interior" (Park, *Secrets* 27). Looking for female "secrets" by looking into the womb turns the corpse into a confessional narrative. In this discourse, wombs, and more controversially, hymens, are the sole signifiers of female sexuality—indeed, of female interiority itself.

While anatomical depictions of the normative male body's interior could connote interiority, with the parts increasingly conceptualized in relation to a unified "self," depictions of wombs, the focal point of anatomical depictions of female bodies, excluded women from the emergent view of selfhood. In *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England*, Eve Keller traces the emergence of (male) selfhood in relation to textual depictions of reproductive bodies. While male selfhood was imposed over

[31] Traub writes: "Like almost every other early modern anatomist, Vesalius depicted the generic body as male; the female body is employed only as its reproductive supplement" ("Gendering Mortality" 54).

representations of body parts, female selfhood was subjugated to the rhetorically constructed agency of the womb. Keller analyzes the "asymmetrical sense of the self that identifies the male with persons and the female with the womb" (70). Similarly, Park considers the symbolism of the womb as anti-individualistic: "However men and women thought about the uterus, it never functioned either as a symbol of humanity or as a figure of personal interiority. ... it had always been the organ through which women were conceived of as existing for others: the lineage, the city, and the nation, as well as husbands, daughters, and sons" (Park, *Secrets* 264). Park immediately draws a distinction between the uterus and the heart: "In this respect, it was unlike the heart, which was not a social organ but which had long stood for those aspects of selfhood that were most personal and particular, a function it did not yield to the brain until the eighteenth century" (Park, *Secrets* 264). By focusing on hearts in my readings of *Othello* and *'Tis Pity*, I emphasize the subjectivity of female characters that is often obscured in anatomical interpretations of the plays that focus on signifiers of sex and reproduction such as the womb and the hymen.

The most famous early modern anatomical illustration, the frontispiece of Andreas Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543), depicts a crowded scene of an anatomy lesson with an opened female cadaver at its focal point. While the image suggests the symbolic centrality of the womb to the project of anatomy, the illustration provides little evidence about the uterus itself. It is not clear whether the womb is visible in the illustration, but it is clear that the womb—present or absent, full or empty—is the object of collective attention. The cadaver that was a woman shares the focal point with the skeleton that hovers above it; both are gendered lessons in iconography that underpin the gendering of anatomy.

The skeleton is not explicitly gendered, and is therefore interpreted as male. It serves an emblematic function as a personification of Death itself, and an anatomical function as the bones a normative male body. Andrea Carlino describes the dual functions of the skeleton as an iconographic and anatomical lesson: "The scene is dominated by a skeleton clutching a magisterial baton: this is undoubtedly a reference to the theme of *memento mori* and to the triumph of death, … but it is also an allusion to the importance assigned by Vesalius to the study of osteology, to the weight-bearing structure of the fabric of the human body" (44). The iconographic symbolism is further emphasized in the second edition of the *Fabrica* (1555), in which the baton becomes a scythe (Carlino 47).

While the skeleton's emblematic messages are universal, the messages that the female cadaver conveys are relegated to the symbolism of the womb. Yet critics disagree over what the womb signifies, as well as whether the womb is even visible in the image. Sawday interprets the visual interplay of the cadaver's opened womb and the skeleton that presides over the scene as conveying the emblematic message: "'Nascentes Morimur' – we are born to die" (71). "Nascentes Morimur" is conveyed as a neatly gendered narrative: the dead woman's womb shows the origin of the presumably male subject ("Nascentes"), while the presumably male skeleton conveys "Morimur." The dead woman becomes one symbolic half of the womb-tomb conjunction, rather than being understood as a subject whose mortality is also depicted in the scene. Sawday reads the skeleton symbolically as coming out of the opened cadaver as mortal offspring. The female cadaver is too specific to represent the universality of "Morimur." It can only represent "mother."

In *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy*, Hillary M. Nunn describes the controversy of viewing the womb in Vesalius's frontispiece (14-15); she

critiques Sawday's assertion that the frontispiece depicts a "uterocentric" universe (Sawday 71), writing: "the womb which Sawday sees as the focal point of the illustration may or may not actually be visible within the woodcut itself. The woodcut's shading, after all, seems to reveal a vague darkness within the abdomen rather than any structures that may lie beneath the subject's skin" (Nunn 14). Nunn argues that Vesalius' description of the anatomical procedure in the written text has influenced critics' readings of the inscrutable image (14-15).

In "Dissecting the Female Body: From Women's Secrets to the Secrets of Nature" Katharine Park argues that Vesalius continues the medieval tradition of looking for secrets hidden within women; however, by focusing on an empty womb, he demystifies the organ: "The principal secret of women was that the uterus held no secrets at all" (39). Park mentions the anonymous executed criminal depicted in the scene was revealed to be feigning pregnancy: "The only thing we know about this woman is that she was emphatically *not* pregnant. Indeed, she is one of the first (and few) non-pregnant female figures in the early history of European anatomical illustration; the traditional representations of female anatomy inevitably focused on the reproductive system and privileged the fetus inside the womb" ("Dissecting," 39). Yet Park (like Sawday) places the female cadaver in the emblematic role of mother. In her persuasive emblematic reading of the frontispiece, elaborated in *Secrets of Women*, she posits the text of the *Fabrica* as the "son" emerging from the "Caesarean" birth depicted in the scene (*Secrets* 243). She writes: "Like Apollo, and unlike Nero, Vesalius has managed successfully to both father and deliver a child, the *Fabrica*, which marks the reinstatement of anatomy as a vital, progressive field of study" (248).

Park shows the parallels in representations of opened bodies in religious and anatomical illustrations, but argues that the frontispiece of the *Fabrica* downplays conventional symbolic

associations between dissected cadavers and martyrs, thus foreclosing viewers' compassion for, and identification with, the female cadaver (*Secrets* 231-55). Instead, she argues, Vesalius is symbolically aligned with sainthood through allusions to St. Anthony, the patron saint of Padua who ordered the anatomy of a rich man to prove his heart was with his money, not his chest cavity. Park compares this anatomical revelation, depicted in relief on the high altar of St. Anthony's basilica in Padua, to the frontispiece of Vesalius' *Fabrica*, based on anatomies performed nearby (*Secrets* 223-49). In this reading, the cadaver's potential to signify as sacred is subordinated to symbolism that emphasizes Vesalius' authorship. My analysis of Giovanni's anatomy of Annabella's heart will argue that the scene departs from the *Fabrica* image to which it is often compared precisely because the audience is invited to feel "pity" for the anatomized "whore." Annabella is endowed with subjectivity denied to the anonymous female criminal on the cover of Vesalius' text, and her heart, which is represented spiritually as well as anatomically, is not reducible to Giovanni's act of authorship.

While critics disagree over what is depicted at the focal point of Vesalius' frontispiece, the various interpretations are informed by similarly gendered cultural assumptions: critics agree that they are viewing a signifier of femaleness, even if they cannot agree upon what they are viewing. What happens if we consider both the skeleton and the cadaver as queer bodies, ungendered remains upon which people project fantasies of sexual difference? The skeleton that presides over the anatomical scene is never viewed as the remains of a woman: it is viewed as symbolizing the mortality of the universal (male) subject or as a personified male Death. Rather than seeing only the symbolism of procreation in the image, the cadaver and skeleton can be read as a temporal tableau: the skeleton will, through dissection or decay, be revealed beneath the cadaver's flesh. What prevents critics from aligning the cadaver with the skeleton, rather than

seeing the cadaver as the skeleton's mother? In the conventionally gendered iconography of death, the skeleton is a "he" unless marked as otherwise, and in conventionally gendered anatomical illustrations cadavers are marked as female through depictions of opened wombs. These gendered differences are emblematically performed rather than anatomically revealed.

In tandem with the gendering cadavers and skeletons, the symbolism of anatomical theaters transformed the status of the criminal corpses dissected there. When analyzing an illustration of Peter Pauw's anatomy lesson at Leiden, Sawday writes: "the criminal corpse has been not merely transformed but transfigured" (74). He analyzes the Eucharistic symbolism of Pauw's gesture with an organ from the opened corpse that may be the heart (74-75). Sawday's reading highlights the openness of anatomy's symbolic dimensions to punitive and spiritual interpretations. The openness of cadaverous matter to competing interpretations, and the ultimate futility of attempts to transform an anatomical part into a stable text, is a structural element of cadaverous performativity that I will elucidate in my reading of Annabella's anatomized heart in *'Tis Pity*.

A crucial example of an anatomical part that obdurately evaded signification is the hymen. The significance, as well as the existence, of the hymen was debated in early modern anatomical texts. Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), which contains the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s earliest use of the word "hymen" as a body part, summarizes early modern authorities that alternately affirm and deny its existence (Ferguson 101, 105-6). Even when the hymen's existence is accepted, the meanings of its absence or presence are unstable. Ferguson describes the hymen's early modern and modern status as "proof" of virginity that is "riddled by doubt" (105). Loughlin writes: "Ideology demands its material existence … However, because of the ultimate inaccessibility and ephemeral nature of the hymen and because it must in the face of

this undecideability also exist as a site of empirical observation, its illustration in various sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medical texts is confused to say the least" (Loughlin 32). Loughlin surveys early modern anatomists' debates about the existence and significance of the hymen (29-39). Vesalius' dissections "for the sake of the hymen" (Vesalius qtd. in Loughlin 45) reveal his difficulty establishing its presence and "reversals" (43) in assigning its meaning (Loughlin 41-47). He did not depict the hymen in the *Fabrica*'s often-copied illustrations of the female reproductive system (Loughlin 32). In *A Directory for Midwives* (1651), Nicholas Culpeper puts faith in the hymen as a sign from God in tension with doubt about its veracity as evidence (Keller 88). The hymen's cultural significance was in tension with its anatomical uncertainty. Rather than appealing to anatomical truth, symbolic stagings of the hymen, such as the notorious handkerchief in *Othello*, highlight the epistemological uncertainty of the elusive and perhaps fictitious body part.

It is not only performances of the hymen that underscore the performativity of dead bodies and their parts in anatomical discourse. Recent critical works on early modern theater's fascination with anatomy often accept anatomical science's epistemology. In this view, theater offers symbolic representations of anatomical truths; while femaleness, death, and bodily openness are performed on the early modern stage, these performances signify anatomical facts. In other words, the public theater is a failed anatomy theater, a space where the truths revealed in the latter are reenacted through tropes. While Nunn's reading of the frontispiece of Vesalius' *Fabrica* critiques the view of the dead female body's interior as legible, her reading of drama in relation to the *Fabrica* replicates the assumption that opening female bodies provides "ocular proof" of a woman's sexuality. She writes: "invasive wounds, feigned though they may be, mark the female character's body as open and uncontained, inevitably associating her with sexual

promiscuity" (87). I am less concerned with the fact that the wounds are "feigned" than with the assumption that the association between violence and sexuality is inevitable. Nunn continues: "A female character's death thus offers the final judgment upon her chastity, providing the audience an emblematic shorthand for determining her essential nature" (87). This essentialist reading assumes that violence against female characters can function simultaneously as corporal punishment and anatomical investigation. Violently marking the body purports to provide anatomical "poetic justice," punishing the sins it presumes to reveal. By staging jealous lovers who kill women, plays such as *Othello* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* not only participate in the discursive construction of female sexuality, but also expose its construction as a form of violence.

The commonplace readings of violence against female bodies in early modern drama that associate violent death and dissection with the condemnation of criminal bodies often neglect that these processes are also central to martyrology and the veneration of saints' bodies. In *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection*, Katharine Park traces the history of anatomies in medieval and Renaissance Italy. Rather than considering only the anatomies that occurred in university settings, she analyzes the opening of dead bodies as part of funerary rituals including evisceration, cults of relics, autopsies for legal and medical purposes, and Caesarean sections, which were known at the time as "*sectio in mortua*—cutting open a dead woman" (15). These practices did not have the public, dishonorable, and anonymous associations that public anatomies did; in fact, many of them were associated with elites (15-19). By including these practices in her history of anatomy, Park shows the interrelated ways in which opening dead bodies could signify, rather than anachronistically privileging the medical model (18). Park draws connections between scientific and sacred anatomies, and links the

privileging of pregnant bodies in anatomy to the dissections of the bodies of holy women in search of Christ's manifestation in their hearts (35).

Dead bodies can be cast as martyrs, criminals, or saints through the symbolic work of anatomy. In "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy," Katharine Park describes tropes in Renaissance anatomy as "linking the saint and the criminal with the martyr as the middle term" ("Criminal" 23). The martyr is a narratively fragile category. Alice Dailey's *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution* begins with the claim that "martyrdom is not a death but a story that gets written about a death" (2). For female bodies, the saint/criminal binary was colored by the sexualized implications of anatomy: reverent dissection of miraculously incorruptible parts is aligned with the preservation of virginity, while public dissection and postmortem display were perceived as sexualized assaults on chastity.

"Female" corpses on the early modern stage exist in a complex web of signification: through the performance of violent death, female characters could be venerated as saints, branded as whores, or paradoxically marked as both. Rather than viewing onstage violence and anatomization as a stable system of signification (in which bodily openness tropes promiscuity and intactness tropes chastity), my third chapter considers its equivocal openness to interpretation. By interpreting Desdemona and Annabella as martyrs, I draw attention to how their deaths are read, both by characters within the plays and in the history of criticism, to construct idealized and criminalized notions of female sexuality. To recall Dailey's point, the manner in which a character dies is less important than the manner in which the action of death and bodily remains are interpreted. Desdemona's corpse and Annabella's heart create complex reading environments for characters and critics who create narratives of female sexual subjectivity out of cadaverous matter.

## Resurrection: The Raising of the Cadaver

As I have explored, death radically levels distinctions of gender, sexuality, and all other social constructs. Imagining resurrected bodies allows these distinctions to reappear, but their reappearance is not inevitable. Representations of the afterlife embody tensions between radical equality and the preservation of earthly hierarchies, including the hierarchy of gender. Social leveling coexists with a hierarchy of morality that distinguishes between resurrected bodies based on their antemortmen identities and actions. The persistence of sexual difference, despite the radical change in sexual identity and the absence of sexual acts, embodies this paradox. While genitals and gendered hierarchies persist in many depictions of the afterlife, resurrected bodies are inevitably queered by changes in bodies' identities and uses.

The Christian doctrine of resurrection radically transforms the implications of the cadaverous resemblance that I have mapped in early modern culture. Putrefaction and dissolution, assaults on identity and bodily integrity, are re-conceptualized as part of the body's journey toward glorification. Glorification entails a superior form of bodily integrity—a body devoid of change—and a return of identity in a perfected form. Human bodies and identities are so radically transformed through this process that it is difficult to say how the living body and the resurrected body can be called the same.[32] While my second and third chapters focus on the continuity and discontinuity between the person and the cadaver, my final chapter explores how resurrection adds a new layer to these tensions: the resurrected body is—and is not—both the antemortem person and the cadaver. While the cadaver signifies a falling away from human identity, the resurrected body signifies a return, but exactly what returns is unclear. The changes wrought through the body's fall into death and rise into glorification are so fundamental that they

[32] Bynum explores the paradoxes of continuity and change expressed in tropes of resurrection in patristic and medieval theology in *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*.

push the boundaries of human identity through the realms of dust and divinity. The glorified body is the human body perfected, reimagined, and fundamentally queered.

Falling, conceptualized as part of the cadaver's identity, is central to the narrative of resurrection. While falling provokes the horror of the cadaverous resemblance, it also endows resurrection with significance. A. H. C. Van Eijk's "'Only That Can Rise Which Has Previously Fallen': The History of a Formula" explains how early Christian writings made the body the locus of resurrection precisely because it, unlike the soul, dies or falls. Van Eijk shows how Tertullian in particular makes a connection between the cadaver's fallenness and its promised resurrection by citing the etymology of the word "cadaver" as "cadere" when arguing that the flesh and body specifically will rise again (Van Eijk 520-21). The cadaver's falling is precursor to its rising; putrefaction is part of the process leading to glorification.

The body's centrality in the doctrine of resurrection challenges views of the body and the cadaver it becomes as contemptible and makes the body indivisible from subjectivity. Fernando Vidal argues that the history of theorizing resurrection is integral to the history of theorizing identity and that theories of resurrection serve as evidence that the Christian concept of the self is, by definition, embodied. He writes:

> Problematic as it was and remains, the doctrine of bodily resurrection contradicts the dualistic understanding of the history of body and the self in the Christian West. Christianity is supposed to see the individual as a duality, torn between an immortal soul to be elevated and redeemed and a perishable body to be mortified and despised. Nevertheless, from an anthropological point of view, it holds the opposite of Descartes's fiction of a bodyless self. … The common expression "embodied self " involves the idea of a (potentially) disembodied self.

> Christianity, however, rejects the possibility of a person existing otherwise than as a composite of body and soul. (Vidal 936)

While the body is central in resurrection doctrine, it is fundamentally reconceptualized, as Paul's description of the metamorphoses that resurrection entails illustrates: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (*KJV*, 1 Cor. 15:42-44). Vidal writes: "With little exaggeration, it may be said that, from the apostle Paul to Pope John Paul II, the history of resurrection debates is a two-thousand-year-old attempt at working out the oxymoron *spiritual body*" (941).

In addition to exploring the paradox of the "spiritual body," resurrection discourse revises the significance of the body's earthy associations. Van Eijk describes how Tertullian uses the associations between the body and dust to support his view of corporeal resurrection: "Tertullian finds in the theological and christological implications of God's making man out of earth in the Beginning an argument in favour of the resurrection precisely of this caro-cadaver" (521). In the Graveyard scene, Hamlet certainly does not see skulls and dust as journeying toward resurrection; he does not trace Alexander the Great's journey beyond the bunghole (5.1.197-212). But the skull does not symbolize death only; it can also foreshadow resurrection. Bynum describes how the durability of skulls can signify the body's preservation and return: "Theophilus associates resurrection and incorruption with God's care for the bones of the dead (a hard, material element of continuity)" (Bynum 31).

The Resurrected Body as Posthuman and Perfected Human

Christian theology regarding the resurrection is a form of speculative object-oriented ontology devoted to considering the materiality, identity, and the functions of bodies that return

from death. Speculating about resurrected matter requires theorizing the relationship between identity and difference, as theologians imagine what remains constant, what is lost, and what is perfected when the body returns from death. Human identity is contested as theologians consider how living and resurrected bodies (as well as the putrefying cadaver that serves as the bridge between the two states) can be called the same.

Christian metaphors for resurrection drew from natural imagery, most significantly using Paul's metaphor of the body awaiting resurrection as a seed in 1 Corinthians 15, and aesthetic imagery, such as a re-forged statue (Bynum 3-6).[33] Medieval theologians favored metaphors that indicated "material continuity and reassemblage" over Paul's seed metaphor, which suggests organic change (Bynum 8). Rebuilding, reassembling, and reconstructing are ways of theorizing the tensions between continued presence and ontological change that resurrected bodies pose. Augustine describes the continued substance and radical change that resurrection entails using a metaphor of a rebuilt statue: "For if even a human workman, who has, for some reason, made a deformed statue, can recast it and make it very beautiful, and this without suffering any part of the substance, but only the deformity to be lost … shall we not think as highly of the almighty Worker?" (Augustine 842). Aesthetics provides a discourse for imagining the perfection of the body through resurrection, when the corrupted and disintegrated flesh is recast and made beautiful by "the great Artificer" (Augustine 864).

The limits of the body, and of human identity, are explored in metaphors for resurrection that shatter and rebuild the embodied person. The question of whether the resurrected body undergoes reassemblage or organic change provides an interesting link to posthuman theory. Can the resurrected body be thought of as posthuman or an automaton? Or is the resurrected state

[33] My discussion of metaphors for resurrection, and of the paradox of continuity and change in identity that resurrection poses, is indebted to Caroline Walker Bynum's *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*.

another organic phase in the body's expanded lifespan, as the seed metaphor suggests? In other words, does resurrection fall under the scope of nature or art?[34] Is the resurrected body human or posthuman?

In "The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume," Udo Thiel surveys early modern debates about corporeal resurrection. Sir Thomas Browne in *Religio Medici* (1643) and Alexander Ross in his critique, *Medicus Medicatus: Or the Physicans Religion Cured, by a Lenitive or Gentle Potion* (1645) both believe "that the resurrection body has to consist of numerically the same particles as the pre-mortem body" (Thiel 86). Kenelm Digby, in *Observations upon Religio Medici* (1644) expands the meaning of bodily sameness by arguing that any matter joined to the same soul will be the same body (Thiel 89). According to Digby, a dead man's soul may be joined to "a *Body* made of earth taken from some mountaine in *America*"; because of the form of the soul imposed upon the matter, the resurrected creature can still be said to have "the same Identicall body" as the man who lived and died (qtd. in Thiel 89). Material differences between the human body and nonhuman matter, as well as geographic differences between a corpse in England and a mountain in America, are deconstructed and re-forged through resurrection.

### Useless Genitals, Sexual Difference, and Sexuality

In addition to negotiating tensions between the continuity and change exhibited by each resurrected body, theologians considered the paradoxes of equality and difference that would exist among the bodies of the resurrected and debated the degree to which bodies would be marked by age, height, weight, and, most significantly for my project, sex. Speculating about resurrected bodies allowed theologians to reimagine sexed bodies and gendered roles.

[34] Fernando Vidal provides an overview of "the history of attempts at naturalizing the resurrection" (970) from the Middle Ages through the Enlightenment.

Resurrection theology connects the human body to other-than-human corpse and resurrected body, expanding and queering the definition of the human. Theologians disagreed about whether sexual difference would exist among resurrected bodies, with some envisioning an entirely homosocial afterlife. Augustine summarizes and argues against this view:

> From the words, 'Till we all come to a perfect man, to measure of the age of the fullness of Christ,' [Eph. 4:13] and from the words, 'Conformed to the image of the Son of God,' [Rom. 8:29] some conclude that women shall not rise women, but that all shall be men, because God made man only of earth, and woman of the man. For my part, they seem to be wiser who make no doubt that both sexes shall rise. (839)

However, while Augustine states that sexual difference persists among resurrected bodies, the relationship between the sexes is imagined as radically transformed due to the absence of lust. Augustine writes: "For there shall be no lust, which is now the cause of confusion. For before they sinned, the man and the woman were naked, and were not ashamed. From those bodies, then, vice shall be withdrawn, while nature shall be preserved. And the sex of woman is not a vice, but nature" (839). The absence of lust and vice among bodies transforms the status of women (and their genitals) from sexual objects to glorious objects: "the female members shall remain adapted not to the old uses, but to a new beauty, which, so far from provoking lust, now extinct, shall excite praise to the wisdom and clemency of God, who both made what was not and delivered from corruption what He made" (Augustine 839).

A perceptual change accompanies the ontological change that resurrection entails, as "spiritual bodies" are endowed with the ability to see God's spirit in all things (Augustine 864). As such, Augustine describes the vision of the resurrected as surpassing and perfecting

anatomists' attempts to understand the body. He writes: "For all those parts of the bodily harmony, which are distributed through the whole body, within and without, … shall then be discerned; and, along with other great and marvelous discoveries which shall then kindle rational minds in praise of the great Artificer, there shall be the enjoyment of a beauty which appeals to the reason" (864). While the work of anatomists is described as incomplete and as "cruel zeal for science" (Augustine 853), the eyes of the resurrected will see the inner workings of bodies, and their inherent beauty, without the need for dissection.

In addition to the absence of lust, the absence of marriage among the resurrected reshapes the structure of gendered society. In his reading of Christ's statement, "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30), Augustine interprets both the persistence of gender and the absence of marriage. He writes: "He even affirmed that the [female] sex should exist by saying, 'They shall not be given in marriage,' which can only apply to females; 'Neither shall they marry,' which applies to males. There shall therefore be those who are in this world accustomed to marry and be given in marriage, only they shall there make no such marriages" (Augustine 840). This statement highlights the persistence of gender roles as well as anatomical sexual difference, even as the enactment of gender roles is entirely transformed. Dividing the resurrected into those "accustomed to marry" and those who are "given in marriage" allows the gender roles defined through marriage to persist as artifacts in the absence of marriage itself.

In this sense, sexual difference and gender roles do not serve social purposes, but rather are features to be displayed. Uselessness is a defining trait of the reimagined body that emerges in resurrection discourse. Agamben's chapter on "The Glorious Body" in *Nudities* surveys theological writings (mainly Augustine) and describes the characteristics of the glorious body as

divorced from functionality and devoted to displaying God's glory. The "useless or unusable organs" of the resurrected body are the theological equivalent of Heidegger's broken hammer (Agamben 98). In this way, the glorified body is similar to the cadaver, which, as I discuss in the introduction, falls away from use. Theories of the resurrected body posit the return of bodily features and processes that are deemed essential while disavowing other dimensions of use, such as nutritive and reproductive functions. The result is a new version of the human body-as-object. Agamben writes: "The glorious body is an ostensive body whose functions are not executed but rather displayed. Glory, in this sense, in in solidarity with inoperativity" (98). The glorious body, divorced from biological processes, is an aesthetic object.

Although genitals of resurrected bodies are inoperative, constructing the resurrected body as marked by sexual difference serves important functions for theorizing gender among the living and the dead. Theologians mitigate the queer implications of the glorified body by imagining the persistence of genitals, sexing resurrected bodies and insisting that gender roles and sexual morality continue even in the absence of sexual acts, procreation, and matrimony.[35] Theories of resurrected bodies participate in the construction of sexuality, advocating for chastity.

In addition to serving as chaste ideals, resurrected bodies can be interpreted as queer figures. While resurrected bodies are separated from reproductive functions, it would be incorrect to say that they are separated from sexuality. In "Sex and the City (of God): Is Sex Forfeited or Fulfilled in Augustine's Resurrection of Body?" Margaret R. Miles points out that Augustine neither included nor excluded sexuality from resurrected bodies, since the concept of "sexuality" did not yet exist. What he did exclude was sex acts, or the "use" of genitals, even

[35] In *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference*, Taylor G. Petrey analyzes how early Christian writings on resurrection impose sexual difference on resurrected bodies, while describing them as free from sexual acts and reproduction.

though genitals themselves would be resurrected. Drawing from post-Freudian views of sexuality, Miles posits "A post-Augustinian resurrection sexuality" described as "eternally blissful sensuality" that challenges the genitally-focused understanding of sex acts in Augustine's texts and in contemporary culture (Miles 324). Although she does not use the word "queer," Miles' view of post-Augustinian sexuality certainly has queer implications, since it challenges heterosexist conceptions of sexuality.

Resurrected bodies' lack of utility has particular implications for resurrected female bodies: "women, equipped with a 'new beauty,' will no longer be subject to 'use'—male lust and childbearing" (Miles 324). Constructing female bodies as used and harmed through sex and procreation and extolling bodies that are not subjected to this use is connected to the chaste feminine ideal. Theodora Jankowski has explored the queerness of chastity by interpreting virginity, celibacy, and chastity as queer practices; she writes: "virginity represented a queer space within the otherwise very restrictive and binary early modern sex/gender system" (8). These queer associations also apply to bodies that are resurrected as celibate. Glorified bodies, like idealized chaste bodies, are separated from instrumental functions and heterosexual marriage relations that undergird the sex/gender system. My readings of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy* show how both plays mobilize the concepts of bodily preservation associated with chastity and resurrection to allow dead characters to return as both queer subjects and aestheticized objects.

## Resurrection Monuments

In both *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy*, a monument serves as a pivot between the corpse and the resurrected body. In *The Lady's Tragedy*, an effigy's defacement precedes and foreshadows the corpse's defilement. In *The Winter's Tale*, Hermione poses as her

own effigy. Monuments convey the paradoxes of life, death, and resurrection; individuality, community, and anonymity; exemplarity and universality; gendered personhood and the queer, undifferentiated matter of stone and bones. They gesture toward immortality (materially, through the durability of stone and symbolically, through portraying faith in resurrection) and transience (through symbolism of mortality and the fact of their own decay). Through epitaphs, monuments blur the boundaries between posthumous speech and silence. These paradoxes are brought to bear in the staging of corpses and/as monuments in theater.

In *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*, Peter Sherlock emphasizes the spiritual dimension of monuments and their relation to resurrection. Kantorowicz's theory of the "two bodies" as natural and political, which he applied to cadaver tombs, has influenced scholarship on early modern monuments generally (Sherlock 43-44, 46). Kathleen Cohen has shown how the "spiritual body" must be added to the framework for interpreting monuments; cadaver tombs such as Archbishop Chichele's can be seen as depicting the cadaver and the resurrected body, rather than the natural and political body of the Archbishop (Sherlock 47). Cadaver monuments contain messages about life, death, and resurrection; they commemorate the political and social lives of individuals, encourage viewers to contemplate mortality, and look forward to resurrection (Sherlock 47). Of these functions, the symbolic hope of resurrection is the most often overlooked. Connecting monuments to the "spiritual body" that is described as resurrected in 1 Corinthians 15, which was included in the *Book of Common Prayer*'s burial ritual in 1559, Sherlock writes: "Monuments must be seen as sacred objects, parts of a material culture concerned with representing the fate of the body and soul in the cosmos at large, not the earthly realm alone" (69-70). Sculptures of the "spiritual body," the paradox at the heart of resurrection theology, are objects with queer agency. They collapse time,

evoking the deceased person, as past memory and present corpse, and the futurity the resurrected body promises. As static representations of reanimated bodies, they trouble distinctions between activity and passivity, human and stone.

Donne's resurrection monument is a significant example of the power of these sculptures. Izaak Walton describes Donne posing for his funeral monument while on the verge of death. Donne stood on an urn while wearing a shroud and pretended to be dead and awaiting resurrection (Walton 78). Before being used by a carver, the image was used by Donne as an object of *memento mori* contemplation until his death (78). Performance, artistry, and spiritual practice coexist in this description: performing death, and viewing the image of this performance, was part of Donne's preparation for the act of death itself.

Walton describes Dr. Fox, who it was later discovered paid for the sculpture, encountering Donne's resurrection monument in a way that echoes the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*. He writes that Dr. Fox "lived to see as lively a representation of his dead Friend, as Marble can express; a Statue indeed so like Dr. *Donne*, that (as his Friend Sir *Henry Wotton* hath expressed himself) *it seems to breath faintly; and, Posterity shall look upon it as a kind of artificial Miracle*" (Walton 83). The sculpture manipulates the threshold between life and death, person and object. Donne posed for the sculpture while appearing deathly, but his engraved image makes the marble appear lively. "Artificial miracle" is a profound paradox that is central to *The Winter's Tale* as well as Donne's monument. The monument, which survived the Great Fire that destroyed St. Paul's, can still be seen at the rebuilt cathedral where it stands as an "artificial miracle": an enduring image of Donne on the threshold of life, death, and resurrection.

My final chapter will show how Hermione's staging as a statue and the dead Lady's staging as effigy, corpse, and ghost allude to the same web of signification as resurrection

monuments. Staged resurrections engage theological debates about “spiritual bodies” and their genders, the embodied person’s continuity and change, and the relationship between artistry and the reanimation of the dead. Hermione’s monumental resurrection, like Donne’s resurrection monument, is an “artificial miracle”—a product of the artistry of the stage that mimics and transcends the artistry of stone.

# Chapter 2: Sexing the Skull[36]

Skulls are predominant signifiers of humanity, but unstable signifiers of sexual difference. Archeological encounters with the past involve assigning sex to unearthed skulls, with varying degrees of accuracy. Sexing skulls involves considering where features fall along a spectrum, rather than looking for the presence or absence of binary markers. This chapter unsettles the view that the skull "has" a sex, an essential identity that anatomists or archeologists can uncover. Sexing skulls is a discursive process that constructs gender in archeological, anatomical, and theatrical contexts. Sexing skulls takes sexual dimorphism for granted and imposes a binary anatomical paradigm of sexual difference onto the dead.

The skull is a queer, neuter object that can be subjected to performative gendering. In this, the skull is not unique. Like all bodily matter, it can be "sexed": conceptually molded to fit into a culture's understanding of sex/gender categories.[37] The skull's significance lies in its uncanny ability to gesture toward key signifiers of personhood, such as the face, eyes, and brain, while simultaneously showing their absence. Existing long after the flesh has decayed, the skull is a perdurable relic of the human body. Skulls exist on the line between individuality and anonymity. Skulls, anonymous and fungible objects, can be made to play any part, but ultimately mock all human roles. They can be used to reconstruct individuals through memory or modern forensic science, but in their anonymity, skulls are also emblems of death itself, uncanny mirrors in which living men and women can see their undifferentiated end.

On stage, skulls perform the roles of anatomical signifiers, *memento mori* icons, and

---

[36] Portions of this chapter have appeared in a different context in my article, "Middleton's Traffic in Dead Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*."

[37] In *Sexing the Body*, Anne Fausto-Sterling analyzes how the sex/gender binary is imposed upon body parts that exhibit a wide range of variation, such as genitals, brains, and hormones.

gendered characters simultaneously, revealing and subverting the performative strategies that operate in iconographic and anatomical traditions. Skulls are human remains with significance across time and cultures, but skull props are quintessentially early modern. In *The Stage Life of Props*, Sofer chooses the skull as the symbolically central prop of Renaissance drama. While props have traditionally been overshadowed by characters, they have become privileged sites of analysis for materialist critics. Recent work, such as the essays featured in Harris and Korda's *Staged Properties in Early Modern Drama*, has explored the circulation of objects on early modern stages and in the culture at large. Although the human body can also play the part of a prop, it is not typically the focus of prop-centered criticism. While the symbolic importance of skull props, especially Yorick's skull, has been examined, the ideological and material traffic in dead bodies in which plays participate when they use skulls as stage properties has remained under-examined. Actors' bodies and animal entrails can be used as props to signify human remains, but skull props are literally human remains. Skull props are cadaverous matter: queer objects with the potential to disrupt human signifying systems.

This chapter traces the "lives" of a skull prop in two plays performed by the King's Men: *Hamlet* (1600-1) and *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606).[38] Both stage the popular iconographic tradition of a young man contemplating a skull. While operating within this tradition, the King's Men performed a virtuosic range of signification with their skull prop, each of which collapses binaries between actor and prop; living and dead; male and female; gendered and neuter. In each play the skull prop is given a role that entails the performance of a gendered identity enmeshed in hierarchical social relationships. At the same time, both plays highlight the uncanny process of

---

[38] My methodology is similar to Andrew Sofer's in *The Stage Life of Props*. In his chapter on Jacobean drama, Sofer examines the skull prop in *Hamlet*, *1Honest Whore*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy*. While he pays close attention to the vitality of props and the material conditions of performance, he does not devote much analysis to issues of gender.

ungendering. Although *The Revenger's Tragedy* may feature the same material skull that appeared in *Hamlet*, the prop's gender and sexuality are radically reworked in the later play. By drawing attention to the skull prop's cadaverous materiality and gender performativity, I hope to further unsettle Yorick and highlight "his" ontological equality to the "bony lady" of *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

While much has been written about how gender is a performative construct, this chapter considers how gender performativity reaches a *reductio ad absurdum* when applied to skulls. These plays invite us to see the performative construction of gendered personhood operating at the level of the bone. While there is a tendency to view the skull as an extension of the person, haunted by the gendered identity of its previous "owner"[39] and revealing the deceased individual's interiority in anatomical detail, skulls are also fungible props that play any gendered role ascribed to them, whether they appear on stage, in anatomy theaters, or in the iconographic tradition. Sexed and gendered skulls parody not only gender roles, but also human identity itself. In fact, parodying gender is integral to parodying human identity, since gender is constructed as a constituent part of human identity.[40]

The skull's gender performativity is always in tension with its neuter, cadaverous materiality. Alongside the constructs of masculinity and femininity that are imposed onto skulls, I will consider the skull's cadaverous status as an ontological, rather than performative, category. The skull's cadaverous thingness undoes any remnants of human constructs, such as social role, occupation, and gender, which become hollow parodies when "performed" by skulls.

---

[39] In *Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England: Browne's Skull and Other Histories*, Howard Marchitello describes the narrative strategies that connect skulls to their previous "owners" and analyzes the skulls of Yorick and Sir Thomas Browne as examples (127-37).

[40] Judith Butler describes the role of gendering in constructing the "human" in *Bodies that Matter*.

Hamlet is intensely aware of the object-status of the skulls he finds. He comments upon how they can be used "to play at loggats with" (5.1.92) or be put to other ignoble uses. Hamlet keeps this disorientation at bay by claiming the skull as his cognitive artifact *par excellence*. His artifaction strategy involves finding names for skulls, both the allegorical names that he invents and the famously particular name, Yorick. Vindice's objectification of Gloriana's skull in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, however, is intertwined with the cultural objectification of women. The skull of *The Revenger's Tragedy* is sexed insofar as it is objectified differently from the "male" skulls of *Hamlet*. Vindice's skull is not only his stage property, but is also his erotic property—both a love object and a fetish. The skull is treated, satirically, as though it were *still* a woman. The constructed role of the female sex object uncannily persists, while the cadaverous matter responds with satirical resistance. *The Revenger's Tragedy* metatheatrically satirizes the skull's gender performativity by forcing the prop to play two polarized feminine roles simultaneously: the remains of chaste Gloriana and the prostituted "bony lady."

*Hamlet*: Naming the Skull

The graveyard scene in *Hamlet* has been hailed as both the beginning and the culmination of the *memento mori* theatrical tradition.[41] In this scene, Shakespeare brings a death's head onto the public stage and turns it into a character. This is the first time that a staged skull is given a name, a performative act that turns the prop into an uncanny actor. The personality of "Yorick"—its status as an artifact with human attributes—exists in tension with the cadaverous materiality of the object itself.

Hamlet is bewildered when he hears that the skull once was Yorick; he expresses the shock of misrecognition with the simple question: "This?" (5.1.182). "This?" signals the

---

[41] Spinrad considers the graveyard scene in *Hamlet* the last true representation of the tradition, before it gave way to mockery in later plays. Sofer focuses on the scene as innovative, citing it as the first play to feature a skull in its action (*Stage Life* 98).

profound disconnection between named person and cadaverous matter. In "'This?': Posthumanism and the Graveyard Scene in *Hamlet,*" Ivan Callus explores the intimate connection between death and encountering posthumanism, which he defines as "the experience of the estrangement from what is most familiar to the human" (225). Callus' "posthuman experience" is similar to the cadaverous resemblance—it is an encounter that shatters human systems of signification. Callus attempts to make the scene a touchstone for posthumanism. He writes: "The posthuman is, at its most direct, about death. The play's emphasis on that theme … attaches itself most unnervingly in this scene, and in its extensions of the memento mori tradition that render it central, to rephrase one of Bloom's titles, to Shakespeare's invention of the *post*human" (220). Continuing Callus' argument that the graveyard scene is integral to posthumanism, I will consider the queer implications of the scene's staging of skulls as posthuman, cadaverous objects.

Before finding Yorick's skull, Hamlet creates a more traditional emblematic scene with anonymous skulls. In Hamlet's musings, only men die: he imagines the skulls he finds belonging to Cain, a politician, a courtier, or a lawyer. "Lady Worm" is a feminized image of decay created to mock the generic male "Lord Such-a-one" (5.1.88, 84). Gender identity, like status and occupation, is simply a part to be played in life and mocked by death, yet the skull conveying this message is always presumed male. The true threat of the dissolution of gender identity in death is assuaged by the preservation of the universalized masculine subject, even as a skull. Although the skulls are perceived as threats to individual identity, they uphold patriarchy by serving as visual emblems of *Hamlet*'s "common theme," which, as Claudius puts it, "Is death of fathers" (1.2.103, 104). Death may reduce all human beings to mere matter, but Hamlet fantasizes that the dead bodies of important men *matter more*.

"Male" skulls serve as philosophical placeholders for Hamlet; he tries on mortality by pondering the remains of various types of men. When Hamlet imagines an anonymous skull's identity, he speaks in the subjunctive, rather than past tense: "This might be the pate of a politician" (5.1.78). The tense's continuity of identity is reinforced through alliteration: the "pate" is still, in a sense, a "politician." Hamlet continues: "This might be my Lord Such-a-One" (84). The skull is not an object that was once a Lord, but rather Lord Such-a-One himself in a degraded state, subjected to feminizing and anti-hierarchical forces: "and now my Lady Worm's, chapless, and knock'd about the [mazzard] with a sexton's spade" (88-90). Worms and the irreverent Gravedigger equally threaten social distinctions. Funerary practices are intended to uphold social divisions (as we learn at the beginning of the scene, this particular grave is only being made due to Ophelia's status as a gentlewoman) but the practicalities of grave-digging debase the noble dead. Hamlet fights against the Gravedigger's—and Death's—leveling message. His social outrage is the most pronounced feature of this encounter with the materiality of mortality. He says, "Here's fine revolution, and we had the trick to see't" (90-91), but all of Hamlet's rhetorical tricks are devoted to *not* seeing the leveling revolution of death. He clings to social distinctions by mourning their dissolution. Attributing maleness to the anonymous skulls he encounters is a key part of this strategy.

The rhetorical tension between imagining continuity between living people and their remains and sensing the radical discontinuity of the cadaverous object continues when Hamlet "finds" the skull of a lawyer: "There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillities, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery?" (98-103). The skull is still referred to with the pronouns "he" and

"him." The skull is mocked by the legal jargon to which it no longer has access, but the fact that "he" is still viewed through legalistic language connects the skull to the lawyer's antemortem identity. While the skulls have lost the social masks they wore in life, Hamlet rhetorically reconstructs them. Rather than allowing the skulls to remain cadaverous objects, he turns them into parodic puppets by endowing them with attribute properties. He creates an iconographic scene, which, like all moralistic messages, is intended for the living. Although he addresses the skulls directly in pantomime, he is acutely aware that his message cannot be communicated to the skulls themselves.

The skulls have not only lost their social status and dignity, they have also lost their (intertwined) access to property. Hamlet continues: "This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land … The very conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box, and must th' inheritor himself have no more, ha?" (103-12). Hamlet confronts the disjunction between the scope of human claims to property and the size and transience of the mortal body. By comparing the sizes of legal documents and a lawyer's dead body,[42] Hamlet deconstructs the binary between human and nonhuman objects. The legal documents overshadow the body due to their greater size and more enduring quality.[43] Hamlet then turns parchment itself into a skull of sorts by remembering its cadaverous materiality:

> HAMLET: Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?
>
> HORATIO: Ay, my lord, and of calves'-skins too.
>
> HAMLET: They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. (114-17)

---

[42] It is unclear whether Hamlet imagines the lawyer as a property owner, or constructs yet another imagined person. De Grazia discusses the openness of interpretation in relation to the conventional association between law and land (Hamlet *without Hamlet* 141).

[43] Hamlet may even be comparing the skull itself to a "box" (Thompson and Taylor 417n104), further emphasizing the thingness of the skull.

Parchment itself is a cadaverous object and *memento mori*. Human identity and property are both deconstructed. People rely on dead animal skins to assert their property rights, are themselves sheep and calves, and are ontologically equal to parchment in death.

The intertwined aspects of human identity and property are central to Hamlet's graveyard contemplation. In Hamlet *without Hamlet*, Margreta de Grazia draws attention to Hamlet's focus on land: he returns repeatedly to the concept of land making men, propping up their identities and worldly power in life, only for men to become no more than pieces of earth after death (145-47). Human beings' connection to land is both proprietorial and elemental: men own land and all human beings become dust. While property relations are gendered, the elemental connection between bodies and dust is not. Becoming earth undoes gender, social status, and any proprietorial relationship living men have to land. The elemental trajectory, "dust to dust," collapses the distinctions of property that undergird identity: both object property (owning land) and attribute property (being a lord, king, etc. based on one's relation to land) are undone. This elemental leveling creates ontological equality and kinship between all degrees of men, between men and women, and between people and things. Hamlet, however, uses rhetoric to forestall this leveling; in the same way that he imposes social order onto skulls, he creates a hierarchy of dust. When he refers to "the noble dust of Alexander" (203-4), the irony does not negate the fact that he is fixated on the remains of great men and desires to differentiate their dust. The dust of any decomposed body can be used to plug barrels or patch walls, but Hamlet focuses on the debased remnants of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar.

After deconstructing human property relationships through his rhetorical anatomy of a lawyer's skull, Hamlet continues to endow the dead with property rights. He asks the Gravedigger: "Whose grave's this, sirrah?" (117-18). When the Gravedigger claims the grave as

his own, his appropriation is a leveling statement. The grave cannot belong to the deceased, even if they were great men. These men, and their rights to property, no longer exist.[44] By digging graves for such men, the Gravedigger outranks them. As he says before Hamlet's entrance, "There is no ancient gentlemen but gard'ners, ditchers, and grave-makers; they hold up Adam's profession" (29-31). The Gravedigger invents a new social hierarchy that is centered upon the grave.[45] By not mourning or honoring social distinctions, the Gravedigger establishes a more intimate connection to cadaverous objects and their queer agency. The Gravedigger's rhetoric is like death itself—it undoes. Hamlet comments upon this: "we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us" (137-38). He objects to social leveling through wordplay in the same way he desires to forestall the inevitable leveling of death.

Hamlet's question, "How long will a man lie i' th' earth ere he rot?" (163-64) expresses his concern with the preservation of gendered human identity, as well as the flesh of the dead. "A man" could simply mean a human being, but it also fits Hamlet's male-gendering of the dead. It rejects the radical break in human and gender identity ushered in by the body's transformation into a cadaverous object, which the Gravedigger has just expressed by referring to the future inhabitant of the grave as "One that was a woman" (135). Hamlet asks about the continuance of identity, wondering how long the identity of a "man" can be stretched out before it collapses into "rot." The Gravedigger does the opposite, showing how death pervades life: "Faith, if 'a be not rotten before 'a die—as we have many pocky corpses, that will scarce hold the laying in—'a will last you some eight year or nine year. A tanner will last you nine year" (165-68). A tanner's body

[44] Margreta de Grazia draws attention to the irony that all the identities Hamlet conjures are assumed to be landed, even though they are not buried inside the church among the socially privileged (Hamlet *without Hamlet*, 137). Hamlet's attribution of social status, as well as male gender, to the skulls is not based upon any anatomical or archeological evidence.

[45] Margreta de Grazia considers the Gravedigger in relation to the Diggers, and analyzes imagery that links a sexton's spade to a coat of arms (Hamlet *without Hamlet*, 133-4).

is not preserved by his social or spiritual greatness, but rather by the thickness of his skin: “his hide is so tann’d with his trade that ’a will keep out water a great while” (170-71). The fact that human skin, referred to as “hide,” is tanned alongside animal skin levels the distinctions between humans and other animals. As with the parchment, the objects with which people work are shown to be ontologically equal to the human body. The body’s ability or failure to keep water out alludes to Ophelia’s death by drowning. A body’s fate after death is not influenced by spiritual or social factors, but rather by the elemental battle between flesh and water: “water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body” (172).

The phrase “whoreson dead body” ironically encapsulates the gendered iconography of death. The generic corpse is gendered male and dishonored by mortality. “Whoreson” displaces the blame for mortality onto the mother, the “whore” who brought his mortal body into the world. While the word “your” before “whoreson dead body” is not primarily a possessive, it plays with the idea of possession—both the Gravedigger’s proprietorial claims to the grave and its remains, as well as the proprietary relationship people have to their bodies. The possessive signals both his irreverent familiarity with the corpses he comes into contact with, as well as a reminder that the bodies of his addressees—Hamlet as well as the audience—are equally subject to decay. At this moment, the Gravedigger finds the famous skull and the general “whoreson dead body” becomes the specific “whoreson mad fellow.” Before the skull is named, it is an intensely specific and strikingly anonymous riddle: “A whoreson mad fellow’s it was” (176).

Hamlet’s rhetorical questions about who the skulls might have been give way to a pointed question regarding the origin of this particular skull: “Whose was it?” (175). Hamlet is no longer in the realm of subjunctive speculation, but rather seeks to discover the “truth” of the skull. While the other skulls were imaginatively endowed with identities, metatheatically crafted as

“being” lawyers or politicians, Hamlet asks about this skull’s history as property belonging to someone. The phrase acknowledges that identity has been irrevocably lost and can only be reconstructed by narrativizing the skull as remnant of the lost body, or property of the lost person. The Gravedigger’s reply, “Whose do you think it was?” (176-77), hints at an enduring fantasy that identity can be preserved after death: it raises the possibility that either through anatomical detail or haunting presence, the skull can escape anonymity and make its antemortem identity known. Conversely, the Gravedigger, as fond of playing with skulls as with words, may be inviting Hamlet to participate in a guessing game, a more focused version of the imaginative exercise Hamlet has been playing all along. The skull’s identity as Yorick or jester is not legible in the skull itself, and Hamlet must rely upon the Gravedigger’s knowledge to reveal (or construct) the lost identity. When Hamlet refuses to guess, the Gravedigger finally answers: “This same skull, sir, was, sir, Yorick’s skull, the King’s jester” (180-81). The repetition of “skull,” “sir,” “sir,” “skull,” mockingly juxtaposes awareness of gendered social distinctions in life with the leveling of death: “sir” is surrounded by, and collapses into, “skull.” The continuity of identity—“This same skull”—is mocked by the past-tense attribute properties, the name and occupation the skull no longer has. The association between jesters and death was a common iconographic motif (Garber 24), but Yorick’s skull subverts convention. The performative constructs, such as costume, that mark an iconographic skull as “jester” are absent, and the Gravedigger instead makes the identification through archeological memory or intimate familiarity with death.

The skull with a name is a contradiction; the memorial specificity of Yorick oscillates with the neuter anonymity of the skull itself. Sofer writes: “Naming the skull transforms the scene. It is a moment of unmetaphoring in which the conventionalized figure of speech has

suddenly become humanized" (*Stage Life* 98). While Sofer uses the term "unmetaphoring" to highlight the skull's transformation from conventional trope to specific individual, I will analyze this "humanizing" of the skull as artifaction. In fact, the artifaction process might even be called metaphoring. Hamlet now sees the skull less as a cadaverous object than as an uncanny synecdoche for Yorick. Hamlet rhetorically superimposes Yorick onto the skull.

The skull's artifactual history is created with words. There is no way to test the veracity of the Gravedigger's statement. Hamlet, however, uncharacteristically lacks skepticism and accepts the Gravedigger's claim at face value.[46] While he scrutinizes the ontological claim made by the Ghost, he does not realize that the skull's constructed identity is similarly ephemeral and uncertain, and instead accepts it as a material fact. Hamlet begins speaking in the past tense, remembering the lost Yorick and rhetorically reconstructing the character traits and fleshly body that have been erased. "I knew him, Horatio" (184) revises his lack of recognition only moments before—"Nay, I know not" (178). Past-tense recognition and intimacy is played out against present-tense misrecognition and revulsion. It is not clear who or what "poor Yorick" is at this point: the object passed between the hands of the Gravedigger and Hamlet, the remembered identity of the living man, or an uncanny fusion of the two. As with the stock character types Hamlet summoned moments before, Hamlet speaks to the skull as a continuation of the jester's identity: "Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning—quite chop-fall'n" (189-92). Hamlet's personalized memory of Yorick shares equal space with the generalized social commentary of the jester. Is Hamlet speaking to Yorick or all jesters? The jester, although linked to a personalized memory, is added to the allegorical moral tableau along

[46] Ivan Callus considers the interpretive possibilities offered by doubting the Gravedigger's recognition of the skull (223-27). Callus notes that the epistemological uncertainty regarding the inhabitants of the grave is especially relevant when we consider that, unbeknownst to Hamlet, Ophelia will soon be buried there (226).

with the politician, the lord, and the lawyer.

Hamlet's appropriation of Yorick's skull's meaning is intensified when Hamlet fashions the skull as a warning to women, a mirror of their future: "Now get you to my lady's [chamber], and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come; make her laugh at that" (192-95). This is the only jest that "Yorick" can still provide, but the mockery stems from it cadaverous materiality rather than the jester's antemortem identity. The specificity of Yorick's identity is overshadowed as Hamlet imaginatively wrenches the prop into the familiar iconographic role of a death's head in dialogue with women. The ominous warning, "to this favor she must come," suggests that the woman's face will decay into the neuter, or even masculine, skull. "She" will be erased, along with her inch-thick paint. Yorick's identity has also been erased, as the prop in Hamlet's hands becomes a cognitive artifact. The skull is as anonymous as the misogynistic type, "my lady." Although Hamlet sets cosmeticized women and skulls in a dialectical relationship, he continues to imagine death as occurring only to males when he adds Alexander and Caesar to his catalogue of decay. Only the appearance of Ophelia's corpse shatters Hamlet's masculinist gendering of death.

In Hamlet's rhetoric, objects such as skulls, parchment, loam, dust, and dirt function to debase human beings, especially men. Skulls are powerless and mute props, unable to fight or bemoan the dejected treatment to which the Gravedigger and Hamlet himself subject them. The male identities that Hamlet contemplates—the lawyer, Lord Such-a-One, and even Yorick—distract from the cadaverous thingness of skulls. *The Revenger's Tragedy*, on the other hand, invites us into the worlds of objects, asking us to consider how a skull feels about necrophilia and vengeance. The skull's queer agency results from the play's subversive allusion to *Hamlet* and its metatheatrical construction of a "lady." The conventional association that Hamlet draws

between skulls and ladies is pushed to its limit and the concept of “lady” is collapsed into a skull.

### *The Revenger’s Tragedy*: Queering the Skull

When *The Revenger’s Tragedy* opens with Vindice soliloquizing with a skull in hand, the allusion to *Hamlet* is palpable. The iconographic *memento mori* has become an iconic prop: the audience sees the anonymous skull prop as Yorick. However, Vindice soon reveals that this skull once belonged to a woman who was betrothed to him. The prop may be materially identical to Yorick, or at the very least not noticeably different from its famous predecessor, and the stage image mirrors the graveyard scene, but the skull has undergone a sex change. When Yorick’s skull becomes Gloriana’s skull, the social, erotic, and property relationships between revenger and prop undergo radical revision, even though the skull props are anatomically identical. The distinctively “female” skull serves, like Yorick’s skull, as an emblem of mortality, a cognitive device in Vindice’s philosophical contemplation. But this skull is also sexually objectified. In fact, the eroticization of the skull is taken to such an extreme degree that it parodies the conventional eroticization of dead female remains and the misogyny of *memento mori* moralizing.

*The Revenger’s Tragedy* constructs the skull’s sex change through a series of context changes. While Yorick’s skull is disinterred in a graveyard, Gloriana’s skull is Vindice’s possession from the start of the play. Gloriana’s skull is an artifact of a chaste woman, a macabre love token from Vindice’s past, and a sexual object prostituted in the present. Not only is the skull revealed to be the remains of a woman through Vindice’s narration, it is also emphatically fashioned into a woman: gender is literally applied to it. In its climactic scene, the skull’s sexual difference is perversely underscored when the disguised Vindice, hired as the Duke’s pander,

dresses and paints the skull of his dead beloved. He then presents the “bony lady” (3.5.121)[47] to the Duke who had murdered her, who faces a painful death after kissing its poisoned mouth. The skull performs three dramatic roles: it is a cadaverous, neuter prop, as well as two characters: “Gloriana” and the “bony lady.” “Gloriana” is a chaste woman whose life and death are narrated, although she appears on stage only as an artifact. The “bony lady” is a satirical icon of the conventional conflation of female sexuality and death, an embodiment of the iconographic connection Hamlet draws between Yorick’s skull and the cosmeticized “Lady.” “She” is a queer sex object: a skull in drag. The skull is “Gloriana” when held in soliloquizing Vindice’s hands, but when attired and prostituted, it becomes the “bony lady.” The cadaverous materiality of the skull itself, however, unsettles both of these gendered performances.

*The Revenger’s Tragedy* is an instance of early modern object-oriented speculation that is thoroughly informed by social and legal notions of gender, personhood, and property. The play pushes us to consider whether an object can actually perform and enjoy revenge, transcending the confines typically imposed upon it as a prop and becoming a central actor in the drama. The play’s entrance into the world of objects is a thoroughly objectified skull that, to borrow the Gravedigger’s phrase, “was a woman.” The skull’s artifactual status as the remains of a woman contributes to its particularly sexual objectification. By parodying objectification and sexual difference, however, the play ultimately undoes gender. Hamlet, concerned with the memories of great men, remains situated in the patriarchal world of the living throughout his graveyard contemplation. *The Revenger’s Tragedy* ventures further into the world of objects by playing with the objectified dead “lady.”

---

[47] All references to Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* are from *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works.* Eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Critics have debated whether chaste Gloriana is victimized or empowered by her skull's sexualized act of vengeance.[48] The skull's poisonous kiss powerfully questions the limits of autonomy and objectification. Does it kiss or is it kissed? Does it act or is it acted upon? Most likely because of its gender in life, Gloriana's skull has frequently been interpreted by critics as a fetish prostituted by a misogynistic revenger.[49] Vindice's pandering of the skull has been considered a violation of Gloriana's chaste body and memory, an instance of objectification of the female body taken to perverse heights. On the other hand, the skull's ability to administer justice almost too poetic has been compared to the role of the dead in legal proceedings.[50] Anatomical readings of the play tend towards essentialism, interpreting Gloriana's character in life through her skull's ontology and actions.[51] Interpretations that rely on a sense of continuity between Gloriana and the skull fall short, however, because death radically ruptures identity. The "bony lady" cannot be used as an index of Gloriana's identity or agency. While the skull is indeed sexual, its sexualization is emphatically not a continuation of Gloriana's sexuality. Since gender and sexuality only exist in their performance, the search for Gloriana's "true" sexuality is futile. *The Revenger's Tragedy* deconstructs the category of the dead chaste woman and shows

[48] While many critics have focused on the scene's misogyny, it has also been cited as an example of feminist revenge. Karen Robertson considers the scene as an act of feminine vengeance. Sofer imagines Gloriana triumphing over "the men who treat her like dirt" (*Stage Life* 112). Pollard includes the dead Gloriana as an example of "The seductive beauty of the female spectacle" that "repeatedly intoxicates, undoes, and potentially annihilates its male spectators" (19).

[49] For example, Laurie A. Finke analyzes the fetishization of Gloriana's skull as the symbol with which to begin her discussion of misogyny in early modern drama in "Painting Women: Images of Femininity in Jacobean Tragedy."

[50] Hillary M. Nunn's *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* aligns Gloriana's revenge with the bier-right (67-68). Karen Robertson writes, "the skull of a female murder victim becomes a participant in the execution of her murderer" (223).

[51] Nunn, for example, interprets the continued presence of Gloriana's "lively inner allure" in the skull (144-45). Although Kathryn Finin analyzes the contrived nature of the skull's gender/sexuality, she interprets the skull's "unmasking" through the lens of Vindice's essentialism: "He seems to believe he is revealing Gloriana's true nature: the nature of every (debased) woman who 'beguiles' every (innocent) man (III.v.50)" (par. 22).

the absurdity of applying our notions of sexual propriety to dead objects. I will resist anthropomorphizing the cadaverous object or speaking for "her." As cadaverous matter, the skull resists propping up theories of female sexuality and desire. Rather than possessing feminist agency or suffering from misogynistic manipulation, the skull in *The Revenger's Tragedy* wields the uncanny agency of a cadaverous object.

In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the remains of two women motivate vengeance. Lord Antonio's wife, in the tradition of Lucrece, commits suicide after being raped. Her body, proudly displayed by Antonio, is a monument to postmortem chastity that is the stable possession of her husband. Vindice's deceased love is a far more problematic property. While the corpse of Lord Antonio's wife is a classic example of an aestheticized "female" corpse, Gloriana's skull's relationship to femininity is far queerer.[52] Both were, in life, chaste—a constructed identity laden with gender, class, and sexual associations. Displayed by the proud widower, Lady Antonio's dead body becomes a symbolic motivator of revenge. The skull, however, not only motivates revenge symbolically (as "Gloriana"), but also participates in it materially (as the "bony lady"). Neither Lady Antonio nor Gloriana appears onstage while alive; all that we know about their characters is conveyed through others' dialogue and the appearance of their remains. Even though the skull is far more active than the corpse, Lady Antonio's highly-wrought, symbolic suicide gives her a voice in the play that Gloriana does not have. Always already dead and in Vindice's hands, Gloriana lacks any representational control over her remains. The skull's voicelessness allows it to exist more firmly in the world of objects.

*The Revenger's Tragedy*'s metatheatrical commentary of the objectification of women

---

[52] Critics have debated the extent to which Lady Antonio's corpse and Gloriana's skull are sexualized. While the extent to which each prop is sexualized is debatable, it is evident that the play's two figures of posthumous chastity are sexualized differently. Peter Stallybrass writes, "although (or perhaps because) anonymous, the skull (unlike the raped Lady Antonio) is sexualized" (130). Coddon argues that both figures are sexualized. I view both bodies as objectified and eroticized, but in significantly different ways.

vis-à-vis the objectification of a skull prop is a point of contact between feminism and object-oriented ontology. As I have been arguing, the dead female body does not truly exist; characteristics of femaleness and femininity can only be imposed upon cadaverous matter. Aestheticizing "female" corpses often constructs gender *as* and *through* sexual objectification; a dead "lady" is doubly objectified.[53] While Lady Antonio's corpse is a straightforward example of the aestheticized, feminized corpse, Gloriana's skull is a parody of aestheticized and gendered cadaverous matter. Lady Antonio's corpse represents a fantasy of continued identity, with femininity and chastity serving as attribute properties that are not extinguished by death. Gloriana's painted skull is a queer object that parodies postmortem femininity, chastity, and identity. By applying the objectifying male gaze and metatheatrical construction of femininity to a skull, *The Revenger's Tragedy* deconstructs the eroticizing tendency central to gendering and aestheticizing "feminine" remains.

The skull is first gendered in Vindice's opening soliloquy when it is addressed as a love object:

> Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,
>
> My study's ornament, thou shell of death,
>
> Once the bright face of my betrothèd lady,
>
> When life and beauty naturally filled out
>
> These ragged imperfectïons,
>
> When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set
>
> In those unsightly rings—then 'twas a face

[53] In *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, Elisabeth Bronfen traces the ubiquitous eroticization of female corpses from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century, and the construction of the female corpse as an aesthetic object *par excellence*. While Bronfen's historical scope is later, the aestheticization of female remains that she discusses is prevalent in early modern drama.

So far beyond the artificial shine

Of any woman's bought complexïon (1.1.14-22)

Vindice's apostrophe to the skull lists its various dimensions as aesthetic object, relic, revenge token, *memento mori*, erotic fetish, and Death itself. Neuter, cadaverous imagery, such as "shell of death," shares space with feminizing imagery that construct the skull as memorial object or representation of his beloved such as "picture" and "ornament." The direct address of "Thou" is replaced by "my" and then by the third person. The repetition of "my" emphasizes that the skull is Vindice's possession; he possessed his "betrothèd lady" in life and possesses the skull in death. Vindice oscillates between memorial and necrophilic desires when discussing Gloriana. The skull's relation to the living woman is located in the past tense, when the skull was cloaked with her "bright face." The relic is defined through the loss of the face, identity, and love. The "imperfections" of the skull are contrasted with the perfections of "life and beauty," which are posited as natural, while the skull's "ragged imperfections" make it unnatural. While skulls and ladies are typically juxtaposed in iconography to highlight the artifice and transience of feminine beauty in contrast with deathly reality, Vindice reverses these associations: Gloriana's life and beauty was "natural" and the skull is unnatural. Later, Vindice will unnaturally "fill out" the skull's "ragged imperfections" with art. Feminine beauty exists unstably in the tension between life and death, nature and artifice. While Gloriana's beauty in life is natural, Vindice describes its ability to surpass the "artificial shine" of cosmetics.

The skull prop embodies the conventional lady-skull dyad to which Hamlet alluded. The skull, however, is not positioned next to a living woman, either imaginatively or dramatically, as in iconography, but rather oscillates with the woman to which it once belonged. The startling discontinuity of former lady and current skull is juxtaposed with a queer continuity: there is a

sense in which the skull is still a feminized sexual object. Vindice continues to direct the male gaze to the skull, switching to the third person when describing "her" face's effect on male viewers. He rhetorically reconstructs her face for the gaze of the audience, drawing attention not only to the prop, but also to Gloriana's status as a sexual object. While the moralism of the iconographic juxtaposition of women and skulls turns on the horror of the discontinuity between feminine beauty and the cadaverous materiality of the skull, Vindice eroticizes the skull and highlights the objectification of both skulls and women. In his soliloquy, both the living woman and the dead skull are actively seductive objects. Describing the skull's eye sockets as "unsightly rings" alludes to the skull's lack of vision and to its ability to attract and repulse the male gaze. The imagery of "rings" casts the skull's empty sockets as erotic orifices. The prop is sexualized as a queer object, rather than defined by sexual difference.

Vindice directly addresses the skull when narrating Gloriana's death: "Thee, when thou wert apparelled in thy flesh, / The old Duke poisoned, / Because thy purer part would not consent / Unto his palsy lust" (1.1.31-34). While ghosts can narrate their own deaths to revengers, Vindice as revenger positions himself as reminding the dead body of its history. The skull is still Gloriana in this speech, still in possession of her "purer part," or chastity, although it is not clear where this "part" resides. The relationship between Gloriana and her skull's "consent" and purity will be revised in the revenge plot.

Vindice tells both himself and the skull to be merry: "Be merry, merry; / Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks" (44-45). This skull's merriness is similar to Yorick's grim jesting, but more literal. Vindice attempts to confer feeling onto the skull, imagining it delighting in the moralistic terror it conveys, as well as the vengeance it will perform. By summoning the skull to "Advance," Vindice treats it as autonomous, rather than as a puppet in his hand. The skull as a

symbol of leveling is a perfect conspirator for Vindice as he rages against personal and social injustice. The skull terrorizes "fat folks" as a *memento mori* warning, while Vindice blends moralism and murderous rage: "for banquets, ease, and laughter / Can make great men, as greatness goes by clay, / But wise men little are more great than they" (47-49). "Greatness," as social status and corpulence, is leveled by the ontological equality of "clay." Vindice inverts the social hierarchy by making "wise men little" (like Vindice himself) greater: because they are made up of less "clay," they are posited as less mortal. Unlike Hamlet, who desires to preserve hierarchies among skulls and dust, Vindice levels living men by viewing them as "clay" objects of various sizes. The skull is thus turned into his ally—a bare, bony conspirator that levels "great men."

While the skull's gender is rhetorically constructed throughout the play, its performative gendering reaches a climax when the skull is attired in feminine costume. No other scene in Jacobean drama pushes the metatheatrical gendering of a dead body so far. The costuming makes explicit, with satiric extravagance, the performative re-gendering of the dead that occurs not only on stage, but also in *memento mori* iconography and anatomy texts. The skull is the remains of a chaste woman and plays the part of a whore, but ultimately it is a cadaverous, neuter object. The skull performs its key scene in drag: the neuter object is made to play the role of the dangerously seductive female. The performance thus deconstructs binaries of gender, as well as the binaries between chaste woman and whore, alive and dead, character and prop, human and object. By playing with the sexual fluidity of the skull, a key anatomical signifier unmarked by sex/gender difference yet imaginatively attached to the antemortem gendered personhood of its previous "owner," *The Revenger's Tragedy* parodies the performative constructs that gender and personify cadaverous remains and highlights the queerness implicit in the iconography of death.

Vindice’s metatheatrical fashioning of femininity provides a satiric representation of how constructing femininity intersects with objectifying women. The linguistic and theatrical revelation of the disguised skull occurs in degrees, as Vindice exploits dramatic irony by playing upon similarities between women and skulls as sex objects. Throughout, we witness Vindice’s joy at playing with the “lady,” both the concept and the character he has fashioned. Before the costumed skull is introduced, Vindice’s describes the “lady” (3.5.12) to his brother Hippolito. When Hippolito asks: “where’s that lady now?” (28), the word “lady” sends Vindice into rapture at his own conceit. Vindice gushes:

> O, at that word
> I’m lost again; you cannot find me yet;
> I’m in a throng of happy apprehensions.
> He’s suited for a lady. I have took care
> For a delicious lip, a sparkling eye.
> You shall be witness, brother.
> Be ready; stand with you hat off. (28-34)

Vindice plays with his intertwined roles as pander, revenger, and stage manager. The “lady” is described through a shorthand blazon: “a delicious lip, a sparkling eye.” He presents himself as selecting for these ideal qualities, punning on the fact that he has fashioned the illusion of these features onto a death’s head. He makes Hippolito the first unwitting actor in his play-within-the-play by encouraging his brother to perform a role in response to the “lady,” when in fact he will take his hat off to a neuter object.

Hippolito, still unaware of the ruse, moralizes about women while waiting for the “lady” to appear:

> Troth, I wonder what lady it should be.
>
> Yet ’tis no wonder, now I think again,
>
> To have a lady
>
> Stoop to a duke that stoops unto his men.
>
> ’Tis common to be common through the world,
>
> And there’s more private common shadowing vices
>
> Than those who are known both by their names and prices.
>
> ’Tis part of my allegiance to stand bare
>
> To the Duke’s concubine—and here she comes. (35-43)

Hippolito considers the indignity of doffing his cap to a prostitute, unaware that “she” is actually the skull of a chaste woman. In life, she defied the platitude “’Tis common to be common,” but in death “she” is as “common” as can be. The stage direction, “*Enter Vindice with the* [*masked*] *skull of his love dressed up in tires*” (3.5.43 s.d.), conveys the skull’s artifactual history as Vindice’s love. The incongruity between the antemortem and postmortem body is highlighted by drawing attention to the skull’s history as chaste beloved while presenting her as a prostitute.

Vindice plays a part in the metatheater, talking to the disguised skull and pretending to engage in dialogue:

> Madam, his grace will not be absent long.
>
> Secret? Ne’er doubt us, madam. ’Twill be worth
>
> Three velvet gowns to your ladyship. Known?
>
> Few ladies respect that. Disgrace? A poor thin shell.
>
> ’Tis the best grace you have to do it well.
>
> I’ll save your hand that labour; I’ll unmask you. (44-49)

He constructs the skull in the image of a woman, both through attire and through the questions imagined to be coming from "her" mouth. "She," like Gratiana, is only concerned with keeping sinful acts discreet. Referring to disgrace as "A poor thin shell!" evokes Vindice's earlier description of the skull as a "shell of death" (1.1.15). Vindice's fashioning of the skull as female character intersects with his fashioning of the prop as a moral emblem.

Vindice's metatheatrical unmasking of the skull creates a moralistic tableau: the beautiful lady is revealed to be a hideous skull. This is a common motif: feminine exteriors are often depicted as hiding inner depravity and immanent death, and beautiful young female bodies are often used as a counterpoint to underscore the horrors of decay. The queer agency of the skull, however, unsettles conventional moralism that relies upon assumptions of sexual difference. While Vindice uses the skull to prop up a misogynistic moral, his emblematic message is as constructed as the "bony lady"; his morals are propped up by costume and cosmetics, not by the essential femaleness of the cadaverous object. Vindice's universalizing moralism exists in an uneasy tension with his delight in the cleverness of this particular performance. The unmasked skull will soon be re-masked to perform revenge, and will then be unmasked again to illustrate an entirely different moral. In other words, there is tension between Vindice's assertion that duplicity is an essential characteristic of femaleness (even when the woman is dead) and Vindice's pride in fashioning a "lady" out of neuter, cadaverous matter. Vindice is unsure whether his "bony lady" is an anatomical specimen (a female skeleton that is representative of all women) or cadaverous matter that he has theatrically mastered (a queer puppet or automaton), but his explicit metatheatricality suggests the latter.

Even after the skull is unmasked, Vindice continues to refer to it as a woman: "Art thou beguiled now? Tut, a lady can, / At such, all-hid beguile a wiser man. / Have I not fitted the old

surfeiter / With a quaint piece of beauty?" (51-54). Vindice oscillates between highlighting his cleverness in fashioning the disguise and remarking upon feminine deception. The phrase "quaint piece of beauty" puns on female genitalia as well as the cleverness of his conceit, creating continuity between the sexual objectification of women and his fashioning of the skull.

Vindice continues, moralizing the stage picture: "Here's an eye / Able to tempt a great man—to serve God; / A pretty hanging lip, that has forgot now to dissemble" (55-57). The blazon he delivered moments ago is now revised as *memento mori*: the "eye" and "lip," which exist only through their absence, move men to repentance rather than to lust. The scene demands that the skull play the roles of seductive woman and death's head simultaneously. Although he claims that the skull has "forgot[ten] … to dissemble," Vindice has delighted in showing how he has made the skull dissemble. The skull is forced to play a dissembling role, even as it is meant to symbolize cadaverous realness. The word "forgot" seems to imply a narrative, a forgetting that this particular woman-cum-skull has experienced. Since Vindice praises Gloriana's honesty, however, this forgetting is aligned with a generalized view of women. The skull has forgotten how to be a woman, to play the gender role that is so intertwined with dissembling, even as Vindice forces it to play the part of a "lady."

Hippolito is shocked at the discontinuity between the skull in the present tense and Gloriana's identity in life: "Is this the form that living shone so bright?" (67). Like Hamlet, Hippolito questions the shocking disorientation of "this" skull and emphasizes the present thingness of the cadaverous object in contrast to the vibrant memory. The phrase "the form," however, draws attention to the female body as an aesthetic object and expresses a sense of continuity: this was the basic form (the bone structure) of Gloriana's face all along.

Vindice's response turns the *memento mori* moralizing upon himself: "The very same. /

And now methinks I could e'en chide myself / For doting on her beauty, though her death / Shall be revenged after no common action" (68-71). The fact that female bodies will decay retroactively makes all "doting" upon women morally reprehensible. While all bodies will decay, obsessive attention is given to the putrefaction of female bodies in this form of moralism. Masculine subjects are shamed for doting upon female "forms," objects that are deceptive in life because they conceal their mortality.

Vindice's chiding could also apply to his postmortem treatment of Gloriana. He doted on her not only in life, but also after her death. Hippolito's greeting to his brother in the opening scene of the play, "Still sighing o'er death's visor?" (1.1.49), implies a history of necrophilic doting. Seeing his dead love dressed as a prostitute, more than the cadaverous materiality of the skull itself, occasions Vindice's self-chiding. When the skull is attired, it draws attention to an affinity between living and dead female bodies and thus makes living women appear grotesque and cadaverous. However, this affinity is far from natural: it is the theatrical effect Vindice has constructed.

In the same sentence, Vindice continues doting on dead Gloriana, contrasting his moralism with the assertion that "her death / Shall be revenged after no common action" (70-71). Revenge is another form of doting on the dead, especially since his plot makes explicit use of the remains themselves. The ingenuity of the revenge plot is a way of emphasizing that Gloriana is not "common," even though its enactment involves disguising the skull as a "common" prostitute. The revenge is Vindice's way of clinging, symbolically and literally, to his love object and as such it is in tension with the *memento mori* message of annihilation.

Vindice then launches into his famed apostrophe to the skull. The speech, like Lear's contemplation of Poor Tom's naked body as "the thing itself," interrogates the use of animals

and objects to clothe and beautify bare, mortal bodies.[54] But Vindice's meditation on human dependency is intensely gendered. He asks:

> Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
> For thee? For thee does she undo herself?
> Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships
> For the poor benefit of a bewitching minute?
> Why does yon fellow falsify highways
> And put his life between the judge's lips
> To refine *such a thing*, keeps horse and men
> To beat their valours for *her*? (72-79, emphasis mine)

In Vindice's rhetoric, women rely more heavily upon object properties such as dress, cosmetics, and milk baths to fashion their identities; femininity is the effect produced by these props. The reference to the silkworm condemns femininity while tacitly alluding to the "worms" (98) that symbolize the decay of female vanity and bodies alike. Femininity is presented as an all-consuming dead end. The poor silkworms "undo" themselves for women's clothing; men undo themselves by selling their property and risking their lives to maintain and beautify women; and women are ultimately undone by death. Men's relationship to property is subsumed by their relationships with women in Vindice's examples. He draws attention to how men fashion femininity, in life and death, by providing the necessary accouterments. "Lordships" and "ladyships" exist as fungible object properties; the one is sold to prop up the other, and neither is a stable identity. "Such a thing" refers both to women generally and the skull specifically. The word "thing" links objectified women and the cadaverous skull, which is still referred to as "her"

---

[54] For an analysis of the intimate connection between personhood and property in *King Lear*, see Margreta de Grazia, "The Ideology of Superfluous Things: *King Lear* as Period Piece."

in the next line. The costumed, “refine[d]” skull is made into an emblem of all ladies, even though the woman it once belonged to was a paragon. Collapsing living women into the dead skull is central to the moralism: living women should be seen as the skulls they will become. Vindice does not mention that the lords will also become skulls, and that their identities are similarly fleeting. Instead, he advises men to preserve their lordships and their lives by eschewing sexual temptation. A fantasy of male preservation is built by displacing mortality onto female bodies, dead and alive.[55]

Vindice ironically performs the actions his moralizing condemns. In addition to literally beautifying the skull (rather than only doing so through a stretch of the moralistic imagination) he is expending energy and risking his life to revenge her death. He is still doting on the cadaverous love object, even as he exhorts others to stop doing so. After considering the ways in which men dote upon women who are destined to be skulls, Vindice considers how women dote upon themselves, again focusing on the resources that are used to prop up a body destined for decay: “Does every proud and self-affecting dame / Camphor her face for this? And grieve her maker / In sinful baths of milk, when many an infant starves / For her superfluous outside—all for this?” (84-87). Through the repetition of “this,” the skull is turned into a rhetorical device that condemns all worldly endeavors, but especially feminine vanity. As in *Hamlet*, the interrogative “this?” draws attention to the cadaverous object and positions the skull as a rebuttal to all facets of human identity. However, the skull also rebuts the misogyny of Vindice’s morals because it has no gendered anatomical difference: it is what both men and women become.

To Vindice, the skull does not convey the message that all must die; he notably refrains

[55] Vindice’s attiring and moralizing of the skull-as-puppet bears a strong resemblance to Francis Quarles’ emblem depicting the soul’s doting upon the body: “Behold thy darling, whom thy soul affects / So dearly: whom thy fond indulgence decks / And puppets up in soft, in silken weeds” (*Emblem VIII*, p. 287). While Quarles uses gendered imagery to moralize the relationship between bodies and souls, Vindice’s moralizing remains focused on the relationship between men and women.

from pondering his own mortality. Its message is intensely sexualized: it rebukes male lust or love for women and female vanity. All women must die and are, in a sense, already deathly. The skull is imagined scaring women out of their gender role by dismantling the performance of femininity, and scaring men out of heterosexuality by making the desire for women grotesque. Vindice imagines the skull at "unclean brothels" (92). While chaste women, such as Marina in *Pericles*, can purify brothels through their virtue, the eroticized skull of chaste Gloriana is imagined performing a similar function as a cadaverous object that evokes horror and repulsion. While Vindice directs the male gaze of the audience to view the skull as a hideous sex object, he commands the women in the audience to see the skull as a deathly mirror: "Here might a scornful and ambitious woman / Look through and through herself. See, ladies, with false forms / You deceive men, but cannot deceive worms" (96-98). The skull's costuming—its "false forms," rather than its cadaverous materiality—makes the skull a gendered mirror.

Gloriana's place in this moralism is unstable. In the midst of generalized moralizing, Vindice addresses the specific skull: "Thou mayst lie chaste now" (90). This is equivocal, since the skull is not resting in peace or in chastity. Instead, it is made to "lie," to dissemble, by signifying the cold "chastity" of death, even as it evokes the sensuality of living women as a perverse mirror. The generalized and atemporal moralism is at odds with both the skull's artifactual history as a part of Gloriana's body and the role of revenger that it will play in the near future. While Vindice's *memento mori* moralizing focuses on the radical loss of identity, even as sexual difference is preserved, his revenge plot focuses on memorializing Gloriana'a identity. Vindice switches from constructing universal morals to narrating the particularized revenge plot he has fashioned. He articulates his understanding of the skull's unique status as prop and actor in the revenge: "Now to my tragic business. Look you, brother, / I have not

fashioned this only for show / And useless property. No, it shall bear a part / E'en in it[s] own revenge" (3.5.99-102). "This," which was repeated so many times to highlight the cadaverous thingness of the skull, here refers to the skull's current role as costumed puppet, a "fashioned" object rather than cadaverous matter. The skull, a significant stage property since the opening scene of the play, is here metatheatrically referred to as such. These lines are often cited as proof of Vindice's objectification and manipulation of Gloriana's skull, but something stranger is also happening. Although the skull is fashioned as stage property, as Vindice's lines indicate, it is "not … only" property. In these lines and the accompanying action the skull moves from the position of a mere prop to that of an actor, one that "shall bear a part." The cadaverous matter becomes an automaton. As it transcends its status as prop and functions as an actor, the skull transcends its status as neuter object and becomes a gendered subject. The performative skull, however, is fashioned not as a person but as an actor, and the explicit theatricality burlesques our notions of subjectivity and sexual identity.[56] The use of "it[s] own revenge" indicates that the revenge does not belong to Gloriana, but to the skull. The revenge belongs to "it," the de-sexed yet hypersexualized object that is simultaneously Gloriana's material remains, Vindice's token, and a quasi-automatous "bony lady."

As Vindice redirects the focus from general morals to the particularized revenge plot, he reminds the audience of the skull's specificity:

> This very skull
>
> Whose mistress the Duke poisoned with this drug,

[56] Several critics have commented on the blurring of the line between actor and prop in this scene, as well as the play as a whole. Sofer describes the roles of revenger and instrument as oscillating between Vindice and Gloriana, depending on one's perspective (*Stage Life* 111-12). Coddon describes the living characters' affinity to the dead, and writes: "the absence of *honesty* (a claim to authentic subjectivity) in the play's world parodically reduces the dramatis personae to the level of props, deconstructing the precarious distinction between the 'dead' body as object and the animate one, with illusions of its own autonomous subjectivity, as agent or even actor" (79-80).

> The mortal curse of the earth, shall be revenged
>
> In the like strain, and kiss his lips to death.
>
> As much as the dumb thing can, he shall feel.
>
> What fails in poison, we'll supply in steel. (3.5.102-7)

Now, instead of making the skull emblematize a misogynistic moral that stresses the discontinuity between deceptive female outsides and cadaverous insides, Vindice narrativizes the skull as a continuation of Gloriana's identity. Gloriana's identity is artifactually constructed in "this skull," as Vindice refers to its connection to its previous owner or "mistress," and to the poetic justice of using it to administer "this drug."

The phrase "kiss his lips to death" is an emphatic declaration of the skull's agency in taking sexualized vengeance. Vindice's pushes the limits of prosopopeia, casting himself as having the ability not only to speak for Gloriana, but also to kiss for her. This appropriation is central to his strategy of taking revenge both for Gloriana and through "her." The startling agency of "kiss his lips to death" is qualified, however, in the next line. In the quarto, a comma rather than a period separates these two lines (Middleton, *Facsimile* F2). Does the skull kiss "as much as the dumb thing can"? The phrase is positioned so closely to "he shall feel," it makes one wonder what the skull can feel as well as what it can make others feel. Vindice tacitly acknowledges that he is speaking for the "dumb thing" and that the skull takes its sexualized vengeance incompletely. He draws attention to the skull's mute thingness, but pushes the limits of what this means. The "dumb thing" will act, kiss, revenge, and symbolically speak as much as it can, but how much this means is far from clear.

Vindice continues the playlet, addressing his brother and continuing his discussion with the skull, who is now "she" rather than "it":

Now come, and welcome, Duke;

I have her for thee. I protest it, brother,

Methinks she makes almost as fair a sign

As some old gentlewoman in a periwig.

Hide thy face now for shame; thou hadst need have a mask now.

'Tis vain when beauty flows, but when it fleets

This would become graves better than the streets. (110-16)

Since femininity is a mere "sign" or semblance, the costumed skull is as much a lady as an "old gentlewoman." Vindice addresses the skull, exhorting it to feel shame—to "Hide [its] face," even though it has no face. Of course, it was Vindice who unmasked the skull. Vindice plays with umasking and re-masking the skull, concealing and revealing the cadaverous "female" body, and making the skull play the coquette, temptress, or shamed woman in turn. He moralizes the ill-fitting context—the skull belongs in the grave, not in public—when of course he has wrenched the skull into this context. In short, Vindice makes the skull prop up feminine stereotypes, and play deceptive, sexually available, and modest roles in turn. At the same time, the skull's status as a cadaverous object undermines these roles, showing they are constructed through Vindice's costuming and rhetoric, rather than revealed anatomically.

Vindice refers to the puppet he has created as "the bony lady" (3.5.121). This naming is a performative gesture that is as important as costume and paint in constructing the prop's gender. The skull is sexed at the level of the bone, but bone has interestingly become adjectival. Gender does not modify the skull itself; this is not the "female skeleton" that was beginning to appear in anatomical treatises. Instead, using "bony" as an adjective turns the prop's lack of flesh or life into an ironically minor modification of the category "lady." Vindice's words metatheatrically

transform the prop into a lady and yoke together the categories "lady" and "skull" that have existed as mirror images. Ladies on the early modern stage were never played by female bodies, but Vindice pushes gender performativity to its limit and by forcing a skull to play a "lady."

Introducing the bony lady to the Duke allows Vindice to continue metatheatrically exploring the "lady" he has constructed. In response to the Duke's question, "What lady is't?" (132), Vindice replies: "Faith, my lord, a country lady, a little bashful at first, as most of them are, but after the first kiss, my lord, the worst is past with them. Your grace knows now what you have to do. Sh'as somewhat a grave look with her" (133-37). Vindice ironically presents the skull as a feminine ideal and as similarly objectified. The phrase "country lady" punningly constructs the skull's sexuality. In the climactic moment of the play within the play, the Duke brusquely woos the "lady": "Lady, sweetly encountered. I came from court. / I must be bold with you. [*He kisses the skull*] O, what's this? O!" (144-45). In this short exchange, the Duke shifts from addressing the "Lady" to expressing bafflement with the object he has encountered: "What's this?"

Vindice reveals both the skull and the poison:

> Brother,
>
> Place the torch here, that his affrighted eyeballs
>
> May start into those hollows. Duke, dost know
>
> Yon dreadful visor? View it well; 'tis the skull
>
> Of Gloriana, whom thou poisonedst last. (146-50)

Like the Gravedigger, Vindice asks if the skull is identifiable. But he does not wait for a response before revealing its identity. In this emphatic repetition of unmasking the skull, Vindice delights in theatrically and verbally revealing the skull's identity. While the skull as an object

can be theatrically revealed, its artifactual history as the skull of Vindice's deceased beloved can only be revealed through language: "'tis the skull / Of Gloriana." In this declaration, the skull's identity is enjambed. The skull was once (or once belonged to) Gloriana, but its only relationship to her identity now is through Vindice's narration. The enjambment heightens the sense of revelation, even as it dislocates the skull and the woman's identity. This is the first and only time Gloriana's name is mentioned. Connecting the revelation of individual identity to the grotesque and fatal cadaverous matter highlights the tension between named identity and anonymous skull. It also heightens the scene's similarity to the graveyard scene; while the skull has been a presence on the stage from the start, it is only now connected to a named character.

As the Duke's teeth and tongue decay, Vindice forces him to look at the cadaverous object: "You have eyes still: / Look, monster, what a lady hast thou made me / My once betrothed wife" (164-66). Although the ruse is over, the skull is still referred to as a "lady." The dramatic irony of the "bony lady" is now used to convey tragic discontinuity: it is horrific to see "what a lady" Gloriana has become. The phrase, "what a lady hast thou made me," portrays Gloriana's transformation from lady to skull as occurring to Vindice; his love object has undergone a profound ontological change from betrothed wife turned to cadaverous matter and the loss of his love object is an assault on his masculinity.

Vindice's weaponizing of the skull continues and intensifies his moralism. He forces the skull to not only convey the message of death, but also to be the bearer of death. The sexual moralism is now literalized; the Duke's death by the skull's poisonous kiss is his rebuke for lust—both the murderous lust he had for living Gloriana and the "slobbering Dutchman" (164) lust he has for her disguised remains. Vindice presents the climax of the scene as moralistic tableau, a dance of death between a skull and an old man: "Age and bare bone / Are e'er allied in

action" (3.5.54-55). Disguised as Piato, Vindice had described his role as a pander as being a "bone-setter" (1.3.42). Here, Vindice not only makes literal the connection between arranging sexual assignations and "set[ting] bones together" (1.3.44), he also adds moral weight to his stage managing of the emblematic "action."

The scene queers the iconography of death by both parodying and making literal the encounters depicted in the Dance of Death tradition. In *The Gender of Death*, Guthke analyzes the familiar Renaissance trope of death as an erotic encounter. While primarily shown through sensual scenes in which the transience of life, youth, and beauty is illustrated through the seizing of an undressed woman by a masculine Death (99-104), the gender of seducer and seduced could also be reversed (104-14). The "bony lady" is a feminized and eroticized version of the "boneman" Guthke describes as a recurrent figure in the iconography of death (99). The scene contains further inversions: the Duke himself is emblematic of old age, death, and lechery, while Gloriana's skull is equivocally tied to youth and beauty. The skull's poisonous kiss evokes lechery and death as well as chastity and redemption. Although the skull plays the part of a misogynistic moral emblem, it also highlights the performativity of this role and of gender itself.[57]

Both the Duke and Vindice express the skull's agency, as revenger and as sexual object. The Duke exclaims: "O, 't'as poisoned me" (3.5.151). "It"—the skull, rather than Gloriana or Vindice, is seen as the poisoner. Vindice redirects the blame onto the Duke, using the poisoning as a lesson in sexual morality. When the Duke complains about his tongue feeling the poison's

---

[57] Coddon reaches a similar conclusion, writing: "The dead body, far from fixing gender categories (as it does in anatomy), here emblematizes the material contingency of gender" (76). I agree with Coddon's analysis, but wish to push it further: Gloriana's skull highlights the material contingency of gender in anatomical discourses as well. The sexual differences portrayed in anatomical texts are, as Traub has shown in "Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies," likewise materially constructed. Since the skull's sex was not fixed in early modern anatomical discourse, its gender in all contexts was materially contingent.

effect, Vindice responds: "'Twill teach you to kiss closer, / Not like a slobbering Dutchman" (163-64). When the Duke asks Vindice and Hippolito: "What are you two?" Vindice responds: "Villains all three" (152-53), adding the skull to the list of conspirators. Vindice continues, "The very ragged bone / Has been sufficiently revenged" (153-54). The dead material itself, the final vestige of the once-female body, has enacted and somehow profited from revenge. Like a restless ghost seeking vengeance, the skull is portrayed as having required this action to be performed, and as now being at peace with its killer killed. Dramatically, the skull truly seems to be at peace, since it does not appear again onstage during the remaining two acts of the play.

Ultimately, the skull's artifactual history—its connection to Gloriana's identity—is effaced and neither the skull nor the woman to whom it belonged are mentioned in the final scene. When Antonio asks how the Duke was murdered, Vindice confesses: "'Twas we two murdered him" (5.3.98). The list of conspirators has shrunk from three to two; the skull has been forgotten. Not only the bony lady's role in the revenge, but also Gloriana's role as a motivator for it, go unspoken. The absence is especially startling, since Vindice discusses Lord Antonio's wife. Vindice says to Antonio: "The rape of your good lady has been 'quited / With death on death" (5.3.90-91). Lord Antonio's deceased wife is a chaste ideal invoked to impose narrative closure onto the blood bath. While the bony lady's kiss emblematically provides a perfect narrative of requital, the queerness and uncanniness of the act, as well as Vindice's extreme delight in it, make it exceed such a narrative of closure.

We never hear Vindice make plans to bury Gloriana; the skull simply disappears from the play after its climactic act. The skull is consumed in performance, rather than memorialized through burial. Vindice never explains how he acquired his prized property. Unlike Yorick, Gloriana's skull is removed from the narrative of interment. As a disinterred (or never-interred)

part, Gloriana's skull is in the tradition of dead body parts that have circulated outside of the scope of legal protection for centuries in museums, curiosity cabinets, and anatomy schools. These are remains that are not considered human, or whose claim to dignity is overshadowed by their necessity to the work of another (the anatomist, the collector, the revenger).[58]

Yorick's skull also simply disappears after playing its iconic role. While Gloriana's skull circulates as un-interred property, Yorick's skull shows the concept of burial as removing one from the realms of human interaction and property relationships to be a fantasy: the skull is disinterred to make room for Ophelia's corpse, foreshadowing the eventual removal of her remains as well. Final resting places are shown to be not so final and the reverent treatment of corpses gives way to the ignominious treatment of skulls.

The ignominious treatment of skulls occurs not only within the fictions of the plays, but also underlies the use of skulls as stage props. The critical dismay regarding Vindice's theatrical use of chaste Gloriana's remains has not been matched by critical dismay regarding the King's Men's theatrical use of a human skull as a stage property. The fantasy of a character, particularly of a chaste female character, is perceived as more offended by the action of the play than the anonymous source of the prop. Since narrativized dead bodies are haunted by their previous "owners," the perceived value of a person's, or character's, life determines what constitutes the proper use of his or her remains.

The afterlives of Yorick's skull in theatrical history, including the occasionally revived use of human skulls to play the part, forcefully illustrate the power of the prop as a defense against mortality even as it emblematizes death itself. Bequeathing one's skull to the Royal Shakespeare Company is a donation that instrumentalizes the body part as a prop, but is also

---

[58] For a discussion of how appeals to kinship have (and have not) been used to legally regulate museum holdings and anatomical specimens, see Lawrence, 131-33.

expressed as the posthumous fulfillment of a desire to "play Yorick."[59] It is difficult to imagine a similar desire to "play Gloriana" or to "play the bony lady," yet these may have been the very roles assigned to the historical "Yorick."

[59] Marchitello describes André Tchiakowsky's desire to "perform" Yorick's skull after his death (125-26). For a review of Tchiakowsky's skull's complicated history as a Royal Shakespeare Company prop, see Aoife Monks' "Human Remains: Acting, Objects, and Belief in Performance."

# Chapter 3: Anatomies of the Heart

In anatomy theaters, confessions are wrenched from the body. Anatomists' techniques were infamously appropriated by early modern dramatists, especially in the staging of jealous lovers. Jealous stage husbands symbolically uncover their wives' secrets by opening their bodies, violently imposing the condition of bodily openness associated with sexual promiscuity. In this chapter, I work against the interpretation of theatricalized anatomies offering "proof" of promiscuity by considering two notorious examples of plays in which female characters are violently punished for their sexuality: *Othello* (1604) and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1629-33). These plays unsettle the anatomical gaze, revealing its insufficiencies and baffling its attempts to secure proof.

While jealous husbands often equate externally applied punishment of the body with the revelation of the body's inner nature, *Othello* and *'Tis Pity* show the flaw in this logic and the essentialism it presumes. Rather than "revealing" sexual impropriety, both plays show how the word "whore" can be written—rhetorically, generically, and violently—and, what is more, how it can be erased. Rather than offering stable ontological categories that can be constructed or observed anatomically, the plays stage the impossibility of securing proof or attaining mastery over the shocking ambiguity of the cadaverous resemblance.

Anatomy is an attempt to master the cadaverous resemblance. Dividing the body into parts and creating legible taxonomies of difference is an attempt to stabilize the disorienting implications of the cadaver's assault on the signifying system. The process presumes to turn the dead body into the passive material from which confessions can be extracted. Bodies are made to confess narratives of disease and anatomical differences, as well as sexual experience, sanctity,

and criminality. The confessions that are sought are actively constructed through the process. However, cadaverous matter defies true mastery by the living; if bodies are looked at, and into, for confessions, they also can baffle the gaze with equivocal resistance.

Equivocation encompasses not only speech acts, but also bodily performances and phenomenal appearances that evade legibility. Rather than confessing truths, the bodies of Desdemona and Annabella equivocate. Moreover, the murderers Othello and Giovanni are depicted as authoring the confessions they purport to extract. By performing acts of revision and erasure on the bodies of the dead, the executioners become part of the equivocal texts they create. The ambiguity of the act of murder itself—as punishment and purification, and as motivated by jealousy and love—heightens the instability. Thus, female sexual subjectivity in *Othello* and *'Tis Pity* is not constructed through the violence of anatomy, but rather through the reparative resistance that bodies in these texts offer through their inscrutability.

Both plays contain erotic murders that are posited not only as punishment, but also as sacrifice: the bodies of Desdemona and Annabella are simultaneously condemned and venerated. Park, as I mention in the first chapter, describes tropes in Renaissance anatomy as "linking the saint and the criminal with the martyr as the middle term" ("Criminal" 23). Desdemona and Annabella are martyrs to love and sexuality. As the "middle term" between idealized beloveds and criminalized "whores," they show the faultiness of the binary as well as its pervasiveness. Murdered in their marriage beds, their deaths are explicitly linked to punishment and erotic consummation. While the treatment of their corpses is radically different—Desdemona's body remains monumentally intact, while Annabella's corpse is the most sensationally opened body on the Jacobean stage—murderers in both plays deliberately blur the boundaries between punitive and sacrificial anatomy and show the fragility of the categories they construct. Rather

than revealing any truth about the corpses of Desdemona or Annabella, both plays highlight the disorienting ambiguity of the cadaver and its power to collapse categories of difference. Both plays challenge the convention that the corpse can be a stable signifier in sacrificial, redemptive, or punitive narratives. The competing narratives that are inscribed onto female bodies, structured by the pervasive binary between whoredom and chastity, and which are purportedly "proven" through the dead body (as a spectacle of criminality, anatomical referent, or sacred relic) are deconstructed and made unstable by the cadaverous equivocation of bodies in *Othello* and *'Tis Pity*.

Dead bodies are not revealed to be martyrs, saints, or criminals, but rather are constructed as such through narrative. Rather than upholding any of these narratives, cadaverous matter disrupts all forms of signification. Rather than revealing the truth of deceased individuals, narratives constructed from dead bodies and their parts are key sites for analyzing how cadaverous matter is read and the affects motivating these readings. A dead body is made to signify differently when approached with suspicion than it does when approached with reverence. It is perhaps not surprising that contemporary criticism of sexuality in early modern drama is mostly concerned with the criminal model, since this most easily fits the "hermeneutics of suspicion" that often animates critical investigation.[60] The hermeneutics of suspicion conceptualize knowledge construction as a performative act of revealing that which is concealed. Sedgwick draws from Melanie Klein's paranoid and depressive positions to explore the affective dimensions of critical practices. Both positions are motivated by loss and lack, but while the paranoid position acts upon the world defensively and is "marked by hatred, envy, and anxiety," the depressive position seeks to "repair" and perhaps create a new sense of wholeness out of

[60] Eve Sedgwick builds upon Ricoeur's formulation of the "hermeneutics of suspicion" when theorizing paranoid and reparative readings.

fragments in a process we might also call “love” (Sedgwick 128). Sedgwick sees these practices operating in oscillation, often coexisting in critical texts, but within frameworks that privilege the paranoid mode of knowing. Rather than being viewed as one of many options for determining meaning, paranoid knowledge “disavow[s] its affective motive and force and masquerad[es] as the very stuff of truth” (Sedgwick 138). While paranoid readings are fundamentally skeptical, they have “faith in exposure” (Sedgwick 139).

Jealous husbands on the early modern stage are paranoid readers *par excellence*. The fantasies of violent dismembering that trope anatomical quests to find evidence of female sexual experience foreshadow “the intimacy between paranoia and knowledge per se” that Sedgwick diagnoses (130). *Othello* is a master class in the hermeneutics of suspicion, and there is no better example of the tragic flaw of paranoid reading’s naive desire to reveal than Othello’s misplaced faith in “ocular proof.” By baffling the violent quest for certainty, the equivocal nature of the cadaverous resemblance offers possibilities for reparative readings that unsettle the paranoid epistemology that underlies the murderers’ logic and that haunts the criticism of the plays.

In addition to considering how a corpse is read affectively, we must consider which parts of the body the readings focus upon—which anatomical markers are constructed as significant. In early modern anatomical texts, wombs, and more problematically, hymens, are the sole signifiers of female sexuality—indeed, of female interiority itself. *Othello* and *’Tis Pity*, however, displace the anatomical gaze, literally or metaphorically, to the heart. The heart is not marked by sexual or ethnic difference and does not invite the problematic presence/absence binary that is so pervasive in anatomical scrutiny of the hymen. Instead, the heart is interpreted through degrees of hardness, inscrutability, and openness to interpretation, and is ultimately a cadaverous “riddle.” Far from providing stable proof, it is radically open to manipulation and

misunderstanding. Moreover, it is a site of merger; through romantic convention, it tropes lovers' union of flesh, souls, and subjectivities. In addition to being a site of romantic union between lovers, the heart is a privileged site of contact between individuals and God. Theologically, the heart is a confessional text that will only be fully opened and read at Judgment Day (Jager 24). The heart is thus a theater for equivocation, staging communication between an individual and God that cannot be observed by human audiences. In *Othello* and *'Tis Pity*, hearts are simultaneously Augustinian sites of psychological and spiritual interiority,[61] emblems of erotic union, anatomical specimens, and flesh subject to division and decay. The murderers' paranoid attempts to reveal somatic and romantic confessions are thwarted by the impossibility of knowing another's heart, even as you hold it in your hand.

The heart offers potential for reparative readings even in the most brutal of contexts. Although both plays court the anatomical tradition's focus on difference (of sex, sexual experience, and race), the unstable boundaries that construct these degrees of separation easily collapse in romantic union and death. Both plays illustrate a crisis in sexual identity by pushing the boundaries of "kind," staging lovers who are too distantly or too nearly related to be considered "natural" matches. While the "radically exogamous" love of *Othello* constructs and collapses differences in religion, ethnicity, and race, the "radically endogamous" love[62] of *'Tis Pity* pushes the logic of similarity, likeness, and kinship to the point of cadaverous collapse. Both plays show that "natural" couplings are sociocultural ideals; nature does not honor such distinctions, but rather levels them. While both plays allude to anatomical science, it is not used

[61] Eric Jager's *The Book of the Heart* traces Augustine's centrality in the development of the trope of the heart as a confessional text and privileged site of spiritual interiority (27-43).

[62] I borrow the phrases "radically exogamous" and "radically endogamous" from Lisa Hopkins, who uses them to describe *Romeo and Juliet* and *'Tis Pity*, respectively (3). I believe that *Othello* depicts a more "radically exogamous" couple, and is as profound an influence on *'Tis Pity* as *Romeo and Juliet*.

to uphold the rhetoric of “natural” differences or “unnatural” sexuality; instead, the leveling of identity and inscrutability of interiority deconstructs anatomical science’s quest for a legible taxonomy of bodily difference.

The complexity of the heart as a psychological, spiritual, and erotic locus allows the plays’ exploration of sexual subjectivities—before and after death—to confound stable binaries. The scrutiny of female sexuality in each play is heightened by anxieties regarding miscegenation and incest. By shifting the gaze to the heart, the plays entertain questions of consent—an aspect of female sexual subjectivity that, as I mention in the Introduction, was only nascent at the time. While paranoid readings focus on difference and division, this reparative reading will focus on the lovers’ unions—of hearts, souls, and bodies—that while constantly under siege (by cultural prejudice and taboos manifested in external threats and internalized by the lovers themselves) persists, albeit equivocally, until the end.

### Equivocal Confessions of Hearts, Hands, and Handkerchief in *Othello*

The character in *Othello* who comments most explicitly on the inscrutability of the heart is, of course, Iago. He presents the heart as a crudely material object—an anatomical specimen that can be held in the hand or worn on the sleeve, an edible object for “daws to peck at” (1.1.65). He jealously guards his interiority to keep his heart from being consumed by others. He uses the equivocal potential of the hidden heart for destructive and self-interested ends (even if the self is unknown). He is both the embodiment of paranoia and a paranoid representation of equivocation.[63]

However, Iago is not the only inscrutable character in the play. At the end of “*Othello* as Protestant Propaganda,” Robert Watson describes the disparity in critics’ motive-

[63] See Watson, “*Othello* as Protestant Propaganda,” for the connection between Iago and Jesuits (and opposition between Iago and Pauline theology).

searching: “Critics have scrutinized the motives of Iago’s hatred, without noticing that Desdemona’s love is no more easily explicable. The impossibility of explaining charity rationally is no less significant for a Christian exegesis than the enigma of ruthlessness, which has at least some basis in creaturely self-interest” (250). Critical focus on Iago highlights the privileging of the paranoid mode of academic inquiry. The reparative is no less necessary for understanding the play, but examining it risks coming across as naive. In “Changing Places in *Othello*,” Neill argues against the assumption that Iago is motiveless. He claims that Iago is motivated by affect, rather than specific occurrences, writing: “What is significant about Iago’s various self-explanations is not so much their apparent factual inconsistencies as their deadly consistency of tone and attitude” (218). He concludes: “resentment, envy, and jealousy … are in some sense *their own motive*” (218). Sedgwick’s description of the paranoid position—“marked by hatred, envy, and anxiety” (128)—could serve as a character summary of Iago. Desdemona’s heart is as inscrutable as Iago’s, but she is motivated by reparative rather than paranoid energy.

Desdemona’s love is often submitted to the paranoid gaze of critics. The racism that has plagued so much of *Othello*’s critical history energizes critics’ obsession with Desdemona’s sexuality. In “Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*,” Neill maps how the play’s obsessions are translated to its audiences and critics, as the fascination with the couple’s sexuality is fueled by racial anxieties. Instead of the question of whether Desdemona has been defiled by adultery, the play, for many, poses the question of whether she has been defiled by Othello. In fact, the racial logic of the play casts their marital union as adultery (Neill, “Unproper Beds” 407-8). According to the rhetoric of whiteness and purity in the play, Desdemona seems to be defined in contrast to Othello. As Karen Newman points out, “Much of the disgust Rymer, Coleridge, and other critics betray comes not from the fact of Othello’s individual blackness but

from the *relation* of that blackness to Desdemona's fair purity" (74). Newman, however, argues against the view that femininity and blackness are set in contrast. Rather, she writes, femininity is "identified with the monstrous in an identification that makes miscegenation doubly fearful" (Newman 75). This paranoid reading, however, is not the only option the play presents. Othello and Desdemona are not Aaron and Tamora. We are not meant to view them solely with anxiety, but also, perhaps, with love.

*Othello* shows the tragedy of paranoia overwhelming reparative love. Othello finds himself caught in equivocal indeterminacy: "I think my wife be honest, and think she is not" (3.3.384). The possibilities of both reparative and paranoid readings coexist in the same line, but Othello will put his faith in the misleading "proof" that paranoia offers, rather than the inscrutability of reparative love. This openness holds true for the play as a whole. Virginia Vaughan sums up the ambiguity: "I think this play is racist, and I think it is not" (qtd. in Neill, Introduction 122). The long history of modern racism and the critical privileging of suspicion has led to paranoid readings eclipsing reparative ones.

Critics anxious to recuperate Desdemona from illicit sexuality often resort to a binary construction of female sexuality, claiming that Desdemona is not a whore but rather a virgin. Marchitello summarizes the critical debate regarding Desdemona's hymen and places himself on the side that believes Desdemona to be a virgin (193n24). Yet he condemns the critical tradition's tendency to accept Othello's conflation of epistemology and ontology: "Desdemona is either an innocent victim or a whore. This is to say that criticism has largely taken Othello's word for it that sexuality is an epistemological field wherein ontological status can be both negotiated and observed" (20). That Marchitello chooses a side in the debate is confusing, since he rightly notes how problematic the question of Desdemona's hymeneal intactness is.

Marchitello describes critics' fixation on Desdemona's hymen, writing: "To ask such questions is to have already accepted a narrational discourse of gender and sexuality that is itself perverse. It is also to refuse to imagine something like a psychological interiority for Desdemona, and to reduce interiority to a vulgar materiality: 'Is her hymen intact?'" (21). Hymens and wombs are the main vessels for constructing female interiority in anatomical science, but not in Shakespeare's play. I will attempt a reparative reading of Desdemona that does not elide her body or set her in polar opposition to Othello. I will focus on Desdemona's union with Othello in body and soul (with the heart serving as a point of connection between the two), rather than focusing on their difference and division.

Much of *Othello* is an interrogation of Desdemona's sexuality, with attention focusing on both her genitals and her heart. As Patricia Parker has shown, Iago's temptation of Othello hinges upon the rhetorical and gynecological "dilation" of women's private parts. The tension between the desires to uncover and conceal these parts, central to the hermeneutics of suspicion, is embedded in the play's "metaphorics of spying, of showing, and of opacity or withholding from vision" (Parker 85). The heart is not subject to this game of revealing and concealing; it is persistently opaque and resists anatomical scrutiny. While genital scrutiny entraps characters (and critics) in crude binaries of sexual experience, the scrutiny of Desdemona's heart is far more complex. It involves considering her desires, motives, and love, rather than simply seeking proof of the sexual acts she has or has not committed. While the genital-focused reading invites the paranoid quest to reveal, the heart-centered reading offers reparative possibilities of resistance.

Desdemona's corpse, her final words, the infamous handkerchief, and ultimately, Othello's corpse, work together to form a deeply equivocal text, co-authored by the couple, which eludes and critiques the anatomical quest for stable signifiers of female sexual experience,

as well as racial difference. The equivocal status of this text circumvents the play's metaphorics of purity and contamination in relation to gender and "race," and creates a postmortem subjectivity for Desdemona that rejects anatomical inquiry and its relation to the binary markers of otherness that haunt the play. Moreover, a series of textual cruxes destabilizes the identities of man and wife, making them queerly interchangeable. Since paranoid readings of Othello and Desdemona's union—by characters and critics alike—hinge upon binaries of difference, the reparative potential of the play rests in transcending these binaries and taking seriously the premise that, as man and wife, they are one flesh.

In act 1, scene 3, Brabantio's allegation of witchcraft displaces Desdemona's sexuality onto Othello. This scrutiny is framed as postmortem evaluation; when the senators ask Brabantio if his daughter is dead, he replies: "Ay, to me" (1.3.59). The trial begins as an allegation of rape as the theft of male property: the theft of Desdemona from her father is coupled with the theft of Desdemona from herself through witchcraft (1.3.67-68). The audience is invited to consider Desdemona's love for Othello is a sign either of being "beguiled" from herself or having a hidden unnatural appetite. Brabantio implores the Duke to anatomize his daughter's heart and mind:

> A maiden, never bold;
> Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
> Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
> Of years, of country, credit, everything,
> To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
> It is a judgement main'd, and most imperfect,
> That will confess perfection so could err

Against all rules of nature. (1.3.94-101).

The taxonomies of difference dividing Othello and Desdemona lead to the conclusion that her love could only be explained as stemming from an unnatural disposition or a foreign contaminant: “mixtures pow’rful o’er the blood” (104).

As the senate explores whether their union was the result of “poison” or “soul to soul” communication (1.3.112, 114), they shift from assessing Othello’s culpability to assessing Desdemona’s consent. Brabantio’s allegation of witchcraft is a paranoid interpretation of love. While not the victim of poisoning, Desdemona is “beguiled … of her self” (1.3.67), as is Othello, through their mutual love. The beginning of their love is aligned with a confusion of identity: “She wish’d she had not heard it, yet she wish’d / That heaven had made her such a man” (1.3.162-63). This wish can mean both that she desires such a man for her husband and that she desires to be such a man. To unite herself to Othello in marriage is to become one with him. Desdemona describes their union as an intermingling of hearts, minds, and souls: “My heart’s subdu’d / Even to the very quality of my lord. / I saw Othello’s visage in his mind, / And to his honors and his valiant parts / Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate” (1.3.250-54). Her ability to see “Othello’s visage in his mind” claims an access to his interiority, a reparative mode of seeing beyond the ocular. Sight, of course, becomes increasingly aligned with paranoia as the play progresses. The transfer of Desdemona from father to husband is accompanied with the transference of paranoia in Brabantio’s warning: “Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see; / She has deceiv’d her father, and may thee” (1.3.292-93). Desdemona is now cast as the deceiver, rather than duped victim. After their love is deemed consensual, the problem of what Desdemona’s consent to a Moor might mean is raised—and this problem will persist until her death.

When Othello replaces Brabantio as paranoid observer, the associations of loss become more internalized. While Brabantio considers Desdemona as property stolen from his home, Othello considers the loss of Desdemona's heart. He does not wonder about witchcraft, theft, or rape—the sex he imagines Desdemona engaging in is always consensual. He does not lament the loss of his property, but rather his inability to fully possess her desires: "O curse of marriage! / That we can call these delicate creatures ours, / And not their appetites!" (3.3.268-70). In short, the play has embraced a modern concept of female sexual subjectivity, viewing women as subjects capable of giving and denying consent, rather than as property given or stolen by men, but has developed a paranoid relationship to what female consent might mean. While Brabrantio's view of Desdemona as an object made him suspect Othello of theft, Othello's view of Desdemona as a sexual subject makes him paranoid about how far her consent might extend.

Desdemona's eyes, which had been aligned with her subjectivity and consent (her ability to see Othello's visage in his mind), become the object of the paranoid male gaze. Her vision is seen as betokening an insatiable appetite, as Iago says to Roderigo: "Her eye must be fed" (2.1.225). Othello's statement "For she had eyes, and chose me" (3.3.189) shifts from being an assurance of love, consent, and devotion, to proof of her unnatural sexuality. This paranoid scrutiny, transmitted from Iago to both Brabantio and Othello, informs the anatomical resonances of the so-called "brothel scene." When Othello commands: "Let me see your eyes; / Look in my face" (4.2.25-26), observer and observed collapse. Desdemona's eyes are the objects of Othello's paranoid gaze, and any loving gaze she casts upon his face can only condemn her further. A paranoid reading of his wife's sexuality is coupled with a paranoid reading of his own body, which is united with hers. Both her eyes and his face are cast as monstrous.

A textual crux captures this entanglement. Othello says: "[Her] name, that was as fresh / As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black / As mine own face" (3.3.386-88). The folio's "My" is replaced in Q2 with "Her." While critics have debated which fits better (Neill, *Othello* 305n3.3.388), the two are so enmeshed that their names suffer alike. This crux shows the inextricability of their identities. Othello linking his name to "Dian's visage" shows the interconnection of male honor and wifely chastity. When Desdemona's name is considered, the blackness of Othello's face implicitly sullies her chastity. While their union is presented as mutually contaminating, the speech gestures toward a reparative past. While a paranoid reading might suggest that the time when both of their names were "as fresh / As Dian's visage" occurred before their marriage, it is equally plausible that this refers to their union before Iago contaminated it.

Since Desdemona's heart cannot be viewed directly, Othello, under Iago's tutelage, turns to surrogate signifiers: her hand and her handkerchief. Iago broaches the topic masterfully: "Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief / Spotted with strawberries in your wive's hand?" (3.3.434-35). Ending the lines with "handkerchief" and "hand" connects the two. Othello's connections to the handkerchief, which he gave to her, and to Desdemona's hand, which is united to his own in marriage, are rhetorically effaced. Instead, he is cast as mere observer—a position he will occupy for the remainder of the play in relation to Desdemona's sexual body, which has now been severed from his own.

Othello attempts to read Desdemona's heart through her hand, saying:

> Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.
>
> . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
>
> This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart;

> Hot, hot and moist. This hand of yours requires
>
> A sequester from liberty: fasting and prayer,
>
> Much castigation, exercise devout,
>
> For here's a young and sweating devil here
>
> That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,
>
> A frank one. (3.4.36-44)

The command, "Give me your hand," evokes marital union but has now become more anatomical than romantic. Othello attempts to read her body as a confessional text, interpreting heat and moisture (vitality) as sins in need of castigation—as signs of liberty that need to be confined.

Desdemona's reply alludes to the romantic connection between heart and hand to express her union with Othello: "You may, indeed, say so; / For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart" (3.4.44-45). Othello, refusing this reparative gesture, focuses on the division of her hand from his own, as well as of hearts from hands more generally: "A liberal hand. The hearts of old gave hands; / But our new heraldry is hands, not hearts" (46-47). He switches between "liberal heart" and "liberal hand," as if the one were an index of the other, but then suggests that the connection between hearts and hands has been radically severed. This belies his initial premise to read Desdemona's "liberal heart" in her "liberal hand." He picks up on Iago's paranoid logic about the inscrutability of the heart. In addition to not knowing another's heart by holding it in your hands, you cannot know another's heart through reading his or her hand. Desdemona's action of giving her heart to Othello slips between signifying her fidelity to her husband and her "liberal" nature in loving a Moor. The bounteousness of her love in giving her heart to Othello becomes evidence of her bodily openness, signaled by the accessibility of her hand and

handkerchief. The talk of hearts and hands is followed by the demand for the handkerchief. Othello believes he is seeking proof of Desdemona's heart, but he is already lost in the heraldry of hands.

Othello's persistent questions about the handkerchief, fueled by his need to link the loss of it to a confession of sexual infidelity, provoke Desdemona's first explicit act of equivocation. In response to Othello's demand for the handkerchief, she says: "I have it not about me" (3.4.53). This statement is perfectly equivocal; it is neither the complete truth nor a lie. When Othello's demands become more furious and the handkerchief becomes more storied, she responds with "It is not lost; but what and if it were?" (3.4.82) and "I say it is not lost" (3.4.83). In "Love and Lies: Marital Truth-Telling, Catholic Casuistry, and *Othello*," Paula McQuade considers Desdemona's apparent lie about her loss of the handkerchief in relation to the discourse of casuistry. Due to women's social subordination and the dangers of losing an "honest" reputation, casuists allowed women to use mental reservation to conceal adulterous deeds from inquiring husbands (McQuade 422-24). By dismantling the link between honest speech and sexual propriety, wifely equivocation eludes the sexualized binary between honesty and dishonesty. Wives can adopt the same verbal strategy, whether or not they committed adultery. Mental reservation allows wives to conceal the truth of their deeds from their husbands so that verbal examination, like physical examination, can yield no stable "proof" of infidelity. Rather than reading Desdemona's "lie" as revealing her character, McQuade argues that it "reveals less about her personality than the contradictory demands upon female honesty within a marriage relationship that insists upon both the ideal of spousal conversation and the wife's social subordination" (428). It also reveals the limitations and failures of paranoid scrutiny, whether it takes the form of verbal or anatomical interrogation.

Equivocation is a strategy that suggests, in the face of brutal oppression and illegitimate interrogation, truth can be preserved by being divorced from human interactions. Desdemona's responses about the handkerchief tell surface lies to preserve a deeper truth: the handkerchief has been lost, but what the handkerchief symbolizes has not. Congruence between Desdemona's heart and outward signifiers—her words, her hand, her handkerchief—has been shattered by Othello's paranoid scrutiny and privileging of outward signs.

The handkerchief is ontologically and symbolically connected to the heart and functionally and linguistically connected to the hand. It is the closest characters in the play come to holding another's heart in their hands—and indeed, it shows how little this action reveals. It is a symbol of confession—somatic, ocular, and auricular—and is equivocal in each case. The handkerchief has been widely accepted as a metonym for Desdemona's somatic sexuality since Lynda E. Boose's germinal reading, which interpreted the strawberries spotting the white cloth as signifying hymeneal blood spotting the whiteness of both wedding sheets and Desdemona's body. Recently, the handkerchief's anatomy has been re-invented: Ian Smith posits that the fabric was more evocative of Othello's blackness than of Desdemona's whiteness. While Smith's project of reading against the dominant ideology that sees whiteness where it does not exist is admirable, his account of the "black textile body" further confines Othello to the "brutal materialist discourse" (Smith 24) that he analyzes, dehumanizing and materializing Othello's character as much as the prop is purported to have done. While Smith uses materialist theater history to analyze the prop's ontological status, the shift from identifying the handkerchief with Desdemona's whiteness (an overdetermined index of her racial and sexual purity) to Othello's blackness does not reveal the handkerchief's "truth," but rather further demonstrates its contingency. As Neill puts it, "[Smith] reveals something about its status as an object of

conjecture" ("Response" 29), which is to say, he reveals that the object itself cannot reveal anything. The "ocular proof" paranoid readers hunt for (within and without the play) can never be found, and can only lead to violence against bodies or texts.

Whether the handkerchief is interpreted as white or black, critics assume both that the handkerchief must signify the body of either Desdemona or Othello, and that anatomical signifiers are legible enough to be transferred to cloth. These readings interpret bodies themselves as bearers of stable anatomical signifiers that can serve as "ocular proof": Othello can be reduced to pigmentation, Desdemona to a bloodstain. The play resists such simple categorization, even for the prop itself. Overdetermined readings of the handkerchief's ontology form a fitting counterpart to critical concern over Othello's pigmentation[64] and the status of Desdemona's hymen. As I mention in chapter 1, the existence of the hymen was doubted in early modern anatomical discourse; any symbolic allusion to the hymen in the handkerchief evokes doubt as much as proof. The bodily differences that the handkerchief is presumed to trope cannot be stably located in bodies themselves. Rather than propping up essentialism and promoting an ontological view of sexual experience or race, the handkerchief shows the radical contingency of these differences, which are as subject to rhetorical construction and dramatic manipulation as the handkerchief itself.

What happens when we look at the handkerchief not with the gaze of an anatomist seeking to create a legible taxonomy of bodily differences, but with the shattered gaze of the *memento mori* practitioner? In other words, what happens if we stop seeking "ocular proof" in the handkerchief, and instead contemplate its ability to unsettle our categories of identity through its cadaverous presence?

---

[64] Smith mentions the debate about Othello's exact pigmentation when explaining that we cannot ascertain the exact shade of the handkerchief's dye (but he is certain it evokes Othello by being non-white) (Smith 18n78).

The handkerchief is explicitly marked by Othello as cadaverous: "The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk, / And it was dy'd in mummy which the skilful / Conserv'd of maidens' hearts" (3.4.73-75). Claiming that the dye is composed of the bodies of maidens gestures towards the blood of deflowering, but the dye is emphatically from the bodies of women who *died* maidens. Because of their deaths, their virginal identity is preserved forever. In this sense, the dye is more aligned with finding "proof" of a dead woman's virginity through anatomy "for the sake of the hymen"[65] than with witnessing the blood of deflowering. The symbolics of erotic consummation are, in death, the symbolics of preserved virginity. Othello enacts this uneasy slippage between loss of virginity and virgin death in his choice of murder, simultaneously troping and erasing consummation by turning the marriage bed into a virgin's grave.

Tracing the dye's origin to maidens' hearts evokes maidenhead, but the heart cannot be unproblematically collapsed into the hymen. For all of the concern over the handkerchief's status as signifier of hymen and/or epidermis, there has been less concern over what it explicitly is manufactured from and signifies: hearts. Heart blood is woven into the fabric, and the textile is said to have power over hearts. The fact that mummy from the hearts of Egyptian maids produces black pigmentation shows the overlapping of femininity and race, but this could be unsettled more. Mummy is ethnically marked because of its Egyptian origin, but its blackness is not linked to skin color—it is a cadaverous product without any connection to the epidermis, a bituminous liquid that blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman. Mummy could be manufactured from ancient corpses or the recently deceased, from bodies that were Egyptian or

[65] For a discussion of Vesalius' dissections "for the sake of the hymen," as well as his reversals in assigning its meaning, see Loughlin 41-47.

English.[66] The ethnic discourses troped in the mummy trade—as well as the sexual ones, since mummy from virgins could fetch higher prices (Smith 22)—are all discursively constructed, rather than embedded in the materiality of mummy.

The gendered narrative of the handkerchief is also troubled by Othello's queer inversion of its history: he endows the handkerchief with a maternal (3.4.56), then a paternal (5.2.217) origin. This could be a textual error, or a psychological repression, but there is a queerer possibility. The attempt to attribute the handkerchief to either mother or father is futile if man and wife are one flesh. The unsettling of identity through sexual union can evoke the cadaverous resemblance, even when no cadaverous parts are on stage. As Hamlet's uncanny exchange with his "mother" Claudius makes clear, marital union can be a cadaverous resemblance: a collapse of identity across categories of difference. Both marital union and death unsettle apparently stable signifiers, just as the gift and loss of the handkerchief can kindle and kill love across ethnic divides. While the handkerchief is explicitly invoked as a symbol of marital union, critics do not seem comfortable reading the flesh of Desdemona and Othello as one, in the text or the textile. In an interpretative move similar to denying the consummation of the interracial marriage, the handkerchief is read as either white or black, signifying Desdemona or Othello—there can be no union of the two.[67]

When Iago gains possession of the handkerchief, he takes the magic out of its web.[68] He reinvents it as a crude anatomical signifier. Rather than a token of the couple's mutual love, it

---

[66] Smith reviews scholarship on mummy, including its role in racializing discourse (15-21). However, as he notes, quoting Sugg, mummy could also be harvested from "flesh taken from fresh corpses (usually those of executed felons, and ideally within about three days) and then treated and dried by Paracelsian practitioners" (Sugg qtd. in Smith 17).

[67] Smith briefly mentions that a black handkerchief spotted with strawberries could be read as a symbol of interracial marriage, but he does not specify how Desdemona is signified (24).

[68] The repeated references to copying the work highlight this.

becomes a signifier of Desdemona's sexual body divorced from Othello, and indeed divorced from Desdemona's agency and consent. Iago constructs Desdemona's sexuality as a free-floating signifier that can be scrutinized and appropriated by men, but ultimately has very little to do with Desdemona's body or desires. Her sexuality, an amalgam of desires and committed acts, cannot exist in the realm of "ocular proof" except through its notoriously flawed surrogate. Iago acknowledges this as he leads Othello from reparative faith in the unknowable to paranoid scrutiny of outward signs: "Her honor is an essence that's not seen; … But for the handkerchief—" (4.1.16-18). Similarly, Iago self-consciously comments on the interpretative reframing, rather than ontological change, that he engineers: "Trifles light as air / Are to the jealous confirmations strong / As proofs of holy writ" (3.3.322-24). Through the alchemy of paranoia, the handkerchief's cadaverous ambiguity is misread as stable "ocular proof"; its equivocal openness is misperceived as legible confession. It becomes metonym for confession itself in Othello's frenzied breakdown of logic and language: "Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief!" (4.1.37).

Along with metatheatrically engineering the handkerchief as an externalized and flawed signifier of female sexuality, the play draws attention to how the word "whore" is applied to women. Othello believes "whoredom" is an ontological state that can be revealed through legible signifiers. He threatens Iago to gather and reveal such proof: "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore; / Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof" (3.3.359-60). The notorious error of the play's "ocular proof" destabilizes not only paranoid epistemology, but also the constructed category "whore." Whoredom is presented as a stigma that is inscribed upon women, rather than a state of being that can be revealed.

In the "brothel scene," when Othello most flagrantly treats Desdemona as a whore, his rhetoric undermines his assertion that she, in fact, is a whore. He says: "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book, / Made to write 'whore' upon?" (4.2.71-72). The agent writing the word "whore" is left ambiguous. Is it Cassio, who is imagined as staining her body through illicit sex? Or Othello himself, who deliberately labels her as a whore and treats her as such? Or Iago, who meticulously constructs the narrative of Desdemona-as-whore? In all of these possibilities, Desdemona is the passive book—and, equivocally, is still a "goodly book"—that is defaced. The "fair paper" is aligned with her skin, making the identity of "whore" superficial and external.

Othello implicates himself when rewriting her identity and their union, saying: "I took you for that cunning whore of Venice / That married with Othello" (4.2.89-90). This implicitly casts her marriage to Othello as constructing or revealing her identity as a whore. If it is the former, he accuses himself of sullying her. If the latter, he considers her consent to marry him a sign of a whorish appetite. Both meanings dehumanize Othello and Desdemona; their union is read as monstrous and mutually contaminating. Both Othello and Desdemona are objectified through Iago's paranoid rhetoric; their spiritual union dissolves into material differences.

Emilia more overtly critiques the process by which women are stigmatized by turning "whore" from a static noun to a verb and making Othello the agent: "Alas, Iago, my lord hath so bewhor'd her, / Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her, / That true hearts cannot bear it" (4.2.115-17). Desdemona is "bewhor'd": called whore, treated as whore, and perhaps even marked as a whore through her union with Othello. Yet none of these actions actually makes her a whore; her "true heart" is unsullied, but breaks under the weight of the word. Desdemona continues this thread, turning "whore" into a verb more associated with words than deeds through her pun: "I cannot say 'whore.' / It does abhor me now I speak the word; / To do the act

that might the addition earn, / Not the world's mass of vanity could make me" (4.2.161-64). Desdemona equivocates, saying the word "whore" even as she claims her inability to do so. Doing so "abhor[s]" her: she paradoxically shows how she has been stigmatized by the word while distancing herself from it.

Significantly, Othello does not murder Desdemona in a way that inscribes "whore" upon her. He eschews the violent acts of branding or anatomizing so favored by jealous stage husbands and which he had considered earlier in the play. Rather than marking her body as criminal or purporting to reveal its inner secrets, he chooses to erase the word "whore" in his sacrificial murder. The tragic irony is that by erasing an identity that does not exist, he inscribes himself as murderer.

Othello's murder strategy constructs Desdemona's body as a monumental spectacle rather than an anatomical one. Othello explicitly, and equivocally, imposes the signifiers of chastity onto his wife's body. He fantasizes that the murder encloses Desdemona's body, turning it into a funerary sculpture rather than a cadaver. Preserving the whiteness of her body is crucial, as Othello explains in his preface to the act: "Yet I'll not shed her blood, / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster" (5.2.3-5). Alabaster monuments are the only funerary sculptures that were not conventionally painted (Oosterwijk 69). Othello not only underscores Desdemona's whiteness, but also distances her from the painting attributed to whores.

Othello's decision to leave Desdemona's body unmarked has as much to do with his self-construction as with his construction of her. He perceives himself not as inscribing her body, but as erasing its guilt. By not shedding her blood or scarring her skin, he attempts to efface his authorship and denies his own guilt by refusing to have her blood on his hands. The body he

envisions securing through murder is similar to the body of "fair paper" before it was stained with the word "whore" (4.2.71, 72) and bloodless, rather than stained with the blood of lust or deflowering. The sacrificial punishment for the "cause" that cannot be named is simultaneously its erasure. He envisions himself as purifying her, even from himself, while also purifying himself of her.

In this scene, when the violent severing of the couple reaches its climax, the possibility of reparative union still exists. The scene presents both affective responses to the cadaverous: it shows the horror of gruesome leveling and the reparative potential of collapsing differences. Desdemona's inscrutable interiority, which also reaches its climax in this scene, is central to the reparative potential that the play offers.

Many critics have commented on the horrific revelation of the play's final scene. Michael Neill writes:

> [D]iscovery, in the most literal theatrical sense, is what the last scene cruelly insists on. Like no other drama, *Othello* establishes an equivalency between psychological event (what happens 'inside') and off-stage action (what happens 'within'); thus it can flourish its discourse of the horror on the bed like a psychoanalytic revelation. ("Unproper Beds" 395)

The psychoanalytic subject here encompasses Othello and the audience: both are lured by Iago into obsessive contemplation of what happens offstage. Both are obsessively concerned with what happens on this bed; more precisely, both are obsessively concerned with what happens inside Desdemona's body as she occupies this bed. But how much of Desdemona, either of her mind or her body, is revealed in the final scene? From this perspective, the scene persistently conceals rather than reveals. This tension makes the anti-anatomical strategy employed in the

murder of Desdemona, a moment full of potential for theatricalizing intense anatomical scrutiny, all the more powerful. At the moment that promises the greatest anatomical revelation, she is rendered fully opaque.

Othello's murder of Desdemona is an attempt to assert a form of control over Desdemona's desires by turning her warm body into a cold corpse. Securing Desdemona's body as chaste property is seen as an escape from the inscrutable and potentially changeable nature of Desdemona as a sexual subject, one capable of consenting to Othello and, through paranoid multiplication, Cassio and potentially "more men" (5.2.6). The scene shows, however, the futility of imposing narratives onto the cadaverous. The narratives of criminal execution and sacrificial offering blur and collapse. Commenting on the theological and legalistic meanings of "oath," "article," and "confess" in the scene, Waldron asks: "Is this a court of law, a (Catholic) deathbed confessional, or an altar for ritual sacrifice?" (164). Othello positions himself as confessor, judge, and executioner, an overreach of his authority that invites the resistance and equivocation that Desdemona demonstrates.[69] Despite the patriarchal hierarchies Othello constructs and the violent division he enacts, a sense of spiritual union with Desdemona persists. When the scene is read as deathbed confessional, it must be remembered that it is both Desdemona's and Othello's (as well as Emilia's) deathbed. The couple's confession is co-authored: Othello's attempts to force Desdemona to confess are pleas not only for her to unburden her soul, but also, and perhaps more importantly, for her to unburden his soul.

When Othello says, "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" (5.2.1), it is not clear whether the soul he addresses is his own or that of his wife. Indeed, the two cannot be separated

[69] Waldron writes: "This belief that a priest (not to mention a husband) could take private confessions and thus 'mediate purification' was precisely what reformers rejected: not only did the church have no power to purify, but also purification was an impossible and presumptuous goal" (169).

at this level. His dialogue with her is simultaneously a dialogue with his soul. I do not wish to allegorize Othello as body and Desdemona as spirit: to do so would be to divide the couple by constructing yet another ontological difference. Instead, Desdemona and Othello are united as body and soul through the conventional imagery of marriage. When Desdemona asks heaven to have mercy on her, Othello replies: "Amen, with all my heart!" (5.2.34). Even though he is resolved to kill her, he asserts that his heart wishes for her absolution. Similarly, Desdemona's line "[Then Lord] have mercy on me!" is completed with Othello's "I say, amen" (5.2.57). After completing a prayer together, Desdemona shifts her plea for mercy from a divine to temporal authority saying: "And have you mercy too!" (58).

Othello's spiritual and temporal dimensions—we could say his heart and hand—have been divided. No longer capable of granting mercy, he still seeks her confession, saying: "confess thee freely of thy sin; / For to deny each article with oath / Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception / That I do groan withal. Thou art to die" (5.2.53-56). He does not view confession as capable of erasing the word "whore" from her body—only death is viewed as having this power—but her confession will cleanse both of their souls. Othello's resolve to punish her body is mixed with tenderness toward her soul; he says: "Sweet soul, take heed, / Take heed of perjury, thou art on thy death-bed" (5.2.50-51). Desdemona's soul is "sweet," even though Desdemona's body is sullied in his eyes. He can also be unwittingly addressing Desdemona as his own soul: he also has reason to take heed of perjury and is also on his deathbed.

When Desdemona refuses to confess to adultery, Othello's identity begins to collapse. When he comments upon the fragility of his sacrificial narrative, a textual crux deepens his sentiments. In the folio, Othello says: "O perjur'd woman, thou dost stone my heart, / And

[mak’st] me call what I intend to do / A murther, which I thought a sacrifice” (5.2.63-65).[70] In the first quarto, Othello refers to “thy heart.” Critics have argued for one reading over the other (Neill, *Othello* 376n5.2.65), but I prefer to let both meanings coexist. Their hearts are united together: to stone one is to stone the other. The verb “stone” conveys both an assault from an external force and the process of internal hardening. Because Othello’s heart has hardened (4.1.182-83), he can throw stones at the heart of his wife—simultaneously accusing her of and punishing her for adultery. Because Desdemona’s seemingly hardened heart deflects these accusations, the stones rebound on Othello’s heart, turning him into the perjured one. In addition to converting a part of Othello into the stony monument he seeks to create, Desdemona’s resistance forces him to revise the narrative of his act before it is committed. Redefining as murder what he seeks to define as sacrifice is a slippage that would cast Desdemona as whore rather than martyr, and himself as executioner, or even criminal, rather than priest. The narrative fragility of these categories illustrates the futility of constructing stable meaning in the face of the cadaverous.

After meeting with Desdemona’s resistance—her refusal to “confess”—Othello again misreads Desdemona’s body. He interprets her weeping for Cassio’s alleged death as a confession of sexual transgression. This is an extremely paranoid reading; her compassion for the loss of life is perceived as lamenting the loss of her bedfellow. He writes her confession for her, using her tears: “Out, strumpet! weep’st thou for him to my face?” (5.2.77). After branding her a

---

[70] Waldron discusses hearts of stone in relation to Protestant theology of sacrifice:

> Othello’s reference to his heart of stone, his legalistic language of retributive justice against a ‘perjured woman,’ and his reference to sacrifice all come into sharp focus in light of Protestant views of propitiatory sacrifice as a species of ‘dead works’ under the law. Othello’s reference to stoning is particularly complex, since one of the ‘altars’ for true and lively sacrifice in the Protestant imagination was the heart, as in Herbert's “The Altar.” (Waldron 149)

strumpet, he murders her, temporarily confident in his punitive and sacrificial narratives. The murder is a form of coerced confession, and it is quickly proven false.

While Othello begins the scene addressing the sleeping Desdemona with a necrophilic romantic trope—"Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee / And love thee after" (5.2.18-19)—Desdemona's corpse resists the clichés that idealize cold, pale, and silent corpses as chaste feminine ideals. Firstly, her corpse does not stay silent for long. Desdemona's dead body expresses interiority not through anatomical revelation, but through language. The lens of casuistry that I cited extends to Desdemona's death and final words. Her last statement is deeply equivocal, both in its content and in its status as postmortem utterance. Poised on the threshold of resurrection, Desdemona is a speaking corpse. She does not communicate like the cadaver depicted in anatomical texts that reveals and gestures toward the secrets of its interior, or like the corpse in a murder trial that bleeds to accuse its murderer. Instead, she does quite the opposite, claiming language to obscure meaning by equivocally confessing her murderer as "Nobody; I myself" (5.2.124). Identifying herself as her murderer asserts her shared identity with Othello—their status as one flesh, either in loving union or cadaverous collapse. To further obfuscate this confession, she adds: "Commend me to my kind lord" (125). Referring to Othello as "kind" not only asserts his gentleness despite the violence he has committed, but also his union with her as kin as well as their union as humankind, rather than divided by a difference in "kind."

Our final glimpse into Desdemona's interiority is an act of equivocation. Equivocal confession is poised on the threshold between truth and lie precisely because it posits a split between what can be observed and a hidden truth that must be concealed. Equivocation can be performed through speech acts as well as phenomenal appearances; Desdemona's dead body, as well as the postmortem words, is equivocal. Reading Desdemona's corpse as equivocal means

reading against the virgin/whore binary, as well as the equation of female interiority with anatomical markers of sexual experience. It means rejecting the quest for revelation that paranoid readings promise, but never fulfill, and instead embracing the reparative potential of radically unsettling categories of difference. Equivocation, as verbal strategy and phenomenal appearance, offers this reparative potential.

As an equivocal utterance, her words elude any easy categorization into the binary of honesty (in all senses of the word) and dishonesty. On the surface, her confession bows to her husband's temporal authority, but its equivocal nature indicates Desdemona possesses a higher, hidden truth. This hidden truth is not the conventional "secret" of the female body, a secret of the flesh that tormented anatomists and jealous lovers alike and fueled paranoid attempts to reveal the body's interior, but rather a mental reservation—a dimension of her confession that the audience, on stage and off, cannot witness. The staging of what cannot be seen here applies to an unknown interiority and subjectivity, the persistent opacity of the heart, rather than the potential revelation of genitalia. "Nobody" gestures toward but is fundamentally unlike the bawdy pun on "nothing." Her utterance rejects the symbolic revelation of the "no-thing" that is the object of the anatomist's fascinated gaze and anxious concealment. Desdemona is an agent in her self-erasure: aligning "I" and "myself" with "no-body" is an act of effacement, even disembodiment. Considered through the lens of Blanchot's cadaverous resemblance, "nobody" gestures towards the loss of identity and disruption of signifying power while "I, myself" asserts an uncanny persistence of her former, living self. This act paradoxically asserts postmortem subjectivity beyond the anatomical system of signification that inscribes bodies, alive and dead. The phrase aligns Desdemona with Hamlet, the great possessor of "that within which passes show," rather

than with the demurely draped, yet violently opened, female cadavers depicted in anatomy texts.[71]

She provides a confession of joint guiltlessness by effacing herself as well as Othello. Rather than proclaim Othello as a murder, she erases his authorship completely and turns his sacrificial gesture into an anonymous act.[72] No person is to blame; the fault is more systemic than individual. Like Cordelia's "No cause" (*Lear* 4.7.74) this statement tells a lie and the truth and offers absolution through erasure.

Othello does not account for the openness of Desdemona's words, and instead forces them into the binaries of honesty and dishonesty, blessed and damned. He says: "She's like a liar gone to burning hell: / 'Twas I that kill'd her" (129-130). Emilia's reparative readings of Desdemona's corpse and confession combat Othello's paranoid ones. Emilia, however, is reparative towards Desdemona only by being paranoid in her reading of Othello. She accuses him: "Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil" (133). "Belie," like "bewhore," draws attention to the way in which male agency constructs female "dishonesty."[73] No longer a union, they are

---

[71] Altman takes Desdemona's last words as the title to his chapter on "Discovering What Passes Show." He writes:

> Her final intimation of what lies within acknowledges her own disruptive potentiality—not something she can muster for herself … but an energy beyond her grasp that has been appropriated, actualized, and given a "character" by her "kind lord." It is the *eros* intuited by Iago, sublimated by Cassio, and glimpsed in shock by Othello when making love to her. The self that is the surplus of the subject, she discovers, can be one's own and another's at the same time. For Desdemona, too, "I am not what I am" is a tragic recognition. (Altman 283)

Theorizing Desdemona's interiority here leads to a voyeuristic image of off-stage sexual intercourse and turns Desdemona's interiority into something observable and open to paranoid discovery and appropriation by male characters. I reject reading Desdemona's final confession as another lure for the prurient fascination with her sexual history.

[72] Waldron links Desdemona's "Nobody" to the use of "Nemo" in legal history. She writes: "As 'Nobody,' Desdemona models a version of atonement in which a fictitious legal person took on the sins of the community. Yet this legal fiction also had a religious history that closely correlates with the Protestant division of sacrifice into lawful and unlawful forms" (173).

[73] This is similar to Othello's "Lie with her? lie on her? We say lie on her, when they belie her" (4.1.35-36).

read as polarities of whiteness and darkness, symbolically interpreted as good and evil, angel and demon.[74]

Even before recognizing Desdemona's guiltlessness, Othello feels the radical loss of his wife and his world:

> My wife, my wife! what wife? I have no wife.
>
> O insupportable! O heavy hour!
>
> Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse
>
> Of sun and moon, and that th' affrighted globe
>
> Did yawn at alteration. (5.2.97-101)

The corpse alternates between being a horrific and heavenly sight, depending upon whether it is viewed as a radical break or continuation of Desdemona's identity. After learning of Desdemona's chastity, Othello seeks solace in the narrative construct of the chaste female corpse, addressing the dead body as a continuation of virtuous Desdemona: "Cold, cold, my girl? / Even like thy chastity" (275-76). But this fiction can be maintained only by creating a strict division between Desdemona and himself, since his focus on her goodness highlights the heinousness of his act. The intimacy of "my girl" collapses into polarity as he imagines himself descending into hell, unworthy of the "possession of this heavenly sight" (278). The posthumous reunion he envisions at Judgment Day must be followed by violent division: "when we shall meet at compt, / This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven, / And fiends will snatch at it" (273-75). Othello ignores her posthumous pardon; he again relies on a paranoid misreading of her body rather than having reparative faith in her expression of love and mercy.

In his lament, "O Desdemon! dead, Desdemon! dead! / O, O!" (281-82), the progression from her name, to her name modified as "dead," to simply "dead" mimics the dissolution of

[74] When Iago is revealed as the play's "devil," these binaries of racialized moral legibility are deconstructed.

identity in death. In expressing how Desdemona has lost her identity, Othello loses his language and ends with moans. His identity collapses along with hers, and becomes legible only in the past tense. The next words he utters are “That’s he that was Othello; here I am” (284).

When Othello seeks to reestablish a present-tense identity, if only to narrate its end, his rhetorical self is deeply equivocal. “Speak of me as I am” (342) gestures toward both the Othello that he was and the ambiguous speaker he now is. He performs a blazon of himself in the past and present, describing “one whose hand, / (Like the base [Indian]) threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe” (346-48). While we do not know whether Othello is drawing a comparison between himself and an Indian or a Judean,[75] we could put more pressure on the part of himself he is comparing: his hand. His hand, almost as autonomous agent, causes destruction and loss. His heart is preserved as a site of love, albeit excessive, “Of one that lov’d not wisely but too well” (5.2.344).

He collapses temporality, narrating past and present acts of violence simultaneously:

> And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and a turban’d Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduc’d the state,
> I took by th’ throat the circumcised dog,
> And smote him—thus. (352-56)

Othello again attempts to impose narrative order onto cadaverous matter by placing his suicide within the catalogue of his heroic deeds. However, he is both murderer and victim, criminal and sacrifice. The tension between union and division is enacted both in his suicide and in his murder of Desdemona (which is also a form of suicide, if they are viewed as one flesh). He embodies the

---

[75] For a review of issues raised by this crux, see Neill, *Othello* 464-65n5.2.346.

dyad of killer and killed, Christian and Turk; the speech presents ethnic, religious, and moral binaries, while the speaker hovers in between them, rhetorically disembodied.

The allusion to circumcision has caused speculation about Othello's penis.[76] Although Othello positions himself as both uncircumcised Venetian and circumcised Turk, critics frequently categorize him among the circumcised. Moreover, circumcision has been interpreted as revealing his heart and shedding light on his "true" religion.[77] Speculation regarding Othello's foreskin eerily resembles speculation about Desdemona's hymen. In both cases, bodily secrets are examined for "ocular proof" of sexual and spiritual interiority. Focusing on the body as a site of irreversible narratives denies the possibility of spiritual redemption: the marked body resists or undoes conversions of the heart. Doubt regarding whether a circumcised person could truly convert to Christianity is similar to anxiety regarding whether a "whore" could be redeemed. The refusal of this possibility is implicit in Othello's decision to commit murder, and it is also central to the plot of *'Tis Pity*.

After stabbing himself, collapsing the boundary between murderer and victim, Othello attempts to reunite with Desdemona by addressing her corpse: "I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee. No way but this, / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss" (358-59). The chiastic repetition of kissing and killing makes their loving union bookend the acts of violent division. It also makes the final "kiss" occur between their corpses, extending their union into the afterlife and turning their bodies into a monument to their love.

---

[76] Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Othello Circumcised: Shakespeare and the Pauline Discourse of Nations" and Daniel Boyarin, "Othello's Penis: Or, Islam in the Closet."

[77] Lupton considers circumcision, rather than color, the defining marker of otherness in the play, and writes: "Paul's entho-political theology can accommodate the vast differences between the Greek and the barbarian, but not the very little difference between the circumcised and the uncircumcised" (84). She maps the complex interplay of externalized circumcision and internalized circumcision of the heart troped in Othello's suicide (83-84).

However, Othello does not have authorial control over the cadaverous image he constructs. In the same way that his sacrificial narrative of Desdemona's murder collapsed, his self-narrated suicide and monumentalizing gesture of reunion are not stable. The indeterminacy is heightened by the fact that we do not know where or how they will be buried.[78] Moreover, Othello can only join Desdemona on the bed by simultaneously joining Emilia. Both Emilia and Othello attempt to reunite with Desdemona in death, and their final spatial choices to die near her corpse—singing to it[79] or kissing it as if it were still Desdemona—signify both burial wishes and resurrection fantasies. The "tragic loading of this bed" (5.2.363), however, overwhelms the intimacy of female friendship and marital union. We are left less with a memorial image than with an image of the leveling of all identities in death. The cadaverous implications inspire Lodovico's horror: "The object poisons sight, / Let it be hid" (364-65). Differences of gender, race, degree, and sexuality, as well as murderer and victim, are dissolved into a single "object." The bed has the status of a mass grave, and Lodovico's command that the curtains be drawn around all three bodies indiscriminately is the closest the play comes to providing the closure of burial.

For all the indeterminacy about how Othello's story will be transmitted, Cassio shows that a reparative reading is possible in his response to Othello's suicide: "This did I fear, but thought he had no weapon; / For he was great of heart" (360-61). Even an intended victim of Othello's paranoia praises the tragic hero's heart. "Great of heart" continues the image of Othello as "one that lov'd not wisely but too well." Some have argued that Othello's heart should be interpreted anatomically rather than spiritually: "Balz Engler, however, has argued (citing e.g.

---

[78] Neill mentions the lack of funeral rites or rhetoric ("Unproper Beds" 383).

[79] Waldron compares Emilia singing "to the dead body as if it could revive" to Paulina's resurrection of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* (176).

5.2.173) that Cassio means only that Othello's heart was swollen with grief to the point of bursting" (Neill, *Othello* 397n5.2.360). I prefer to interpret Othello as eulogized rather than anatomized in these lines.

Paranoid readings threaten to reduce bodies to anatomical specimens. These divisive tendencies, however, coexist with reparative ones that seek to rebuild union and a sense of wholeness in the face of fragmentation. Both of these tendencies coexist in the play and its criticism, but paranoia has been privileged in both. In the same way that, according to Neill, *Othello* does not anachronistically "oppose racism" but rather plays out the anxieties that underpin it ("Unproper Beds" 412), *Othello* shows us the tragedy, and the epistemological error, of anatomically dividing bodies according to differences in sex, sexual experience, and race, but only by preying upon audiences' anxious fascination with these categories. The alternatives it offers are the radically unsettling collapse of these categories in death and the reparative potential of collapsing these categories in love.

## Spiritual Anatomies and the Cadaverous Heart in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

Othello's jealousy is a crisis in faith, with theological issues presented allegorically through romance (Watson, "Propaganda"). In *'Tis Pity*, however, the crisis of faith must predate the romance: the incestuous romance between brother and sister requires the rejection of church doctrine as its necessary precondition, as the Friar's condemnation of Giovanni's heretical "dispute" in the opening scene makes clear. "Faith" no longer exists analogously in the romantic and theological dimensions, but in an inverse relationship. Therefore, Giovanni is not only jealous of Annabella's marriage to Soranzo, but also (and more powerfully) of her reunion with God through repentance.

Annabella, at first glance, may seem less sexually ambiguous than Desdemona. There is

no ambiguity about her sexual experience: she commits incest with her brother and marries Soranzo to conceal her resulting pregnancy. Her violently opened body and spectacularly displayed heart fit all too easily into the anatomical-theatrical signifying system as marking her sexual openness. While Desdemona's adultery is imagined, and she is proven, as far as such proof is possible, not to be a "whore," Annabella is branded a "whore" in the play's title and its closing words. Yet, Annabella's status is not as clear-cut as this may appear. Unlike Othello, Giovanni never calls his beloved a "whore" (but Soranzo does, repeatedly). Ford presents Annabella in an ambiguous relationship to the ironic title and stages the possibility of redemption and genuine pity for her character. *'Tis Pity* is concerned with its female protagonist's anatomical facts as well as her spiritual possibilities. She is poised between the competing narratives of penitent woman, in the tradition of Mary Magdalen, and criminalized whore. Her heart could endorse either of these narratives as specimen, spectacle of punishment, or relic. But instead of stably upholding any narrative, the heart collapses them into a cadaverous "riddle."[80] In a paranoid reading, she is a whore *par excellence*, the "Whore of whores" (4.3.20), as Soranzo calls her. In a reparative reading, she is a penitent and redeemed "wretched, woeful, woman" (5.1.8), as she calls herself. The subversiveness of the play rests in its ability to stage her as both simultaneously, deconstructing the binary of fallen and redeemed by presenting Annabella, in life and death, with an equivocal and hence unknowable spiritual interiority.

Through a moralized anatomical gaze, Annabella follows a trajectory of fallenness: she loses her virginity, becomes pregnant, dies, and suffers postmortem mutilation. In the spiritual sense, she repeatedly seeks and is granted redemption. Annabella's repeated seeking of

[80] Neill's "'What Strange Riddle's This?': Deciphering *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*" analyzes how Giovanni's "violent literalization" (165) of metaphors regarding the heart "subjects the metaphorizing process itself to intense ironic scrutiny" (158). While I also consider this process, my reading differs by considering the possibilities for Annabella's spiritual and somatic interiority to resist Giovanni's violence.

repentance is reparative; she seeks wholeness in the face of fragmentation. Although the turn to religion in early modern criticism has yielded several interesting interpretations of the play, Annabella's spiritual interiority is still not often taken seriously. Recent criticism has privileged corporeal readings over spiritual ones, focusing on oppressive social structures, Ford's ambiguous relationship to Catholicism, and Annabella's sexualized body.[81] Readings that focus on psychological and spiritual interiority are more likely to center on Giovanni, implicitly privileging his subjectivity. While Annabella's sexuality and corporeality are undoubtedly important facets of her identity, a crucial component of her identity is often ignored: her spirituality. When Annabella's interiority is considered in terms of her hymen and womb, she is presented as increasingly "fallen." However, her heart's narrative is non-linear: it softens alternatingly from sexual and religious pity, unites with Giovanni's heart in love and divides from it through repentance. When the heart appears onstage in the final scene, all of these narratives collide: it is a crudely literalized romantic idol, a sexualized anatomical specimen, and an inscrutable site of spiritual interiority.

The multiple references to hearts throughout the play are activated and complicated by its brutal, bloody appearance. The appearance of the heart onstage collapses the anatomical, spiritual, and romantic associations of the heart that appear repeatedly throughout the play. Before considering what I will call the denarrativized heart that makes its appearance in the final scene, I will consider the many narratives of the heart that the play carefully sets up. The first time Giovanni mentions the heart, it is in the conventional trope of confession. He says to the Friar: "To you I have unclasped my burdened soul, / Emptied the storehouse of my thoughts and heart" (1.1.13-14). However, Giovanni's revelation of his heart is not properly a confession: he does not seek absolution, but rather indulgence. Giovanni speaks to Friar Bonaventure as

[81] For a review of recent criticism, see Sandra Clark, "The State of the Art."

confidante, although he calls him "confessor" (1.1.46); he has already replaced the spiritual associations of the heart with romantic ones. The Friar urges repentance, linking the spiritual and the somatic: "Cry to thy heart, wash every word thou utter'st / In tears and, if't be possible, of blood" (1.1.72-73). True repentance is staged in the heart, and the body's fluids cleanse the words.

When Giovanni confesses his love to Annabella, he moves the heart imagery more squarely into the romantic realm. The religious resonances are still active, but Giovanni's religion is now erotic love: he constructs an idolatrous devotion that he will remain faithful to throughout the play. Giovanni offers his breast to Annabella, playing with the boundaries between metaphorical and literal revelation of the heart: "And here's my breast, strike home! / Rip up my bosom; there thou shalt behold / A heart in which is writ the truth I speak" (1.2.217-19). The offer has the potential to become literal: his heart is presented as a book that simultaneously confesses spiritual identity and romantic desires.[82] Despite the threat of becoming literal, however, the trope remains safely in the realm of the figurative.

After their consummation, Giovanni describes a radical change in Annabella's identity:

> No more sister now
>
> But love, a name more gracious. Do not blush,
>
> Beauty's sweet wonder, but be proud to know
>
> That yielding thou hast conquered and inflamed
>
> A heart whose tribute is thy brother's life. (2.1.1-5)

---

[82] Jager describes the origin of the romantic trope of the heart, which casts the heart as a spiritual site and a sexualized organ. He writes: "Instead of an interior writing that signified spiritual values and the transcending of carnal impulses, medieval love poets openly celebrated a writing on the 'fleshly' heart that embodied sexual desires, memories, and fantasies. Even so, the idealizing tendency of medieval love literature often left the book of the heart hovering somewhere between the realm of spirit and the realm of the flesh" (67).

Annabella has not only changed from sister to lover, she has become the embodiment of “love” itself; this tension between allegory and literalization is central to the play. Although he tells Annabella that she is “No more sister now,” he continues to refer to her as such throughout the play, and refers to himself as her “brother” four lines later. Their identities are both radically transformed and radically unchanged. “A heart” is interestingly open to interpretation: it is both his (linked to his life) and hers (conquered by her). Annabella reciprocates this gesture: “And mine his. Oh, how these stolen contents / Would print a modest crimson on my cheeks, / Had any but my heart’s delight prevailed!” (2.1.6-8). While Giovanni has just ordered her not to blush, she now links this lack of bodily confession to her “heart’s delight” or erotic desire for Giovanni. Annabella indicates that she has a sexual subjectivity that matches Giovanni’s, even though it is not presented to the audience in so many words.

While Giovanni praises Annabella as undergoing a metamorphosis from “sister” to “love,” he diminishes the change that has occurred to her body. Giovanni diminishes the importance of the hymen while elevating the status of the heart, saying: “I marvel why the chaster of your sex / Should think this pretty toy called maidenhead / So strange a loss, when, being lost, ’tis nothing, / And you are the same” (2.1.9-12). Giovanni’s dismissal of virginity’s importance and his assertion that Annabella’s identity is unchanged by the loss is undermined by the play’s dramatic action. He turns the cultural importance of virginity into a scruple of “chaster” women, effacing the violence by which patriarchal power enforces this obsession. Annabella’s response, “’Tis well for you, / Now you can talk” (12-13), points out Giovanni’s subjective bias and dismisses it as “talk.” The disconnection between Giovanni’s “talk” and Annabella’s body will intensify as the play continues. While Giovanni routinely dismisses bodily

signifiers (maidenhead, the shared blood of kinship[83]) as mere words, the play shows how Annabella's bodily confessions overpower Giovanni's sophistry.

Giovanni's rhetoric does not change, but Annabella's body must.[84] In the same way that Giovanni does not perceive Annabella as changed after her loss of virginity, he does not perceive her as changed after her pregnancy and marriage to Soranzo. He soliloquizes:

> She is still one to me, and every kiss
>
> As sweet and as delicious as the first
>
> I reaped, when yet the privilege of youth
>
> Entitled her a virgin. Oh, the glory
>
> Of two united hearts like hers and mine! (5.3.8-12)

Again, Giovanni appeals to the rich ambiguity of the "heart": it is a site where erotic union, spiritual devotion, and shared blood of kinship can coexist without the binaries of absence and presence that mark Annabella's hymen and womb and lead to her socially necessary marriage. The dramatic structure of the play challenges the unchanging image "Of two united hearts" that Giovanni fantasizes. The mutuality of "united hearts" is in tension with the active and passive binary Giovanni presents when casting himself as "reap[ing]" Annabella's kisses. Giovanni frequently wavers between mutual love and violent dominance, and this tension will reach its climax when Giovanni literally claims Annabella's heart as his own.

The heart as a site of erotic and familial union is heightened by the fact that it is metonymically connected to the womb. Annabella's heart and womb are presented as

---

[83] Giovanni refers to the words "brother" and "sister" as "a peevish sound, / A customary form from man to man" (1.1.26, 24-25).

[84] Many critics have viewed Giovanni's lack of change as positive. Woods, taking a more balanced view, writes: "Giovanni's 'sameness' is a spiritual stagnation that the play implies is both laudable continuity and reductive limitation" (124). I argue that Annabella's changes—both bodily and spiritual—present a reparative form of resistance to Giovanni's unchanging appeals to romantic convention and male dominance.

simultaneously Giovanni's: they are sites where his identity is figuratively and literally imprinted upon her body. To complicate matters further still, the couple shares two wombs: Annabella's and their mother's. Giovanni collapses kinship and erotic union when justifying his love to the Friar: "Say that we had one father, say one womb / (Curse to my joys) gave both us life and birth" (1.1.28-29). Rather than referring directly to their mother along with their father, the mother is metonymically reduced to her "womb." This is similar to the female body's status as a "reproductive supplement" in early modern anatomy (Traub, "Gendering Mortality" 54). Giovanni soon revises his argument, turning the "curse" of sharing a womb into a blessing that endorses and compels their complete union:

> Are we not therefore each to other bound
>
> So much he more by nature, by the links
>
> Of blood, of reason, nay, if you will have't,
>
> Even of religion, to be ever one—
>
> One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all? (1.1.30-34)

The repetition of "one" begins with their mother's "one womb" and culminates in the siblings' union of soul, flesh, love, heart, and all. Incest literalizes erotic and romantic tropes of union, such as the Biblical view of man and wife as "one flesh," and undoes them by showing their horror. This type of radical unmetaphoring increases throughout the play. The linkage of womb and heart foreshadows the final scene; their mother's womb, where they trace their origin, is connected to Annabella's womb and heart, where Giovanni imposes their end.

In the wooing scene, Giovanni says:

> Wise Nature first in your creation meant
>
> To make you mine; else't had been sin and foul

> To share one beauty to a double soul.
>
> Nearness in birth and blood doth but persuade
>
> A nearer nearness in affection. (1.2.244-48)

While Othello and Desdemona's match is deemed "unnatural" because of their ethnic differences, Giovanni uses the same logic of kind to argue that incest is compelled by nature. There is tension between the mutual union of "nearer nearness" and the masculine possessiveness of "make you mine." Giovanni attempts to construct a complete union of identity while preserving distinction in the form of traditional gender roles.

This tension between mutual union and gendered division continues when they swear their love. Annabella begins: "On my knees, / Brother, even by our mother's dust, I charge you, / Do not betray me to your mirth or hate. / Love me or kill me, brother" (1.2.261-64). Giovanni repeats the vow, but changes the object that he swears on to "my mother's dust" (265). Sanders writes: "Giovanni uses the possessive 'my' as opposed to Annabella's shared 'our.' The role of male possession and possessiveness in this play is already marked out for us as attentive audiences" (qtd. in Massai 121n1.2.261-7). Their mother, who was first mentioned only as a "womb," now makes an appearance as "dust." Her dust is both highly specified, signaling the siblings' shared origin and continued loyalty, and completely leveled: dust is dust. While the reference to the shared womb reinforces their kinship, the reference to their shared dust subtly introduces the womb/tomb association, and constructs not only the siblings' shared ancestry but also the shared kinship and mortality of humanity, the universal "fellowship of dust."

Annabella's reparative spiritual trajectory separates her from Giovanni more than her marriage to Soranzo does. While Annabella repeatedly repents, Giovanni repeatedly refuses to repent. Act 2 scene 5, like the opening scene, begins with the Friar responding to Giovanni's

"confession" and highlights the inability of the Friar to absolve the unrepentant Giovanni. Again, the Friar cannot function as confessor because Giovanni has appropriated the language of confession to serve his own sexual desires and romantic ideals. The Friar's warning that Giovanni will be punished is dismissed as "uncharitable" (2.5.12). The "charity" Giovanni seeks is sexual indulgence, rather than grace.

Giovanni similarly aligns "pity" with sexual permissiveness: "Then you will know what pity 'twere we two / Should have been sundered from each other's arms" (2.5.47-48).[85] Hearing Giovanni extol Annabella's virtues, the Friar recuperates "pity" in the religious sense: "The more I hear, I pity thee the more, / That one so excellent should give those parts / All to a second death" (2.5.59-61). The Friar's "pity" here is genuine, as he laments that Annabella will be sentenced to death and damnation. Moreover, the "pity" is directed at Giovanni, making him culpable for the incest and its tragic consequences. This is the reparative counterpoint to the Cardinal's dismissive final words that form the play's title. The Friar expresses "pity" not for Annabella being a whore, but for Giovanni condemning her to "a second death." "One so excellent" primarily refers to Giovanni, but it also gestures toward Annabella's "parts" that will be given to death. The excellence of Giovanni's intellect is perversely used to justify his incest, and the excellence of Annabella's "parts" are used improperly. Both meanings present sin as a corrupting process, rather than an ontological state. The blazon of Annabella that Giovanni has just performed is revised as a tragic sacrificial offering of his sister's "parts … to a second death." The image of Giovanni condemning his sister to a "second death" foreshadows his murdering Annabella and re-killing her heart by impaling it on his dagger.

[85] Hippolita also links sexual yielding to pity when describing how Soranzo seduced her, saying: "a heart of steel / Would have been wrought to pity, as was mine" (2.2.36-37).

The Friar continues to attempt to convert Giovanni, saying: “Why, leave her yet. / The throne of mercy is above your trespass, / Yet time is left you both—” and Giovanni completes the line: “To embrace each other … She is like me, and I like her resolved” (2.5.63-67). He rejects the continued possibility for repentance and change signaled by the Friar’s repetition of “yet.” He presents his union with his sister as more powerful than either’s submission to God. Their mutual love coincides with their joint damnation; the Friar says: “a pair of souls are lost” (2.5.69). When Annabella converts, she chooses God’s mercy over Giovanni’s love.

Giovanni’s repeated failures to repent are set in contrast to Annabella’s multiple repentances. Act 3 scene 6 mirrors act 1 scene 1 and act 2 scene 5 by beginning immediately following a confession. Only this time, the confession seems to have been successful. The Friar tells Annabella:

> I am glad to see this penance, for, believe me,
> You have unripped a soul so foul and guilty
> As, I must tell you true, I marvel how
> The earth hath borne you up. But weep, weep on;
> These tears may do you good. (3.6.1-5)

While critics have commented on Annabella’s passive role in the scene due to her minimal dialogue,[86] her tears are constructed as actively participating in the confession and absolution. The Friar continues: “Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched, / Almost condemned alive” (7-8). The word “almost” is crucial: the continued possibility of grace is forgotten by other characters, many of whom view others as already damned to justify taking vengeance upon them.

[86] See Woods, 125-26.

The Friar describes hell as a place where "damned souls / Roar without pity" (15-16), but shows that pity is still possible in life.

The Friar purports to read the confession of Annabella's heart: "But soft, methinks I see repentance work / New motions in your heart" (3.6.31-32). This spiritual anatomy recuperates the conventional view of the heart as a devotional text, subject to revision through repentance.[87] Of course, the audience cannot secure proof that Annabella's heart is repentant. This scene is frequently subjected to paranoid readings that emphasize the social rather than spiritual forces at play. Woods discusses the critical debate regarding the extent to which the pregnant Annabella's repentance is linked to "manipulation" and "social conformity" (126) and writes: "Critics have been reluctant to credit this repentance with spiritual significance, instead regarding it as her final capitulation to the pernicious social forces that entrap her" (128). While neither reading can be definitively proven, paranoid readings of social forces have overshadowed reparative readings of Annabella's spiritual subjectivity. While it is important to pay attention to the oppressive forces at play, it is equally important to avoid eliding female interiority and spiritual experiences.

Annabella asks: "Is there no way left to redeem my miseries?" (33) and the Friar offers counsel:

> There is, despair not; heaven is merciful
>
> And offers grace even now. 'Tis thus agreed:
>
> First, for your honour's safety, that you marry
>
> The Lord Soranzo; next, to save your soul,
>
> Leave off this life and henceforth live to him. (34-38)

The Friar attempts to redeem her honor first, and then her soul. He implicitly suggests that social acceptance is a necessary precondition for personal conversion and there is no hope for her soul

[87] For the development of this convention, see Jager.

until her honor is recuperated. The Friar ignores that incest traditionally required public reparation (Woods 126). While critics have commented on the deceptive nature of the Friar's advice as potentially anti-Catholic, his recommended strategy of equivocation recognizes the oppressive social system in which Annabella lives. The phrase "honour's safety" refers not only to the preservation of her name, but also to her self-preservation: the two are inextricably linked. He is aware that the socially illegible category of redeemed but pregnant unmarried woman cannot safely exist. Instead, he counsels her to become an equivocally chaste wife. The equivocal strategy eludes the spectacle of public punishment (which sacrifices the individual to set an "example" for society, as we will see in the final scene) to provide personal spiritual redemption. If we believe in the power of redemption, Annabella's penance renders her a "chaste" wife to Soranzo. Her marriage may be characterized by deceit and withheld information, but these strategies for self-preservation fall under the purview of wifely equivocation. The disconnections between Annabella's somatic, spiritual, and social trajectories form the catalyst for the tragedy: maintaining her "honor" through marriage reveals her "whoredom" to Soranzo (since her body does not change along with her soul) and leads to her death rather than ensuring her, or her honor's, "safety."

Theatrical confessions, like anatomy, are often linked to the paranoid epistemological aim of revealing hidden secrets. Woods describes "a particular fascination with the figure of the female confessant" in early modern drama. She continues: "Dramatic confession often performs an epistemological fantasy in which the hidden sexual truth (or rather falsity) of a woman is exposed" (127), but concludes that Ford's "representations of sacramental struggle" do not conform to the theatrical stereotype. Both *Othello* and *'Tis Pity* stimulate and undermine spiritual voyeurism as much as they excite and baffle the anatomical gaze. No hidden secrets are revealed

in these plays' confessional moments. Instead, they offer the unverifiable possibility of hidden spiritual change.

Act 4 scene 3 also begins immediately following a confession, but this time it is a somatic one: Annabella's body has just confessed her pregnancy. Notably, this is the first scene in which Annabella is called a whore. Soranzo brands her a whore through repetition, calling her "Whore of whores!" (4.3.20) and "Harlot, rare, notable harlot" (4.3.4). His threatening words form a violent counterpoint to the title of the play when he says: "Such a damned whore / Deserves no pity" (4.3.77-78). He considers her to be damned while living (rather than "almost" damned, as the Friar puts it) and unworthy of human or divine pity. As husband, Soranzo takes on the role of confessor, executioner, and God. He begins the scene: "Come, strumpet, famous whore! Were every drop / Of blood that runs in thy adulterous veins / A life, this sword—dost see't ?—should in one blow / Confound them all!" (4.3.1-4). Soranzo, in the tradition of jealous stage husbands, attempts to anatomize, punish, and publicize Annabella's crime in one blow. Since her incest and pregnancy are not common knowledge, the epithet "famous whore" is a performative utterance; Soranzo threatens to publically punish her and metatheatrically does so on stage. He anatomizes her "adulterous veins" and threatens her life. He continues the anatomy, condemning the fetus and her womb as monstrous and mutually contaminating: "Now I must be the dad / To all that gallimaufry that's stuffed / In thy corrupted, bastard-bearing womb" (4.3.12-14).

When faced with Soranzo's interrogation, Annabella uses equivocation to resist his brutal form of patriarchal control. While her body has confessed pregnancy, Annabella's verbal resistance shows the limits of interrogation and even anatomization to reveal hidden secrets. He seeks an auricular confession to match the somatic one: "Why, art thou not with child?" (4.3.26).

Annabella mocks the redundancy of his paranoid scrutiny in her response: "What needs all this, / When 'tis superfluous? I confess I am" (26-27). After this "superfluous" confession, Soranzo seeks more information: "Tell me by whom" (28). When Annabella refuses to name Giovanni, Soranzo threatens her: "Not know it? Strumpet, I'll rip up thy heart / And find it there" (53-54).

Soranzo's threat to extract a confession by extracting her heart is a prime example of the paranoid epistemology of jealous stage husbands. The claim asserts that the confessional text represented by the heart can be appropriated and revealed. Rather than being a text shared only between a person and God, the heart can be made horrifically public: the husband presumes to take on the godlike role of revealing, judging, and damning his wife's heart. While this obviously looks forward to the final scene, the symbolism of the revealed heart will undergo radical revision. Again, Ford is constructing a narrative of Annabella's heart only to collapse it later. In this scene, Annabella's corporeal confession is matched with corporeal, as well as verbal, equivocation. Soranzo's inability, despite his threats, to reveal the father of the fetus highlights the opacity and inscrutability of the body: the father's name is not legibly imprinted on her womb or heart.[88] Annabella further heightens the equivocal potential of her pregnant body by alluding to the immaculate conception (Woods 128).

Soranzo's threats to extract a confession from her heart are coupled with threats to dismember her: "Come, whore, tell me your lover, or by truth, / I'll hew thy flesh to shreds" (57-58). Soranzo, implicitly acknowledging that her heart will not prove a legible text with her lover's name inscribed upon it, turns to threats of torture and dismemberment to extract a verbal confession. While Annabella is unable to avoid confessing her own sexual acts, she would rather

[88] Susan J. Wiseman's "*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*: Representing the Incestuous Body" begins with this exchange. Wiseman writes: "Soranzo's questioning dramatises the impossibility of knowing about incest from the evidence of the pregnant body; for the body does not of itself disclose the identity of the child's father, let alone the nature of the relationship between the two parents" (180).

die than name her brother. She urges Soranzo to act on his threats and sings in Italian about the joys of being a martyr for love. Alluding to martyrdom and romance allows her to refashion herself as a figure from hagiography or courtly love poetry instead of the "whore" Soranzo has branded her. It also recasts Soranzo as oppressive executioner, rather than confessor or judge. She commands Soranzo: "be a gallant hangman!" (69), mockingly alluding to his gentlemanly status while condemning the ignoble role he is performing.

Soranzo revisits the romantic tropes he used when courting Annabella and shows how easily they can become violent: "in this piece of flesh, / This faithless face of hers, had I laid up / The treasure of my heart" (4.3.108-110). He continues: "Deceitful creature, / How hast mocked my hopes and in the shame / Of thy lewd womb even buried me alive! / I did too dearly love thee" (113-16). Soranzo appeals to the conventional womb/tomb association, which Giovanni will soon make literal. The "treasures of his heart" collapse into a cadaverous union with her "lewd womb." Like Othello's "cestern" (4.2.61) that collapses his heart and Desdemona's body into a cesspit of copulating toads, it shows how easily tropes of romantic and erotic union can become images of death, burial, and decay. Moreover, like Othello's self-narration as "one who lov'd not wisely but too well" (5.2.344), Soranzo casts murderous jealousy as an abundance of love.

Soranzo pretends to offer absolution only to further his murderous plot, saying:

> Yet will not I forget what I should be
>
> And what I am: a husband. In that name
>
> Is hid divinity. If I do find
>
> That thou wilt yet be true, here I remit
>
> All former faults and take thee to my bosom. (4.3.138-42)

The reference to husbands as worldly images of divine grace highlights how far removed Soranzo is from that image; like Giovanni, he is presented as usurping God's vengeance rather than God's grace. His repetition of the word "yet" (138, 141) emphasizes the temporal nature of redemption. "Yet" allows for the possibilities of spiritual as well as romantic conversion; rather than categorizing Annabella as already damned, it allows her the potential to transform from dishonest "whore" to "true" wife. Both the Friar (2.5.63, 65) and the Cardinal (5.6.106) use "yet" when urging Giovanni to repent. Soranzo's image of futurity and forgiveness is mere façade, however, since he has already decided to foreclose these possibilities through vengeance.

The only time we witness a confession, rather than its immediate aftermath, is in act 5 scene 1. Not only is this Annabella's second auricular confession, it also functions as two confessions in one. Annabella's soliloquy is a private dialogue with God, a confession in the Protestant mode. When the Friar enters below and overhears her, her personal confession becomes an auricular, Catholic confession as well. Staging her confession as intended to be private allows it to exist outside of the explicit prompting of patriarchal authority (unlike her previous confession), while still allowing it to be endorsed by this authority. This is as close as the play comes to staging the spiritual dimension of Annabella's heart, and it serves as a reparative but often overlooked counterpoint to the literal staging of her heart in the final scene.

While marriage was part of Annabella's penance for incest and pregnancy, she now repents her marriage as well as her prior sins. Her spiritual progress is beset with social complications that she and the Friar are powerless against. Alone, she imagines her identity, as well as the genre of the play she appears in, and asks Time to "bear to ages that are yet unborn / A wretched, woeful woman's tragedy" (5.1.7-8). This genre is in tension with the title: is she a "wretched, woeful, woman" or a "whore"? Can both meanings coexist? What is the relationship

between her "tragedy" and the ironic "pity" of the title? Houlahan analyzes the tension embedded in the play's title, claiming Annabella is either a whore *or* worthy of pity; to be both is an act of deconstruction. He writes:

> If you took the harsh moral line of the Cardinal, you would consider her a whore. But if you did so think of her, how could you pity her? You would rather eagerly condemn her to her fate, with as much relish as the Cardinal sentences Putana. If Annabella is a whore, then it is not a pity. If on the other hand you pity her, recalling in particular her untimely, underplayed death, then you would not think of her as a whore. (147)

Houlahan's reasoning here mirrors the patriarchal logic of Soranzo, who neatly encapsulates this line of thought when he says: "Such a damned whore / Deserves no pity" (4.3.77-78). However, this is not the only formula for "pity" that the play presents. The Friar condemns her actions while offering pity; being marked as a "whore" does not preclude pity, and is not an unalterable state of being. Rather than reading the title through the lens of Derridean deconstruction, we can consider the deconstruction of social categories wrought through repentance. This is what Annabella's self-construction as a "wretched, woeful, woman" presents.

Annabella confesses not only her acts, but also her appearance: "Now I confess, / Beauty that clothes the outside of the face / Is cursed, if it be not clothed with grace" (5.1.10-12). Soranzo has just lamented giving his heart to her "faithless face" (4.3.109); she internalizes the conventional misogyny that aligns feminine beauty with deception. By repenting the disjuncture between beauty and grace, Annabella appeals to God to align her interiority and exteriority, clothing them both in "grace." She apostrophizes Giovanni, lamenting the entanglement of their sin: "O Giovanni, that hast had the spoil / Of thine own virtues and my modest fame; / Would

thou hadst been less subject to those stars / That luckless reigned at my nativity!" (5.1.17-20). Blame is interestingly refracted here: she finds fault both in her stars and Giovanni's subjection to them. While her stars are an external force, Giovanni's subjection might be more interiorized. After acknowledging that Giovanni is not guiltless, she switches to describing her blame and wishes to exculpate him further: "Oh, would the scourge due to my black offence / Might pass from thee, that I alone might feel / The torment of an uncontrolled flame!" (21-23). She acknowledges Giovanni is sullied, but with a "black offence" that she claims as her own. Taking this offence from him would mean reclaiming her blame, while absolving him of his own. She still sees herself as destined for hell, but hopes Giovanni's soul may be saved. Giovanni, on the other hand, desires posthumous union more than he hopes for heaven or fears hell.[89] Annabella recasts their romance as death and "sadly vow[s] / Repentance and a leaving of that life / [she] long [has] died in" (35-37).

Annabella's written confession, a "paper double-lined with tears and blood" (5.1.34), makes literal the Friar's advice to Giovanni in the opening scene: "Cry to thy heart, wash every word thou utter'st / In tears and, if't be possible, of blood" (1.1.72-73). The words are both written in and purified by her blood and tears. This instance of unmetaphoring is filled with devotional significance; her writing enacts heartfelt confession and penance, aligning spirit and body. The Friar's appearance offers Catholic absolution while metatheatrically serving as *deus ex machina*: heaven appears to answer her prayer for a passerby to receive her letter. By overhearing Annabella's soliloquy, the Friar comes as close as possible to witnessing her spiritual interiority. He describes being: "Glad in my soul that I have lived to hear / This free confession 'twixt your peace and you" (5.1.41-42). Annabella's letter is not only a token of her

[89] Giovanni consistently refers to Elysium, eschewing the dualistic moralism of heaven and hell.

confession, but a potential catalyst for Giovanni's conversion, as she says: "Bid him read it and repent" (47).

The Friar's parting words are: "My blessing ever rest / With thee, my daughter. Live to die more blessed" (56-57). The Friar gives her his eternal blessing, yet casts her as capable of "more" blessing. While other characters, including Annabella herself, routinely couple redemption with death, the Friar desires that it extend her life. Annabella speaks as a practitioner of *ars moriendi*, revising her life as preface to this moment of grace: "Thanks to the heavens, who have prolonged my breath / To this good use. Now I can welcome death" (5.1.58-59). Does she "die more blessed"? Part of the play's ambiguity is that it unites a "good death" with an unspeakably heinous one. The fate of Annabella's spirit and body, which we may further specify as her spiritual heart and her corporeal heart, are radically disjointed.

When the Friar delivers the letter to Giovanni, he says: "Unrip the seals and see. / The blood's yet seething hot that will anon / Be frozen harder than congealed coral" (5.3.24-26). Opening her confessional letter is presented as an anatomical procedure, linked to opening her heart. The letter does not just contain a confession, it performs a conversion as its ink dries. The blood's transformation from "seething hot" to "frozen" occurs both on the page and in Annabella's body as she converts from lust to chastity. Giovanni replies: "'Tis her hand, / I know it; and 'tis all written in her blood" (31-32). The proximity between "her hand" and "her blood" makes it seem as if Giovanni recognizes not only her handwriting but also her blood. Even though he claims such an intimate recognition, he dismisses it as forgery after disagreeing with the contents (39). Giovanni dismisses the letter as a product of Annabella's hand and a signifier of her heart; instead, he will soon literally appropriate her heart using his hand.

The Friar leaves Parma (and the play) after deeming Giovanni a lost cause: “since no prayer / Can make thee safe, I leave thee to despair” (5.3.70-71). The contrast between the Friar’s final words to Giovanni and to Annabella emphasizes their eternal rupture as reprobate and blessed. Unlike his predecessor in *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Bonaventure does not make a final confession at the end of the play. Therefore, Annabella’s repentance goes unknown to the rest of the characters and Giovanni’s revelation of her heart in the final scene is not coupled with the revelation of her confession written in blood.

Upon confronting Annabella about her confession, in the scene that will culminate in her murder, Giovanni’s paranoid reading of Annabella’s repentance attributes her conversion to new sexual experiences. He accuses her: “What, changed so soon? Hath your new sprightly lord / Found out a trick in night-games more than we / Could know in our simplicity?” (5.5.1-3). Conversion is linked to feminine inconstancy in the question “changed so soon?” Giovanni continues to subversively privilege erotic over religious devotion, saying: “Thou art a faithless sister” (9). His question, “You’ll now be honest, that’s resolved?” (15), deconstructs “honesty” by turning it into a sign of being “faithless.” Spiritual and social honesty are linked to being dishonest to him. Giovanni ignores the argument in favor of breaking unlawful vows,[90] thus making honesty impossible for Annabella, who is trapped by their incestuous vow.

When discussing Soranzo’s plot against their lives, Giovanni and Annabella have a spiritual dialogue, in which they represent doubt and faith, respectively. Giovanni thinks of the apocalypse, saying: “The schoolmen teach that all this globe of earth / Shall be consumed to ashes in a minute” (5.5.30-31). He then calls it into question: “But ’twere somewhat strange / To see the waters burn; could I believe / This might be true, I could believe as well / There might be

[90] Soranzo uses this logic to justify his broken vows to Hippolita (2.2.85-88).

hell or heaven" (32-35). Annabella finishes the line: "That's most certain" (35); her three words affirm the existence of everything Giovanni has called into doubt. While Annabella speaks much less than Giovanni, she completes lines that Giovanni leaves metrically unfinished with simple affirmations of orthodoxy. This pattern continues, suggesting that Giovanni's shortened lines are unfinished thoughts that must be completed with the Christian doctrine Annabella supplies. Rather than providing union with her brother, the shared lines show their spiritual separation. Their dialogue about the afterlife continues:

> GIOVANNI. A dream, a dream; else in this other world
>
> We should know one another.
>
> ANNABELLA. So we shall.
>
> GIOVANNI. Have you heard so?
>
> ANNABELLA. For certain.
>
> GIOVANNI. But d'ee think
>
> That I shall see you there, you look on me;
>
> May we kiss one another, prate or laugh,
>
> Or do as we do here?
>
> ANNABELLA. I know not that (36-41)

Giovanni questions the continuity and discontinuity between this life and the next, pushing the boundaries of continued identity, recognition, kinship, and sexuality into a fantasy of erotic intimacy in the afterlife: he imagines an eternal opportunity to "do as we do here." This fantasy of continued erotic union elides the fact that Annabella has already vowed to discontinue their sexual relationship in this life. In this instance, Annabella can only complete his line with

uncertainty. Giovanni has wandered beyond the scope of Christian soteriology and she has become the doubter, now that the conversation has turned to Giovanni's religion of love.

In the same way that Giovanni will soon ask the onstage audience to inspect her heart, he asks Annabella to inspect his face and eyes. Annabella's brief observation, "Methinks you weep" (5.5.48), is followed by Giovanni elaborate discourses on his tears: "These are the funeral tears / Shed on your grave; these furrowed up my cheeks / When first I loved and knew not how to woo" (5.5.49-51). The tears collapse space and time: they exist in the present (observed on his face), future (signifying the time after her death, and even her burial), and past (as a link to his love before it was communicated or consummated). He continues:

> Fair Annabella, should I here repeat
>
> The story of my life, we might lose time.
>
> Be record all the spirits of the air
>
> And all things else that are, that day and night,
>
> Early and late, the tribute which my heart
>
> Hath paid to Annabella's sacred love
>
> Hath been these tears, which are her mourners now. (52-58)

Giovanni cites his tears as a constitutive part of his identity and a link between his heart and Annabella's love, as well as between his love for her and his mourning of her. His tears are as symbolically important as her heart and Giovanni metonymically links them here. Just like the heart, the tears cannot speak for themselves as anatomical facts; Giovanni must construct their significance rhetorically. Preparing to end Annabella's life, he gives a self-narration, which is characteristically boastful rather than confessional.

He continues: “Pray, Annabella, pray. Since we must part, / Go thou white in thy soul to fill a throne / Of innocence and sanctity in heaven. / Pray, pray, my sister” (63-66). The allusion to *Othello* has been noted (Massai 232n5.5.63-66), but Giovanni’s religion of love makes these lines difficult to comprehend. He has just dismissed her repentance as “faithless[ness]” and called into doubt the existence of heaven while desiring to continue their lovemaking after death. What type of prayer, what type of heaven, and what type of throne of sanctity could he possibly envision here? If this Giovanni’s moment of grace—a desire that his sister be cleansed of their mutual sin—it is fleeting: he soon imprints their sin upon her as his triumphant narrative.

The deathbed has been turned into a completely unstable semiotic field. The symbolism of marital consummation and murder that appear in *Othello* are triangulated: although she is killed by Giovanni, Annabella wears her bridal robes from her marriage to Soranzo[91] and is killed in their “sad marriage bed” (5.5.98). Moreover, Annabella’s pregnancy and the symbolism of her heart link the scene to a birth. By taking her murder upon himself, Giovanni deprives Soranzo of the pleasure of taking vengeance and asserts authorial control. Soranzo would undoubtedly have constructed Annabella as criminal through the act of murder (as his rhetoric in 4.3 makes clear). While critics often treat Giovanni as if he is operating in the same mode, he is not punishing her for her sexual crimes: he is punishing her for repenting them. Moreover, he is not seeking a confession (he is intimately aware of Annabella’s sins). Instead, he attempts to undo her confession and repentance by dislodging her heart from a site of interiorized communion with God to an externalized symbol of their romantic and sexual union. He turns her organ of psychological and spiritual subjectivity into his hideous love object: a paradoxical

[91] Soranzo asks that Annabella “deck herself in all her bridal robes” (5.2.11), echoing *Othello*.

symbol embodying the tension between complete union and absolute possession that Giovanni has displayed throughout the play.

However, by depriving Soranzo of the privilege of being the revenger, he also deprives Annabella of the potential to construct herself as martyr in the face of his oppressive authority. The defiance she showed to Soranzo in 4.3 when she commanded him to kill her and the preparations for death at Soranzo's hand that she has been undergoing suggest that she has constructed herself as martyr and equivocally chaste wife of this oppressive man. Instead of this more clear-cut narrative of death, she is forced into a far more ambiguous scene with Giovanni, during most of which she is unaware of his intentions (and she is never aware of the role her heart will play after her death). Her self-narration is overwritten and her voice is silenced by Giovanni's dominating narrative.

Like Othello and Desdemona, the siblings share a deathbed prayer. Annabella begins: "Ye blessed angels, guard me!" and Giovanni responds: "So say I" (5.5.67). He asks her to kiss him after he asks her to pray, potentially undoing her prayer by insisting upon the repetition of their sin. He continues:

> Give me your hand. How sweetly life doth run
> In these well-coloured veins! How constantly
> These palms do promise health! But I could chide
> With Nature for this cunning flattery. (5.5.74-76)

These lines have been compared to Othello's inspection of Desdemona's hand (Massai 233n5.5.74-6), but again the connotation is radically altered. Unlike Othello, Giovanni praises the vitality of his beloved's hand and, by association, her sexuality. Instead of attacking Annabella for her hand's liveliness, Giovanni posits himself as more knowing than Nature,

which has not provided a sign of her impending death. Her hand is marked by “cunning flattery,” because it, like Annabella herself, is ignorant of the act of murder his hand is about to commit.

Giovanni equivocally requests pardon before Annabella knows that he intends to murder her, saying: “Kiss me again. Forgive me” (5.5.77). Annabella responds, “With my heart” (5.5.77). Annabella may be forgiving Giovanni for their mutually committed sins, accepting him into her heart’s confession as she did in her soliloquy. She echoes Othello’s “Amen, with all my heart!” (5.2.34). While Annabella’s reference to her heart is spiritual and perhaps romantic, Giovanni will make it brutally literal. His request for preemptive pardon is similar to his postmortem extraction of her heart. In both instances he imposes his will upon Annabella without respect to her subjectivity or consent.

Giovanni explains Annabella’s murder to her while performing it: “To save thy fame and kill thee in a kiss” (5.5.84). Killing and kissing evokes *Othello* again, but it is unclear what Giovanni means by saving her fame. He will soon make her infamous, publically exposing her heart in a way that inscribes her as a notorious “whore.” Perhaps he means the fame of their love, to which he remains committed. He continues: “Thus die, and die by me and by my hand. / Revenge is mine; honour doth love command” (85-86). The intensification of “by me and by my hand” underscores his authorship and agency, reinforcing the power of his hand over her heart. “Revenge” is achieved not only against Soranzo by baffling his plot, but also against Annabella by punishing her “faithless” conversion.

When Annabella questions his act, saying: “Oh brother, by your hand?” (87) Giovanni responds:

> When thou art dead
>
> I’ll give my reasons for’t; for to dispute

> With thy—even in thy death—most lovely beauty
> Would make me stagger to perform this act,
> Which I most glory in. (87-91)

Giovanni's words are again set in tension with Annabella's body. He refuses to "dispute" not with her, but with her "beauty," suggesting her body is her sole rhetorical power. By denying her the opportunity to hear and discuss his actions, he denies her the chance to compete with his narrative. Giovanni's use of "dispute," the word that begins the play, underscores that this is a tragedy of Giovanni's heretical disputation as it is played out upon Annabella's body. The equivocal promise to "give [his] reasons" to the corpse can refer to postmortem discussion or the anatomical communication he inscribes; either way, it is a one-sided conversation.

Annabella's dying words both condemn and absolve Giovanni: "Forgive him, heaven, and me, my sins. Farewell, / Brother, unkind, unkind! Mercy, great heaven" (5.5.92-93). Annabella both unites and divides them in these lines. She asks for joint pardon, even for Giovanni (who never repents), but the word "sins" is only mentioned with the possessive "my." She calls him "unkind," condemning both his incest and his murderous action, with the repetition signaling the proliferation of his sins. She labels him as "unkind," in implicit contrast to her kindness. While he accuses her of being a "faithless sister" for breaking their vow, her accusation that he is an "unkind" brother challenges him for violating the laws of kinship, compassion, and nature.[92] Annabella's last words gesture towards, but invert, Desdemona's final words: "Commend me to my kind lord" (5.2.125). The final plea for "Mercy" could be on the behalf of Giovanni or herself. Like Desdemona, she asks for his sins to die with her in a Christological gesture.

Giovanni does indeed offer more explanation after her death:

[92] Houlahan also notes a pun on "unkinned," and describes death as unkinning and making more than kin (145).

> She's dead. Alas, good soul! The hapless fruit,
> That in her womb received its life from me,
> Hath from me a cradle and a grave.
> I must not dally. This sad marriage bed,
> In all her best, bore her alive and dead.
> Soranzo, thou hast missed thy aim in this:
> I have prevented now thy reaching plots
> And killed a love for whose each drop of blood
> I would have pawned my heart. Fair Annabella,
> How over-glorious art thou in thy wounds,
> Triumphing over infamy and hate!
> Shrink not, courageous hand; stand up my heart,
> And boldly act my last and greater part. (95-107)

He provides the briefest of eulogies for the "good soul," before focusing on memorializing himself. While the words "good soul" could be no more than convention, they still gesture toward the part of Annabella that Giovanni will overwrite: her soul in contrast to her body and the goodness of her repentance in contrast to the continuance of their sin. Poised between "She's dead" and "The hapless fruit," the phrase "good soul" could also refer to the fetus that has died. Giovanni literalizes Soranzo's image of Annabella's womb as a grave, and represents himself the proud author of the fetus' birth and death, wielding the godlike power to give life and take it away. The two references to the "heart" are both directed at his own, thus linking his heart to the one that will appear in the following scene. He also links his "hand" and "heart": both are courageously emboldened and assert his identity and authorship. His apostrophe to the dead

Annabella continues to praise her beauty. He constructs her bleeding body as playing a supporting role in his triumphant narrative, eliding her resistance to death by his hand. He closes the scene focusing on her beautiful corpse, rather than her "good soul."

All of the narratives of the heart that I have analyzed are shockingly called into question in the play's infamous climax: Giovanni enters the final scene "*with a heart upon his dagger*" (5.6.8 s.d.). The notorious stage prop is interestingly depersonalized in this stage direction; it is "a heart," rather than "Annabella's heart." This choice could reflect theatrical realities, since the origin of the prop is anonymous. Most likely an animal heart, it is a cadaverous presence wrenched from narrative legibility. The reading audience is given the same shock of misrecognition—the same cadaverous riddle—as the viewing audience. Considering that an animal's heart played the role of Annabella's heart, Houlahan views the prop as a failure that severs words and things (137). While Houlahan's deconstructive reading considers theater's "enfeebled means" (144) of representation, the fact that animal remains can perform human ones reinforces the striking anonymity of cadaverous matter and its queer agency that collapses categories of identity, even human identity itself.

Giovanni describes himself as: "Trimmed in the reeking blood / That triumphs over death" (5.6.9-10). Although Giovanni presents himself as Christ-like, the "triumph" is shared unequally between the couple: Giovanni triumphs over Annabella's death. Annabella's blood, which is tied to his own through familial and erotic symbolism, is used to prop up his heroic self-narrative. When the onstage audience expresses confusion, he responds:

> Be not amazed. If your misgiving hearts
> Shrink at an idle sight, what bloodless fear
> Of coward passion would have seized your senses,

> Had you beheld the rape of life and beauty
>
> Which I have acted? My sister, oh, my sister! (5.6.15-19)

The cadaverous heart causes the hearts of those who see it to “Shrink,” while his own was able to “stand up” and perform the horrific act (5.5.106). He boasts of the hardening of his heart required to commit the deed, reinscribing it as phallic power, and reduces Annabella’s heart to a spectacle of his own courageous heart. As in Othello’s suicidal speech, Giovanni couples his boast with regret when his rhetoric breaks down and he laments his lost sister. The repetition of “sister,” like Othello’s repetition of “wife” in the line “My wife, my wife! what wife? I have no wife” (5.2.98), highlights the chasm between the gendered character and the cadaverous object.

Annabella’s heart is a silent, cadaverous presence that cannot be contained by Giovanni’s flowing rhetoric. For the final time, and in the most striking way, Annabella’s body is in tension with Giovanni’s disputation. The denarrativized heart overwhelms Giovanni’s metaphors, as Neill explains:

> [W]hat renders the final tableau enigmatic is not so much its associative vagueness as the welter of competing definitions and explanations it invites. In the absence of any controlling ritual context, no one of these can be confirmed; so that the heart always threatens to become nothing more than itself, a grisly tautology—a piece of offal *en brochette*, brutally stripped of all vestiges of metaphor. (“Riddle” 165)

The “grisly tautology” that Neill describes is not limited to Annabella’s heart, but rather is the defining feature of the cadaverous resemblance, which, in Blanchot’s formulation, *resembles itself*. Cadaverous parts undermine the signifying systems that attempt to contain them, simply

by being nothing other than themselves. By drawing attention to the cadaverous part's status as tautological riddle, *'Tis Pity* anticipates Blanchot's concept.

While I agree that the staged heart is a cadaverous, denarrativized presence, I hope to work against the assumption that the spiritual dimension of Annabella's heart can be undone, erased, or exposed as nonexistent through Giovanni's violent literalization. The assumption that the literal heart negates or unmetaphors the spiritual one comes from privileging the paranoid epistemology of revealing; in this reading, the "ocular proof" of the heart forecloses the possibility of a spiritual interiority that is inaccessible to audiences onstage and off. The myriad of potential narratives for constructing the dead body's importance—criminal, saintly, romantic—fall away in the face of the heart's cadaverous presence. However, these narratives are still available for reparative recuperation.

Giovanni continues:

> You came to feast, my lords, with dainty fare;
> I came to feast too, but I digged for food
> In a much richer mine than gold or stone
> Of any value balanced. 'Tis a heart,
> A heart, my lords, in which is mine entombed. (5.6.22-26)

The cannibalistic imagery reduces Annabella's corpse to a feast and a natural resource. While Othello describes his murder as casting away a pearl, Giovanni imagines himself digging in a rich mine: in a shocking and grotesque literalization, he has not lost Annabella but rather unearthed her heart as his valuable possession. The repetition of "a heart" (25, 26) evokes their "two united hearts" (5.3.12), while the division across two lines evokes their violent separation. As in the stage direction, it is "a heart." He attempts to re-metaphor the heart by claiming that his

heart is “entombed” in it, but the deathly imagery is only literal for Annabella. He posits himself as “glorious executioner” (5.6.32) and martyr. While critics often interpret Giovanni’s anatomization of Annabella through a scientific lens,[93] this is a devotional anatomy: he isn’t revealing the hidden truth of Annabella’s body, but rather constructing a relic of their love.

The heart is not anatomically interesting because it is not marked by otherness. Incest could presumably be revealed through “monstrous” births (Wiseman 184), but the heart does not perform monstrosity. Its revelation is horrific, but the heart itself is strikingly ordinary. The play’s anatomical scrutiny stops short of revealing the fetus. In this sense, the play thwarts the anatomical gaze and its relentless fascination with the pregnant body. The play not only refuses to perform the double-dissection (of woman and fetus) that anatomists prized, but also refuses to link incest to somatic otherness.

Giovanni desires the guests to inspect the heart and recognize it: “Look well upon’t. D’ee know’t?” (5.6.27). Like the Gravedigger in *Hamlet*, Giovanni invites onlookers to guess the former identity of a cadaverous object. The question also parodies the convention of the heart as a legible text, imprinted with Annabella’s identity and the image of himself as her lover. Instead of showing any recognition, Vasques says: “What strange riddle’s this?” (28). The “riddle” refers to both Giovanni’s enigmatic words and the cadaverous heart. Giovanni attempts to collapse both into one text, making the heart his emblem, but the heart resists this appropriation.

Giovanni constructs the heart’s confession with his language, appropriating its identity and meaning: “’Tis Annabella’s heart; ’tis! Why d’ee startle? / I vow ’tis hers. This dagger’s point ploughed up / Her fruitful womb” (29-31). He bafflingly implies that the audience is startled due to disbelieving the heart’s identity, rather than because of the monstrosity of the act.

---

[93] Marchitello compares Giovanni’s strategy to Vesalius’ anatomies: “As Vesalius opens the female body ‘for the sake of the hymen’ and the attendant story its presence/absence can be made to tell, so Giovanni imagines he can open Annabella’s ‘womb’ and find in it her heart, that he can open her heart and find in it his own” (37).

He offers the "vow" of its authenticity, since such proof cannot be found in the heart itself.[94] The reference to her womb associates it with the heart. The heart is an overdetermined symbol of Annabella's identity, their mutual love, Giovanni's possession, their sexual consummation, and the fetus they created. The heart functions here as metonymy of their sexual love and its deathly consequences; it is a womb/tomb symbol that collapses the literal and the figurative. Her womb's confession is subsumed into the spectacle of the heart, as Giovanni continues: "her too fruitful womb too soon bewrayed / The happy passage of our stolen delights / And made her mother to a child unborn" (47-49). Annabella's body is excessive and treacherous: marked as "too fruitful" and conceiving "too soon." Giovanni links this somatic confession to betrayal, as he did her spiritual confession. By murdering her, Giovanni revises Annabella's body from "too fruitful" womb to tomb. As metonymy for the womb, the heart is turned into a signifier of her sexual deeds, and as a romantic trope, it memorializes their love, but the prop says nothing (at least to the onstage audience) of the spiritual state in which she died. To the audience aware of Annabella's spiritual journey, the heart equivocates—it is a site of hidden interiority that does not yield up its secrets, even to this intense scrutiny.

Annabella's heart, as it appears in the final scene, is not her confession. It is not recognized as her or hers. Giovanni, unlike Soranzo, is not seeking Annabella's confession when he opens her body. Instead, he is seeking to create a narrative of himself: he presents her heart as a boast of his glory and his love. His narration of their love is steeped in possessiveness: "nine months I lived / A happy monarch of her heart and her" (43-44). The conventional trope of male lover as monarch and female body as territory is made savagely literal by the division of "her heart and her," a rhetorical separation of Annabella's identity and her heart that mirrors the anatomical operation Giovanni has just performed. The heart, which has been referred to

[94] Giovanni's vow is not believed until Vasques confirms that he has witnessed Annabella's remains.

throughout the play, can no longer signify properly in the romantic sense now that Giovanni's possession of Annabella's heart has been made grotesquely literal. Giovanni's "riddle" is that he has made his sister's heart his own. He has rewritten the trope of the heart as a confessional text to serve his religion of love and honor, idolatry and vengeance. These are the metaphors that fail, as Neill shows, and through their extravagance the play "subjects the metaphorizing process itself to intense ironic scrutiny" (Neill, "Riddle" 158). Outside of the spiritual narrative of Annabella's repentance, and in horrifically literalized excess of the romantic narrative of their union, the denarrativized heart is a cadaverous presence.

However, portraying the heart literally does not necessarily foreclose all possibilities for its symbolic relevance. While Giovanni's metaphors fail in the face of his brutal violence, there is no reason to believe that Annabella's construction of her own heart is voided. Annabella does not exist as the heart-prop, just as Gloriana does not exist as the skull-prop in *The Revenger's Tragedy*. If Annabella is to be found in the heart, it is in the heart's concealed narrative—its opaque signifying power as a site of her spiritual interiority. This narrative is a record not only of sexual deeds, but also of repentance; it is a narrative that could never be catalogued by an anatomist. The spiritual dimension of the heart cannot be unmetaphored or reduced to mere matter because it eludes the human eye by definition. The staged heart and Annabella's confession work in tandem to create an equivocal heart. The staged prop oscillates between "a heart" (a cadaverous presence that is profoundly anonymous) and Annabella's heart (a site of her sexual and spiritual interiority). The cadaverous heart coexists with the spiritual heart, in the same way that the putrefying body is the raw material for resurrection in the Christian paradigm.

Florio, the father of the tragic couple, dies of a broken heart (5.6.62); his spiritual and somatic crisis is an interiorized counterpoint to Annabella's sensationally displayed heart.[95] The bloodline collapses into a blood bath, and Giovanni proudly states: "Now survives / None of our house but I, gilt in the blood / Of a fair sister and a hapless father" (65-67). Giovanni is covered in the figurative blood of his father and the literal blood of his sister, and revises his guilt for these murders as triumphant gilding. While stabbing Soranzo, Giovanni says: "Soranzo, see this heart which was thy wife's: / Thus I exchange it royally for thine, / And thus and thus" (71-73). The heart, connected in the past tense to Annabella and their marriage, is weaponized in the present. Like Gloriana's skull, the cadaverous female body (itself a paradox) is turned into an agent of revenge. Unlike Vindice, however, Giovanni does not claim that the act pleases Annabella. Instead, he gets pleasure by mocking their marriage and making the "exchange" of hearts brutally literal.

Giovanni's preoccupation with authorship persists in his final words: "Whose hand gave me this wound?" (5.6.97). Content with the knowledge that Vasques dealt him the final blow, he is unconcerned about the fate of his soul. The Cardinal offers Giovanni the opportunity for a final confession, saying: "Think on thy life and end, and call for mercy" (104), but Giovanni rejects it:

> GIOVANNI. Mercy? Why, I have found it in this justice.
>
> CARDINAL. Strive yet to cry to heaven.
>
> GIOVANNI. Oh, I bleed fast.
>
> Death, thou art a guest long looked for; I embrace

[95] Houlahan describes Florio's death as "the inverse of the riddle of Annabella's heart. For Florio may indeed be heartbroken, and the pathological cause of death may indeed be cardiac arrest. The characters onstage can 'see' Florio is dying, but they cannot see his breaking heart. They make the obvious metaphorical link that it is Giovanni who has broken his father's heart" (145).

> Thee and thy wounds. Oh, my last minute comes.
>
> Where'er I go, let me enjoy this grace:
>
> Freely to view my Annabella's face. (105-110)

This marks the final separation between Giovanni and Annabella, in life and presumably after death. She repents multiple times and dies calling upon heaven's mercy for both of them. He dies rejecting it, seeking only the worldly comfort of revenge as "justice" and the hope of posthumous reunion with Annabella. This reunion has nothing to do with "heaven," which he refuses to "cry to" or invoke. Viewing Annabella could occur in Elysium or even hell (the only place where their posthumous reunion is depicted in the play, through the Friar's vivid imagery [3.6.24-30]). He equates "grace" with viewing "Annabella's face," remaining faithful to his idolatry until the end. These final words repeat the couplet from Annabella's soliloquy (5.1.12-13), but subvert the meaning of "grace" to keep the focus on the exteriority of Annabella's "face" rather than her interiorized conversion. Giovanni appropriates not only her heart, but also the words of her heartfelt confession in his final anti-confession.

Although the Cardinal allowed Giovanni the opportunity to repent and ask for mercy, he is merciless when dealing with the female characters. Putana is ordered to "be ta'en / Out of the city, for example's sake / There to be burnt to ashes" (5.6.137-39). The social importance of turning her into an "example" warning others of the dangers of the sexual female body is more important than offering mercy or pardon to the individual body and soul. The Cardinal orders the expedient disposal of bodies and wealth (taking much greater care to describe the disposal of the wealth), saying: "Take up these slaughtered bodies, see them buried; / And all the gold and jewels, or whatsoever, / Confiscate by the canons of the Church, / We seize upon to the Pope's proper use" (151-54).

His final words turn Annabella into an example:

We shall have time

To talk at large of all; but never yet

Incest and murder have so strangely met.

Of one so young, so rich in nature's store,

Who could not say, ''Tis pity she's a whore?' (159-63)

He speaks of her embodied fate with the disembodied and detached voice of common opinion and authority. The Cardinal's concluding words (which voice the play's title) are in the present tense. Annabella no longer exists, but the characters continue to assert the continuance of her identity as a "whore." Since Annabella is absent from the final scene, these words are directed at her only continued presence—her heart. If the heart is a confession, of the sins of Giovanni, Annabella, or both, the Cardinal's response is not to offer any hint of forgiveness, or even the "pity" upon which he remarks. His closure is that of the anatomist, creating a legible taxonomy: the heart is a specimen of whorish femininity. "She's a whore" effaces the trajectory of seduction, the mutually committed sin, Annabella's repentance, and Giovanni's heinous murder; it turns Annabella's sexual behaviors into ontology and gives her sole responsibility for the tragedy. Like Desdemona's handkerchief after it is separated from her body, Annabella's disembodied heart becomes a misleading signifier of female sexuality that reduces subjectivity and desire to the paranoid regime of "ocular proof." The Cardinal's concluding speech is the final attempt to narrativize the cadaverous heart.

The Cardinal's last words seem to deny the possibility of redemption or grace, but Friar Bonaventure has a different narrative of Annabella in the form of her confession written in blood. Annabella desires to pass on her "wretched, woeful woman's tragedy" (5.1.8), a

competing, self-authored narrative of her guilt and desire for redemption—a reparative reading of her situation in contrast to the paranoid criminalization of her as a "whore." Like Desdemona's "Willow" song,[96] this confession is a feminine lament, poised between reparative love and suicidal submission, that exists in an equivocal relationship to the play's main narrative.

The division in spiritual status between Annabella and Giovanni leaves the possibility of posthumous reunion unclear. Either they will be radically divided, or Annabella's plea for mercy for her brother will be answered. More cynically, Giovanni's desire to continue their incestuous union—in a sense, to undo his sister's conversion—will prevail in Elysium or hell. The play presents these possibilities, along with the more subversive view that the afterlife is a fable, but does not endorse an answer. This serves as a parallel to Othello's comment about seeing, but not reuniting with, Desdemona as her appearance hurls him to hell.

Giovanni discusses posthumous reunion, but his dismemberment of Annabella's body shows his unconcern for her bodily resurrection: his desire to possess her heart as a relic overpowers any concern for her bodily integrity. He chooses worldly spectacle over faith in resurrection. Both plays look forward to the type of resurrections I will discuss in the following chapter, but without offering any certainty of the lovers' reunions. Instead, the tableaux of death express characters' fantasies of the afterlife. In *Othello*, the dead bodies embrace, dying upon a kiss, offering hope of reunion, even if it is complicated by the presence of Emilia's corpse. In '*Tis Pity*, Giovanni clutches Annabella's heart, worshipping the idol he has made of her.

---

[96] Philippa Berry interprets the Willow song as the "interwoven voices of the living, the dead, and the non-human" that links "a chain of female deaths" to the natural world (56-57).

# Chapter 4: The Aesthetics of Resurrection[97]

In the previous chapters, I have focused on the material remains of dead bodies: their excavation, anatomization, and idolization, their use by living characters and their equivocal identities as cadaverous matter. This final chapter focuses on the final act in the drama of the dead body: resurrection. Resurrected bodies are cadavers that return. The radical ontological shift that happens when the cadaver resurrects presents a new paradigm for interpreting human identity as well as categories of sex, gender, and sexuality. In drama, resurrection plots provide means for fantasizing ontological changes in the body, dramatizing the paradoxes of continuity and change that underpin resurrection. Plays can speculate about what continues and what is transformed as a human becomes a corpse and a corpse becomes a resurrected body. Resurrection entails a radical change in subjectivity, even as it promises the return of the antemortem embodied person. I will consider how gendered subjectivity is revised when the dead resurrect onstage. In theology and in theater, theories of resurrection imagine queer corporeal afterlives. Resurrected bodies push the limits of gender, sexuality, and humanity. I will consider the glorified body as both a theological and theatrical concept. By staging glorified bodies, plays engage in queer object-oriented speculation, inviting audiences to consider human bodies as posthuman objects, as well as radically transformed gendered subjects.

In 1611, the King's Men performed two plays that retrieved female characters from graves: Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and the anonymous play known as *The Lady's Tragedy*,

---

[97] Portions of this chapter have appeared in a different context in my article, "Middleton's Traffic in Dead Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*."

which has been attributed to Thomas Middleton.[98] Richard Robinson may have played the resurrected figure in both plays, highlighting the sense of theatrical return both within and between the plays (Briggs, "Parallel Texts" 835). In both plays, the paradox of art and nature is integral to the dramatic traversing of boundaries between life and death, and both plays make aestheticizing female remains central to the metatheatrics of resurrection. Both plays deconstruct the binary between the aesthetic animation of automata and natural (or supernatural) resurrections of bodies. Theatrical magic conceptualizes resurrection as artful and natural and posits the resurrected body as both aesthetic object and human being.

*The Winter's Tale*'s theatrical magic positions Hermione's body as a statue: the actor's body must perform the role of an "it," posing as an inanimate object before being revealed or revived as a living human. While *The Winter's Tale* places Hermione in an explicitly aesthetic context, the transformative moment is the revelation that she is emphatically *not* a painted statue, but rather flesh and blood: the art itself is revealed to be nature. While Hermione's body is natural, her resurrection is an "artificial miracle"[99]: a theatrical miracle that occurs within the aesthetic frame of the fiction. *The Lady's Tragedy*, on the other hand, shows the dead flesh of the Lady subjected to art. The Lady commits suicide to avoid being raped by the Tyrant, who then steals the corpse from the grave and attempts to force the illusion of life upon the dead body. While the Tyrant's attempts to revivify the body are futile, the play dramatizes the promise of corporeal resurrection through the Lady's ghost, who returns to care for the body and assure its

---

[98] The play is included in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007). References to *The Lady's Tragedy* are to the "A" text of Julia Briggs' dual edition in this collection, unless otherwise noted. I follow Briggs in using the title *The Lady's Tragedy* for the anonymous play that is also known as *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*. I agree with Briggs' title's foregrounding of the Lady's centrality, rather than George Buc's title's foregrounding of the generic similarities to *The Maid's Tragedy*. For a further discussion of the play's authorship and title, see Briggs, "'The Lady Vanishes': Problems of Authorship and Editing in the Middleton Canon."

[99] This phrase is from Izaak Walton's description of Donne's resurrection monument, which I discuss in the first chapter.

reburial in the hope of future, and proper, resurrection. Aided by Govianus, who was betrothed to the Lady in life, the dead Lady takes revenge upon the Tyrant by weaponizing art: the corpse is painted with poison and kills the Tyrant with a kiss. This reuse of the poisonous kiss trope from *The Revenger's Tragedy* is imbued with new meaning due to the agency of the dead Lady, an agency that prefigures the return of embodied identity through carnal resurrection. While resurrection in *The Winter's Tale* occurs only within the frame of the narrative, *The Lady's Tragedy* promises a future resurrection of the dead and reburied character, a promise that undergirds the reverent treatment of the corpse by the ghost and Govianus and makes the Tyrant's aesthetic manipulation of the body more heinous. Rather than depicting an "artificial miracle," *The Lady's Tragedy*'s representation of the corpse's aesthetic manipulation is polarized: the Tyrant's actions travesty resurrection, while the ghost and Govianus, as well as the play's structure, express traditional hope in carnal resurrection.

While my previous chapters have focused on theatrical representations of dead bodies as cadaverous objects, resurrection plots endow dead bodies with subjectivity. Subjectivity separates person from object in the plays, and the dramatization of subjectivity allows for the return of the person rather than merely the animation of the dead object. Both plays experiment with staging posthumous subjectivity and blur the lines between human subjectivity and the agency of objects. The Lady is staged as corpse and ghost in *The Lady's Tragedy*, and Hermione's subjectivity as statue is complexly revealed and concealed. The characters that return in both plays are also props; they can be read as resurrected bodies and posthuman objects. As such, the subjectivity these postmortem characters, simultaneously women and objects, is queered. In *The Lady's Tragedy*, a dummy and effigy serve as surrogates for the dead Lady's body, highlighting both the status of the dead body as a neuter object and the ability of inanimate

objects—including dummies, stones, and cadavers—to play gendered roles. Both of these aspects highlight the queer agency of props: their ability to reveal the performativity, and temporality, of gendered personhood.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, Christian metaphors for resurrection depict the body's return from death through aesthetic and natural imagery. The question of whether resurrection falls under the scope of art or nature drives *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy*. Both plays use aestheticized, feminized dead bodies to deconstruct boundaries between art and nature. Both plays draw from natural, aesthetic, and spiritual imagery in their metatheatrical exploration of how drama can and cannot bring back the dead. Theatrical magic transforms aesthetic objects into revivified characters, even as it transforms living actors into aesthetic objects. *The Winter's Tale* presents art as the closest worldly approximation of glorification and draws from the poetics of resurrection to create the "artificial miracle" at its climax. *The Lady's Tragedy*, on the other hand, highlights the dangers of artifice, the delusion of fantasies of return, and the hubris of attempting to revivify the dead. However, while the Tyrant's necrophilic obsession that fuels his faith in art is condemned, art itself is not. The Tyrant cannot make the Lady live again by painting her, but he unwittingly brings her back from the dead as a ghost seeking vengeance due to his mistreatment of the body. The use of painting as a tool for vengeance that suggests a temporary revivification of the Lady's body complicates the relationship between life and death, and between nature and art. While the Tyrant hopes for an erotic resurrection of an aesthetic object, the Lady resurrects as a revenger instead. The Lady's subjectivity is made central, along with her hope for resurrection that necessitates reburial. While the depiction of the dead Lady's body can be aligned with posthumanism, the representation of the dead Lady's subjectivity expresses traditional faith in resurrection. It is messianic rather than posthuman. The play's

central paradox is its co-mingling of ironic and earnest treatments of death and resurrection, a paradox that can be aligned with its exploration of the indignities of death and the promise of an embodied afterlife.

In both plays, the characters that return from death are women praised for their chastity. In looking at how the connections between life, death, and resurrection are played out over aestheticized, feminized corpses, my strategy is similar to the one Elisabeth Bronfen employs in *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic*. Bronfen begins by establishing how representations of dead women are deemed pleasing: "The aesthetic representation of death lets us repress our knowledge of the reality of death precisely because here death occurs *at* someone else's body and *as* an image" (x). *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy* take the aestheticization of death further, directing the viewer's gaze to feminized dead bodies while offering hope of resurrection. Aestheticization is key to revivification in both plays, whether the character returns fully or fleetingly. The aesthetic celebration of the dead woman that Bronfen traces from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century finds one of its roots in the resurrected female characters on the early modern stage. The theatrical representation of the chaste resurrected body relates to the development of the aesthetic category of the dead woman, a category which, as my dissertation has argued, is a contradiction in terms, like any other postmortem category of gender and sexuality. While aestheticizing cadaverous remains can parody gender, as occurs in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, resurrection enables a return of gendered embodiment, but a gendered embodiment queered by its passage through death.

Rather than dramatizing a general resurrection, the plays present gendered resurrections: the return of the dead is inextricable from the preservation of chastity and femininity. In this way, the plays conform to a strain in theological discourse in which chastity not only prefigures

the glorified body, but is also rewarded by posthumous preservation and resurrection. For example, Caroline Walker Bynum considers the moral implications of Jerome's portrayal of resurrected bodies as retaining sexual organs:

> Jerome was concerned about sexuality as well as sexual difference. It is as if our genitals must be present in heaven, so that our victory over them—and our reward for this victory—can continue for all eternity. In his attack on Rufinus in 401, he states explicitly that amputation of the members in the resurrection would mean we would all come to equality of condition; the virgin would then be equal to the prostitute. (Bynum 91)

My project has considered how virgins are indeed equal to prostitutes in death: no such distinctions can be applied to cadaverous matter. Theorizing resurrection allows such distinctions to reappear, but their reappearance is not inevitable. Discursive strategies must be employed to construct chastity and simultaneously reward it with resurrection.

By staging exemplary chaste women, killing them, and bringing them back, the plays engage in a complex examination of glorifying and objectifying women. I will consider the glorified body as both a theological and a theatrical category and will argue that the construction of chastity undergirds both. While my first chapter surveyed theological speculation regarding the glorified body, this chapter considers how the glorified body can be staged. Glorified chastity in the plays is both an ontological state and an emerging subjectivity. Glorified chaste bodies are made into aesthetic objects of display; however, they are not merely objects. Chaste subjectivity emerges as a complex form of posthumous interiority. The chaste bodies of Hermione and the dead Lady become the property of others, yet chaste subjectivity is a form of self-ownership that Hermione and the Lady assert from beyond the grave. Hermione-as-statue and the dead Lady's

corpse are explicitly feminized objects, and can even be read as commentary on objectified women. Yet resurrection imagery enables the return of subjectivity for both figures, allowing Hermione and the Lady to express agency and will, and to give, deny, or defer consent.

Resurrection plots were wildly popular on the early modern stage.[100] While resurrection plots were deployed for a variety of dramatic ends, Shakespeare frequently aligns resurrection with redeeming the chastity of female characters, from Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* to Imogen in *Cymbeline*, and most significantly, Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. *The Lady's Tragedy* also makes chastity an undying feature of the Lady. Chaste resurrections allude to and overcome the anatomical quest for "evidence" of chastity that I analyze in chapter 3. "Proving" chastity shifts from an epistemological anxiety to a matter of ontology and faith in these plays; chaste embodiment becomes the effect of an aesthetic strategy rather than something revealed through anatomical inquiry. Through staging resurrections, anatomical investigation of the dead body is replaced with aesthetic wonder at its return.

While the treatment of Gloriana's skull satirizes the eroticization and aestheticization of feminized dead bodies, *The Winter's Tale* makes aestheticizing the body central to its theatrical magic. In *The Lady's Tragedy*, the dead Lady more explicitly alludes to Gloriana's skull by repeating the poisonous kiss, but the dead Lady's resurrected subjectivity transforms the meaning of the act. In both *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy*, Christian beliefs regarding resurrection are interwoven with resurrection tropes from classical myths. In particular, both plays relate the myth of Pygmalion's animation of an art object to the resurrection of dead bodies. Sean Benson writes that in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* "Shakespeare fuses the stories of Pygmalion, Proserpina, and the Resurrection" (158). Benson emphasizes the religious dimensions Shakespeare layers onto Classical recognition tropes (151).

[100]Forsythe provides an extensive list of plays that feature resurrection plots (89-91).

Hermione is staged as both an animated object and a subject that returns. The statue trope allows the play to speculate about the materiality of the resurrected body within the framework of aesthetics. *The Lady's Tragedy*, on the other hand, transforms the associations of the Pygmalion myth by incorporating allusions to Lucrece. The narrative of Lucrece not only informs the Lady's suicide, but also persists in the ghost's concerns regarding the necrophilic treatment of the corpse. The play thus engages with issues of sexual violence, consent, and culpability after death, as well as posthumous preservation and aesthetic reanimation.

Lodhia considers how "playing dead" in *The Lady's Tragedy*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and *The Duchess of Malfi* prefigures Cartesian mechanistic dualism in some ways, and privileges the body over spirit. The agency of dead or false bodies as automata in these plays "epitomize[s] the power and identity crises at stake in bodily fashioning, where bodies devoid of souls (still) possess agency" (Lodhia 137). The doctrine of resurrection, however, also privileges the body by drawing attention to its fall and rise. While I have interpreted Gloriana's skull as a queer automaton, the staging of the Lady's corpse pushes beyond parody and instead alludes to the return of embodied subjectivity through resurrection. The staging of Hermione's statue and the Lady's corpse not only engages in experiments in dramatizing automata, but also, and more fundamentally, theorizes the return of embodied selves by dramatizing the continuity of identity after death.

## Monumental Resurrection in *The Winter's Tale*

By staging Hermione as a statue, *The Winter's Tale* deconstructs the binaries between human and object, life and death, art and nature. Statues gesture toward the fantasy of immortality through memorialization, as well as the inanimate thingness of the corpse. In the same way that the play deconstructs the binary between art and nature in its "gillyvor" passage

(4.4.79-103), which places the art of flower grafting, as well as aesthetic manipulation more generally, in the domain of nature, Hermione-as-statue is both a natural body and an aesthetic object. Hermione's transformation from woman to inanimate thing to living being (from life to death and back again) tropes the death and resurrection of the body, but each step of the body's change is revealed to be the effect of an aesthetic strategy.

The aesthetic strategy that Hermione and Paulina employ triumphs over Leontes' anatomical and punitive designs. Leontes, like Othello, believes that proof confirming his jealousy can be found and punished at the site of his wife's body, although Leontes is less concerned with proof than with punishment. He also fantasizes subjecting the infant Perdita's body to punitive anatomy, saying "The bastard brains with these my proper hands / Shall I dash out" (2.3.140-41). He believes the infidelity he suspects indicates a flaw in his wife's nature, something that contaminates him as well as their son, who is infected by sharing Hermione's blood: "I am glad you did not nurse him. / Though he does bear some signs of me, yet you / Have too much blood in him" (2.1.56-58). Since Hermione is an exemplary woman, her ontology has significance for women generally. Antigonus expresses this belief when he tells the jealous Leontes: "For every inch of woman in the world, / Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false, / If she be" (2.1.137-39). He quantifies and qualifies not women, but rather "woman's flesh." Female subjectivity is effaced by the focus on the ontology of female flesh and the anatomically fueled desire to analyze every "dram" of it. By staging Hermione as a statue, the play glorifies "woman's flesh," not by dissecting it, but rather by displaying it as miraculously intact. The aesthetic strategy of Hermione posing as a statue does more than objectify the chaste body. When the statue is revealed as a living being, Hermione's subjectivity returns.

Playing dead is part of the strategy; Hermione's apparent death converts Leontes from suspicion to faith in a way that no testimony, evidence, or oracle could. Leontes' jealousy is believed to be part of him until he dies, as Camillo puts it:

> [Y]ou may as well
> Forbid the sea for to obey the moon
> As or by oath remove or counsel shake
> The fabric of his folly, whose foundation
> Is pil'd upon his faith, and will continue
> The standing of his body. (1.2.426-31)

While Camillo aligns Leontes' jealousy with the "standing of his body," it is when Hermione's body falls that Leontes undergoes an existential change from faith in his suspicion to faith in his wife. Mamillius' death and Hermione's swoon serve as a mysterious form of proof. When Leontes exclaims: "I have too much believ'd mine own suspicion" (3.2.151), he is converted by the death (and seeming death) of loved ones, rather than persuaded by evidence of Hermione's chastity.

Paulina uses death as a tool to work Leontes' repentance. She urges him: "Look down / And see what death is doing" (3.2.148-49). The present progressive tense creates an image of death in process, a Dance of Death in which Hermione is being claimed before our eyes. She announces Hermione's death with superlatives: "the Queen, the Queen, / The sweet'st, dear'st creature's dead" (3.2.200-1). As if one announcement is insufficient, she repeats her claim: "I say she's dead; I'll swear't" (3.2.203). By escalating from "say" to an intent to "swear," she posits a speech act as proof of death. Of course, death is "proven" through speech in theater. Leontes and the audience are persuaded by this theatrical manipulation of life and death.

Paulina continues:

If word nor oath

Prevail not, go and see. If you can bring

Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,

Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you

As I would do the gods. (3.2.203-7)

Paulina's words serve as "proof" of Hermione's death, even as her imagery of life returning to the body presages the resurrection of the final scene. *The Winter's Tale* engages in a metatheatrical experiment, examining how art can give life and take it away.[101] Can words, oaths, or the spectacle of a non-breathing body give evidence of death? Leontes desires to see the "dead bodies," but his phrase shows that he already accepts Paulina's word that Hermione is dead. He says:

Prithee bring me

To the dead bodies of my queen and son.

One grave shall be for both; upon them shall

The causes of their death appear (unto

Our shame perpetual). Once a day I'll visit

The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there

Shall be my recreation. (3.2.234-40)

The audience does not see "the dead bodies," but rather accepts the deaths on faith.

The play, like the Christian doctrine of resurrection, unsettles the idea of death itself. *The Winter's Tale* offers "proofs" of death that turn out to be false, from Leontes' viewing of the

---

[101] Leonard Barkan describes the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* as "one of [Shakespeare's] most intricate essays in artistic self-consciousness" (661), which uses the artistry of theater to comment on and surpass sculpted masterpieces that "were praised for being on the verge of coming to life" (662).

"dead bodies" to Antigonus' visitation by what appears to be Hermione's ghost. By unsettling proof of death, the play makes the boundaries between life and death permeable, reversible. The play undoes not only the deaths of certain characters, but also the certainty of death. Of course, not all of the deaths of characters are undone in the play. Each character that returns from death is paired with a character that does not. Mamillius shares a grave with living Hermione, and Antigonus dies in Bohemia while Perdita is saved. The play does not deny death, but rather dramatizes the truth of both death and resurrection. The fact that the female character of each pair returns links the preservation and resurrection of the body to female chastity.

Paulina later asserts that both Perdita and Antigonus are dead:

> Is't not the tenor of his oracle,
> That King Leontes shall not have an heir
> Till his lost child be found? Which that it shall,
> Is all as monstrous to our human reason
> As my Antigonus to break his grave,
> And come again to me; who, on my life,
> Did perish with the infant. (5.1.38-44)

Even while asserting Antigonus' death, Paulina conjures an image of his return. This return never materializes, of course, but the "lost child" does reappear. The false assertion that Antigonus and Perdita perished together parallels the shared grave of Hermione and Mamillius. Both sets of graves are unstable, half empty but half full.

The moment in which Antigonus is lost and Perdita is found is summed up by the Old Shepherd's comment to his son: "thou met'st with things dying, I with things new-born" (3.3.113-14). This line encapsulates the close kinship between death and (re)birth that natural

processes contain. The transition from the deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus in the first half of the play to the return of Perdita and Hermione in the second is aligned with the natural progression from winter to spring *and* with the artful overleaping of sixteen years. At the play's conclusion, when Perdita is found again, the coupling of death and resurrection takes center stage, this time within an explicitly aesthetic context. While Paulina's chapel is unlike the seacoast of Bohemia, the art contained there is also revealed to be nature.

Hermione's transformation into a statue serves as an ontological rebuke to Leontes' suspicion. Paulina refers to Leontes' jealousy in a materialistic metaphor: "The root of his opinion, which is rotten / As ever oak or stone was sound" (2.3.90-91). The play stages the opposition between jealousy and chastity as the contrast between rottenness and stone. While stone is subject to decay, its durability compared to flesh allows it to be aligned with undying constancy, in the play as well as in funerary sculpture. Hermione becomes stone, performing her constancy and refuting Leontes' rotten suspicion, as well as the bodily rottenness the play associates with sexual promiscuity and death.

The final scene of *The Winter's Tale* does not reveal anatomically a new Hermione, but rather theatrically positions Hermione's body as new and glorified. The agency of objects is situational and contextual. By unveiling Hermione's body in Paulina's gallery, and by rhetorically constructing it as the work of "Julio Romano" (5.2.97), Hermione's body becomes something other than Hermione's body. In other words, the body of Hermione takes on new meanings through the intense focus on its materiality. In theater, materiality is dynamic. Unveiling the material body of the actor within the context of Paulina's gallery creates a shift in perspective that transforms the actor's body from flesh to stone to flesh again.

The statue is presented as a paragon of aesthetic achievement. Third Gentleman describes

Julio Romano as a "that rare Italian master … who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape" (5.2.97-100). This revisiting of the art and nature debate playfully describes the separation between art and nature as both subtle and infinite. The artist imitates nature "perfectly," but lacks "eternity" and the power to "put breath into his work"—in other words, power over life and time. The gentleman continues: "He so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer" (5.2.100-2). By theatrically constructing Hermione as another Hermione—a perfect copy—the play toys with the paradox of antemortem identity coexisting with the mimicry of memorial sculpture and the novelty of the resurrected body.

The statue is separated from other works of art, just as Hermione is set above all women. Paulina says:

> As she liv'd peerless,
> So her dead likeness, I do well believe,
> Excels whatever yet you look'd upon,
> Or hand of man hath done; therefore I keep it
> [Lonely], apart. But here it is; prepare
> To see the life as lively mock'd as ever
> Still sleep mock'd death. (5.3.14-20)

When Paulina says Hermione's "dead likeness … Excels whatever yet you look'd upon," she places the statue's beauty above all other things, both humans and objects. The living Hermione and the "dead likeness" are both "peerless" in an aesthetic economy of persons and objects. Hermione's "peerless[ness]" refers to her virtue and her beauty, and the statue is seen as possessing both qualities. "Dead likeness" puns on the object's ability to mimic the person. It

describes the art object's mimicry, but also Hermione as dead-like, mimicking death as she performs the role of statue. The repetition of "mock'd" aligns art's power to imitate life with the natural process of sleep's power to imitate death; the mimicry between life and death, nature and art, operates in both directions.

According to the stage direction, "[*Paulina draws a curtain, and discovers*] *Hermione* [*standing*] *like a statue*" (5.3.20 s.d.). Statues are conventionally designed to stand like people; to stand "like a statue" is to perform this mimicry, presenting one's body as inanimate matter that imitates life. Neither speaking nor moving for 100 lines after its theatrical revelation, Hermione-as-statue is an inoperative body, like the glorious bodies of resurrection theology. Hermione-as-statue is the focal point of the scene as an object of display, while the body's functions, anatomy, and subjectivity remain obscure. The display transforms the natural body into art, actor into significant prop.

Since the statue is defined by silence, the onlookers view speech as the signifier that separates people from things. Yet Herminone-as-statue's silence is itself a form of rhetoric. "The silence often of pure innocence / Persuades when speaking fails" (2.2.39-40), Paulina says before she presents the infant to Leontes. Hermione-as-statue persuades simply through being. Leontes transforms the meaning of the statue's silence, turning it into a characteristic of Hermione:

> Her natural posture!
> Chide me, dear stone, that I may say indeed
> Thou art Hermione; or rather, thou art she
> In thy not chiding; for she was as tender
> As infancy and grace. (5.3.23-27)

Leontes' aesthetic appreciation gives way to conversation with the object. The object's silence

(“not chiding”) mimics Hermione’s negative virtues (chastity and silence) which dead bodies and statues ape so well.

Leontes returns to commenting upon the statue: “Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems” (28-29). Paulina responds: “So much more our carver’s excellence, / Which lets go by some sixteen years, and makes her / As she liv’d now” (30-32). The wrinkled statue raises issues of memorialization aesthetics and the age of resurrected bodies. “Our carver” is both Julio Romano and the passage of time, notorious for carving wrinkles into brows. It is a metatheatrical allusion to Time, the Chorus, who appears onstage to “slide / O’er sixteen years” (4.1.5-6) and to theater, the dramatic art of manipulating time and the boundaries between life and death. The sculptor’s power to manipulate time tropes and is supplanted by the magic of the stage. Hermione’s wrinkles allude to the natural process of aging, but they are an aesthetic construct. The actor who plays Hermione cannot have aged sixteen years since the start of the play. Leontes and Paulina’s dialogue rhetorically construct the wrinkles, dramatically speeding up the natural process of time.

Leontes continues: “O, thus she stood, / Even with such life of majesty (warm life, / As now it coldly stands), when first I woo’d her!” (5.3.34-36). Rather than perceiving life as present or absent, he perceives it as warm or cold. The statue is not so much dead as coldly alive. Similarly, Leontes shifts fluidly between referring to “her” (Hermione’s memory) and “it” (the object). The instability between human and stone is heightened when Leontes exclaims:

> I am asham’d; does not the stone rebuke me
> For being more stone than it? O royal piece,
> There’s magic in thy majesty, which has
> My evils conjur’d to remembrance, and

From thy admiring daughter took the spirits,

Standing like stone with thee. (37-42)

The statue's agency is as active as the verbs used to express it: it has the power to rebuke, conjure, and convert onlookers to stone.

While Leontes projects his guilt and desires onto the statue, Perdita is the first to attempt to interact with the statue directly, to perform a scene with the statue as an equal actor. She says:

And give me leave,

And do not say 'tis superstition, that

I kneel and then implore her blessing. Lady,

Dear queen, that ended when I but began,

Give me that hand of yours to kiss. (42-46)

She refers to the statue as her mother, addresses it as "Lady" and "queen," and sees it as capable of presenting its hand.

Paulina interrupts: "O, patience! / The statue is but newly fix'd; the color's / Not dry" (46-48). Paulina owns the statue and controls access to it. She tells Leontes: "Indeed, my lord, / If I had thought the sight of my poor image / Would thus have wrought you (for the stone is mine), / I'ld not have show'd it" (56-59). Her threat of concealing the statue—of closing the curtain—is tantamount to burying Hermione again.

Paulina plays with the line between aesthetic rapture and delusion: "No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy / May think anon it moves" (60-61). Leontes replies: "Would I were dead but that methinks already—" (62), linking the statue's apparent life with an exclamation proposing his own death. He continues: "Would you not deem it breath'd? and that those veins / Did verily bear blood?" (64-65). The wonder of the sculpture is that it can depict breath and

blood circulation in insensible matter. In this, art's mimesis surpasses anatomy's ability to detect, since breath and blood circulation are phenomena to which anatomists had no direct access in cadavers. Polixenes replies: "Masterly done! / The very life seems warm upon her lip" (65-66). Again, the boundary between life and death is rendered as a continuum of temperature. If the statue can be warm, rather than "seem warm," it lives.

Slippage between aesthetic rapture and delusion fuels Paulina's strategy as she goads onlookers to notice movements while dismissing them as fantasy. She increases the urgency of the aesthetic rapture by threatening repeatedly to conceal the object: "I'll draw the curtain. / My lord's almost so far transported that / He'll think anon it lives" (68-70). Leontes replies: "O sweet Paulina, / Make me to think so twenty years together! / No settled senses of the world can match / The pleasure of that madness" (70-73). Like the Tyrant in *The Lady's Tragedy*, Leontes desires the delusion of art. He has fallen in love with the object that appears to live. He continues: "this affliction has a taste as sweet / As any cordial comfort" (76-77). Leontes is being revived along with the statue: the appearance of the statue's life is his "cordial," capable of healing his guilt.

Leontes desires to kiss the painted object. He says: "Still methinks / There is an air comes from her. What fine chisel / Could ever yet cut breath? Let no man mock me, / For I will kiss her" (77-80). Paulina warns, or perhaps threatens: "Good my lord, forbear. / The ruddiness upon her lip is wet; / You'll mar it if you kiss it; stain your own / With oily painting" (80-83). Unlike in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*, the desire to kiss the object is thwarted. The object is protected from Leontes' possible harm, and Leontes is protected from the object's possible revenge. Leontes is not allowed to act out his desires upon a passive object; he must wait until Hermione awakens and consents. The statue has already begun to return to life through

Paulina's pronoun; the focus on "her lip" links the painting of the feminized object to the painting of women and actors.[102]

Paulina's words are as much a part of bringing the statue to life as any of the statue's movements. In the same way she used language as evidence for Hermione's death, she resurrects Hermione rhetorically. She introduces the spectacle:

> Either forbear,
> Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you
> For more amazement. If you can behold it,
> I'll make the statue move indeed, descend,
> And take you by the hand; but then you'll think
> (Which I protest against) I am assisted
> By wicked powers. (85-91)

Hermione's agency returns in a complicated form. Paulina will control the statue's actions, and will command it to "take [Leontes] by the hand." Hermione's consent is blurred by Paulina's puppeteering, but Leontes has been rendered more passive than the statue. While Hermione performs the ontological passivity of the statue, Leontes undergoes an existential transformation that revises his patriarchal power.

Leontes already sees the statue as female and uses feminine pronouns. He says, "What you can make her do, / I am content to look on; what to speak, / I am content to hear; for 'tis as easy / To make her speak as move" (91-94). The word "easy" is strange, considering what he desires. While Paulina promises to make the statue move, movement is not seen as enough. Leontes desires a resurrection of Hermione's subjectivity in the form of speech.

Paulina says: "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (94-95). Awakening faith is the

[102] For an extended analysis of the use of paint in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy*, see Stevens, 121-52.

magic that allows the resurrection to occur.[103] Hermione's statue does not "prove" her chastity, but rather offers an embodiment of faith. Hermione's chastity is not established through "ocular proof," but through faith in theatrical magic that the play aligns with faith in the promise of glorious resurrection.

While the onlookers must awaken their faith, the statue is described as awakening to music. Paulina's command, "Music! awake her! strike!" (98) repeats the word "awake" in a significantly different context. While the command to the onlookers stresses the importance of renewed interpersonal faith, as well as faith in Paulina's theatrical magic, the command to the musicians is a reminder that the statue does not awaken solely by others' faith. The awakening is an aesthetic spectacle in which the statue awakens as much in response to music and incantations as in response to forgiveness and faith. Justin Kolb writes:

> She is now a thing animated by the recognition of the audience and made to 'pertain to life' ... She is an assembly of Julio Romano's statue, the carefully constructed alcove, music, stagecraft, the king's humbling, the gathered witnesses, and the fulfilled prophecy of the watching gods. Regardless of where Hermione has been, the play insists that she become the statue, and that her resurrection be the product of a harmonious unity of all the properties of the stage. (60)

Staging participates in creation, and onlookers must have faith in the aesthetic spectacle as well as in the Hermione that emerges as its final product. Paulina says to the statue:

> 'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;

[103] Sean Benson describes the ambiguity of the line: "Our faith in precisely what is never specified, though it is fair to see it as a call for faith in the powers of the imagination, of theater. The possibility of a resurrection from the dead is as viable an option, if not more so, as the other interpretations of Paulina's polysemous line" (13). Sarah Beckwith aligns Paulina's words with John's account of Christ's resurrection, which "takes it as axiomatic that the resurrected Christ appears only to those who believe" (144).

Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come;

I'll fill your grave up. Stir; nay, come away;

Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him

Dear life redeems you. (99-103)

Paulina uses the rhetoric of resurrection. While she earlier constructed the image of another Hermione, a "dead likeness" that could awaken, she now creates an image of Hermione rising from the dead ("I'll fill your grave up"; "Bequeath to death your numbness"). This paradox of identity mirrors the ambiguity of the resurrected body. Is the resurrected body a copy or the original? What changes and what remains the same?

Paulina tells Leontes: "Do not shun her / Until you see her die again, for then / You kill her double" (105-7). Paulina focuses on Hermione's deaths—the one from which she has apparently awoken and the one that awaits her. Hermione is still mortal and Leontes still has the ability to kill her. Paulina's syntax implies that Leontes can shun Hermione after she "die[s] again," but the play has established that his devotion to his wife should persist after death. It is hard to imagine that if Leontes becomes a widower again, he would be allowed to remarry. The play's exploration of resurrection and reunion coexists with its examination of marriage as not existing only until death, but rather persisting through death.

Paulina instructs Leontes: "present your hand. / When she was young, you woo'd her; now, in age, / Is she become the suitor?" (107-9). Hermione gives a complicated form of consent. She is "the suitor," but in Paulina's words and at her command. While her consent is complicated, she is significantly not a passive object for Leontes to act upon. At the moment of touch, Leontes exclaims: "O, she's warm! / If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (109-11). "She's warm!" is an affirmation of life, both because temperature has been relied upon

as an index of life and because the female pronoun obscures the possibility of the statue still being an "it." The distinctions between "magic," "art," and natural processes ("eating") dissolve.

While the Hermione that returns is presented as a natural body, associations with death haunt the body. After viewing the body's movements, Camillo desires more proof of life. He says: "If she pertain to life let her speak too" (113). Polixenes wants not only speech, but also an account of her life that may include her passage through death. He says: "Ay, and make it manifest where she has liv'd, / Or how stol'n from the dead" (114-15). Kenneth Gross aligns Polixenes and Camillo's skepticism with the play's ambiguity; *The Winter's Tale* entertains fantasies of both redemption and vengeance without fulfilling either (Gross 108). He interprets the legalistic language used to describe transactions between life and death, such as "pertain to life," "bequeath to death," and "stolen from the dead," and writes: "His words suggest that Paulina is as much a grave robber as a figure of Orpheus, Hercules, or Christ" (Gross 107).

Paulina casts herself as a grave robber, if only elliptically, by promising to fill the grave up after it has been emptied. In 1604, James I's Witchcraft Statute criminalized the necromantic use of corpses (Thomas 526). This statute has metaphorical relevance for Paulina's rhetoric of grave robbing and the theatrically bewitching reanimation of Hermione's body. Grave robbing and necromancy are lawful in this scene, however, if only because Leontes has the sovereign power to declare the theatrical magic "an art / Lawful as eating" (110-11). *The Lady's Tragedy* will explore more literally the relationship between grave robbing, art, and resurrection.

Throughout the play, Hermione has been an object of observation. In the final scene, observing Hermione is synonymous with observing life itself. Paulina says: "That she is living, / Were it but told you, should be hooted at / Like an old tale; but it appears she lives, / Though yet she speak not. Mark a little while" (115-18). Paulina instructs the audiences, onstage and off, to

observe Hermione's body, to look for proofs of life (warmth, movement, speech), but ultimately to have faith that she lives. In *The Winter's Tale*'s exploration of resurrection, faith rather than proof is required for Hermione to be viewed as human rather than automaton, or as a resurrected person rather than an animated corpse.

While critics often make Leontes the privileged observer of Hermione's statue—the one to whom, or for whom, she reawakens—Perdita actually fulfills this role. Perdita's return catalyzes Hermione's resurrection; the two lost women return jointly. Paulina speaks to Perdita: "Please you to interpose, fair madam, kneel, / And pray your mother's blessing. Turn, good lady, / Our Perdita is found" (119-21). The climax of the scene, the moment of the statue's long-awaited speech, is entirely female-centered. With the phrase "Our Perdita," Paulina claims the daughter as belonging to her and Hermione. Paulina has been called a midwife; she delivered the infant from prison and claimed her when Leontes would not. She lost her spouse in the delivery of the infant to Bohemia. In the final scene, she acts as midwife again, this time delivering the mother to the daughter.

Hermione finally speaks, directing her words only to her daughter:

> You gods, look down
> And from your sacred vials pour your graces
> Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own,
> Where hast thou been preserv'd? where liv'd? how found
> Thy father's court? for thou shalt hear that I,
> Knowing by Paulina that the oracle
> Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserv'd
> Myself to see the issue. (121-28)

In the speech so much desired by Leontes, she says nothing to him. Although speech can be an index of subjectivity, Hermione's speech reveals nothing about whether or not she has forgiven Leontes. Her present subjectivity is revealed only as faith in the oracle and her daughter's life, a "hope" that allowed her to triumph over death by "preserv[ing]" herself. "Preserv'd" connotes defying death and maintaining chastity, and it is the same verb Hermione applies to Perdita in her question.

The moment of resurrection is a moment of recognition between mother and daughter. Kolb describes Hermione and Perdita as "quasi-*humans*" that "exist in ontologically unsettled forms" until the final scene. He writes: "Only at the end of the play, through a communal, theatrical, act of recognition, do the two women attain a stable ontological status" (Kolb 46). Hermione's ontological stability in the final scene is the effect of the aesthetic strategy that ontologizes chastity and approximates glorification. Hermione and Perdita's reunion establishes a connection between the mother and daughter's flesh that Hermione used as evidence of mutual innocence in her trial when she described the infant's banishment: "The innocent milk in it most innocent mouth" (3.2.100). By proclaiming both the mother's milk and the daughter's mouth as innocent, Hermione defends "woman's flesh" at the moment in the play when both female characters enter the ontological instability of presumed death. The mother-daughter reunion in the final scene displays the ontological chastity of both; it is a recognition that Hermione is chaste and that Perdita was born legitimately (and, significantly for chastity's social construction, nobly). The joint return of Hermione and Perdita combines the natural form of immortality achieved through procreation[104] with the artful reconstruction of bodies and the divinity of the prophecy. Paulina's stage magic revises the Pauline seed metaphor for resurrection in light of the

[104] Those who disagreed with Paul's description of resurrection interpreted it as the worldly form of continuity achieved through offspring (Bynum 29).

play's flower grafting debate; the body that returns is both natural and aesthetically manipulated.

Hermione's personhood exists in her embodiment and connection to her daughter, rather than in a narrative account of herself. Addressing Hermione's return and other Shakespearean resurrections, Sarah Beckwith writes: "To pursue the whys and wherefores of these means is to dissolve the kinds of trust that are being rebuilt in the new communities and identities forged through such returns. … It is not how Hermione has survived that is important but *that* she has. Her recovery depends on the renunciation of epistemology as our mode of access to others" (130). While Beckwith is concerned with epistemology in interpersonal interactions, I am concerned specifically with epistemologies of gender and sexuality. By calling the final scene female-centered, I have included the awakened statue as a female character, which I believe the play encourages us to do. However, while the returned Hermione is gendered, we learn very little about Hermione's sexuality in the new community that has been formed. Hermione's affective bonds to the other female characters onstage overshadow her sexual bond to Leontes. The question of marriage and sex in this new community, like the question of marriage and sex in the afterlife, is left unsettled.

In Paulina's promise to Hermione, "I'll fill your grave up" (5.3.101), grave robbing is posited as its antithesis—filling the grave. Her words represent Hermione's grave as open; the sixteen years have been a liminal period, with Hermione suspended in an open grave, neither fully dead nor living. Paulina's theatrical magic is a form of grave robbing that paradoxically opens and fills the grave. However, Hermione's grave is not an empty tomb; it is shared with Mamillius. Filling up the grave quietly effaces Mamillius. Is his body awaiting resurrection? Mamillius' return in another form (Florizel) provides dramatic coherence, but does not offer theological consolation. Similarly, Leontes, learning that Hermione lives, says "I saw her / (As I

thought) dead; and have (in vain) said many / A prayer upon her grave" (139-41). Since Hermione and Mamillius shared a grave, calling these prayers "vain" indicates the desire to efface the loss of Mamillius and the practice of mourning for him.

The other character who does not return is, of course, Antigonus. Through the bear's consumption of Antigonus the play addresses the facts of bodily change—decomposition, fragmentation, and annihilation. Consumption by beasts was an anxious topic in resurrection theology,[105] but these assaults on the body are portrayed tragicomically in the play. Antigonus is "torn to pieces with a bear" (5.2.63)—a form of fragmentation that seems to defy reassembly. The scene ends, however, with the Clown's solemn promise: "If there be any of him left, I'll bury it" (3.3.131-32). The bear's leftovers are offered burial in the hope of resurrection.

For all the poignancy of the deaths that occur in the playworld, mourning unrecovered losses is not allowed in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*. Paulina briefly alludes to her lost husband: "I, an old turtle, / Will wing me to some wither'd bough, and there / My mate (that's never to be found again) / Lament till I am lost" (5.3.132-35). Leontes says: "O, peace, Paulina! / Thou shouldst a husband take by my consent, / As I by thine a wife" (5.3.135-37). While Paulina's power to choose Leontes' wife was part of his repentance and punishment for his wrongs, Leontes now posits it as a simple and comic exchange of "consent." While Paulina's choice for Leontes' new wife was none other than his lost wife, Leontes' choice of Camillo for Paulina's husband replaces Antigonus. Finally, Leontes' game premises an equal exchange, but ultimately reestablishes his patriarchal authority.

If the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* gestures toward reunions in the afterlife, it says nothing about what marriage will look like in that realm. Leontes and Hermione may be reunited,

[105] Bynum discusses how Ignatius of Antioch "sees fragmentation and digestion by the beasts as the ultimate threat and thus as that over which resurrection is the ultimate victory" (27).

but there is silence and lack of overt recognition. Any reunion between Paulina and Antigonus in the afterlife will be triangulated with Camillo. The web of reunions in the final scene is occasioned in part by Camillo's "desire to lay [his] bones" in Sicilia (4.2.6). Rather than a funeral, however, he finds marriage upon his return home. The theme of "things dying" and "things new-born" is woven into the fabric of the community that has been formed. The unsettled elements, the loose ends in that fabric, show how the play does not push its resurrection poetics into the realm of theological speculation. The dead only return within the aesthetic frame of the narrative, and only certain dead characters are allowed narratives of return. *The Lady's Tragedy*, on the other hand, both promises and prefigures the resurrection of a character beyond the scope of the play.

## Grave Robbing and Resurrection in *The Lady's Tragedy*

*The Lady's Tragedy* also combines grave robbing and aestheticizing bodies, but does so more literally than *The Winter's Tale*. *The Lady's Tragedy* blurs the meaning of resurrection to include both the lifting of a dead body out of a tomb (an irony that will inform the later term for grave robber, "resurrectionist" [*OED*, "resurrectionist, n." 1]) and earnest belief in the glorious resurrection. Leontes attempts to control his wife's sexuality, causes her death, and desires her return. All of these actions are repeated by the Tyrant, but the violence of these actions is compounded by the Lady's lack of consent to the Tyrant, in both life and death. Richard Burbage may have played both the Tyrant and Leontes (Briggs, "Parallel Texts" 835), turning the Tyrant's jealousy, violence, and delusion into metatheatrical commentary on Leontes' behavior. The Tyrant's manipulation of the corpse travesties resurrection; his aestheticization and sexualization of the dead body highlight its status as a posthuman object. The Lady's ghost, however, allows the Lady's subjectivity to continue after death. The dual staging of the dead

Lady as corpse and as ghost complicates issues of postmortem subjectivity and the meaning of the return of the dead.

Like Hermione's statue, the Lady's corpse is not an object of horror, but rather of aesthetic and spiritual reverie. While *The Winter's Tale* is careful to distance its theatrical magic from idolatry, *The Lady's Tragedy* is more ambiguous. Both the Tyrant and Govianus have been denounced for idolatrous treatment of the corpse.[106] The difference between the Tyrant's illicit worship of the dead body and Govianus' lawful reverence is determined by their relationship to the dead Lady's subjectivity: the Tyrant loves the automaton he creates by aestheticizing the dead body, and Govianus loves the corpse and ghost as continuations of the Lady's identity. The Lady's subjectivity and consent, voiced by the ghost, significantly change the status of postmortem attachment and distinguish the Tyrant's necrophilic delusion from Govianus' relationship with a quasi-resurrected Lady.

*The Lady's Tragedy* features a corpse that is manipulated as much as Gloriana's skull, and that is fetishized as much as Annabella's heart. Annabella's heart and Gloriana's skull are props that embody the tension between cadaverous, neuter remains and objectified "female" parts. They have agency, but not the agency of human subjects. They possess cadaverous agency through their uncanny and disorienting presence and dramatic agency as props. However, while Annabella loses her voice once she is murdered, and Gloriana never has a voice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the dead Lady has a voice as a ghost. The appearance of the ghost allows the Lady's subjectivity and agency to return. When the Tyrant turns the Lady's body into an aesthetic and erotic object, the Lady's ghost gives voice to her lack of consent. The Lady has a posthumous sexual subjectivity that hinges upon preserving the chastity of her corpse and

[106] Zimmerman describes both the Tyrant and Govianus as idolatrous and continues: "Govianus's attachment to a spirit he envisages in material terms and to whom he has an overtly sensual devotion compromises his outrage at the Tyrant's necrophilia" (99).

reburying it to await resurrection in peace and privacy. The ghost and body collaborate to defeat the Tyrant (with some help from Govianus), leading to a reunion of ghost and corpse that prefigures resurrection. The ghost's presence is a return of personhood that saves the corpse from ignoble treatment and recuperates it as part of the Lady's identity, rather than a posthuman object divorced from the Lady's identity and subjected to the manipulations of others. The continued existence of the Lady's identity after death casts the Tyrant's necrophilia as sexual violence and necessitates that the Lady's protection of her chastity continues as a posthumous endeavor.

The Lady posits her suicide as a strategy for preserving her chastity. She tells her betrothed, Govianus: "Thou canst not lose me there, for dying thine, / Thou dost enjoy me still. Kings cannot rob thee" (3.1.145-46). Death is represented as a state of suspended betrothal. Rather than posing the problems of bodily instability and decay, death is viewed as offering a stability not available to living bodies. While living bodies can be violently appropriated through rape, represented as the "rob[bing]" of male property, the Lady's death secures Govianus' possession of her.

The Lady's justification of suicide revisits the longstanding debate centered on Lucrece. The play's novelty is that it extends the examination of the relationship between body and spirit, or sexual violation and consent, to include the postmortem body. The Lady's promise, "Kings cannot rob thee," becomes brutally ironic when the Tyrant steals the corpse from its tomb. The play explores what can and cannot be "robbed." The material body is robbed, but the Lady's consent cannot be. The dead Lady's postmortem agency is manifested through her ghost, which reclaims the body through the revenge plot.

The Lady pleads that Govianus kill her, but he swoons and is mistaken as dead by the Lady. After the Lady kills herself, Govianus awakens, creating a theatrical image of resurrection.

Govianus praises her suicide as “virgin-victory” (3.1.177) that will win her “Eternal praise” (178). Chastity both prefigures and is rewarded with resurrection. Viewing the corpse as chaste recuperates it from the disorienting implications of the cadaverous resemblance by connecting the dead body to the gendered virtue of the Lady in life and the eternal constancy with which the body will be endowed through resurrection. Bodily chastity is constructed as the link that creates continuity between the Lady’s life, death, and embodied afterlife. Rather than viewing the cadaver as a radical break in the Lady’s identity, the constructed chastity of the corpse allows it to be aligned with the defining feature of the Lady’s identity. Govianus kisses the dead body and states:

> Thou’rt cold enough
> To lie entombed now by my father’s side;
> Without offence in kindred there I’ll place thee
> With one I loved the dearest next to thee.
> Help me to mourn, all that love chastity! (3.1.251-55)

Although they are not married, Govianus claims the Lady as kin and asserts his right to bury her. Familial and affective bonds are signified by the spatial positioning of bodies in the tomb. The phrase, “one I loved the dearest next to thee,” is ambiguous; it can mean that Govianus’ love for the Lady is closely followed by his love for his father, or that his beloved father will be spatially “next to” the Lady’s corpse. The tomb is a worldly memorial to the family as well as a place to await resurrection and reunion in the afterlife. The final line’s emphasis on chastity, made more emphatic by the fact that it is part of a couplet, turns this quality into the sole reason for mourning the Lady. He asks for chastity itself to be mourned allegorically through mourning the Lady’s corpse.

The ghost's concern for the material body has been criticized as idolatrous.[107] However, the ghost is mainly concerned with avoiding illicit sexuality. The ghost, like the living Lady, believes that her chastity is contingent upon avoiding sexual violence. Structurally, removing the corpse from the Tyrant's possession is no different from the suicide that prevents his rape of her living body. Both are motivated by the desire to preserve chastity as an embodied state.

At first, the Tyrant views death as permanently negating the possibility of viewing the Lady as a love object:

> O, she's destroyed, married to death and silence,
>
> Which nothing can divorce—riches, nor laws
>
> Nor all the violence that this frame can raise.
>
> I've lost the comfort of her sight forever. (4.2.27-30)

Death is envisioned as a rival lover whose claim to the Lady's body is irrevocable. All of the earthly powers that the Tyrant used as weapons against the Lady in life, such as "riches," "laws," and "violence," are now futile. However, perhaps prompted by the word "raise" and the awareness that he chiefly misses "her sight," the Tyrant suddenly has the idea to steal the Lady's body from the grave. He frames it as a plan to spite death: "A new joy / Is come to visit me, in spite of death" (4.2.33-34).

As his plan gains momentum, he uses the image of releasing the Lady from prison to describe his plan to conquer death: "Death nor the marble prison my love sleeps in / Shall keep her body locked up from mine arms" (4.2.45-46). The Tyrant's imagery replaces the imprisonment of the tomb with imprisonment in his arms. Especially since the Lady's suicide in prison was conceptualized as liberation from the Tyrant's threat of rape, the Tyrant's

[107] Zimmerman writes: "The Lady's overvaluation of her corpse unavoidably evokes the Catholic fixation with materiality so inimical to reformists" (100).

conventional romantic imagery is laden with sexual violence. The Tyrant not only desires to triumph over death, he desires to triumph over the suicide that was an explicit rejection of his sexual advances.

The Tyrant visits the tomb, which likely includes an effigy reminiscent of Hermione's statue (Briggs, "Parallel Texts" 834), although this effigy is most likely recumbent rather than standing. Although Govianus spoke of burying the Lady in a tomb shared with his father, the dramatized tomb is conflated solely with the Lady's body. As happened with Mamillius and Hermione's shared grave, the male deceased is effaced by the aesthetic focus on the feminized body.

The power of the Lady's effigy is similar to that of Hermione's statue: it moves the Tyrant to kiss it. He perceives it as crying and says: "The monument woos me; I must run and kiss it" (4.3.9). Projecting the power to woo onto the monument makes the object complicit in his kissing of it. This is the same strategy used to blame women for provoking rape, and casting the effigy in the role of wooer shows the absurdity of this misogynistic reasoning. The Tyrant mirrors Leontes' speech and delusion and pushes it further. While Paulina stops Leontes before he can kiss the statue, the Tyrant acts out his desires upon objects—first the effigy, and then the corpse.

The Tyrant's delusion comes close to object-oriented speculation, but he can only view the monument through the lens of his own projection:

> Now trust me if the tears do not e'en stand
>
> Upon the marble. What slow springs have I?
>
> 'Twas weeping to itself before I came.
>
> How pity strikes e'en through insensible things

And makes them shame our dullness. (4.3.10-14)

The monument is viewed as a mourner and as a device that moves onlookers' pity, as funerary monuments are designed to do. Although he recognizes the monument as "insensible," he continues his conversation with it:

Thou house of silence, and the calms of rest
After tempestuous life, I claim of thee
A mistress, one of the most beauteous sleepers
That ever lay so cold, not yet due to thee
By natural death, but cruelly forced hither
Many a year before the world could spare her.
We miss her 'mongst the glories of our court,
When they be numbered up. All thy still strength,
Thou grey-eyed monument, shall not keep her from us. (4.3.15-23)

The Lady's beauty and youth are cited as the reasons she is not "due" to death yet; preserving feminine beauty will be integral to the Tyrant's plan to thwart death. The grave is addressed as a rival that will be overcome. Especially since the "grey-eyed monument" is feminized, his use of force against it is linked to his disregard for the Lady's consent in life. "We miss her" begins as a statement of mourning, but turns into a statement about material lack: the presence of the Lady's body is "missed" when the court's treasures are "numbered up." This objectification of the Lady allows the Tyrant to envision reclaiming the lost Lady by exhuming her body and keeping it at court.

Critics have interpreted this scene in in light of the 1604 statute that prohibited the use of corpses for witchcraft.[108] The play's exploration of grave robbing, however, pushes beyond necromancy and into the more ambiguous domain of viewing the dead as personal property. The theatrical exploration of the dead as property extends from the sensationalism of necromancy and necrophilia to mundane but critical proprietary claims to burials. The question of whether corpses can be owned as property and used by the living is intertwined with the question of whether corpses have rights and protections under the law.[109] Necrophilia continues to be legally ambiguous in the United States because of the corpse's status as quasi-subject and quasi-property.[110] The view of the body as awaiting resurrection, however, allows grave robbing and necrophilia to be seen as assaults on the sleeping subject.[111]

The opening of the Lady's grave is described in terms reminiscent of dissection and rape, with the Tyrant ordering his men to "Strike" the monument and "Pierce the jaws / Of this cold ponderous creature" (4.3.24, 25-26).[112] His men reject "the batt'ring of a lady's tomb" (41); the Lady's gender and class in life heighten the postmortem violation. The corpse is still considered a "lady," and disrupting "her" tomb is seen as a violation of privacy and propriety. The

---

[108] Anne Lancashire writes, "The secret exhumation of a corpse would … have been associated by Jacobeans with witchcraft" (28).

[109] The view of corpses as existing outside the realm of property has impacted Anglo-American law in ways that have become increasingly relevant in the wake of biotechnology and organ donation. In "The Rights of the Corpse," John Sutton Baglow equates the corpse's rights with the living's obligation to treat it with dignity, granting it proper burial and reverence. In "Corpses Do Not Have Rights: A Response to Baglow," James Stacey Taylor and Aaron Spital deny Baglow's claim that corpses have "limited human rights," classifying them instead as inanimate objects to which any obligations due are to those surviving them.

[110] In "Abuse of a Corpse: A Brief History and Re-Theorization of Necrophilia Laws in the USA," John Troyer describes the legal ambiguity regarding necrophilia as a result of the corpse's status as "a quasi-subject before the law" (132).

[111] The play shares this view with early Christian theologian Cyril of Jerusalem, who "condemn[s] grave robbers because exactly the body they violate is going to rise again" (Bynum 80).

[112] Pollard (103) and Bamford (97) also link the robbery of the monument to rape.

“batt’ring” of a feminized tomb, especially one consisting of an effigy, presents a stage image of sexual violence, even though the “violence” is occurring to an inanimate object. While inanimate objects cannot be victims of violence, both the tomb and the corpse are perceived as such through their connection to the Lady’s posthumous personhood, both as memorial objects and as uncanny continuances of her identity. Actions directed toward the tomb, the corpse, and the Lady herself (whatever that might mean after death) are conflated. The Tyrant addresses the monument: “No, wilt not yield? / Art thou so loath to part from her?” (44-45). The monument is aligned with the Lady herself, who would not “yield” to the Tyrant in life, and to a rival who will not “part from her.” The grave both possesses the corpse and is metonymy for it.

When the Tyrant views the corpse, he addresses it as “blest object!” (62). “Object” highlights the materiality of the body and its role as aesthetic, romantic, and sacred object. The “object” is quickly gendered and humanized: “She’s only pale, the colour of the court, / And most attractive” (66-67). Death is perceived as a minor bodily adjustment (“only pale”) and an aesthetically beneficial one at that.

Removing the body from the grave is presented as a mock resurrection.[113] The Tyrant commands his soldiers: “Take up her body” (69). The soldiers are forced to lift the body out of the grave, while one comments: “I am afraid of nothing but she’ll rise / At the first jog, and save us all a labour” (76-77). The Tyrant’s awed response to the corpse’s exhumation—“O, the moon rises!” (82)—makes rising a natural act performed by the dead body itself.

When the corpse is removed from the grave, the Tyrant addresses it in terms that evoke *The Winter’s Tale*:

---

[113] Beckwith writes: “The play works in counterpoint to the medieval tropes of Easter; the tyrant is Herod, and his soldiers are sent not to guard the empty tomb to prevent a resurrection, but to violate and rob the sacred space of the church” (139).

Art thou cold?

I have no faith in't yet; I believe none.

Madam! 'Tis I, sweet lady, prithee speak!

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

I'll prove a kiss. (4.3.87-91)

While "faith" was required in *The Winter's Tale* to believe that Hermione lived, the Tyrant lacks faith to believe that the Lady is dead. *The Winter's Tale*'s unsettling of "proofs" of death is pushed to parody here when the Tyrant doubts that an exhumed corpse is dead. If a living actor plays the corpse in this scene, however, the Tyrant's delusion is layered with dramatic irony. If the corpse is played by a dummy, the radical break in identity between the living Lady and the cadaver is signaled by the transition from actor to inanimate prop. Kissing the body proves its coldness, but this signifier of death is interpreted as the Lady's chaste rejection of the Tyrant's sexual advances:

By th' mass, thou'rt cold indeed; beshrew thee for't!

Unkind to thine own blood? Hard-hearted lady,

What injury hast thou offered to the youth

And pleasure of thy days! (4.3.94-97)

The conventional association between chastity and death allows the Tyrant to denounce both simultaneously. Bringing the Lady back to life would be a triumph over death and chaste resistance, both of which are signified by the body's coldness. Similarly, the phrase "Hard-hearted" layers Petrarchan convention with quasi-anatomical awareness of rigor mortis. The Tyrant's rhetoric draws from the "marriage of Pygmalion and Petrarchanism" that Leonard Barkan describes in Renaissance culture and *The Winter's Tale*. He writes: "hard-hearted ladies

were described as stony or frozen, and the Pygmalion myth was assimilated to the Petrarchan action of coaxing warmth and responsiveness out of a *donna crudele*" (660). By applying this rhetoric to the dead body of a woman who killed herself to prevent being raped, the play both makes the Petrarchan use of the Pygmalion trope grotesque and shows the violence that underlies conventional romantic imagery.

The Tyrant addresses the corpse as both a memorial to the soul and a material possession:

> Since thy life has left me,
> I'll clasp the body for the spirit that dwelt in't,
> And love the house still for the mistress' sake.
> Thou art mine now, 'spite of destruction
> And Govianus; and I will possess thee. (4.3.112-16)

The image of conquering death in these lines, as the Tyrant proudly steals the body from "destruction," is reminiscent of resurrection. The Tyrant makes it clear that this act is a resurrection of body only, since he does not have access to the spirit. The corpse is thus resurrected as aesthetic object or automaton, rather than as human person. While the Tyrant believes that this will allow him complete power over the body—as his boast, "I will possess thee," makes clear—the appearance of the Lady's ghost shows that she has not lost her ability to deny consent by dying.

When visiting the Lady's monument, Govianus stresses the continuity between the Lady in life and death, as well as between the body and the monument: "Already mine eye melts. The monument / No sooner stood before it, but a tear / Ran swiftly from me, to express her duty" (4.4.1-3). While the Tyrant conflates these objects in order to conquer them, Govianus praises the chastity of the interrelated objects. His terms endow the monument with chaste connotations;

it represents symbolically and preserves structurally the dead Lady's bodily integrity. The ambiguous pronoun of "her duty" could refer to the monument, the deceased Lady, or Govianus' tear, all of which are merged in this display of mourning. He refers to the tomb as a "Temple of honour" (4), a monument to female chastity. "Chamber of peace, / Where wounded virtue sleeps, locked from the world" (5-6) evokes privacy and removal from society. He is unaware that the monument has been violated, and that the tomb has been left, in the First Soldier's grotesque metaphor, like a meat pie without any filling (4.3.132-36).

Govianus addresses the body he believes to be in the grave, using explicit resurrection imagery:

> Eternal maid of honour, whose chaste body
> Lies here, like virtue's close and hidden seed,
> To spring forth glorious to eternity
> At everlasting harvest— (4.4.37-40)

The "chaste body" of the "Eternal maid" is perceived as embodying eternity and "everlasting harvest." By calling the body "virtue's close and hidden seed," Govianus appeals to the seed metaphor for resurrection. While the seed metaphor conceptualizes resurrection as a radical, yet natural, transformation of identity, Govianus conceptualizes "virtue's … seed" as the continuation of the Lady's "chaste body." The glorious resurrection, or "everlasting harvest," brings forth the hypostasized virtue, the chaste body's eternal dimension, that the grave merely keeps hidden.

This meditation on resurrection is interrupted when the Lady's ghost utters its first words: "I am not here" (4.4.40). As Julia Briggs points out in her note, this alludes to the angel's utterance at Christ's empty tomb: "He is not here, for He is risen." By alluding to this utterance,

Middleton positions the grave robbing plot as a macabre resurrection narrative. By using the first-person pronoun, the Lady's ghost layers the complex issue of postmortem subjectivity onto the religious allegory. The displacement of the body calls the lady's ghost into being: postmortem selfhood emerges in the rupture created by the premature removal of the body from the tomb.

The ghost's appearance creates a stage image of resurrection. The ghost rises from the tomb, providing a spiritual parallel to the body's removal from the tomb in the previous scene. The stage direction is worth citing in full: "*On a sudden in a kind of noise like a wind, the doors clattering, the tombstone flies open, and a great light appears in the midst of the tomb; his Lady, as went out, standing just before him all in white, stuck with jewels and a great crucifix on her breast*" (4.4.42.1-6 s.d.). The elaborate description of noise and lighting highlights the metatheatrical spectacle of the scene. The ghost paradoxically emerges from the empty tomb, embodying the riddle of being here and not here. Although this is a spectral appearance rather than a corporeal resurrection, the ghost's entrance through the open tomb evokes resurrection.[114] The body and spirit are staged as identical: "his Lady, as went out." The crucifix around her neck symbolizes the promise of carnal resurrection, while the stage image prefigures it.

The B-text, used in performance, adds a final line to the stage direction: "*Enter Lady: Rich. Robinson*" (B4.4.42.7 s.d.). After the spectacle of resurrection that the elaborate stage direction sets up, this addition reminds the reading audience of the materiality of theater. Briggs describes how this line "draws attention to the physical presence of the boy actor, his face whitened with flour as convention required, dressed … to resemble the corpse 'as it went out' in the previous scene (and, perhaps, the Lady's effigy upon her tomb)" ("Parallel Texts" 837). The

[114] Andrea Ria Stevens interprets the costuming, painting, and lighting as creating "a spectacle of Transfiguration" (129).

Lady's spirit, body, and memorial are staged as parallel, almost identical, and are performed by boy actor, dummy, and effigy. The threefold staging of the dead Lady blurs the boundaries between neuter object and gendered subject. Statue, corpse, and spirit are performed in turn by stage props and living actor.

The ghost tells Govianus: "The peace that death allows me is not mine. / The monument is robbed. Behold, I'm gone, / My body taken up" (4.4.60-62). In the phrase, "I'm gone," the pronoun applies to the body, rather than the ghost or spirit that utters the phrase. Yet the ghost also uses the phrase, "My body." In the ghost's speech, the chaste body is both her identity and her property: both must be protected from the Tyrant's appropriation.

The dislocated posthumous subjectivity—the rupture between body and spirit—allows the ghost to deliver a narrative of presence and absence simultaneously:

> I am now at court,
> In his own private chamber. There he woos me
> And plies his suit to me with as serious pains
> As if the short flame of mortality
> Were lighted up again in my cold breast;
> Folds me within his arms and often sets
> A sinful kiss upon my senseless lip;
> Weeps when he sees the paleness of my cheek,
> And will send privately for a hand of art
> That may dissemble life upon my face
> To please his lustful eye. (4.4.66-76)

The ghost uses first-person pronouns and the present tense to narrate the actions occurring to her body "now." The dislocated voyeurism blurs subject/object binaries and collapses romantic and necrophilic imagery. "There he woos me" presents the irony of the Tyrant wooing an inanimate object, "As if" it were still alive, but this subject/object distinction is complicated by the fact that, as a ghost, the Lady still views the body as herself and is still capable of denying consent. Therefore, the description of necrophilia falls within the scope of rape. In the description of "A sinful kiss upon my senseless lip," the alliteration of "sinful" and "senseless" highlights the body's lack of life that makes the act especially sinful. But "sinful kiss" is ambiguous, and could implicate the Lady's body as well. The "senseless[ness]" of the body does not prevent the ghost from seeing the act as a violation, a sin in which she is implicated. In the same way that she asked Govianus to kill her to prevent sexual violation in life, she orders him to reclaim her material body and symbolic rest: "My rest is lost. Thou must restore't again" (79).

As the ghost mentions, the Tyrant's use of art is a use of force; he desires to "dissemble life upon [the corpse's] face / To please his lustful eye" (4.4.75-76). The use of "dissemble" as a transitive verb that is done to the Lady's body undercuts the traditional misogynistic association between women, painting, and dissembling. "To please his lustful eye" presents the eye as a sexual organ that can be sated by viewing a spectacle of reanimation. The Lady's corpse is forced to become the Tyrant's erotic object.

During the Lady's life, the Tyrant attempted to woo the Lady with treasures and to overpower the Lady with force. The Tyrant continues this dynamic in death, using art as both a treasure and an instrument of force to exert his will upon the corpse. He metatheatrically positions himself in the tradition of Herod:

> I once read of a Herod whose affection

> Pursued a virgin's love, as I did thine,
>
> Who for the hate she owed him killed herself
>
> (As thou too rashly didst) without all pity;
>
> Yet he preserved her body dead in honey
>
> And kept her long after her funeral.
>
> But I'll unlock the treasure house of art
>
> With keys of gold and bestow all on thee. (4.3.117-24)

Sovereign power, riches, and even force did not allow the Tyrant to possess the Lady in life, but the Tyrant attempts to use these powers to possess and reanimate the corpse. The Tyrant's image of "unlock[ing] the treasure house of art" is similar to his image of grave robbing as an act of liberating the body. He combines his necrophilic desires with romantic tropes, presuming to court the dead body with the gift of reanimating art.

The final scene is the climax of the Tyrant's use of art and of the Lady's posthumous agency as both object and quasi-resurrected subject. Govianus, led by the Lady's ghost, ultimately defeats the Tyrant by posing as a painter and applying poison to the dead Lady's lips. Through the poisonous kiss, the dead Lady turns the Tyrant's forceful use of art into a vehicle of vengeance. The scene focuses on the display of the corpse, but the significance of the display is revised several times by shifting contexts. The Tyrant first calls for the corpse to be brought out to fulfill his intense desire to see "her." His struggle between his own "spirit" and "blood" is ironically juxtaposed with the duality of the Lady's ghost and corpse. He has lost an attempt to restrain himself from viewing the body:

> In vain my spirit wrestles with my blood,
>
> Affection will be mistress here on earth.

> The house is hers, the soul is but a tenant.
>
> I ha' tasked myself but with the abstinence
>
> Of one poor hour, yet cannot conquer that.
>
> I cannot keep from sight of her so long.
>
> I starve mine eye too much. [*To an attendant*] Go, bring her forth
>
> As we have caused her body to be decked
>
> In all the glorious riches of our palace. (5.2.1-9)

The feminized "Affection" wins out over the spirit in the Tyrant's battle for bodily control. Speaking of his body in gendered terms of possession, "The house is hers," evokes the Lady's body and the question of to whom it now belongs. The corpse is referred to as "her," yet it is also "her body," the possession of a dislocated female subject. The Tyrant asserts control over the body and its presentation, attiring it and transforming it into a treasure along with the "riches" that cover it.

The body's entrance is textually announced with another highly descriptive stage direction: "*They bring the body in a chair, dressed up in black velvet which sets out the paleness of the hands and face, and a fair chain of pearl across her breast and the crucifix above it*" (5.2.13.1-4 s.d.). Since "the body" mentioned here is most likely a dummy, the queerness of the staging mirrors the queerness of the way "the body" can refer to a living or dead body, an animate or inanimate one. This queerness is continued in the neuter pronouns used to describe "the hands and face." The feminine pronoun only appears when attention is directed to feminized anatomy, "her breast." While the Tyrant has changed the body's costume to black velvet, the crucifix remains. Although the crucifix takes on new associations in this context—as another

jewel with which the body is decked and perhaps a symbol of idolatry[115]—the association with resurrection remains central. The stage direction not only prescribes the action, but also provides aesthetic commentary by remarking upon the contrast between black velvet and pale dead skin.

The stage direction continues with a dumb show: "*The Tyrant stands silent awhile, letting the music play, beckoning the soldiers that bring her in to make obeisance to her, and he himself makes a low honour to the body and kisses the hand*" (5.2.13.4-8 s.d.). The song that accompanies this action has a *memento mori* theme that links the horrors of death to the loss of feminine beauty:

> O what is beauty that's so much adorèd?
> A flatt'ring glass that cozens her beholders:
> One night of death makes it look pale and horrid;
> The dainty preserv'd flesh, how soon it moulders.
>     To love it living, it bewitcheth many,
>     But after life is seldom heard of any. (5.2.14-19)

The conventional misogyny of the song makes the feminine gender role shameful because of its transience. The image of feminine beauty "cozens" because it will ultimately be destroyed by death. Of course, the song does not fit the action of the play: the body of the dead Lady is still adored. The line, "The dainty preserv'd flesh, how soon it moulders" mimics temporal decay: flesh that is preserved in life "moulders" after death. The trappings of femininity, mostly aesthetic effects produced by clothing and paint, dissolve along with the ungendered flesh, which is referred to as "it." The stage image, however, does not present the gendered body as temporal, but rather shows the paradox of a preserved, feminized corpse. Along with preserving the body,

---

[115] Zimmerman considers the crucifix as part of "the play's Catholic ambience" (100).

the Tyrant preserves the Lady's gender through performative costume, display, and by casting it in the role of love object.

The Tyrant addresses the corpse as aesthetic object and love object: "How pleasing art thou to us even in death! / I love thee yet, above all women living, / And shall do sev'n year hence" (5.2.24-26). The Tyrant positions the corpse as a woman, one superior to "all women living." The pleasure he derives from the body is sexual, romantic, and aesthetic, and he envisions keeping both his love and the body unchanged for seven years. He continues:

> I can see nothing to be mended in thee
> But the too constant paleness of thy cheek.
> I'd give the kingdom but to purchase there
> The breadth of a red rose in natural colour,
> And think it the best bargain
> That ever king made yet; but fate's my hindrance,
> And I must only rest content with art,
> And that I'll have in spite on't! (5.2.27-34)

Rather than aligning death with rapid change and decay, as in the song, the Tyrant aligns death with "too constant paleness." This constancy is linked to the Lady's sexual constancy, her chastity in life and death. The corpse's pallor is a symbolic refusal of the Tyrant's sexual advances, and he will attempt to use art as a force to combat it. He fantasizes purchasing "natural colour" for the corpse's cheek. As in *The Winter's Tale*, resurrection is imagined as an aesthetic transformation, a return of color and warmth. The Tyrant does not envision the Lady coming back to life as a subject capable of refusing consent, but rather envisions the body as an object changing in appearance. The phrase "natural colour" makes natural liveliness a mere qualifier of

aesthetic appearance. In other words, he desires to harness life and nature as forms of art, creating an aesthetic resurrection that would make the body a more perfect object. Since this is not a power he can "purchase," he uses his sovereign and economic power to employ an artist, "some private hand" (5.2.40). In the aggressive ending of this speech, he vows to use art "in spite" of fate. He is also spiting the body itself by exerting this force upon it.

The conventional misogyny that condemns women for "painting" results in the Tyrant moralizing ironically to the corpse:

> It is no shame for thee, most silent mistress,
>
> To stand in need of art,
>
> When youth and all thy warm friends has forsook thee.
>
> Women alive are glad to seek her friendship
>
> To make up the fair number of their graces,
>
> Or else the reck'ning would fall short sometimes,
>
> And servants would look out for better wages. (5.2.41-47)

The Tyrant addresses the corpse as a woman, one who might feel "shame." Positioning the body as "in need of art" attributes the desire for art onto the corpse itself, evinced through its lack of color, rather than the Tyrant's need to exert sexual and aesthetic control over the dead body through the use of art. As with Gloriana's skull, the metatheatrical aestheticizing of "female" remains by male characters unsettles the conventional misogyny that condemns women for deceptive artifice.

Govianus, disguised as an artist, addresses the body in an aside: "'Tis strange to me / To see thee here at court, and gone from hence" (5.2.53-54). He sums up the paradox of the cadaverous resemblance; the Lady is both "here" and "gone." As in the ghost's utterance, "I am

not here," it is impossible to locate the subject. Identity's connection to body and spirit, past memory and present object, make it impossible to locate "her."

The Tyrant and disguised Govianus engage in a dialogue of object-oriented speculation, disagreeing about what the corpse "wants":

> TYRANT. Look on yon face and tell me what it wants.
>
> GOVIANUS. Which? That, sir?
>
> TYRANT. That. What wants it? (66-67)

Govianus' confusion indicates the difficulty of recognizing the "face" of the corpse. Instead of seeing a human "face," he can only ask: "That…?" As in the graveyard scene in *Hamlet*, ambiguous demonstrative pronouns express the radical break in identity of once-human faces. The dialogue between the Tyrant and Govianus plays off the semantic flexibility of "wants" to mean lack, a deficit that can be equally applicable to subjects and objects, and distinctly human desire. The Tyrant perceives the face as both lacking color and desiring the revivification it signifies. The disguised Govianus, aware of the Lady's actual desires vis-à-vis her ghost, does not see the desire for aesthetic revivification, but rather for Christian resurrection, when he looks at the face of the corpse. The ghost *wants* the body's reburial; the desire of the dead does not coincide with the desires the Tyrant has projected onto the corpse. Govianus replies that the corpse desires "Some thousand years' sleep and a marble pillow" (68). This interpretation of what the corpse "wants" implicitly condemns the Tyrant's actions as violation of the body's "sleep." "Marble pillow" again conflates corpse and effigy; the Tyrant has violated the symbolic rest depicted in the monument and the rest of the corpse when envisioned as sleeping until resurrection.

The Tyrant must reframe his question to focus on aesthetics: “What colour wants she?” (72). While the question associates “wants” specifically with the lack of color, “she” appeals to a sense of human agency that exists outside of the object’s pallor, as Govianus picks up on in his reply: “By my troth, all, sir. I see none she has, / Nor none she cares for” (73-74). Aesthetic objectification and human subjectivity intersect here: the corpse is both an object that wants (lacks) color and a subject that wants (desires) none.

Govianus continues: “A lower chamber with less noise were kindlier / For her, poor woman, whatso’er she was” (75-76). Referring to the grave as “A lower chamber with less noise” continues the depiction of death as sleep and the grave as a private domestic space. The corpse is both “her” and a past-tense “poor woman.” Although Govianus pretends not to know the corpse’s identity and status in life, the Lady’s corpse is perceived as a “poor woman,” both suffering and debased due to the actions performed on her body.

The Tyrant tells Govianus:

> Let but thy art hide death upon her face
> That now looks fearfully on us, and but strive
> To give our eye delight in that pale part
> Which draws so many pities from these springs,
> And thy reward for’t shall outlast thy end,
> And reach to thy friend’s fortunes, and his friend. (5.2.81-86)

Rather than resurrecting the body, art will merely “hide death.” While “death” is the main subject of the verb “looks fearfully on us,” “her face” also performs this action. Death and “her face” are one. The face is interpreted both as a cadaverous resemblance and an object haunted by “her.” Since the Lady’s lack of consent in life is intensified by death’s complete foreclosure of

consent, art is presented as a way to provide the semblance of life and consent. The Tyrant combines this attempt to mimic immortality through art with a promise of eternal rewards for the artist in the earthly realm of fortunes.

While Govianus paints the corpse's face, the Tyrant narrates the aesthetic and metaphysical significance of the act and portrays art as both supernatural power and brute force:

> Could I now send for one to renew heat
> Within her bosom, that were a fine workman!
> I should but too much love him, but, alas,
> 'Tis as unpossible for living fire
> To take hold there,
> As for dead ashes to burn back again
> Into those hard tough bodies whence they fell.
> Life is removed from her, now, as the warmth
> Of the bright sun from us when it makes winter,
> And kills with unkind coldness—so is't yonder.
> An everlasting frost hangs now upon her,
> And, as in such a season men will force
> A heat into their bloods with exercise
> In spite of extreme weather, so shall we
> By art force beauty on yon lady's face,
> Though death sit frowning on't a storm of hail
> To beat it off. Our pleasure shall prevail. (5.2.96-112)

While Govianus and the Lady's ghost speak of the body as awaiting glorious resurrection, the Tyrant's speech forecloses the possibility of resurrection by aligning the body with "dead ashes" destined to never regain bodily shape and by describing the coldness of death as "everlasting." Removing the corpse from the narrative of Christian resurrection allows it to be positioned as his exclusive property, an automaton rather than a sleeping subject. Yet the Tyrant perceives lingering traces of the Lady's subjectivity in the dead body, particularly since her death symbolizes her refusal of him. The "unkind coldness" is both death and chastity. The final metaphor presents the use of art as physical force, analogized to the exercise with which "men will force / A heat into their bloods." The metaphor blurs the boundary between his body and the Lady's corpse: rather than forcing heat into his own blood, he will force the appearance of warmth onto the corpse's flesh. The aesthetic triumph is aligned with an act of rape.

After the paint is applied, the Tyrant ironically echoes Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*: "O, she lives again! / She'll presently speak to me!" (5.2.113-14). The Tyrant performs the roles of Leontes and Paulina: he is both a guilty man obsessed with a delusional belief that the inanimate object lives, and the one who purports to reanimate it. The body, however, is completely unlike the one revealed at the end of *The Winter's Tale*: it lacks life, warmth, and the ability to speak, and is in fact covered with wet (and poisonous) paint. While Hermione's body stands like a statue, this body is unable to stand, to the Tyrant's dismay: "Keep her up, / I'll have her swoon no more, there's treachery in't" (115-16). The falling of the cadaver is treacherous because it rebukes the Tyrant's desire to see the body as living. The inanimate body succumbing to gravity is revised as "her" decision to "swoon."

The Tyrant, under the delusion of the art he has purchased, continues: "Does she not feel warm to thee?" Govianus replies: "Very little, sir" (5.2.117). As in *The Winter's Tale*, heat is the

index of reanimated life. Life and death are set in a continuum rather than a binary, and while "Very little" refutes the Tyrant's claim that the Lady lives, it gives hope that there may be some warmth in the body. The Tyrant continues this when he responds: "The heat wants cherishing, then. Our arms and lips / Shall labour life into her. Wake, sweet mistress, / 'Tis I that calls thee at the door of life!" (118-20). The Tyrant attempts to perform sexualized theatrical magic; "labour[ing] life into her" recalls conception, birth, and resurrection. The Tyrant's call to the dead body "at the door of life" is answered in a way he does not expect. The "door of life" is also the door into death, which the corpse calls him through via the poisonous kiss. The combination of dialogue and kiss complicate the agency of the dead body. The ghost earlier described the Tyrant's "sinful kiss" (4.4.72), blurring subject/object agency and making blame difficult to locate. In this final "sinful kiss," it is far from clear to which character the "sin" or the "kiss" belongs.

In this scene, the King's Men allude to their prior performances of both Hermione's statue and Gloriana's skull. The painted corpse's action exists somewhere between the resurrected subjectivity and aesthetic magic of the statue scene and the queer parody of the skull's revenge. The ghost as a continuance of the Lady's subjectivity and co-conspirator in the corpse's revenge revises the parody of *The Revenger's Tragedy*. While Gloriana's skull's revenge belongs to "it," the dead Lady's revenge belongs to both the body that performs it and the spirit that presides over it.

After the Tyrant's fatal kiss, during his last agonizing moments of life, Govianus addresses the Tyrant in terms that condemn his theft, which is inextricably linked to his religious and sexual violations. He says:

> O, thou sacrilegious villain,

> Thou thief of rest, robber of monuments!
>
> Cannot the body after funeral
>
> Sleep in the grave for thee? Must it be raised
>
> Only to please the wickedness of thine eye? (5.2.127-31)

The "sacrilegious" Tyrant has "raised" a corpse that should only be raised by God. His grave robbing and use of art to mimic life are crude attempts to resurrect and glorify the Lady's body. Like the Duke of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the Tyrant is punished for his sexual violence, but he is also punished for playing God. The image of a body being "raised … to please" evokes the pleasure of theater. In this case, the Tyrant's necrophilic dramaturgy is not lawful magic.

While the kiss is an expression of posthumous agency, the appearance of the Lady's ghost makes her agency even clearer. The stage direction states: "*Enter the Ghost in the same form as the Lady is dressed in the chair*" (5.2.153.1-2 s.d.). The dummy playing the body is referred to as "the Lady," gendering the inanimate object, both the material dummy and the corpse it performs. In the dual staging of corpse and spirit, the Lady's identity is troped by identical costume. While the ghost, in her earlier appearances, is referred to as "Lady" in the speech prefixes, the character is referred to as "Spirit" in the final scene. The playtext's shifting use of "Lady" indicates the confusion of the Lady's posthumous identity when corpse and ghost share the stage.

The ghost's presence torments the Tyrant as much as the corpse's kiss does. He exclaims: "I called not thee, thou enemy to firmness, / Mortality's earthquake" (5.2.154-55). The fact that the Tyrant desires a relationship with the corpse as automaton, rather than with the resurrected Lady, is highlighted by his disdain for the ghost. Govianus tells the ghost: "Thy body shall return to rise again, / For thy abuser falls, and has no power / To vex thee further now" (162-64). The

alliterative spatial dynamics mapped by “return” and “rise again” posit reburial as seamlessly leading to resurrection. The use of “again” is ambiguous, however, when describing the body’s rising: the body has already risen and will rise yet again. The commonplace saying comes close to aligning resurrection with a repetition of the grave robbing we have witnessed.

Govianus reclaims the corpse and the crown, and before reburial, the Lady is posthumously crowned queen. The act resonates with a marriage vow. While this has caused critics to align Govianus’ actions with the Tyrant’s,[116] the Lady’s consent gives their actions fundamentally different meanings. While the Tyrant uses the Lady’s dead body as an object, Govianus continues his relationship with the Lady as a subject after her death. Govianus’ speech to the corpse is complicated by his entangled relationships with the Lady’s spirit, body, and memory:

> And since the body of that virtuous lady
> Is taken from her rest, in memory
> Of her admirèd mistress, ’tis our will
> It receive honour dead, as it took part
> With us in all afflictions when it lived.
> Here place her in this throne, crown her our queen,
> The first and last that ever we make ours,
> Her constancy strikes so much firmness in us.
> That honour done, let her be solemnly borne
> Unto the house of peace from whence she came
> As queen of silence. (5.2.196-206)

[116] Stevens writes: “Behaving much like the Tyrant he just deposed, Govianus enthrones the Lady’s body to be revered; for Martin Wiggins, ‘the distance between him and the necrophilic King narrows to a hair’s breadth’” (132).

In this speech, Govianus' pronouns oscillate among "her," "it" and "ours," revealing the ambiguous identity and property status of the dead body, as well as the continued identity of his deceased beloved. Perhaps the performative act of claiming the body in a coronation resembling matrimony serves to stabilize the gender and identity of the corpse, which Govianus begins to consistently refer to with the feminine pronoun or possessive, no longer as "it." "Her constancy" spans life, death, and presumably resurrection; the sexual constancy symbolized by chastity tropes the corporeal constancy that carnal resurrection promises. Govianus mirrors this constancy by abjuring remarriage; as in *The Winter's Tale*, marriage persists through death. Yet while *The Winter's Tale* uses the aesthetics of resurrection to achieve worldly immortality through the return of Leontes' wife and heir, futurity is explicitly divorced from procreation in *The Lady's Tragedy*. The unconsummated marriage between Govianus and the dead Lady prefigures the celibacy, yet continued sexual difference, among the bodies of the resurrected.

Govianus, like the Tyrant, "raises" the body, placing it on the throne. While the Tyrant's actions burlesque resurrection, Govianus' actions prefigure it. The Tyrant's exhumation of the body and rhetoric deny any form of resurrection other than the illusion provided by art, while Govianus' reburial and rhetoric serve to care for the body as it awaits resurrection. As Govianus begins to lead the Lady's second funeral procession, according to a stage direction: "*The Spirit [of the Lady] enters again and stays to go out with the body, as it were attending it*" (5.2.206.1-2 s.d.). The body is honored and protected by the spirit. This union prefigures resurrection. Govianus tells the ghost:

> Thou need'st not mistrust me; I have a care
>
> As jealous as thine own. We'll see it done
>
> And not believe report. Our zeal is such,

We cannot reverence chastity too much. (5.2.207-10)

The living loved one and the deceased's spirit both have a duty to the corpse. More precisely, both revere chastity as an undying attribute of the Lady's body. The "jealousy" over the Lady's body is not solely between the male rivals fighting over an object, but also between the Lady's ghost and Govianus. Critics who describe the Lady's objectification miss that the body is not fully owned by Govianus; he acknowledges the ghost's right to the body. Govianus and the ghost will both ensure the body is properly buried. The most important reunion in the play is not between Govianus and the Lady in either her ghostly or corporeal forms, but rather between the ghost and body. The importance of the body to the ghost is neither sensualist nor idolatrous, but rather resonates with the image of the body as the soul's bride.[117]

Since the Lady, like Hermione, is an exemplary woman, her quasi-resurrection is constructed as significant for women generally. In the final lines of the play, Govianus provides moral commentary: "I would those ladies that fill honour's rooms / Might all be borne so honest to their tombs" (5.2.212-13). How should "honest" be interpreted here? Female "honesty" is defined not only by sexual propriety in life, but also by the supernatural ability to condemn posthumous violation and seek retribution from beyond the grave. The play, like early modern law, is confused about defining sexual violation in relation to women as subjects and objects. The body's violation perturbs the spirit and is considered an assault on "her" chastity. Yet the Lady, as body and spirit, is still considered chaste and honorable despite the Tyrant's actions. In the performance text, the word "honest" was changed by the censor to "virtuous" in the final

[117] Osmond discusses accounts of the Resurrection that describe the body appearing as a beautiful bride to the soul (289).

couplet (B5.2.164), weakening the social critique of the ironic juxtaposition of "honor" and "honest," as well as the allusion to *The Winter's Tale*.[118]

Govianus' couplet reinscribes the "honesty" of the corpse, narrativizing the corpse's degradation and revenge as another triumph of the Lady's chastity. The Lady's proper reburial and resurrection are promised as rewards for and extensions of her bodily comportment in life and death. This plan for reburial continues the theme Govianus brought up after the Lady's death, when he told the body his burial plans: "Without offence in kindred there I'll place thee / With one I loved the dearest next to thee. / Help me to mourn, all that love chastity!" (3.1.253-55). Govianus' continued focus on the chastity of the corpse reinforces its continuance despite the assaults on the body that death and necrophilia have posed. Both of his burial couplets attempt to preserve the body rhetorically.

*The Lady's Tragedy* is a tragedy of reburial with elements of a tragicomic resurrection plot. While revenge occurs in the play, Govianus' goal is not to metaphysically address wrongs, but to materially recover a loved one's body. Anne Lancashire explains the play's unusual status as a revenge tragedy, citing reburial as the motivation rather than revenge and Govianus' unusual triumph rather than eventual punishment as a revenger (Introduction 37). Because of her agency in killing the Tyrant, the Lady could also be considered the play's revenger, in which case her final funeral procession would fit, in a unique way, the conventions of the genre. The posthumous marriage provides tragicomic closure that hinges on the promise of resurrection.

Theologically and romantically, Govianus and the Tyrant seem to be engaging in similar behaviors. Both have been described by critics as idolatrous and both have been described as necrophilic. The ghost's assertion of posthumous subjectivity—her condemnation of the Tyrant's

[118] In his jealousy, Leontes says of Hermione: "'Tis pity she's not honest—honourable. / Praise her but for this her without-door form" (2.1.68-69).

actions and goading of Govianus' revenge—make this a play not about the manipulation of a feminized object, but rather about the assertion of posthumous sexual subjectivity. The ghost's protection of her body's chastity is intertwined with the complexity of resurrection beliefs. While the Tyrant's actions crudely travesty resurrection, the ghost's care for her body, aided by Govianus, stems from sincere hope for resurrection.

## Conclusion

My project began with the "past tense of gender" as it is expressed through staged cadavers and concludes with the futurity of gender and gender relations as imagined through stagings of resurrected bodies. While the Gravedigger's riddle dislocates Ophelia in time and turns the body into a past-tense woman, imagining the resurrection of the Lady's "chaste" corpse allows gendered identity to exist proleptically. Staged cadavers and cadaverous parts such as "Yorick's" skull and "Annabella's" heart embody tensions between past-tense gendered persons, present-tense neuter objects, and future-tense glorified, and differently gendered, bodies. The temporal construction of the human is queered when the "lifespan" is expanded to include death and resurrection as embodied processes.

The profound changes the body undergoes when transitioning from living person to cadaver to glorified body challenge the concept of identity. In *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy*, chastity is constructed as an ontological state that creates the effect of continuity between these radically different forms of embodiment. "Chaste" cadavers are aligned with preservation and even reanimation. Representations of "chaste" corpses revise the notoriously unstable cadaver into a reliable bridge between the corporeal stability promised by idealized living women and the immortal constancy of glorified bodies. Resurrection and feminine chastity are linked in a tautology that vindicates idealized women. Chaste corpses in both plays, however, are not merely objects, but are also powerful sites for representations of posthumous subjectivity.

While the leveling of death can be carried over into a leveled afterlife, a queer equality that transcends sexual difference, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Lady's Tragedy* are more concerned with preserving femininity. Artistry in both plays is ultimately used to make the gendering of

death and the afterlife appear natural.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *Nudities*. Trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Altman, Joel B. *The Improbability of Othello: Rhetorical Anthropology and Shakespearean Selfhood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Ariès, Philippe. *The Hour of Our Death*. Trans. Helen Weaver. New York: Knopf, 1981.

Augustine, Saint Bishop of Hippo. *The City of God*. Trans. Marcus Dods. New York: Modern Library, 1983.

Baglow, John Sutton. "The Rights of the Corpse." *Mortality* 12:3 (2007): 223-239.

Baines, Barbara J. "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation." *ELH* 65:1 (1998): 69-98.

Bamford, Karen. *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Barkan, Leonard. "'Living Sculptures': Ovid, Michelangelo, and *The Winter's Tale*." *ELH* 48.4 (1981): 639–667.

Beckwith, Sarah. *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Benson, Sean. *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Raising the Dead*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2009.

Berry, Philippa. *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

*The Bible: Authorized King James Version*. Eds. Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature*. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

Bogost, Ian. *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Boose, Lynda E. "Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love.'" *English Literary Renaissance*. 5.3 (1975): 360-374.

Boyarin, Daniel. "Othello's Penis: Or, Islam in the Closet." *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Ed. Madhavi Menon. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Bray, Alan. *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. Boston: Alyson, 1988.

Briggs, Julia. "The Lady's Tragedy: Parallel Texts." *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 833-38.

---. "'The Lady Vanishes': Problems of Authorship and Editing in the Middleton Canon." *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1992-1996*. Ed. W. Speed Hill. Tempe, Ariz: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies in conjunction with Renaissance English Text Society, 1998. 109-120.

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* New York: Verso, 2009.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

"cadaver, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web. 22 May 2016.

Callus, Ivan. "'This?': Posthumanism and the Graveyard Scene in *Hamlet*." *Posthumanist Shakespeares*. Eds. Stefan Herbrechter and Ivan Callus. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Carlino, Andrea. *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Clark, Sandra. "The State of the Art." *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Lisa Hopkins. London: Continuum, 2010. 60-76.

Coddon, Karin S. "'For Show or Useless Property': Necrophilia and *The Revenger's Tragedy*." *ELH* 61:1 (1994): 71-88.

Coke, Edward. *The third part of the Institutes of the laws of England concerning high treason, and other pleas of the crown, and criminall causes*. London, 1644. *Early English Books Online*. Web. 20 November 2012.

"corpse, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web. 22 May 2016.

Dailey, Alice. *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.

De Grazia, Margreta. *Hamlet without Hamlet*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

---. "The Ideology of Superfluous Things: *King Lear* as Period Piece." *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*. Eds. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Ferguson, Margaret. "Hymeneal Instruction." *Masculinities, Childhood, Violence: Attending to*

*Early Modern Women—and Men: Proceedings of the 2006 Symposium*. Eds. Amy E. Leonard and Karen L. Nelson. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011.

Finin, Kathryn R. "Re-Membering Gloriana: 'Wild Justice' and the Female Body in The Revenger's Tragedy." *Renaissance Forum: An Electronic Journal of Early Modern Literary and Historical Studies* 6:2 (2003): n. pag.

Finke, Laurie A. "Painting Women: Images of Femininity in Jacobean Tragedy." *Theatre Journal* 36:3 (1984): 356-370.

Ford, John. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Ed. Sonia Massai. London: Arden, 2011.

Forsythe, Robert S. *The Relation of Shirley's Plays to the Elizabethan Drama*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1914.

Freccero, Carla. *Queer/Early/Modern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Frye, Roland Mushat. *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Garber, Marjorie. "Remember Me: *Memento Mori* Figures in Shakespeare's Plays." *Renaissance Drama* 12 (1981): 3–25.

Gittings, Clare. *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England*. London: Croom Helm, 1984.

Gottlieb, Christine M. "Middleton's Traffic in Dead Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*." *English Literary Renaissance*. 45.2 (2015): 255-274.

Gross, Kenneth. *The Dream of the Moving Statue*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Guthke, Karl S. *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Harman, Graham. "The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object-Oriented Literary Criticism." *New Literary History* 43.2 (2012): 183–203.

Harris, Jonathan Gil, and Natasha Korda, eds. *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Hopkins, Lisa. Introduction. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Lisa Hopkins. London: Continuum, 2010. 1-13.

Houlahan, Mark. "The Deconstructing *'Tis Pity*?: Derrida, Barthes and Ford." *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Lisa Hopkins. London: Continuum, 2010. 136-51.

Jager, Eric. *The Book of the Heart*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Jankowski, Theodora A. *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

Keller, Eve. *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.

Kolb, Justin. "'To Me Comes a Creature': Recognition, Agency, and the Properties of Character in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*." *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*. Ed. Wendy Beth Hyman. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011. 45-60.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Lancashire, Anne. Introduction. *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*. By Thomas Middleton. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. 1-84.

Laqueur, Thomas W. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge,

Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990.

---. “Sex in the Flesh.” *Isis* 94:2 (2003): 300-306.

Lawrence, Susan C. “Beyond the Grave—The Use and Meaning of Human Body Parts: A Historical Introduction.” *Stored Tissue Samples: Ethical, Legal, and Public Policy Implications*. Ed. Robert F. Weir. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998. 111-142.

Llewellyn, Nigel. *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Lodhia, Sheetal. “‘The House is Hers, the Soul is but a Tenant’: Material Self-Fashioning and Revenge Tragedy” *Early Theatre* 12:2 (2009): 135-161.

Loughlin, Marie H. *Hymeneutics: Interpreting Virginity on the Early Modern Stage*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1997.

Luciano, Dana, and Mel Y. Chen. “Has the Queer Ever Been Human?” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21:2–3 (2015): 183–207.

Lupton, Julia Reinhard. “Othello Circumcised: Shakespeare and the Pauline Discourse of Nations.” *Representations* 57.1 (1997): 73-89.

Marchitello, Howard. *Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England: Browne’s Skull and Other Histories*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Massai, Sonia, ed. *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*. By John Ford. London: Arden, 2011.

Matthews, Paul. “Whose Body? People As Property.” *Current Legal Problems* 36 (1983): 193-239.

McQuade, Paula. “Love and Lies: Marital Truth-Telling, Catholic Casuistry, and *Othello*.” *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England.* Eds. Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003.

Menon, Madhavi. "Introduction: Queer Shakes." *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Ed. Madhavi Menon. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Middleton, Thomas. *The Revenger's Tragedy: A Facsimile of the 1607/8 Quarto*. Ed. MacDonald P. Jackson. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983.

---. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*. Eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Miles, Margaret R. "Sex and the City (of God): Is Sex Forfeited or Fulfilled in Augustine's Resurrection of Body?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 73.2 (2005): 307-327.

Monks, Aoife. "Human Remains: Acting, Objects, and Belief in Performance." *Theatre Journal* 64:3 (2012): 355–371.

Neill, Michael. "Changing Places in *Othello*." *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 207-36.

---. Introduction. *Othello, the Moor of Venice*. By William Shakespeare. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

---. *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

---. "Othello's Black Handkerchief: Response to Ian Smith." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 64.1 (2013): 26-31.

---, ed. *Othello, the Moor of Venice*. By William Shakespeare. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

---. "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 40.4 (1989): 383-412.

---. "'What Strange Riddle's This?': Deciphering *'Tis Pity She's a Whore.*" *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions*. Ed. Michael Neill. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 153-79.

Newman, Karen. *Fashioning Femininity in English Renaissance Drama*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1991.

Nunn, Hillary M. *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005.

Oosterwijk, Sophie. "Food for Worms – Food for Thought: The Appearance and Interpretation of the 'Verminous' Cadaver in Britain and Europe." *Church Monuments* 20 (2005): 40-80.

Osmond, Rosalie E. "Body, Soul, and the Marriage Relationship: The History of an Analogy." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34:2 (1973): 283-290.

Park, Katharine. "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy." *Renaissance Quarterly* 47:1 (1994): 1-33.

---. "Dissecting the Female Body: From Women's Secrets to the Secrets of Nature." *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women*. Eds. Jane Donawerth and Adele Seeff. Newark: University of Delaware Press. 2000. 29-47.

---. *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection*. New York: Zone Books, 2006.

Park, Katharine and Robert A. Nye. "Destiny Is Anatomy." *New Republic* 204.7 (1991): 53–57.

Parker, Patricia. "*Othello* and *Hamlet*: Dilation, Spying, and the 'Secret Place' of Woman." *Representations* 44.1 (1993): 60-95.

Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1993.

---. "Thinking with Skulls in Holbein, *Hamlet*, Vesalius, and Fuller." *Placing Michael Neill: Issues of Place in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*. Ed. Jonathan G. Harris. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

Petrey, Taylor G. *Resurrecting Parts: Early Christians on Desire, Reproduction, and Sexual Difference*. Routledge, 2015.

Pollard, Tanya. *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Quarles, Francis. *Emblems*. Illus. Charles Bennett and W. Harry Rogers. London: J. Nisbet, 1861.

Radin, Margaret Jane. *Reinterpreting Property*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

"resurrectionist, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016. Web. 22 May 2016.

Rigolot, François. "Magdalen's Skull: Allegory and Iconography in Heptameron 32." *Renaissance Quarterly* 47:1 (1994): 57-73.

Robertson, Karen. "Chastity and Justice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*." *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*. Eds. Carole Levin and Karen Robertson. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991. 215-236.

Sawday, Jonathan. *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Schiebinger, Londa. "Skelettestreit." *Isis* 94:2 (2003): 307-313.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare.* Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Sherlock, Peter. *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008.

Smith, Ian. "Othello's Black Handkerchief." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 64.1 (2013): 1-25.

Sofer, Andrew. "The Skull on the Renaissance Stage: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Props." *English Literary Renaissance* 28.1 (1998): 47-74.

---. *The Stage Life of Props*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Spinrad, Phoebe S. *The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987.

Stallybrass, Peter. "Reading the Body: *The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Jacobean Theater of Consumption." *Renaissance Drama* 18 (1987), 121-148.

Stevens, Andrea Ria. *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama, 1400-1642*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

Stolberg, Michael. "A Woman Down to Her Bones: The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries." *Isis* 94 (2003): 274-299.

Taylor, James Stacey and Aaron Spital. "Corpses Do Not Have Rights: A Response to Baglow." *Mortality*, 13:3 (2008): 282-286.

Thiel, Udo. *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Thompson, Ann and Neil Taylor, eds. *Hamlet*. By William Shakespeare. London: Arden

Shakespeare, 2006.

Traub, Valerie. “Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies.” *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture*. Eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

---. “The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies.” *PMLA* 128:1 (2013): 21–39.

---. *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Troyer, John. “Abuse of a Corpse: A Brief History and Re-Theorization of Necrophilia Laws in the USA.” *Mortality*. 13.2 (2008): 132-152.

Van Eijk, A. H. C. “‘Only That Can Rise Which Has Previously Fallen’: The History of a Formula.” *The Journal of Theological Studies*. 22.2 (1971): 517-529.

Vesalius, Andreas. Frontispiece. *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*. Illus. unknown Venetian, attributed to workshop of Titian. 1543. ARTstor. Web. 22 May 2016.

Vidal, Fernando. “Brains, Bodies, Selves, and Science: Anthropologies of Identity and the Resurrection of the Body.” *Critical Inquiry* 28:4 (2002): 930–74.

Waldron, Jennifer Elizabeth. *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theater*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Walton, Izaak. *The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and Robert Sanderson.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1927.

Watson, Robert N. “*Othello* as Protestant Propaganda.” *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*. Eds. Claire McEachern and Debora K. Shuger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Wiseman, Susan J. “’*Tis Pity She’s a Whore*: Representing the Incestuous Body.” *Renaissance*

*Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, c. 1540-1660*. Eds. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn. London: Reaktion Books, 1990. 180-97.

Woods, Gillian. "The Confessional Identities of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*." *'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Critical Guide*. Ed. Lisa Hopkins. London: Continuum, 2010. 114-35.

Wright, Thomas. Preface. *Alexandri Neckam De Naturis Rerum Libro Duo: With the Poem of the Same Author, De Laudibus Divinae Sapientiae*. By Alexander Neckam. London: Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1863. ix-lxxviii.

Young, Iris Marion. *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Zimmerman, Susan. *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005.