MATTERS OF THE HEART:
GENDERING THE HEART IN JOHN FORD’S ‘TIS PITY SHE’S A WHORE
AND
WILLIAM HARVEY’S THE MOTION OF THE HEART

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in English

By

Roya Julia Biggie, B.A.

Washington, D.C.
August 31, 2010
To my professors.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queer/Feminine Desire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Early Modern Anatomy Theater</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern Heart(s)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Hearts, Queer Language</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 2.1 .................................................................................................................. 13

Figure 2.2 .................................................................................................................. 17
Queer/Feminine Desire

Though precious Time, that swiftly rid'st in post
Over the word, to finish up the race
Of my last fate; here stay thy restless course,
And bear to ages that are yet unborn
A wretched woman's woeful tragedy.
-Annabella, 'Tis Pity She's A Whore (5.1.4-8)

Alone, in the privacy of her bedchamber, Annabella anticipates her own demise. Betrothed to another and coerced into confession, she resists her love for her brother, Giovanni; their affection, once secret, is eventually exposed, leading Annabella to foresee her fiancé’s murderous wrath. Yet, in this moment, she does not mourn her loss of self, nor does she attempt to escape. She instead cries out to Time, pleading that it stay, bear witness, and finally tell “ages…yet unborn” of “a wretched woman’s woeful tragedy.”

Aware of her own mortality, she longs for her tragic fate to touch an approaching future. Time, she believes, can facilitate this touching. As she begins to feel out the unborn, she hopes that it too will feel her.

In Getting Medieval, Carolyn Dinshaw takes up the very cross-temporal touches for which Annabella yearns. A non-linear methodology, she attests, assists in the
development of a queer history, one that gives voice to traditionally silenced figures of alterity, the wretched woman, if you will. In a series of trans-historical “juxtapositions,” Dinshaw brings the pre-modern and postmodern into conversation, seeking to “make entities past and present touch.”¹ As we touch the past and allow it reciprocally to touch us, we are able to make what Donna Haraway refers to as a “partial connection.”² According to Haraway, the “knowing self” is always “partial…constructed and stitched together imperfectly.”³ This incompleteness of self allows for a joining, a touching of the past and present, the old and new.

While Dinshaw grounds her work in the medieval period—she focuses on partially connecting the period’s conception of unintelligibility to our own—my project engages in a historically queer reading of early modern drama and medical texts. Specifically focusing on John Ford’s ‘Tis Pity She’s A Whore⁴, first performed in 1633, and William Harvey’s 1628 The Motion of the Heart, I hope seriously to consider Annabella’s final plea: What can her tale illuminate for “ages…yet unborn”? If we can, even if only for moment, ask Time to “stay [its] restless course,” how might we touch and be touched by a 17th century “wretched woman’s woeful tragedy”? My aim here is to take part in the joining of the past and present and consider the violence enacted upon theatrical and medical bodies, bodies that, like Annabella’s, are subject to an arguably threatening and masculinist epistemology. This inquiry, I hope, will illuminate our own

---

² qtd. in Dinshaw, 14.
³ Ibid, 14.
⁴ The exact date of the play is uncertain; however, the play was first published in a quarto edition in 1633. It was first performed by Queen Henrietta’s Men in the Cockpit Theater.
anxious attempts to gender the body while regulating non-normative forms of feminine
desire and sexuality.

Though often compared to Romeo and Juliet, 'Tis Pity She’s A Whore presents
critics and audience members with an impossibly scandalous and grotesque version of
Shakespeare’s star-crossed lovers. The romantic love between Annabella and her brother
is not only disturbing to our contemporary sensibilities, but was also subject to
condemnation during the early modern period. Thomas Adams, in his 1615 sermon, “The
Black Devil,” writes:

There is roome enough in one heart for many sins. Mary Magdalens heart
held seauen deuils: this Apostates eight. There was a whole Legion in
another. Math. 8. All the Principalities and powers of darknesse in a
fourth. Absolon had treason, ambition, pride, incest, ingratitude, for his
hearts stuffing. Iudas had no fewer turpitudes in his. The heart is so small
a piece of flesh, that it will scarce giue a Kite her breakfast: yet, behold,
how capacious and roomthy it is, to giue house-roome to seauen Deuils.5

Housed within the body’s interior, incest infects the body, nestling within its core along
with other sins or “devils.” Considered not only a sin or one of “seaven deuils,” incest
was also regarded as a form of sodomy. As Jonathan Goldberg notes, Anne Boleyn was
not only criminalized for incest, but for sodomy, which was “precisely the charge that
would accompany treason.”6 The early modern understanding of sodomy was not limited
to male-male relations, nor did it implicate a series of specific acts. Rather, Goldberg
argues that early modern sodomy accounted for “anything that threatens alliance…[and]
emerge[s] into visibility when those who are said to have done them also can be called

traitors, heretics, or the like, at the very least, disturbers of the social order.” Incest itself was also broadly understood as that which not only involved blood relations, but also included close kin marriages. In *Blood, Bodies and Families*, Patricia Crawford points to a 1626 church case, which refers to “‘naturall and lawful brethren,’ that is, kin created by blood and affinity.” She notes that, according to Martin Ingram, “most prosecutions for sibling incest were for marriage with a deceased wife’s sister.” An ecclesiastical sin and a political crime, early modern incest contaminated the spiritual interiors of the body while posing a threat to the integrity of the family and state. As I consider incest in this essay, I would like to take a capacious, and admittedly contentious, stance regarding Annabella’s love for her brother. Although I do not wish to wholly disregard its historical and contemporary implications, I would like to think about the critical possibilities available to us if we look beyond incest as a mere taboo. In doing so, we can conceive of incest as a form of desire sameness, one that is prone to violence. I consider Annabella as a queer female figure whose corporeality and desires become subject to a violent and decidedly masculinist epistemology. Her love for her brother allows us to consider a feminine and eventually silenced form of erotic agency.

My use of the term “queer,” in this context, is consistent with recent scholarship in queer studies. In “What Does Queer Theory Teach US about X?,” Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner propose that “queer work wants to address the full range of power-ridden normatives of sex. This endeavor has animated a rethinking of both the perverse

---

7 Ibid, “Introduction,” 19.
9 Ibid, 213.
and the normal.”\textsuperscript{10} A rethinking of incest can allow us to engage in the project Berlant and Warner propose; through considering its productive possibilities in terms of queer scholarship, we are able to question a term already existing at the limit of the perverse, one that arguably straddles the border of the unintelligible. In doing so, we can explore what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.”\textsuperscript{11} The possibilities to which we become privy—Sedgwick’s gaps and overlaps, dissonances and resonances—similarly provides us contact with a “mesh,” a tangle of sexuality and gender potentialities. My aim here is not to recalibrate normalcy, but to consider the ways in which queer desire creates a space, a gap, if you will, for a form of female erotic agency.

Including Annabella within this mesh allows us to join Berlant, Warner, and Sedgwick in further interrogating the modalities of power that dictate—often violently—normative modes of being. I do not mean to suggest, when referring to Annabella’s queerness, that she expresses same-sex desires. I use the term to convey a desire which is considered to be non-normative and socially inacceptable. Annabella’s illicit love for her brother not only leads to her clandestine marriage, but also results in a forced engagement to her suitor, Soranzo, and her tragically violent end. As Annabella’s queer desires are publically condemned, Giovanni retaliates in a drastic attempt to possess his sister in the

fullest sense. He stabs out her heart, declaring it a signifier of their utmost affections for one another. By considering Annabella’s love for her brother as a form of queer desire, we can not only interrogate the perverse/normative binary, but we can also closely examine the physical and emotional violence this dualism facilitates.

Judith Butler, in *Antigone’s Claim*, proposes that we must critically consider the productive possibilities of incest in terms of queer scholarship. She argues that Antigone and her brother, Polyneices, share an incestuous love for one another; however, she urges us to consider their mutual affection and loss as an “allegory for the crisis of kinship.”\(^{12}\) Although Butler cautiously asserts that “neither the return to familial normalcy nor the celebration of incestuous practice” occupies the thrust of her project, she considers the queer love between Antigone and Polyneices as a means by which we may examine our own precarious forms of “legitimate love.”\(^{13}\) In my reading of Ford’s play, I would like similarly to move beyond the suggestion that the Annabella and Giovanni’s love for one another threaten normative kinship ties, a critical move that has preoccupied much of the scholarship surrounding *'Tis Pity*.\(^ {14}\) I am instead interested in focusing on the ways in which Annabella’s love for her brother, as a specifically queer and feminine form of desire, is examined, regulated, and ultimately, silenced. I would like to suggest that this interrogation provides us with a performative and textual venue through which we may consider the contemporary regulation of queer desire. The textual remains of the socially

---

unintelligible propose ways in which our own society may re-imagine more inclusive forms of what Butler calls legitimate love.

Annabella’s opportunity to express a desire that is specifically incestuous as it is feminine is violently thwarted in the play’s final act. Metonymically positioned at the tip of her brother’s sword, Annabella’s desires are penetrated by a masculine need to contain and discipline the feminine. Although Giovanni is also fatally wounded at the end of the play, his murder is not a direct attack on his incestuously queer desire for his sister; Giovanni is murdered by Vasques, Soranzo’s servant and the Parmese banditti, after he mortally stabs Soranzo. The murder Soranzo plans and the one Giovanni finally enacts illustrates a need to secure and stabilize male subjectivity. Distressed by the prospect of their own cuckoldry, the two must, quite literally, execute the source of their anxiety. Thus, Annabella’s desire, both feminine and queer, is silenced, symbolized only spectrally in her wounded and no longer throbbing heart. As I consider Annabella’s relationship with her brother and her subsequent murder, I would like to conceive of early modern unintelligible desire as both queer and feminine forms of erotic agency, that is, desires that are subject to a violently masculinist form of domination.

In her analysis of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *The Winter’s Tale*, Valerie Traub examines the ways in which female erotic power was controlled during the early modern period and specifically in the period’s drama. She points out that the four positions afforded to women during the period—“maid, wife, widow, whore”—are constituted “not merely by their biological sex, but by their sexual activity.” Traub argues that the

15 Valerie Traub, “Jewels, Statues, and Corpses: Containment of Female Erotic Power,” *Desire and*
period’s preoccupation with female chastity “renders woman’s erotic power inordinate, even excessive.” The anxieties surrounding this issue are counteracted, or perhaps further brought to light, through a “strategy of containment.” Traub writes:

The erotic threat of the female body is psychically contained by means of metaphoric and dramatic transformation of women into jewels, statues, and corpses. Indeed, together, the plays seem motivated toward this end: to give women speech only to silence them; to make women move only to still them; to infuse their bodies with warmth only to coldly “encorpse” them.

Annabella’s performed transformation from a breathing, desiring woman to a corpse, and then to a heart, and finally to a declared “whore” resonates with not only the dramatic form of containment Traub examines (5.6.156), but one that was also enacted in the period’s medical discourses and anatomy theaters. Advances in anatomical science during the 16th and 17th centuries increased the desire for an encyclopedic knowledge of the body. This yearning to know what Katharine Park calls the “hidden and secret interior” of a specifically female body echoes the period’s medical fascination with feminine corporeality as “the paradigmatic object of dissection.” Reiterative rhetorical and aesthetic techniques used in the period’s medical discourses illustrate attempts to render a universal male body while painting the feminine as the subaltern. In Bodies that Matter, Judith Butler refers to these processes as attempts at materialization, efforts that strive to establish the limits of intelligibility. Dramatically, Giovanni’s desire to discover an interiority within the corporeal, specifically, the heart, enables him to rid his sister of

---

16 Ibid, 26.
17 Ibid, 26
her former erotic agency and claim his sister’s desires for his own. Annabella’s penetrated heart and the female corpse upon an anatomist’s dissecting table are both subject to a masculinist form of domination, an attempt to know the feminine at the risk of, and perhaps through, its demise. Butler, however, points out that “materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled.”20 As I explore the period’s medical texts and anatomy theaters, my hope is to not only explore the discursive forms of violence such discourses and practices enable, but also to reveal the Sedgwickian gaps and overlaps for which attempts at materialization can never fully account.

The goal of this project is, thus, to consider critically the ways in which non-normative feminine desires become prone to a destructive and masculinist epistemology. By positioning ’Tis Pity She’s A Whore into conversation with early modern medical discourses my work will interrogate the containment and silencing of queer and feminine forms of erotic agency. My analysis, I hope, will shatter this silence, revealing the whispers of a queer past and the prospect of a more vocal future. As I converge the literary and medical, I will specifically focus on the heart, a figurative and literal entity, susceptible to an often anxious writing and rewriting.

Annabella’s queerness, I would like to suggest, is based in both her incestuous desire for her brother and her refusal to participate in a heart-based love language. Annabella, of course, recognizes her own desires as illicit; however, her queerness also takes shape in her expression of her erotic agency. In hesitating to include herself within

the play’s love rhetoric, Annabella creates a queer love language for herself, one in which she can express her desires. For her, the masculine rhetoric of her suitors is insufficient; her desires are best expressed in another key.

What, thus, becomes problematic is Annabella’s disassociation with the bodily love language of the heart. Unsure of her heart’s affections, and therefore the sincerity of her love, her suitors propose and finally enact a violent possession of the organ. The desire to know and possess the female body, I argue, parallels the period’s scientific advances and practices. Through positioning the medical, anatomical, and theatrical into conversation, I argue that the murder and the murderer, the cadaver and the anatomist, are collapsed into a single body in which gender is both written upon and undone. What we garner instead is a narrative of corporeal control. This longing to know the female body also demonstrates a desire to represent the feminine as containable and subordinated to the masculine. I will begin by first turning my attention to the early modern anatomy theaters and the period’s medical rhetoric of the heart.

*The Early Modern Anatomy Theater*

Gathered around a cadaver, students of medicine converse. Their attention, for the most part, is directed away from the corpse laid bare on a slab and awaiting the surgeon’s incision. Comfortably seated in a towering podium, a doctor of medicine clutches a text while he too shows little interest in the cadaver at hand. The surgeon, bending over the body, cleaves to a knife, ready to penetrate. He is perhaps the only one focused on the cadaver—save what appear to be a couple of students—and most likely the only member of the scene to make direct contact with its external and internal body.
I begin with this anatomy scene to demonstrate the vast developments occurring within the anatomy classroom and theater during the early modern period. My description depicts an illustration from Johannes de Ketham’s *Fasciculo de Medicina*, a Latin anatomy text, first published in Venice in 1491, by a German physician (figure 1). The divided roles of the surgeon and the orator, as we see in Ketham’s scene, were established by Mondino de’ Luzzie, a Bolognese professor of surgery whose first dissection took place in 1315.21 Although dissections were not entirely uncommon—“postmortem examinations occurred in Bologna and France as early as the beginning of the twelfth century”—Mondino’s 1315 dissection was sanctioned by the pope, representing the first historically authorized dissection.22 The affair, as Luke Wilson suggests in “William Harvey’s *Prelectiones,*” became a ritualized event, an authorized scene or spectacle. Although Mondino’s ordained anatomization was attended only by his students, the dissection was acknowledged as a certified form of consumable knowledge.

The separate positions of the surgeon and orator carried into 15th and early 16th century medical practices, demonstrating a continued reliance on textual authority and a privileging of the antiquarian. Wilson draws our attention to this gap between the textual, the archaic descriptions of a complex interior, and the corporeal, the stripped cadaver strewn across the anatomist’s slab. In the medical classroom, behind a podium, an orator read from an anatomy text while a surgeon, gripping a scalpel, carefully cut into the cadaver. In these scenes, the body did not take precedence over the text’s descriptions.

22 Ibid, 64.
Rather, the textual explanations of the body guided the interpretation of the severed cadaver. What becomes problematic here is the potential limitations of text. That is to say, the anatomized cadaver may not have necessarily reflected the body the orator described. As the classroom’s primary teaching tool, these anatomy texts resisted the body’s complex and often contradictory possibilities.

This style of dissection, which requires the separation of the surgeon and the orator, did not prevail, thus, bridging the gap between the textual and the corporeal. In the 16th century, as the anatomy theater gained popularity, Andreas Vesalius, an Italian physician, subverted the model of dissection captured in Ketham’s *Fasciculo di medicina*. Beginning in the 1530s, he conflated the roles of the surgeon and orator; rather than lecturing from a podium, he rid himself of the cumbersome text to which Ketham’s orator clings. Vesalius instead relied on improvisational techniques as he explained the inside workings of a specific and readily present corporeality. Vesalius defends this model in his 1543 *On the Fabric of the Human Body*, a detailed account of the human skeleton and muscular system. He writes: “No one should accept what this book or any other says, however much it has been approved by age or authority, without first, and more than once, testing what it says by means of careful dissection.”

Although Vesalius counters many of Galen’s claims (Galen was considered the figurehead of Greco-Roman medicine), Vesalius is careful not to question only the antiquarian, but also the contemporary. For him, the corporeal always takes precedence over the textual.

---

Moreover, Vesalius’s insistence that scholars embark upon several dissections characterizes the body as a precarious and mysterious entity, always subject to further (mis)interpretations. Students of medicine must, according to Vesalius, test what the anatomy text “says” against the exposed and potentially contradictory body. He clarifies that his text is not intended to educate students on a fixed corporeality, but rather he writes, “As I go through the parts in order I shall include after my exposition of each a method of dissection so that the reader may properly dissect all the muscles and ligaments in a single body and complete them in due order.”

Emphasizing his methodology rather than his findings, Vesalius welcomes subsequent dissections while considering their both indispensable and disruptive potential. The body and text are, therefore, characterized by their possible vicissitudes, their ability to always undergo change and variation.

Although Vesalius’s text considers his fellow scholars as his primary readership, his dissections were not restricted to students of medicine, but were opened up to the voyeuristic gaze of a public though solely male audience. No longer limited to the university or the seedy back streets of Padua, they were instead “occasions for public display in various political and religious ceremonies mandated by elaborate regulations.”

This ostentatious decorum, often “accompanied by banquets, concerts, and theatrical performances,” assisted in guaranteeing the “legality and sanctity of the event” while simultaneously disassociating the anatomy theater with its more sordid

24 Ibid, 146.
connotations. In spite of their authorization, dissections were linked to the morally questionable, an association, that was presumably tied to the source of its subject matter. Executed criminals were often handed over to medicine while grave-robbers also sought to make a profit within the anatomy field. Moreover, the state regulation of the anatomy theater suggests an attempt not only to conflate the latter with other forms of popular entertainment, but to control what is seen and to whom it is revealed. While the body’s interior workings became more accessible to the 16th century young man with a little change in his pocket, we must consider what was exposed or possibly hidden from our audience member.

While Vesalius’s attention to the body’s specificities was an undoubtedly revolutionary technique, his exegeses often functioned to justify the deaths or executions of men and women publically deemed as disruptive to the social order. In “Vesalius’s Fabrica and Shakespeare’s Othello,” Howard Marchitello draws our attention to the anatomical and theatrical attempt to read the female body as a symbol of its sexuality, an endeavor that is similarly enacted in Ford’s play. Charles Estienne, a 16th century French anatomist, aesthetically produced images of the female reproductive system in his La dissection des parties du corps humain. As figure 2 illustrates, the woman’s reproductive organs are associated with a sensuous sexuality. Strewn across an unmade bed, the woman revels in a mass of sheets and pillows. Eyes shut and arms thrown back, the woman gently caresses her tousled hair. As readers, we become privy to not only the

---

26 Ibid, 68.
workings of the female anatomy, but a moment of sumptuous ecstasy. The female body is thus, a specifically reproductive and excessively sexual body.

As Marchitello relates, this equation of femininity and sexuality took the form in the period’s medical images and texts. Marchitello points to Vesalius’s interpretation of an eighteen-year-old woman whose death was believed to be the result of her excessive sexuality. Vesalius claims that in a moment of vanity, the woman held her breath, tightened her corset, drawing attention to the tiny perimeter of her waist, and passed away—he, however, does not relate the specific cause of her death. Upon further inspection, Vesalius remarks upon the woman’s explicit sexuality, noting that, “I dissected the girl’s uterus for the sake of the hymen [which] was not entirely whole but had not quite disappeared, as I have found it usually the case in female cadavers in which one can barely find the place where it had been.” He concludes that the girl must have “ripped [it] with her fingers either for some frivolous reason or…against strangulation of the uterus without the intervention of a man.” Vesalius, thus, locates the cause of the woman’s death amidst sexual practices, which, in turn, are directly associated with physical peculiarities. Not only is the woman purported to partake in the “frivolity” of masturbation, but she also does not engage in heterosexual sex, a remedy that was believed to prevent the uterus’ strangulation (she instead attempts to untangle her uterus herself). Marchitello points out that, in this narrative, “Vesalius can only theorize that there was no man.”

---

woman’s “corrupt sexuality and its anatomical traces” creates an emblematic narrative of female sexuality. In relying upon the ocular, the “masculinist faith” in that which can be seen, Vesalius turns the bodies of women into stories, narratives that ultimately support state regimes of intelligibility and abjection.

The surgeon-orator is, thus, implicated in a Foucauldian position of authority, one in which “power and knowledge directly imply one another.”29 In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault argues that “the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”30 As a “system of politically motivated reading,” Vesalius’s anatomization of female cadavers works as a discursively violent means by which knowledge of the body justifies its domination.31 Rather than revealing a series of “phenomenological fact[s],” the body becomes a “narratological signifier” or “narratological proof” of femininity and criminality.32 As a body of knowledge, the cadaver is disciplined and contained within the anatomist’s narrative. For Vesalius’s women, this narrative is unquestionably one that reduces the woman’s body to its undesirable or inappropriate sexuality. This attempt to contain the female body is not only apparent in the narratives concerning female sexuality, but in the more subtle rhetorical maneuvers evidenced in anatomical descriptions of the body.

30 Ibid, 551.
31 Marchitello, 534.
32 Ibid, 534.
**Early Modern Heart(s)**

Guard your heart. Heart attack. My heart will go on. Cross my heart. With all my heart. You broke my heart. Heartache. Heart failure. With little effort, I could easily add to this list of heart-related aphorisms. Figured predominantly in religious, literary, and medical texts, the heart, at both the literal and figurative levels, is inscribed and overlaid with a variety of cultural nuances. Perhaps, for some, the heart conjures up the image of a greeting card aisle in early February, or an anatomical map of the circulatory system featured in a Bio 101 textbook, or maybe, the organ invokes the bleeding heart of Christ, depicted in the stained glass of a medieval cathedral. To explicate an exhaustive list of the wide variety of cultural meanings which contribute to our contemporary conception of the heart would be a nearly impossible task. I am interested in, more specifically, examining the way the heart figures into early modern love language while considering the period’s anatomical discoveries and practices.

As the increasing interest in the anatomized body gave way to what Jonathan Sawday refers to as the “culture of dissection,” the Galenic or Greco-Roman view of the body was not only increasingly contested, but also vehemently defended. We see this push and pull in the period’s medical texts surrounding the heart, specifically, Helkiah Crooke’s *Microcosmographia* (1615) and William Harvey’s *On the Motion of the Heart* (1628). This tension, however, is unsurprising. As both a form of popular entertainment and medical practice, dissections opened up the body’s interior to the critical gaze of a male anatomist. The heightened attention to the body’s intricacies undoubtedly led to medical discoveries; however, medical practices and texts simultaneously demonstrated a
desire to reaffirm Galenic and still prevalent understandings of the human body. In her introduction to *The Body Embarrassed*, Gail Kern Paster remarks upon the period’s investment in a Galenic or humoral physiology. She writes:

Humoral theory was instrumental in the production and maintenance of gender and class difference…When they were required to master their bodies for the sake of the ‘civilizing process,’ the various disciplinary regimes Foucault has seen as characteristic of emerging modernity, the bodies to be mastered were humoral bodies. And the embarrassed bodies of wives, whores, rustics, and children, who predictably failed in such tasks, suffered humoral forms of embarrassment.\(^3^3\)

As a medical system, humoralism or Galenism grounds otherness in ontological difference. Subjects grew up with an understanding of the four humors—blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm—and “imagined that health consisted of a state of internal solubility to be perilously maintained” by a driven attention to the self or in consultation with a medical practitioner.\(^3^4\) From an early age, subjects strove to civilize their bodies, controlling their humors through a delicate attention to their daily habits. The body’s humors, believed to be in a constant state of flux, were directly related to one’s environment and dietary habits. Yet, as Paster notes, the bodies who defied the categories of woman, lower-class, and child were more likely to master their bodily humors in a civilized manner. The embarrassed bodies implicated in such categories were always already less civilized than the controlled bodies of what we can assume to be upper-class men.

---


\(^{34}\) Ibid, 8.
The maintenance of a balanced, Galenic body required the “movement of humoral fluids.” Heat, located within the heart, promoted this interchange and was believed to be the body’s source of “life and nutrition.” Men were thought to have distinctly warmer bodies than women who were considered colder; feminine humors were considered to be more resilient to the healthy ebb and flow which facilitated the body’s heat. Thus, the embarrassed body is characterized by its coolness, its inability to sustain a vigorous system of “transpiration and evacuation.” As we examine Crooke’s defense of Galenism and Harvey’s break from the system, we will see that this gendered conception of the heart’s heat becomes an integral splitting point between our two physicians.

In championing the Galenic view of the body, Crooke bases gender difference in ontological variance; that is, the cooler female body is biologically subordinated to its male counterpart. He writes:

Wherefore a woman is so much lesse perfect then a man by how much heate is lesse and weaker then his; yet…this imperfection turned unto a perfection, because without the woman, mankind could not have been perfected by the perfecter sexe. The great Maister workman therefore of set purpose, made the one halfe or mankind imperfect for the instauration of the whole kinde, making the woman as receptacle of the seede of which a new man was to be created.

In *The Language of the Heart*, Robert Erickson tries to redeem Crooke’s conception of the “lesse perfect…man,” arguing that Crooke, in fact, eulogizes the feminine as necessary to reproduction. This said, the feminine in Crooke’s account is reduced to her reproductive capacity. Appealing to bodily difference, Crooke attempts to circumscribe

---

37 Ibid, 9.
and naturalize male and femaleness. This, I would like to suggest, begs for a critical reconsideration of the sex/gender system he seeks to uphold.

In her seminal work, *Gender Trouble*, Butler interrogates our preoccupation with the maintenance of sex/gender binaries and, drawing on Luce Irigaray’s *This Sex Which Is Not One*, argues that:

> Women can never ‘be,’ according to this ontology of difference, the excluded, by which that domain marks itself off. Women are also a ‘difference’ that cannot be understood as the simple negation of “Other” of the always-already masculine subject…They are neither the subject or the Other, but a difference from the economy of binary opposition, itself a ruse for a monologic elaboration of the masculine.

As a medical text, Crooke’s *Microcosmographia* attempts to materialize feminine and masculine corporeality, providing a reading of the male and female hearts that defends “domination.” Butler argues that such discourses do not “construct” matter as a “site or surface,” but represent “a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and [the] surface we call matter.”

Through his appeal to biology and religion, Crooke attempts to produce ontological binaries which limit male and female bodies to particular functions (men to producing “seede” and women to the possibility of reproducing more men). Represented by their perfection, men become intelligible beings through this very materialization while their female counterparts are contained within their capacity to propagate another generation of men. Crooke’s treatise, as a regulatory discourse, attempts to produce “intelligible genders…which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, and

---

39 Butler, 25.
sexual practice, and desire.”

In its interest in the body’s interior, the *Microcosmographia* is reflective of the period’s interest in the human anatomy’s potential as a “mark of individuality.” As Sawday points out, the period was “devoted to the gathering of information and the dissemination of knowledge of the ‘mystery’ of the human body”; yet, he also notes that scientific investigation into the body’s core “renders it visible only through scenes of representation.” Though Sawday is presumably referring to graphic representations of the anatomized body, in Crooke’s rhetorical representation of male and female bodies, the individual, through its anatomy, is positioned into an essentialized role within the socio-political system.

Crooke’s medical representation of the female body is not the binary opposite of the male body, but a product of a phallogocentric sex/gender system, what Gayle Rubin defines as “a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, [and] social intervention.” If the feminine is unrepresentable and always already excluded, what Crooke defines as the “lesse perfect” female body is not a representation of the feminine at all but a “monologic elaboration of the masculine.” Crooke’s binary relationship between male and female corporeality functions to naturalize and stabilize the feminine body within a sex/gender system which, in short, is founded on the premise of male dominance and female reproduction. As we place Rubin and Butler into conversation with one another, it is clear Crooke attempts to

---

41 Gender Trouble, 23.
43 Ibid, 4.
44 Ibid, 11.
circumscribe the “feminine Other” for the sake of this system. The result is an entirely masculinist dualism; Crooke’s Galenic female body is only a “ruse” for a strategic and fictional binary that, ultimately, proliferates a hegemonic sex/gender system.

Harvey’s reconsideration of the Galenic body disrupts this system. Famous for discovering that the heart pumps blood throughout the entire body, he describes the “innate heat of the heart” as it spreads throughout the body:

This indeed is the chief use & end of the Circulation of the blood, for which cause, the blood by its continual course, and perpetual influence, is driven about; namely, that all the parts depending upon it by their first innate warm moisture might be retain’d in life, and in their own vital and vegetative essence, and perform all their functions, whilst…they are sustain’d and actuated by natural heat, and vital spirits.46

Harvey, however, differs from Crooke in that he does not attribute the heart’s capacity to produce warmth to the body’s gender. Yet, he rhetorically masculinizes the heart, suggesting a hesitation towards the potential implications of his own discovery. If, as Harvey suggests, the body’s ability to generate heat is not dependent on its maleness or femaleness, his theory cannot produce and maintain the gender differences upheld by traditional Galenism. In short, Harvey dismantles the sex/gender binary humoral theory attempts to establish, specifically, regarding the body’s capacity to create heat. This said, Harvey, I would like to suggest, instead alleviates the potential anxieties surrounding this break by rhetorically masculinizing the heart, thereby proposing that the universal body is, in fact, a masculine body. He writes:

The substance of the heart is a thicke…and red flesh, being made of the thicker parte of the bloud; it is lesse redd then the flesh of muscles but


harder, more solide and dense, that the spirits and inbred heate which are contayned in the heart and from thence powred into al parts of the body should not exhale; and that it might not bee broken or rent in his strong motions continuall dilation and constriction...[the] heart is erected, and it raises it self upwards into a point...the heart being grasp’d in ones hand whilst it is in motion, feels harder...The motion of the heart was a kind of tention in every part of it...[and] in all its motions, it was erected, received vigour, grew lesser, and harder.”

As Erickson points out, the heart’s incarnadine color, ability to “erect...upwards into a point,” and “harder” feel when “grasp’d” masculinizes the heart as a phallic organ.

Harvey’s description of what Erickson terms as the “phallic heart” proposes a sex/gender system that is not entirely different from the one Crooke also seeks to establish. Although Harvey privileges the anatomically masculine, he diverges from Crooke in declining to subordinate the feminine through a masculinist binary in which the “feminine” defies intelligibility and is always already the subaltern. For Harvey, the intelligible body is attributed to a masculine heart.

I would like to suggest that Harvey’s rhetorical gendering of the heart as a masculine organ reveals an anxious reaction toward his own discovery, an attempt to re-inscribe the sex/gender system his text disrupts. In “Gendering Mortality in Early Modern Anatomies,” Valerie Traub examines “representational strategies [for example, the use of illustrated Greco-Roman statuesque figures] whereby anxieties about the terms of male, as well as female, embodiment are negotiated, managed, and displaced.”

Traub contends that the anatomical drawings of male statuesque figures respond to anxieties toward early modern dissections, practices which, like Harvey’s discovery, pose the

---

47 Erickson, 76.
48 Erickson, 76.
49 Traub, 46.
possibility of a common corporeality, a “vulnerability to mortality that all bodies share.” Similar to the drawings of classicized muscle men cadavers, Harvey’s rhetorical masculinization of the heart speaks to the anxieties surrounding his break from the Galenic body. Harvey’s text, as a kind of regulatory discourse, attempts to construct a phallic heart while it simultaneously reveals the impossibility of an “absolute outside, an ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse.” Produced by a “constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, ‘inside’ the subject as its own founding repudiation,” the body’s contours, the intelligible subject, is precariously defined by a spectral other. As we turn to ‘Tis Pity, we see Harvey’s universally masculine heart embedded within the play’s love language. Annabella’s heart does not, however, entirely disappear, but becomes unintelligible to masculinist logics that attempt to impose a phallo-centric corporeality.

*Queer Hearts, Queer Language*

We may consider ‘Tis Pity She’s A Whore a play of doubles. We see symmetries in the blood ties of our two lovers, the bodies of the murdered and murderer, the cadaver and anatomist, and finally in one of the play’s most poignant images: Annabella’s bloody heart upon the tip of her brother’s sword. In the soft tissues of his beloved’s body, Giovanni sees his own, claiming that he has repossessed the heart in which his is “entombed” (5.6.27). Perhaps Giovanni’s belief that his heart is embedded within Annabella’s gestures to his ardent love for his sister. Maybe their intertwined

---

50 Ibid, 45.
51 Ibid, 8.
52 *Bodies That Matter*, 3.
physicalities reflect their erotic, incestuous intimacy. Or, perhaps, the collapse of their hearts into one is a result of both of these possibilities: the sacrificial gesture of love for one’s closest of kin. As we examine Annabella and Giovanni’s incestuous relationship, I would like to ask: What does it mean for the self and the other, the lover and the beloved, to collapse into the same? In a play in which sameness is condemned, how is it expressed and what is at risk?

In addressing these questions, I would like to re-conceptualize Giovanni’s incestuous yearning to become “one” as a desire for sameness. As he expresses his affection for Annabella, his rhetoric—his insistence on the siblings’ doubled souls and mirrored physicalities—resonates with a Neoplatonic understanding of love. In The Symposium, Aristophanes’ speech describes the story of love’s origin. Rounded with four legs and arms, humans bore two faces and sets of genitals aligned on opposite sides of one another. They represented three, rather than two, genders: male, the children of the sun; female, the children of the earth; and “androgynous…a distinct nature as well as a name, combining male and female,” the children of the moon.53 Their “strength” and “vigor” inspired the eight-limbed humans to try and “climb up to heaven and attack the Gods.”54 Fearing usurpation, Zeus discussed what to do with the treacherous humans and decided to cut the humans in two, recognizing that they will become “weaker and more useful to us because there will be more of them.”55 After splitting the humans, Zeus ordered Apollo to turn their heads towards their wounded torsos. The humans, divided

54 Ibid, 23.
55 Ibid, 23.
and struck by their gashes, longed for their other halves. They “threw their arms round each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to form a single living thing.”

Infatuated by their counterparts, the humans did little else and eventually died from “hunger and from general inactivity.” From this loss of one’s other half, from the longing to reunite with what was once whole, erupted “the innate desire of human beings for each other.” Although, as The Symposium explains, Zeus eventually took pity on the humans and allowed them to reproduce, these pre-reproductive humans lived for their other halves, for their desire to return again to an original sameness, only to perish for the very longing we call love.

Platonic love, then, according to The Symposium, is initiated by loss. The “innate desire of human beings for each other” did not emerge while humanity was still woven to their other halves, but only after the split from one being into two. Feelings of love surface as we recognize this division and, in doing so, desire to return an original sameness of self. Moreover, I would like to suggest that Platonic love is not only grounded on the loss of one’s other half, but is propelled by an initial violence, a forced separation. To love is to recognize not only loss, but the violence inherent to that very loss. As the divided humans gazed upon their slashed torsos, their physical wounds became affective ones, compelling them to love their lost halves.

The violence which manifests in The Symposium is twofold. After Zeus physically tears the humans apart, a second violence emerges in and through the desire to return to

---

56 Ibid, 27.
57 Ibid, 24.
an original oneness. As the humans attempt to become one, their individual deaths mark the impossibility of the very oneness for which they strive. Thus, Platonic love is grounded on both the initial violence of separation as well as the impossibility of reunion; the humans love because of their unattainable yearning to live as one and the same. If we were to recover the loss which fuels our love for one another, love, in the Platonic sense, would cease to be.

In the 17th century, Neoplatonism permeated much of the period’s masques, plays, and poetry. Inspired by the Marquise de Rambouillet’s attempts to reform “manners and sexual mores of the French royal circle,” Queen Henrietta Maria advocated Platonism as a means of refining the Caroline court, establishing Platonic love “as a fashionable cult and court game.” As Lesel Dawson points out, during the period “Platonic love is represented as the opposite of lust, and its advocates emphasize that physical desire must either be eschewed or sublimated in order for souls and minds to unite in an affection that is based on admiration, friendship, and equality.” Influenced by Christian philosophy and the period’s Petrarchan love language, Neoplatonism sought to unite lovers by their “thoughts and souls rather than their bodies.” This non-corporeal meeting of souls was taken up by John Ford in a treatise entitled, *Honour Triumphant* (1606). He writes:

Love is the only bande, the alone obligation, that traffiques betwixt earthly creatures and heauenly angels, that vnites woman to man, yea man to man,

---

60 Ibid, 137-138.
nay man to himself, and himself to God. Love is the dignity of man’s worth, not a blind Cupid, a sensual lust, as poets faine; but an earnest and reasonable desire of good, as authorities confirme. It is an entire conjunction of soules together. 

Writing several years prior to the British height of Neoplatonism, Ford commends love as a means by which souls may join together. Not only does love sustain heterosexual and homosocial bonds, but it also draws one closer to god. It is through love that one can “desire…good,” love another, oneself, and one’s god. Distinguishing love from “sensual lust,” Ford regards the love for the other, as well as self-love, as a spiritually righteous path.

In Ford’s ‘Tis Pity She’s A Whore, Neoplatonism serves as both the rhetoric by which the lovers converse as well as a means by which Giovanni justifies his incestuous desire for his sister. Yet, it is this very oneness which is regarded as socially unintelligible. As the Friar reminds Giovanni, his desire for his sister is “almost blasphemy” (1.1.45). Penalized as an act of sodomy, incest was, as I’ve mentioned, considered an ecclesiastical as well as a juridical crime. For Giovanni to pursue an unintelligible relationship with his sister, to become closer or one with whom he is most close, was to risk death. If we consider Giovanni’s love for Annabella as a desire to further eliminate the difference which separates them, their relationship, condemned by both the church and state, approaches a too near “nearness” (1.2.230).

Moving beyond doctrine and law, I would like to suggest that the sameness Annabella and Giovanni desire is subject to condemnation because of its impossibility. If

---

attempted, their Neoplatonic desire for a literal oneness would result in, according to *The Symposium*, their deaths. Moreover, as a desire which leads to death, sameness is not conducive to the social order; not only did *The Symposium’s* humans die of inactivity, but if meshed into their original oneness, the beings would not be able to serve the gods as Zeus had intended. While both Annabella and Giovanni claim to desire a queer equivalency with one another, the impossibility of this oneness propels Giovanni towards a love language in which death functions as both an expression of desire as well as its cessation. Annabella, however, refuses the impossibility of her desires, forging a rhetoric in which desire is expressed through the body rather than terminated as a result of the body’s death.

Initially, as Giovanni moves towards a love language grounded upon a violence enacted upon the body, he perverts the period’s rejection of the corporeal and instead reasons that his attraction to his closest of kin emanates from what he identifies to be both a physical and spiritual “nearness” (1.2.230. Confessing his love for his sister to his confidant, the Friar, Giovanni argues:

```
Shall a peevish sound,
A customary form, from man to man,
Of brother and of sister, be a bar
'Twixt my perpetual happiness and me?
Say that we had one father, say one womb
(Curse to my joys) gave both us life and birth;
Are we not therefore each to other bound
So much the 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?
```
As he “empties the storehouse of [his] thoughts and heart,” he wishes that he too could engage in “what all men else may” (1.1.14, 18). Recognizing love as a universal right, Giovanni attests that “love”—that to which all are entitled—is unreasonably “barred” to him (1.1.25); his incestuous love for his sister, he comments, does not follow a traditional, or “customary” form, but is considered socially unintelligible or, as the Friar exclaims, a “sin,” one that nears “blasphemy” (1.1.14, 45). As Terry Clerico argues in “The Politics of Blood,” Giovanni wishes to disregard the society’s customs and return to a pre-social state; he “justifies his sexual desire for his sister by linking their union to an inarticulate transcendent nature that apparently supersedes the demands of culture—a nature that is immune from the toxicity, from the ‘peevish sounds’ of language.”

Giovanni reasons that their familial tie—that is, their “natural” bond—offers them further reason forever to live as one. Longing for a link that extends beyond the similar circumstances of theirs births, Giovanni wishes to unite himself with his sister in a manner figuratively described as that which is afforded to traditional heterosexual couples. He desires an all-encompassing oneness with Annabella, wishing that they live as “one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all.” Their familial bond, Giovanni argues, should not separate, but further unite the siblings on both spiritual and physical levels.

Similar to the feeling of unfulfilled desire which touched the children of the sun, earth, and moon, Giovanni’s affection for his sister takes on a form of lovesickness.

---

Giovanni’s desire to become “one all” with his sister leads to his feeling “lost” and certain that his “fates have doomed [his] death” (1.2.135). He believes that:

The more I strive, I love; the more I love,
The less I hope; I see my ruin, certain.
What judgments or endeavors could apply
To my incurable and restless wounds
I thoroughly have examined, but in vain. (1.2.135-139).

Giovanni’s sense of loss alludes to a prior sense of wholeness, a oneness, predating a separation presumably marked by his wounds. Reminiscent of the wounded torsos in Plato’s text, the body is marked by the loss of the beloved, suggesting a way in which one’s separation and desire for another is signified upon the corporeal. According to a Platonic understanding of love, Giovanni’s love for his sister arises from his very loss. As he unsuccessfully “strives” to cure his “wounds”—or return to a previous sense of wholeness—he finds his self further separated and more deeply in love with Annabella, recognizing the impossibility of their union. Similar to divided humans, his “ruin” stems from the permanence of their separation. The inevitability of loss, apparent upon his wounded body, compels his love, provoking him to further strive for wholeness while confronting the fated impossibility of oneness. For Giovanni, with loss comes love and with love—that is, with the hopelessness of recovering that loss—comes death. Divided from his beloved, as Giovanni repeatedly strives to become one with Annabella, he asserts that he does not near Annabella, but his own ruin.

Yet, in spite of what Giovanni believes to be a fated separation, he professes his love to Annabella, wooing her with echoes of similar Neoplatonic sentiments. He reasons that:
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 or blood doth persuade
A nearer nearness in affection. (1.2.226-230)

Giovanni again appeals to the “natural”; his desires are of an organic rather than part of the social order. He believes that his sameness with his sister was intentional; nature “meant” to unite the pair through their creating two such physically similar beings. As Giovanni gazes upon his sister, he views himself, albeit narcissistically, within his sister’s features, physical traits which, Giovanni comments, are strikingly admirable. Annabella’s physical likeness to her brother (this passage leads us to assume that Giovanni is the elder of the two) allows Giovanni to affirm his desire to become “one all” with his sister. Considering their “nearness in birth [and] blood,” their souls inhabit what Giovanni assumes to be a single physicality. As mirror images of each other, the pair is moved to a “nearer nearness in affection,” emotional ties swayed by those of kinship. Yet, their ties to one another extend beyond those of physical likeness, tying the pair together at the metaphysical level.

He describes his lovesickness—endless nights of “long suppressed…hidden flames” and tortured “sighs and groans”—while flattering Annabella with grandiose, Petrarchan expressions of love. He, by way of illustration, compares Annabella’s forehead to that of Juno’s, claims that her eyes “give life to senseless stones” and that her “lips would tempt a saint” (1.2. 188, 192). After a series of extravagant flatteries, he concludes, “If you would see a beauty more exact/ Than art can counterfeit, or nature frame,/ Look in your glass, and there behold your own” (1.2.195-197). If we consider
Giovanni’s assertion that they share “one beauty,” as Annabella gazes into her looking glass, she sees within its smooth surface both herself and her brother. Narcissistically, Giovanni is seduced by Annabella’s beauty as well as his own. Although Neoplatonism, as advocated by the Caroline court, veered away from the corporeal, the mirroring of lovers was not an uncommon trope in descriptions of Platonic love. Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), an Italian philosopher, writes, “The soul of the lover becomes a mirror in which the image of the beloved is reflected…when the beloved recognizes himself in the lover, he is forced to love him.”

Thus, following Ficinio, as Giovanni’s eyes sweep across his sister’s face, he views not only himself within her features, but a part of himself that he has lost. While this gestures towards a sense of self-love, I would like to suggest that Giovanni’s admiration for Annabella’s beauty as well as his own concurrently complicate his feelings of loss. He not only experiences a sense of separation from his sister, but he also, in doing so, feels a sense of self-loss. This self-loss, the wounds Giovanni yearns to heal, further propel his desire for a unitary sameness with his sister.

Annabella exhibits a similar form of narcissistic tenderness towards her brother as she sees what she believes to be a handsome young man in the distance. Not knowing it is her brother who approaches, Annabella feels instantly attracted to him. Dawson argues that this moment “recalls…an alternative version of the Narcissus myth…Like Narcissus, Annabella’s love springs from a moment of (mis)recognition, in which the real object of desire is the refracted image of the self.”

---

64 Marsilio Ficino from *Marsilio and the Phaedran Charioteer*, as quoted by Dawson, 132.
65 Dawson, 145.
“refracted image,” but a lost selfhood, one that if regained, would return her to a prior, though unattainable, wholeness.

Although Annabella does not directly appeal to their familial ties as a means by which she may justify her love for her brother, she admits that she too feels unconventionally affectionate towards her brother:

```
Thou hast won
The field, and never fought; what thou hast urged,
My captive heart had long ago resolved.
I blush to tell thee—but I’ll tell thee now—
For every sigh that thou hast spent for me,
I have sighed ten; for every tear, shed twenty. (1.2.234-239)
```

Annabella’s rhetoric similarly establishes the siblings as Neoplatonic doubles. She not only feels a strong emotional tie to her brother—one that won her heart without the battle of courtship—but she has also experienced the visceral effects of what she once believed to be an unreciprocated love. Like Giovanni, Annabella has wet, though in hyperbolic intensity, her face with tears and sighed at the thought of her brother. Their sameness, thus, becomes apparent in not only their physical and emotional likeness, but in their rhetorical responses.

The play further aligns the Annabella and Giovanni as Neoplatonic doubles—not only in their similar feelings of lovesickness and desire for one another, but as they vow to love one another, in a moment of rhetorical likeness, which approximates a traditional, though private, nuptial:

```
ANNABELLA: On my knees, (she kneels)
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.
```
GIOVANNI: On my knees, (he kneels)
Sister, even by our mother’s dust, I charge you,
Do not betray me to your mirth or hate;
Love me, or kill me, sister. (2.1.243-249)

Swearing upon the remains of their deceased mother, Annabella and Giovanni affirm their affection for one another by again gesturing to their physical bond, their shared experience in “one womb.” The pair refuses to face the unrequited love of the other, vowing that the beloved must either “love” or “kill” the other. Their mutual and continued desire for one another, thus, becomes a matter of life and death. Yet, considering the period’s criminalization of incest and the very impossibility of their desired oneness, their hope to live as one and the same is fraught with severe consequences. Their vows may, more appropriately, swear to “love me, and kill me,” which we, of course, see Giovanni enact in the play’s final moments. Their relationship is not only unintelligible to Parmese society and, therefore, subject to criminalization, but also illustrates what I would like to suggest is a violence inherent to a Neoplatonic form of love. Although the lovers’ initial courtship scene ties them together as mirror images of one another, Giovanni’s commitment to a Neoplatonism, in particular, leads to their inevitable deaths.

As The Symposium suggests, love is both the desire to return to a previous wholeness as well as the impossibility of the fulfillment of that very desire. The humans Aristophanes describes only experience love after their partition from their other halves. Thus, one’s love for another—as well as its persistence—is dependent upon Zeus’s decision to tear brutally the four-legged humans into two. This co-dependent relationship between violence and love is manifested in 'Tis Pity through not only the lovers’
explicitly Neoplatonic rhetoric (as described above), but also through the rhetoric of self-partition. In his work, *The Body Emblazoned*, Jonathan Sawday turns to what he identifies as “erotic dreams of self-partition,” which “lingered in poetic texts until well into the seventeenth century,” and was considered an “extreme participant in the elaborate Petrarchan game of self-abasement before the beloved object.” While Sawday links this “game” to a form of sado-masochism, the desire for one’s own partition also suggests a further separation of the lover from his/her beloved, one which escapes the possibility of wholeness while, in turn, propagating one’s desire for another. Thus, love, in the platonic sense, becomes a matter of not only the desire for sameness, but maintaining its impossibility. In *'Tis Pity*, Giovanni’s love for Annabella—his yearning to become “one” with his sister—is intensified as he imagines his own dissection and, more specifically, what Annabella may discover upon his heart.

Desperate to prove his devotion to his sister, Giovanni hands Annabella his dagger and exclaims, “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” (1.2.210-212). Giovanni argues that the “truth” of his love for his sister is signified upon the contours of his heart. The marked body, according to Giovanni, conveys the emotional stance he wishes to express through speech. In his essay, “Visceral Knowledge,” David Hillman describes the early modern desire to read the body as a sign of one’s materiality as well one’s selfhood,
linking it to the period’s “pre- Cartesian belief system.” Although he accounts for the period’s medical advances (for example, Harvey’s partial move away from the Galenic system), Hillman notes that this fascination with the physical-psychological interior figured heavily in early modern arts and literature. Urging Annabella to plunge into the depths of his bosom, Giovanni turns to his heart as a means by which he may more readily convince Annabella of his love. This turn to the organ is suggestive of the period’s medical and literary interest in the fragmented body. In the introduction to *The Body in Parts*, Carla Mazzio and David Hillman argue that the early modern attention to the individual body part endows the part with attributes of agency and subjectivity, allowing it to become a “concentrated site where meaning is invested and often apparently stabilized.” Never inherent to the body, meaning is inscribed upon it, overlaying it with an unessential significance.

Although Giovanni attempts to guide Annabella’s reading of his heart—convincing her that upon it he will find the “truth” of his affections—Giovanni’s dissection also places him in the passive and feminized position of a cadaver. This position, the vulnerable corpse upon the anatomist’s slab, was one that was typically afforded to marginalized and penalized bodies, often criminals and the loot of grave robbers. Giovanni conveys a desire to not only occupy such a role, but that Annabella take on the masculine and penetrative position of the anatomist, subjecting himself to the sharp-point of the dagger of which he demands she take hold. Giovanni proposes his

---


dissection for the sake of proof, demonstrating both the period’s pre-Cartesian link between materiality and interiority as well as the tendency to invest specific body parts with significance not inherent to the part itself. If Annabella were, in fact, to tear out her brother’s heart, her interpretation of the organ would be, on the one hand, guided by the reading Giovanni insists she will discover. Yet, Giovanni’s very insistence that she penetrate his heart poses the possibility that there is a degree of latitude to what she may find. Giovanni’s passive and silenced body, if dissected, would no longer speak or mark his heart as a signifier of his love. The anatomized and static heart would allow Annabella to interpret the organ without necessarily adhering to her brother’s analysis of his own physical and emotional interiority. Divorced from Giovanni’s vows of love and devotion, the heart becomes an empty signifier; it is no longer marked with the affective stance he longs to express, but instead reveals the body’s inevitable mortality and decay.

Thus, we may instead consider not what Annabella may or may not find upon her brother’s heart, but the proposal itself. Though an admittedly hyperbolic expression of devotion, Giovanni not only marks his heart as a signifier of his love, but he also, in doing so, imagines his own dissection and death. The incision he envisions—the cut that he reasons will allow Annabella to view the proof of his love—resonates with the wounded bodies in *The Symposium*. Representative of Zeus’s violent rage, the wounds mark not only the loss of one’s platonic double, but the inception of love, the desire to unite once again with one’s other half. Giovanni’s proposed self-division and death does not bring him closer to his sister, but further separates the pair, propagating the desire for an eventual union. It is through the mutilated body, through the separation from one’s
other half, that feelings of love for another are able to persist. By imagining the partition of his own body, an incision that will further limit the possibility of union, Giovanni is able to ensure that Annabella’s love for him will persevere. Thus, his appeal to his heart as a form of corporeal proof is as much about his own desire for his sister as it is about ensuring that Annabella will continue to feel for her beloved.

If actualized, Giovanni’s dissection would, of course, lead to his own demise as a physically and emotionally desiring subject. Drawing on a Platonic understanding of love as well as Freud’s work on desire, Jonathan Dollimore explains that “desire implies lack…[and] to be human is to desire.”\(^\text{69}\) According to him, “the absolute object of desire is, experimentally, a fantasy of the absolute release from desire, i.e. death of desire/death of self.”\(^\text{70}\) As Giovanni imagines his own death, he not only rids himself of the possibility of a Platonic union with his sister—allowing Annabella to forever feel the lack of her double—but he also dreams of a release from the forbidden desire he feels for his sister. While, through death, desire is thwarted, it is not ceased because of a Platonic meeting of souls, but achieved through the body’s affective and physical mortality.

Soranzo similarly appeals to his heart as a signifier of his love for Annabella:

ANNABELLA: Yes, you’ll say you love me.
SORANZO: And I’ll swear it, too; will you believe it?
ANNABELLA: 'Tis not point of faith…
SORANZO: Did you but see my heart, then would you swear—
ANNABELLA: That you were dead. (3.2.15-17, 23)


\(^{70}\) Ibid, 375.
Like Giovanni, Soranzo imagines his own dissection, sacrificing his anatomized heart for the sake of his beloved. He attests that, by viewing his heart, Annabella will reciprocate love for him, “swearing” upon the devotion he wishes she too would feel. Though Soranzo urges Annabella to inhabit the penetrative role of the anatomist, he, like Giovanni, attempts to convince her of what he claims she will find—presumably, both the sign and signifier of his love. According to Soranzo, it is by way of his own death that Annabella will similarly “swear” upon her love for him. In comparison to Giovanni, Soranzo’s rhetoric is not explicitly Neoplatonic; however, his hope that both he and Annabella might swear upon their love for one another suggests a desire for reciprocity, a state of mutual love. The cutting open of the body, thus, becomes a means by which the object of one’s affections will love (or continue to love) the lover.

Yet, if Soranzo’s imagined dissection were, in fact, to occur, his heart would not convey his love for Annabella, nor would it lead to a mutual form of love between the lover and beloved, but as Annabella points out, his anatomization would signify instead the cessation of desire, or more simply put, “that [he] were dead.” Thus, perhaps what Soranzo longs for is not an emotional oneness with Annabella, but the release from desire itself; a Platonic union with the beloved--the ultimate goal of Neoplatonic love--is never fulfilled. As Dollimore argues, “desire becomes an experience of present/projected lack rooted in present/remembered loss, somewhere between past loss and future lack, and always already unrealizable”71. The play’s love language suggests that the desire for that very union is attempted through the proposed partition of the body. While “splitting or

71 Ibid, 370.
dividing is the founding principle of desire”--suggesting that one’s love for another may propagate through the body’s anatomization--what ultimately occurs is not the fulfillment of desire, but the release from desire altogether. Thus, the imagined (and, in Annabella’s case, realized) violence enacted upon the body becomes intimately linked with the impossibility of a Neoplatonic union.

While the bifurcation of the body gestures to both the propagation and release from desire, the heart is invested as a site upon which desire is both written and, once ripped from the body, dissolved. While Soranzo and Giovanni attest that their hearts signify their love for Annabella, the organ, given its figurative and anatomical possibilities, no longer serves as a rhetorical measure of love, but as a sign of corporeal decay. What instead becomes apparent is the unfeasibility of the oneness or sameness for which Giovanni and Soranzo yearn.

As the play progresses, the impossibility of a Neoplatonic union with Annabella manifests itself in not only the lovers’ rhetoric, but in an attempt to contain and control Annabella’s heart. Striving to win over Annabella’s affections, the suitors participate in what Traub refers to as a “relation of exchange,” rhetorically offering their hearts as proof of their love and devotion.72 Annabella, however, does not partake in this negotiation; while she, for example, expresses feelings of love for her brother, she never once attempts to convey her affections through imagining her heart’s anatomization. Refusing to implicate herself within this form of Petrarchan and, as I’ve argued,

---

Neoplatonic rhetoric, Annabella excludes herself from the economy of hearts Giovanni and Soranzo attempt to establish. As such, her suitors project their anxieties regarding Annabella’s desires upon her heart, what they considered to be the signifier of her love. Learning that Annabella is pregnant, Soranzo attempts to discover the name of the child’s father, the presumable object of her affections:

SORANZO: Tell me his name!...
ANNABELLA: You shall never know.
SORANZO: How!
ANNABELLA: Never. If you do, let me be cursed.
SORANZO: Now know it, strumpet? I’ll rip up thy heart
And find it there. (4.3.50-54)

In this instance, Soranzo imagines himself not in the feminized, passive position of a corpse, but in the penetrative and masculine role of the anatomist, a position in which he is able to take corporeal control over Annabella. By extracting Annabella’s heart and, in addition, ripping apart the organ, Soranzo believes that, within the depths of Annabella’s heart, he will be able to read not just desire itself, but the object of her desire. As Susan Wiseman points out, “even a pregnant body does not tell all its own secrets, and incest is undiscoverable from external evidence.”73 Similar to the dissections performed on the bodies of criminalized women, Soranzo hopes to search her body for ontological proof of her aberrance. The viscera of her interior are quite literally considered signifiers of her emotional interiority. While her enlarged stomach reveals the “fruit of her desires,” it is within the depths of Annabella’s body and heart that will reveal, according to Soranzo,

---

both the father of her child and the object of her affections.\textsuperscript{74} The dissection of the heart, the discursive violence enacted upon Annabella’s body, serves as a means by which Soranzo may not only read, but also criminalize his beloved’s promiscuity.

Moreover, the intimate link between desire and violence is again realized in Soranzo’s proposal. In regards to a Neoplatonic conception of love, Annabella’s potentially torn torso further separates her from her brother, preventing the pair from the union they desire. While this state of disunity, on the one hand, furthers their desire for one another, Annabella’s death does not, in the end, engender desire but destroy it. Thus, while Soranzo seeks to discover the object of Annabella’s desires his violent threat—his proposal that he tear Annabella’s heart from the depths of her bosom—demonstrates a patriarchal yearning to not only assert corporeal control over Annabella, but also, through death, to thwart what he finds most threatening, her desire for another.

Though the rhetoric of anatomization, on the one hand, seeks to propel feelings of love from the beloved, given its destructive implications, this Neoplatonic love language also imagines both the cessation of desire and the discursive violence enacted upon the body. Soranzo and Giovanni, in particular, both dream of a Neoplatonic union with Annabella, a desire that suggests a yearning for oneness, a sameness with the beloved. Yet, the violence inherent to this rhetoric—the inequality in the masculinist position of the anatomist and the passive, feminized position of the cadaver—suggests the impossibility of Neoplatonic union between the lover and the beloved. The marked body of the lover is known only through its death and the concurrent cessation of desire.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 83.
Annabella attempts to queer the play’s love language, the masculinist rhetoric that expresses love for another through the body’s imagined anatomization. Refusing to mark her heart as the locus of her desires, she also considers the literal implications of her suitors’ hyperbolic testimonies of love. In response to her brother’s suggestion that she “rip up [his] bosom,” she admits that if he were, in fact, to die, “‘twere fitter I were dead” (1.2.210). She also refuses the figurative nuances of Soranzo’s proposal that she “see [his] heart,” pointing out that she would not take notice of his emotion interiority, but that he “were dead.” Moreover, Annabella’s retort draws attention to the link between Neoplatonic love and a form of death. While to love, through the body’s anatomization, is to imagine a literal loss of one’s self, Annabella’s response may allude to a way in which the self undergoes a form of death in every act of love.

Annabella, I would like to suggest, subverts the rhetoric of her suitors, refusing the impossibility of oneness with the beloved. Using her own blood, Annabella writes her brother a letter and begs that the Friar:

Commend me to my brother, give him that,
That letter; bid him read it and repent.
Tell him that I--imprisoned in my chamber,
Barred of all company, even of my guardian,
Who gives me cause of much suspect--have time
To blush at what hath passed. (5.1.46-51)

Though the content of the letter is not revealed, Annabella’s incestuous and queer desire for her brother is released through her blood, the very fluid that passes through her heart, marking a piece of parchment intended for her beloved. In this moment, Annabella collapses the positions of the anatomist and cadaver into a single body. She does not exactly enact her own dissection, but instead uses her physical interior as a means by
which she may express her emotional interiority. While she is drawing her own blood to reveal her heart's desires, so to speak, she does not imagine, nor does she perform her own anatomization; her body does not become subject to the anatomist's scalpel and interpretation. Rather than allowing her beloved to dissect her heart and discover what may be written upon it, Annabella uses her own body to articulate her desires.

Resisting the rhetoric of anatomization, Annabella queers the way in which body and, in particular, the female body is marked while simultaneously queering the Neoplatonic and inherently violent love language of her suitors. She circumvents the masculinist rhetoric of dissection, distancing herself from inhabiting the passive position of a deceased corpse. This said, she does not entirely divorce her emotive stance from the corporeal. While still expressed through the body, love is no longer linked with the ruin of both desire and corporeality. As she writes with her own blood, Annabella founds a love language that allows her to articulate her desires without the body's imagined or actualized decay; blood writing becomes a corporeal and semiotic act in which the fleshy body marks her desire for her brother. Annabella is still a desiring body as she is a speaking one. Considering her commitment to Neoplatonism, Annabella's desire for a sameness with the beloved is not thwarted; the proof of one's desire for another is not tied to death of desire. The lover and beloved are not placed in the asymmetrical and gendered positions of a cadaver and anatomist, nor is the desire for sameness thwarted because of its impossibility. For Annabella, love--the desire for sameness-- is not ceased, but only further articulated through rather than upon the heart.
Moreover, by excluding herself from the masculine economy of hearts of her suitors, Annabella, I would like to suggest, establishes a queer equivalency between her heart and that of her brother’s. Their hearts need not dissection to prove their devotion to one another; their love for one another is, in a Neoplatonic sense, the same. As she resists the anatomizations her suitors propose, Annabella not only refuses the unequal positions of the anatomist and cadaver, but she also suggests that this form of corporeal proof is not necessary. She, to use her brother’s language, does not need visual evidence to know that they are “one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all.” Their hearts, if marked at all, are one and the same.

Yet, Annabella’s commitment to this oneness—her desire to maintain a corporeal equivalency between herself and her brother—is precisely what subjects her to the violence enacted upon her body at the end of the play. As her heart—the supposed signifier of her desires—is not offered to her suitors, it becomes the site of their anxieties and desires. While, as I’ve discussed, Soranzo threatens to rip her heart from her bosom, Giovanni, in the play’s final act, enacts this proposition. In retaliation to his sister’s forced marriage to Soranzo, Giovanni steals away to her bedchamber, stabs out her heart and declares:

Thus die, and die by me, and by my hand.  
Revenge is mine; honour doth love command…  
Soranzo, thou hast missed your 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 great part! (5.5.85-86, 99-106)
In this moment, Giovanni proposes that Annabella’s forced marriage to Soranzo is a breach of the honor their love demands. Here, she is the criminalized female corpse, a body subject to an anatomist’s interpretation of her misguided desires and sexual deviance. Yet, as not solely Annabella’s anatomist but as her beloved, Giovanni seizes upon her torn body as a marker of her “triumph over infamy and hate.” Annabella’s wounded body and anatomized heart finally become markers of their incestuous relationship; it is only through death that Annabella, according to Giovanni, is able to resist the “infamy and hate” their relationship may evoke while still “honouring” their love for one another.

Curiously though, as Annabella’s heart rests at the tip of her brother’s sword, it is in these final moments that we see an intertwining in the physicalities of Giovanni and Annabella. Giovanni claims that he would “pawn [his] heart” for “each drop” of his beloved’s “blood.” Given Annabella’s blood written letter as well as Giovanni’s willingness to visualize his heart throughout the play, perhaps Giovanni has, in fact, “pawned” his heart for the sake of his sister. While, at a starkly literal level, Giovanni’s heart is firmly within his ribcage, perhaps we can consider Giovanni to have experienced a kind of death himself. Grasping his sword, upon which we find Annabella’s heart, Giovanni insists that his “courageous” hand “shrink not” and that his heart “stand up.” To what exactly is he referring? The unclear referent, in this instance, suggests that the organ he commands is not solely his, but Annabella’s.

For Giovanni, this corporeal coiling, the conflated hearts of the siblings, comes only through death, once the body can no longer desire the beloved. As Giovanni seizes
upon his sister’s desires, terminating her affections, he saunters through Soranzo’s dinner party and proclaims:

I came to feast too, but I digged for a food  
In a much richer mine than gold or stone  
Of any value balanced; ’tis a heart,  
A heart, my lords, in which mine is entombed. (5.6.24-27)

According to Giovanni, Annabella’s heart, the site upon which her desires are writ, is also his grave. The language of entombment proposes a way in which by loving Annabella, Giovanni has also lost his own heart within the depths of hers. Not only are their physicalities conflated in this moment, but their subjectivities. By killing Annabella, Giovanni can not only take full control of his sister, controlling and ceasing her suspect desires, but within her, he can also reclaim himself.

This said, though we do see an affective and physical entanglement between the brother and sister, this mingling occurs through death, through the violent possession of the female body. Giovanni regards his sister’s heart as a rich and valuable form of “food,” one that he can presumably consume. This grotesque oneness, this desire for a sameness with Annabella through her consumption, leaves us with a drastic asymmetry between our two lovers. Though Giovanni’s Neoplatonic rhetoric is initially suggestive of a queer and incestuous equivalency between himself and his sister, as desire is linked more intimately with death throughout the play, oneness with the beloved is obscured. Giovanni’s desire for sameness becomes a desire for possession; his willingness to penetrate Annabella’s body reveals a masculinist imperative to control the corporeal.

I would like to suggest a comparison between Giovanni’s anxious reaction towards a queer sameness with his sister and Harvey’s masculinization of the heart. Both
identify a queer morphological equivalency—Giovanni between himself and Annabella, and Harvey between the hearts of men and women. This said, this sameness is, though proposed, ultimately dismissed, suggesting an anxiety towards a queer affective and physical oneness between the masculine and feminine. While Harvey departs from a Galenic, gendered understanding of the organ, he ultimately rejects the sameness he comes across for a masculine rhetoric, which implies a tacit rejection of the feminine. Giovanni, somewhat similarly, idealizes a sameness between himself and Annabella, yet his desire for corporeal control over his sister results in an asymmetry between the Neoplatonic doubles.

When placed in conversation with each other, Ford’s play and Harvey’s text provide us with a medical and literary moment of history in regards to the heart. As the organ which pumps life through our veins, as the seat of our emotions, the heart becomes subject to an anxious, and in these cases, masculine desire to know the organ through its dissection. That which the heart reveals—whether it’s the name of Annabella’s true love or its androgyny—is discovered through the cutting open of the body. To know the body, physically and affectively, is done through the scalpel and sword. This masculine imperative to anatomize the body results in, for Harvey, the exclusion of the feminine and, for Giovanni, the death of his beloved.

Where does this leave Annabella? We see her murder, her body strewn across the stage, her heart on the point of her brother’s dagger. Her desire for a Neoplatonic oneness with her brother is violently ceased as her heart, the seat of her desires, is ripped from her bosom. Yet, I would like to suggest that as Giovanni’s Neoplatonic twin dies at his
hands—forbidding the potential for their imagined union on earth—he too dies as well. Perhaps in loving Annabella—in desiring a Neoplatonic union with her—Giovanni has undergone a kind of death of subjectivity. Giovanni’s insistence that his heart is trapped within hers suggests a kind of mutual death, an ineffable way in which the specter of the beloved may haunt the lover to his/her own demise. This haunting, however, proposes a kind of dynamism in death, a way in which the deceased is resurrected. Though Annabella is no longer a speaking body upon the stage, her ruins—her letter in blood, her heart in which Giovanni’s is entombed, the love language she forges—suggest a life beyond her body’s decay.

Moreover, perhaps Annabella’s desire for an entanglement between herself and her brother is not ultimately impossible, but inevitable. In Unmarked, Peggy Phelan draws on the Lacanian conception of the self and other. She points out that in creating an image of the other, the subject is both sculpted and disfigured by this process. According to Phelan, to “doubt the subject seized by the eye is to doubt the subjectivity of the seeing ‘I’.”

In spite of our attempt to re-imagine the other, Phelan points out that representation is never quite complete, but instead it “always conveys more than it intends” while revealing its “ruptures and gaps.” In ’Tis Pity, as Giovanni disrupts Soranzo’s dinner party, he claims to have been the “happy monarch” of his sister’s heart (5.6.45).

Considering that Annabella never once offers her brother her heart, his attempt to re-present his sister’s heart exposes what Phelan refers to as the ruptures and gaps always

---

76 Ibid, 2.
already inherent in this endeavor, leading us to wonder if, in fact, Giovanni ever possessed his sister’s heart or if his declaration is, for him, a mere fantasy he wishes to indulge. Thus, as the image of the other is formed through the piecemeal of memory and is, in part, woven into a kind of fantasy, the subject possesses a certain degree of disbelief in his/her own ability to both capture and re-member the other in its totality. This feeling of doubt, according to Phelan, belies the subject’s own sense of selfhood, suggesting a dependency, on the part of the subject, in the belief of his/her ability to recreate, remember, and recast the image of the other.

Although representation is always already a failure, we attempt to remember the other to reaffirm ourselves. Through the intertwining acts of memory and representation, we re-imagine the other and, in doing so, engage in the belief of our seeing “I,” a belief that concomitantly confirms our own subjectivity. Phelan draws on the work of Sophie Calle, a French-born artist interested in the exchange between the subject and the art object. Her work, *Ghosts*, attempts to capture this interaction through the “speech act of memory and description.” In 1990, after several paintings were stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum in Boston, Calle asked museum visitors and staff to describe the paintings. As the visitors and staff attempted to remember the paintings, their descriptions did not disclose qualities essential to the paintings themselves, but more interestingly, the recovery process instead revealed “the subject’s own set of personal meanings and associations.” Phelan points out that in attempting to remember the lost object, “loss acquires meaning and generates recovery—not only of and for the object,

---

78 Ibid, 147.
but for the one who remembers.” While the subject may doubt its seeing “I,” that is, its inability to fully recover the lost object, embedded within the excess and gaps of representation is a sense of selfhood. In declaring himself the monarch of Annabella’s heart, Giovanni reaffirms himself as the rightful proprietor of Annabella’s heart and himself as his sister’s true love. Thus, the effort to describe or represent the lost object illustrates our own investment in the other, an investment hinged with the desire to counter the potential disbelief of the eye/I. As we recover loss, the other recovers us.

Although the exchange between the self and the other is crucial to the formation of subjectivity, Phelan describes this encounter as inherently unequal. She proposes that:

The relationship between self and other…is alluring and violent because it touches the paradoxical nature of psychic desire; the always already unequal encounter nonetheless summons the hope of reciprocity and equality; the failure of this hope then produces violence, aggressivity, dissent. The combination of psychic hope and political-historical inequality makes the contemporary encounter between self and other a meeting of profound romance and deep violence.  

For the most part, I agree with Phelan’s contention regarding the essential inequality of the exchange between the self and other—we can never fully represent the other just as the other can never fully represent us. After her death, Annabella cannot participate in this interaction; her erotic and representational agency is silenced and contained within her still heart. That said, I would like to take issue with the logic that seems to underlie Phelan’s argument. In referencing works like Calle’s *Ghosts*, Phelan acknowledges the ways in which we both shape and are shaped by the other; however, despite this entanglement, she clings to the binary logic of the internal and external, the self and

---

79 Ibid, 147.
other. Phelan refuses the possibility that while the encounter may be unequal, it is also characterized by a sense of dependency, reciprocity even. I would like to propose that our reliance on the other (and its reliance on us) disrupts this binary, creating a spatially interwoven dynamic between the self and the other. If we consider subjectivity or selfhood as decidedly unessential and always already fashioned through the other, the “self/other” or the “internal/external” develop a co-dependent relationship.

To an extent, 'Tis Pity enacts an undoing between the Giovanni and Annabella. Composed by the memories of his lost lover, Giovanni’s selfhood depends upon his relationship with his sister. Annabella’s selfhood may similarly rely on her brother, his willingness to give up his heart, whether literally or figuratively, and embed it within her own. This giving allows for a doubling of selves, of interiorities, a transformation of one beloved into another. What I find particularly compelling in this play is the energy driving the exchange between the lovers, the undoing and the becoming. The subjectivities of both Annabella and Giovanni are in a state of constant flux. Neither fixed, nor essential, the internal self interlaces with its external other. This interlacing, I would like to argue, interrupts the distinction between the internal and external. We become each other to undo each other to become ourselves.

In the introduction to Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy and Performativity, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes affects as potentially “attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects.”\(^81\) Sedgwick theoretically supports this idea of attachment

---

\(^81\) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Introduction,” Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy and Performativity
by rejecting the dualism behind the logic of “beneath and beyond,” a binary that I would like to suggest is analogous to Phelan’s binary relationship between the self and the other, the internal and the external. Sedgwick instead proposes that we instead consider the preposition “beside.” She writes:

> Invoking a Deleuzian interest in planar relations, the irreducibly spatial positionality of beside also seems to offer some useful resistance to the ease with which beneath and beyond turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos... Beside permits a spacious antagonism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking.  

Sedgwick’s Deleuzian conception of beside not only prevents us from considering an essentialist selfhood, but it also acknowledges the constant and inevitable interaction between the self and the other. If we consider the besideness of this interaction—an interaction that is characterized by a mutual undoing—the exchange between what Phelan distinguishes as the “self” and “other” becomes increasingly chaotic. Giovanni must penetrate Annabella’s interiors in order to reclaim his own. This is not to say that subjectivity disappears entirely. What, I think, instead becomes less and less apparent is Phelan’s distinction between the internal self and the external other. Like the lovers in ’Tis Pity, the self is composed of the other as the other is composed by the self. Of course, as Phelan acknowledges, this exchange is never exactly equal; however, I would like to suggest that what is equal is the inter-dependency between the self and other; we need the other as much as the other needs us. Since this dependence is characterized by an energetic and constant exchange, what was once “internal” or “external” to the subject

---

83 Ibid, 8.
is less and less clear. In breaking the internal/external boundary, we become beside ourselves.
Works Cited


Dollimore, Jonathan. “ Desire is Death.” *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*. Ed.


