

The Ocular Impulse and the Politics of Violence in *The Duchess of Malfi*

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1. the ocular impulse to inspect and control the female body in *The Duchess of Malfi*

There are the articulations of the desire to see, inspect and control the female body in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. This desire is intimately connected with the "ocular impulse" which emerges within coeval anatomical and gynaecological discourses. This ocular economy is a regulatory production of the body; but it also problematizes the position of the subject of the gaze. Moreover, it presents the privatized body of the conjugal couple. The Duchess's body is invested with the principle of "fixed order," so as to sustain the proper boundaries of class, gender and eroticism. It is articulated in Antonio's picture of the Duchess as the normative and inaccessible lady of courtly love, a high-born virginal being whose "countenance" is liable to be misinterpreted as

erotic provocation and yet remains, fundamentally, nothing but the embodiment of "continence" and denial.¹⁾

For her discourse, it is so full of rapture,
 You only will begin then to be sorry
 When she doth end her speech: and wish, in wonder,
 She held it less vainglory to talk much
 Than your penance to hear her: whilst she speaks,
 She throws upon a man so sweet a look
 That it were able to raise one to a galliard
 That lay in a dead palsy; and to dote
 On that sweet countenance: but in that look
 There speaketh so divine a continence
 As cut off all lascivious and vain hope.

(1.1.200-210)

In this statement, the Duchess is presented not only as a woman but also as a way of making statements about the body politic and as a yardstick against which the political activities of her two brothers can be gauged. However, Ferdinand regards his sister's body as potentially non-transparent, threateningly predicated upon the discrepancy between a public face and a secret inner part (1.1.317-320): "be not cunning, For they whose faces do belie their hearts Are witches ere they arrive at twenty years, Ay, and give the devil suck." He aims to bring to light what is hidden and "private," so as to reinforce visibility as a modality of power over the body of the Duchess. It is Bosola who is charged with the task of inspecting and controlling the young widow. According to

1) All quotations from the play are taken from John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi. Drama of the English Renaissance II: The Stuart Period*, ed. R.A. Fraser and N. Rabkin (London: Macmillan, 1976).

Patricia Parker, there is the close relation between the delator's activity of bringing something hidden before the eye and the "voyeuristic" drive of early modern anatomical and gynaecological discourses that seek to expose the "secret place" of women (Parker 64-7). One of the many masks Bosola puts on in his role of "intelligencer" is that of the physician detecting the signs of the transformation of the Duchess's body.

Bosola. I have other work on foot: I observe our Duchess
Is sick a-days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
She wanes i'th'cheek, and waxes fat i'th'flank;
And, contrary to our Italian fashion,
Wears a loose-bodied gown: there's somewhat in't.
I have a trick may chance discover it,
A pretty one; I have bought some apricocks,
The first our spring yields. (2.1.70-78)

The role of physician seems at the center of the debate about his role of "intelligencer." He takes part in the vital process of revealing the signs of the pregnancy of the Duchess. As described in the above passage, vomiting, stomach-agitation, blue eyelids, wane cheek and fat flank are the most typical signs of pregnancy. The scrutinous analysis and voyeuristic intrusion of the irreducible private body were carried out to exhibit the secrets of the female body and the Duchess's pregnancy. After tempting her with some dainties, he concludes that "her tetchiness and most vulturous eating of the apricocks are apparent signs of breeding" (2.2.1-3). Bosola's reading of the Duchess's body took place in the Duchess's belly where a knowledge of the reproductive body is inscribed with its act of examination and discovery. It has little to do with

a gradual understanding of its thereness and much to do with relations of domination. The analysis of the signs of pregnancy is just the beginning of Bosola's work as an intelligencer. Bosola's scrutiny of the body reveals the gynaecological discourse's ocular impulse to see and know, to lay bare and exhibit the secrets of the female body: A whirlwind strike off these bawd farthingales, for, but for that, and the loose-body'd gown, I should have discover'd apparently the young springal cutting a caper in her belly (2.1.156-159). Bosola's scrutiny of the Duchess's body certainly has echoes and elements common to the gynaecological discourse's ocular impulse to lay bare the female body. William Kerwin argues that the *Duchess of Malfi* has an explicitly medical frame, not only in its characters and language, but also in the historical context of Jacobean medical politics (96). He examines that the play's use of medical theater repeatedly connects the authority of educated physicians and the attenuated legitimacy of the court at Malfi. According to Kerwin, in connecting the problems of doctors and royalty, Webster was echoing in very directed ways historical parallels in his own city. The numerous challenges to their authority which London physicians faced were inseparable from their culture's challenges to king and bishop. Galenic medicine, in both its technical knowledge and its organizational structures, was incapable of meeting the needs facing a country of new social problems and arrangements. Most healers were non-physicians who did not aspire to professional status, and the physicians' attempts to create such a status involved a radical centralization of power, and with it a new representation of their own role. In connection with Kerwin's argument, it is interesting to note the important role of Bosola who is charged with the task of inspecting the Duchess's body like a physician. Bosola's scrutiny of the Duchess's pregnant body seems inseparable from their culture's understanding of the general female body and there is a trace of distrust toward

this kind of inspection and Bosola's attempts to create power through inspecting the Duchess's body and giving information to Ferdinand. The distrust to his role can be analysed through the representation of the Duchess's pregnancy, childbearing, and the representation of the bliss of the conjugal couple in the text. Moreover, those elements are understood to be the subversive potential against the attempts of Bosola and Ferdinand to control the irreducible female body of the Duchess. As Michel Foucault has argued, in the context of a discussion of the body's involvement in the exercise of power, "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (27). In this sense, the "objective" status of the pregnant body of the Duchess emerging from Bosola's inspection can be taken as symptomatic of a realistic knowledge of the body. Yet, this realism needs to be conceived as one of the effects of the anatomical and gynaecological discourse which engenders the female body as an object subjected to the male gaze. As Coddon points out, the Duchess of Malfi projects a discovery of her body as the "private" locus of authenticity and self-determination (8-11). The Duchess addresses Antonio in the wooing scene.

Duch. You do tremble.
 Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
 To fear, more than to love me. Sir, be confident,
 What is't distracts you? This is flesh, and blood, sir,
 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
 Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man,
 I do here put off all vain ceremony,
 And only do appear to you, a young widow
 That claims you for her husband, and like a widow,
 I use but half a blush in't. (1.1.457-463)

The body disclosed by the Duchess is made of "flesh and blood." This palpable body functions as a self-evident, essentialist construct from which heterosexual desire seems to flow spontaneously, breaking down social boundary and dispelling class and gender tensions. Antonio is torn between the traditional hierarchy of rank, which enjoins his submission, and the traditional gender hierarchy, which enjoins him to dominate. But the Duchess's insistence that Antonio should avert his eyes and explore the depth of his inner self is undoubtedly an affirmation of personal merit and interiority. Thus, the Duchess interrogates the regulation of gender and sexuality implemented through the exchange of women's bodies under the "dynastic" version of patriarchy. The heterosexual desire established and instigated by the "flesh and blood" body of the Duchess is sanitized as soon as it is brought to light. It finds its proper meaning in the sedate, monogamous and reproductive merging of bodies sanctified by matrimony:

Duch. Bless, heaven, this sacred Gordian, which let violence
 Never untwine.
 Ant. And may our sweet affections, like the spheres,
 Be still in motion.
 Duch. Quickening, and make
 The like soft music.
 Ant. That we may imitate the loving palms,
 Best emblem of a peaceful marriage,
 That ne'er bore fruit, divided. (1.1.481-8)

The Duchess and Antonio's embracing bodies are subjected to the sinister incarnations of the dynastic version of marriage. They are within the dynastic and the liberal version of marriage impinges upon each other, inducing those

class, gender and erotic anxieties supposedly alien to such private realm. The survey of the realm of the self suggested by the Duchess is consistent with the path she follows in her own voyage of discovery of the true self and bodily identity lying behind the dreams of those that are born great (1.1.445). Yet, the bourgeois authenticity she represents is only one of the subject-positions from which she speaks in this scene. Antonio underlines this multiplicity as he articulates his regret about not having played an active role in the wooing: "These words should be mine, / And all the parts you have spoke" (1.1.475-6). They seem to register a partial incorporation of the patriarchal values of the old and new regime. In spite of the fact that the Duchess has already converted Antonio's bosom into the repository of her heart: "You have left me heartless mine is in your bosom" (1.1.453), the consummation of the marriage and the fulfillment can only take place offstage, in another secret place by definition absent. However, their marriage life is represented as utter happiness and based upon complete integrity even though it can not be displayed to the public and attained in the secret place. As I examined, there is the deliberate efforts to scrutinize the Duchess's pregnant body projected by Ferdinand and his agent, Bosola. However, in defiance against this persistent ocular impulse, the Duchess projects her subject position, and originally articulates her heterosexually oriented flesh-and-blood body she uncovers. The Duchess protests against Ferdinand's logic that she should be remained as a widow (3.2.136-39). Her body natural is understood to be threatening to the integrity of the body politic. Therefore, Ferdinand defines her a notorious strumpet and her partner as a strong-thighed bargeman (2.4.4). However, Ferdinand is sexually obsessive and incestuous; the Cardinal has broken his vow of chastity and carries on with Julia. This overt display of sexual passion pervades the court.

Moreover, Ferdinand's behaviour toward his sister is disturbing. He desires

to violate his sister by having her "darkest actions, nay your privatest thoughts, . . . come to light" (1.1.324-25). His desire to delve into her sexual behaviour climaxes when he exposes his father's poinard to her and notes that "women like that part which, like the lamprey, / Hath never a bone in't" (1.1.338-344). The sword he shows to the Duchess incarnates violent male oppression and a symbol of patriarchal power. This desire, then in addition to being incestuous, figures him as an effeminized male, the same term used to describe homosexual men. According to Behling, Ferdinand's extreme interest in his sister's sexuality has less to do with political ambitions than with fear that he is losing his own masculine identity (7). In other words, Ferdinand's fear is to be cuckolded. As Orgel states, "the fear of losing control of women's chastity, a very valuable possession that guaranteed the legitimacy of one's heirs, and especially valuable for fathers as a piece of disposable property is a logical consequence of a patriarchal structure" (18). Antonio is perceived as threatening to Ferdinand's masculine identity because Antonio cuckolded him both sexually and also economically by robbing him of the Duchess, the Duke's method of securing economic or political bounty. But the Duke is threatened also by the Duchess, who he feels is capable of castrating his power, or subsuming his power, by re-establishing the bloodline (Behling 7). Though perhaps paranoid, the Duke must definitely have understood that the Duchess has the power of disrupting his authority and her political identity would undoubtedly have been regarded by him and the Cardinal as genuinely masculine. Therefore, the brothers' desire to sustain their political and economic power reinforces their logic that the Duchess's body should be inspected and controlled. This desire is intimately related with the ocular impulse which projects the ideology of exposing the secret part of the female body.

2. Secret places, abject bodies, the politics of violence

In Helkiah Crooke's 1615 anatomical treatise *Microcosmographia*, Crooke defines "the orifice of the necke [of the womb] as a part too obscene to look upon" (239). The desire to see and to avert the eye are inextricably related to each other. Crooke described that "those parts which in some creatures [i.e., men] are prominent and apparent, should in others [i.e., women] be veyled and covered" (216). It seems that it is only by visually unfolding and penetrating a woman's secrets that what is "veyled" by nature is finally given a proper shape and therefore actualizes its potential status. A woman's "privy" thus remains a bodily excess which cannot be properly categorized within the anatomical discourse's ocular production of bodies that matter; a discourse in which it is nonetheless inserted as an "object" and in the form of a "masculinized" morphology.

Patricia Parker linked this paradoxical place "too obscene to look upon" to the hidden place of Desdemona's sexuality in *Othello* (71). This is described as a site that is impossible to see (3.3.408) and as a locus which is too hideous to be shown (3.3.112). The place is nonetheless situated at the center of the play. It cannot be brought to light and yet is endlessly displayed, as in the bedroom scene at the end of the play. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess is defined as the "infection" rather than the "infected," as the assertive widow playing an active role in that which her two brothers forcefully categorize as transgression.

Card. You may flatter yourself,
And *take your own choice: privately* be married
Under the eaves of night.

Ferd. Think't the best voyage

That e'er you made; like the irregular crab,
 Which though 't goes backward, thinks that it goes right,
 Because *it goes its own way*.

(1.1.316-21; italics are my emphasis)

In this passage, there is the emphasis on the discrepancy between the Duchess's "outside" and "inside" and Ferdinand described her potential assumption of such a role as the figure of the witch, one of those cunning women whose faces do belie their heart (1.1.308-10). He adds that "a visor and a mask are whispering-rooms that were ne'er built for goodness" (1.1.335). In his remark, the Duchess's threatening depth is represented through a double disguise, a visor and a mask, and Ferdinand announces to detect the Duchess's "darkest actions" and her "privat'st thoughts" (1.1.315). This is the articulation of the desire to see, inspect and control the female body and this desire is intimately connected with the "ocular impulse" which emerges within coeval anatomical and gynaecological discourses. Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, like most sixteenth- and seventeenth- century anatomical and gynaecological treatises, is marked by anxiety towards the ambivalent interior fold of the female body, veiled and covered by nature to register a woman's proper place. In addition, the anxiety easily turns into violence. Ferdinand assures that he will "hew" his sister "to pieces," after threatening to dispense mixed doses of cure and punishment:

Ferd. Apply desperate physic:

We must not now use balsamum, but fire,
 The smarting cupping-glass, for that's the mean
 To purge infected blood, such blood as hers.

(2.5.23-6)

As for Ferdinand, the exposure of the Duchess's "whispering-rooms" as something remote from a "private" reservoir of chastity undoubtedly intensifies the voyeuristic pleasure of discovery. It seems that it is only by visually unfolding and penetrating a woman's secrets that what is "veiled" by nature is finally given a proper shape and therefore actualizes its potential status. A woman's "privy" remains a bodily excess which cannot be properly categorized within the anatomical discourse's ocular production of bodies that matter; a discourse in which it is nonetheless inserted as an "object" and in the form of a "masculinized" morphology. In the coeval anatomical and gynaecological discourses, there are strong traces of the desire to see and to avert the eye from the female "privy." In *The Duchess of Malfi* it is mainly the position of Ferdinand that is fraught with such ambivalent desire to see and not to see; a desire which finds an emblematic articulation in relation to the Duchess's corpse. He responds to the abjectified corpse of the Duchess by saying, "Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle" (4.2.264). The gesture of covering the Duchess's face is nonetheless followed by his request to uncover it once more: "Let me see her face again" (4.2.270). Whereas these lines are consistent with the play's dominant drive to see, inspect and control the female body, they also anticipate the speech in which Ferdinand announces another discovery, that of the murder of his sister: "The wolf shall find her grave, and scrape it up / Not to devour the corpse, but to discover / The horrid murder" (4.2.307-309). The Duchess's murder is carried out in a private space—her lodging—by a number of nameless executioners who use strangling rather than dismemberment as a mode of reinscription of power over her body. Moreover, her prolonged torture, which reaches its apogee when Ferdinand decides to "remove forth the common hospital / All the mad-folk, and place them near her lodging" (4.1.127-8) a resolve whose underlying logic is that she'll needs be mad to confirm the

madness of her transgression—does not seem to achieve the desired effect. The Duchess ironically comments as follows: "Indeed, I thank him: nothing but noise and folly / Can keep me in my right wits" (4.2.6-7). There is also no confession to seal the violence of execution. Furthermore, the Duchess's last dying speeches repeatedly focus on the monotony of the spectacular display which requires her subjection. Just before her death, she associates the tediousness of the spectacle with the "whispering" and clandestine manoeuvrings of Ferdinand and his acolytes, which *reverses* the connotation of "whispering" as *her* "secret" and illicit sexuality:

Duch. I know death hath ten thousand several doors
 For men to take their exits; and 'tis found
 They go on such strange geometrical hinges,
 You may open them both ways:—any way, for heaven-sake,
 So I were out of your whispering.

(4.2.219-223; italics are my emphasis)

Whispering, in short, like the revolving doors of death, goes both ways. The "Whispering-rooms" is represented in the play as "intimate, private closets," a site containing and becoming the sign of one of the Duchess's most "privy" places. There is the strong homology between a woman's secret parts and her intimate "private" closet or "cabinet." However, according to Ferdinand, depth is achieved in this privy places "not in the figure of interiority by which the concealed inside is of another quality from what is external, but by a doubling of the surface" (1.1.315). This "doubling" can be related to the anatomical and gynaecological discourses in which Ferdinand's position participates. According to these discourses, as Thomas Laqueur points out, there is only one body, a one-sex or one-flesh teleologically male body, whose colder, less perfect and

inverted mirror image is gendered female (5-6). The "concealed inside" represented by the female sex-organs is thus not "of another quality" or essentially different from the "exterior surface" signified by the male sex-organs. Therefore, we need to point out that early modern anatomy and gynaecology articulate "an assertion of male power to know the female body and hence to know and control a feminine Nature." In the death scene, however, the Duchess articulates and problematizes Ferdinand's attempts to inspect and control the female body. The Duchess made no confession to seal the violence of execution. Furthermore, the Duchess's last speeches put emphasis on the secret manipulating of the female body deployed by Ferdinand and Bosola. Just before her death, she relates the weariness of the spectacle with the "whispering" and clandestine maneuvering of Ferdinand and Bosola. It definitely reverses the connotation of "whispering" as her "secret" and forbidden sexuality.

3. Uncanny specular reversals

As we examined, it is interesting to note the important role of Bosola who is charged with the task of inspecting the Duchess's body like a physician. Moreover, Bosola's scrutiny of the Duchess's pregnant body seems inseparable from their culture's understanding of the general female body. In the text, the brothers' desire was to sustain their political and economic power by reinforcing their logic that the Duchess's body should be inspected and controlled. This desire is intimately related with the ocular impulse which projects the ideology of exposing the secret part of the female body. However, the position of the subject of the gaze is problematized and there is a trace of distrust toward this kind of inspection on the female body and the privatized body of the conjugal

couple. The distrust to the inspection can be attained through the representation of the Duchess's pregnancy, childbearing, and the representation of the bliss of the conjugal couple in the text. Moreover, those elements are understood to be the subversive potential against the attempts of Bosola and Ferdinand to control the irreducible female body of the Duchess. In the bed-chamber scene it is the "private" economy of pleasure of this body that articulates itself.

Duch. Bring me the casket hither, and the glass:—

You get no lodging here tonight, my lord.

Ant. Indeed, I must persuade one:—

Duch. Very good:

I hope in time 'twill grow into a custom
That noblemen shall come with cap and knee,
To purchase a night's lodging of their wives.

Ant. I must lie here.

Duch. To what use will you put me?

Ant. We'll sleep together:—

Duch. Alas, what pleasure can two lovers find in sleep?

(3.2.1-10)

The casket and the glass, later on, the kissing, Antonio's reference to the Duchess and Cariola as two "faces so well form'd," the Duchess's concern about her hair and its colour: all these elements contribute to naturalize the pleasures of the conjugal couple. In this scene, the bodies of the conjugal couple are invested with an erotic charge. Those elements put emphasis on the privatized body of the conjugal couple and they are understood to be the subversive potential against the attempts of Bosola and Ferdinand to control the irreducible female body of the Duchess.

According to Frank Whigham, Ferdinand's is a desire to evade degrading association with inferiors. He even redefines Ferdinand's "incestuous inclination toward his sister" as the irredeemably social narrowing of his kind from class to family, with the Duchess coming to stand for "his own radical purity," conceived in class terms (Whigham 169). The Duchess's body, construed by Ferdinand as a body in which his blood "his rank" flows uncontaminated, functions as a specular image, conferring an "ideal unity" on his body. Put another way, Ferdinand's "possession" is simultaneously an appropriation of another body and a construction of his own body, which is inseparable from the process of demarcation of class boundaries. The threat to Ferdinand's "body proper," for instance, is most often signified through a signifier such as "blood" as passion and desire. Blood as passion is a signifier bringing an intolerable effect of sameness to bear on blood as lineage, which is one of the privileged points of identification around which the contours of the "body proper" attempt to establish themselves. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than when "blood" as the cherished signifier of Ferdinand's "rank" uncannily turns into a "rank blood": "Her witchcraft lies in her rank blood" (3.1.70). Ferdinand presents an uncanny and distorted counterpart between two bodies:

Ferd. Methinks her fault and beauty,
Blended together, show like leprosy,
The whiter, the fouler. (3.3.62-4)

The ambivalence of the specular image corresponds in many ways to the ambivalence of the double described by Freud in his paper on the "uncanny." In this paper, Freud argues that in specific circumstances the double as "insurance against the destruction of the ego" "reverses its aspect," so as to

become "the uncanny harbinger of death" (235). For Freud, this reversal is a sign of the return of the "surmounted" stage of "unbounded self-love," of "primary narcissism," a return which transforms the once so familiar interchangeability between the ego and its image into something too familiar to be endured. As far as Ferdinand is concerned, the salutary interchangeability between his body and that body of hers, which appears so familiar, represents itself as a hostile, uncanny image, an image whose effect is one of fragmentation. Needless to add, this fragmentation instantaneously makes way for an active will to punish. What Lacan would call "aggressivity" is in the play a desire on the part of Ferdinand to "hew her to pieces" in order to grasp his always precarious, imaginary sense of unity. Yet, the estranging and foreign image which keeps on returning from without is nothing but one's own projected image. It makes perfect sense for Ferdinand to declare, speaking to his brother: "I could kill her now, / In you, or in myself, for I do think/ It is some sin in us, heaven doth revenge / By her" (2.4.64-6). Yet, once Ferdinand comes into close proximity to the rival "who leaps his sister," the desire of aggressivity is deferred.

Ferd. Whate'er thou art, that hast enjoy'd my sister,
 For I am sure thou hear'st me—for thine own sake
 Let me not know thee: I came hither prepar'd
 To work thy *discovery*, yet am now persuaded
 It would beget such violent effects
 As would damn us both:—I would not for ten millions
I had beheld thee; therefore use all means
 I never may have knowledge of thy name.

(3.2.90-7; italics are my emphasis)

These lines immediately follow an exchange between the Duchess and Ferdinand in which the latter ironically claims that he would accept to "see her husband" only if he "could change eyes with a basilisk" (3.2.86-7)—with a reptile whose eyes were imagined to strike people dead. Short of this metamorphosis, it is the antagonist that seems to embody something "too obscene to look upon": "I would not for ten millions I had beheld thee." This "something" is identifiable with the threatening reversibility of the look.

After the murder of the Duchess, typically effected through the intermediary of a double, the problematic of the double is given a further twist by Ferdinand's confession: "She and I were twins: / And should I die this instant, I had liv'd / Her time to a minute" (4.2.267-9). Once more, Ferdinand's plenitude appears only as lost. Moreover, by linking the elimination of his double to his own death, he implicitly remarks that his proper being is out there, in the other. In the last act of the play Ferdinand presents himself as follows:

Ferd. Leave me.

Mal. Why doth your lordship love this solitariness?

Ferd. Eagles commonly fly alone: they are crows, daws, and starlings that flock together:—look, what's that follows me?

Mal. Nothing, my lord.

Ferd. Yes:—

Mal. 'Tis your shadow.

Ferd. Stay it, let it not haunt me.

Mal. Impossible: if you move, and the sun shine:—

Ferd. I will throttle it. [*Throws himself down on his shadow.*]

(5.2.28-38)

Moreover, he is reported to be affected by lycanthropy and to have been

found behind Saint Mark's church, with the leg of a man upon his shoulder. The doctor says, "He how'd fearfully; / Said he was a wolf, only the difference / Was, a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside, / His on the inside" (5.2.15-8). Ferdinand represents himself as a turned-inward version of himself and he is spurred on to compulsively return to the same place. By the end of the play, Ferdinand is the deformed embodiment of haunting, situated at the point where absolute 'singularity' and absolute "otherness" uncannily coincide with each other without neutralizing each other. As such a disfigured figure of haunting, he cannot but haunt that by which he is haunted—the grave, where the scene of discovery as well as its violence are endlessly reenacted in an occluded form.

주제어: 존 웹스터, 『말피 공작부인』, 시각적 욕구, 폭력의 정치학, 여성 해부학 담론, 여성의 몸, 기괴한 반전

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Abstract

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In Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, there is dominant desire to see, inspect and control the female body. Ferdinand aims to bring to light what is hidden and "private," so as to reinforce visibility as a modality of power over the body of the Duchess. It is Bosola who is charged with the task of inspecting and controlling the young widow. Bosola's scrutiny of the Duchess's pregnant body seems inseparable from their culture's understanding of the general female body. This desire is intimately connected with the "ocular impulse" which emerges within coeval anatomical and gynaecological discourses. This ocular economy is a regulatory production of the body, but it also problematizes the position of the subject of the gaze. In the text, there is a trace of distrust toward this kind of inspection and Bosola's attempts to create power through inspecting the Duchess's body and giving information to Ferdinand. The distrust to his role can be analysed through the representation of the Duchess's pregnancy, childbearing, and the representation of the bliss of the conjugal couple in the text. Moreover, those elements are understood to be the subversive potential against the attempts of Bosola and Ferdinand to control the irreducible female body of the Duchess.

The desire to see, inspect and control the female body is intimately connected with the "ocular impulse" which emerges within coeval anatomical and gynaecological discourses. Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, like most sixteenth- and seventeenth- century anatomical and gynaecological treatises, is marked by anxiety towards the ambivalent interior fold of the female body, veiled and covered by nature to register a woman's proper place. In the ending

scene, Ferdinand is represented as a turned-inward version of himself and he is spurred on to compulsively return to the same place. Ferdinand is the deformed embodiment of haunting, situated at the point where absolute "singularity" and absolute "otherness" uncannily coincide with each other without neutralizing each other. As such a disfigured figure of haunting, he cannot but haunt that by which he is haunted—the grave.

Key Words

John Webster, *the Duchess of Malfi*, ocular impulse, politics of violence, anatomical and gynaecological discourses, the female body, uncanny reversals