

“WHAT MEANS THESE TEARS?”: INTERSECTIONS OF GRIEF AND GENDER IN
EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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Drawing from characterizations of grieving in England during the early modern period, the thesis advances a series of examinations of literary dramatizations of grief and death. In the first chapter, the thesis presents some of the historical dynamics of the period that constructed ways of thinking about death and grief, namely, the elimination of Purgatory. The first chapter also introduces the period’s gendering of grief as feminine, and casting of the emotion as Catholic, arguing that those characterizations worked to bring grief under the same suspicion as females were. In other words, grief, like women, was typified as both virtuous and dangerous, leading to acute anxieties about interpreting and performing such an ambivalent emotion. The following two chapters examine the instances in Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*, and Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, where grief is depicted in gendered terms, and actually leads to transgressions of gender and other social values due to its ambivalent nature. The thesis closes with a chapter that considers the gendered aspects of dying well according to the *ars moriendi* tradition, and compares the social importance of performing good grief with that of the performance of a good death.

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Introduction

When we encounter grieving and death in our lives, what seems most important to us is to honor the memory of the deceased. We do this by constructing a positive image of both their life and their death. In fact, every culture in the world has a prescribed way of grieving – a script, if you will, of handling the body of the deceased and dealing with loss. The death of a loved one may feel like a personal loss to us and maybe even a familial affair, but grieving and dying are much more complex – and they involve, and in some ways require, onlookers. Call to mind our own culture’s traditions of making large donations to public institutions or to charities in the name of a deceased loved one, or of publishing obituaries that skew the truth of the person’s life or death, because we recognize that there are honorable ways of dying. We grieve or show respect to the deceased in this way because we recognize that, as living mourners, we are responsible for constructing the identity of the deceased through the narratives that we choose to tell. Funerals are cultural events; we recognize that the purpose is to pay our respects to the deceased but, in fact, how well we carry out this process and how well we grieve is as much a reflection on ourselves as it is on the life and memory of the deceased. We need only think of our culture’s discomfort with widows or widowers who remarry too soon, or even public figures who die from substance abuse, to come to an understanding about the cultural implications of how we grieve and die. Our culture’s interpretations of other people’s deaths and grieving suggest that these processes are not simple or personal, but complex activities that can construct individual identities as moral or immoral, respected or disrespected, grievable or not grievable.

In the early modern period, these ideas were not lost on people. There are conduct books, pamphlets, and even records of people’s last dying words that reveal the importance

of dying well and grieving well. These cultural artifacts from the early modern period show that changes in religious doctrine following the Reformation, ideas about gender, and even politics shaped the ways that people thought about dying and grieving. My thesis will first provide an analysis of two plays, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively, to interrogate the ways in which these plays engage with gendered beliefs about grieving and dying. I will analyze the plays' considerations of cultural attitudes concerning dying and grieving, particularly those that are gendered, and define the anxieties concerning grief and death expressed in these works. Lastly, I theorize the arguments illustrated in the other chapters through an analysis of *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women* to consider the ways in which ideas about how to die well construct death as a gendered performance and allow for the subversion of gender norms through cultural rituals of death and memorialization. In *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, Phillip Stubbes, the author, attempts to set his wife Katherine forth as a model to be imitated in life and in death. In doing so, Phillip constructs the deathbed as a kind of moral theater and Katherine's last dying speeches as a performance or drama directed by her unwavering faith in God and her impressive ability to resist despair or temptation.

In his study of public punishment, *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault has perhaps made the strongest case for the performative nature of death, arguing that public executions in particular function as a way for the state to maintain ideological control. Even in minor cases, he posits, public punishment "belongs to the ceremonies by which power is manifested" (47). J.A. Sharpe, who studies early modern crime literature, has also written about the ways in which hangings and executions were a part of the public theatre, designed

by civil and religious authorities to uphold particular values and to present the social order as threatened; the desire to uphold certain social values would have been accomplished by creating a model of behavior (in other words, a script) to be followed by criminals during the performance, such that the ritual of public executions became theatrical (146). There is no shortage of scholarship on the performative nature of public executions, and the idea that executions often followed a script designed by civil and religious authorities as a part of the public theatre is widely accepted. While I plan to briefly address the scaffold as a stage, I'm much more interested in the ways that the deathbed space also functioned as a stage on which power dynamics played out, and one that allowed for the subversion of gender by dying women and the ways in which death engages with social order and therefore functions as performative of certain values and social expectations.

One of the most important elements of the public execution was the criminal's farewell speech, which often took an incredibly stereotyped form since it was designed to be an admission of the criminal's guilt and recognition of the state's justice in putting him or her to death. Undoubtedly, these speeches were part of a script and a recognizable part of the performance. In fact, chapbooks and pamphlets would often reprint the criminals' speech for those who were not in attendance (Sharpe 107). Other aspects of the public execution, such as the drawing and quartering of the bodies of those convicted of treason, were also a part of a performance of power that functioned as symbols to discourage would-be criminals. However, Clare Gittings expands on the notion of the ceremony of public execution as a demonstration of power by rightly pointing out that the complexity of these rituals is not limited to the manifestation of power by civil and religious authorities. Indeed, the performative nature of these events as theatrical and carnivalesque reveals more about early

modern ways of thinking about death. Gittings notes that “the treatment of those executed for high treason reveals . . . a lack of differentiation between the living and the dead body . . . [the] desire to punish the dead corpse once life had been extinguished . . . makes sense only against the background of a society in which the decent interment of the dead was a matter of utmost concern.” (71). Ways of thinking about death during the early modern period were far from straightforward, though, and often contradictory. For example, there were striking similarities of the festivity surrounding executions and weddings (Gittings 71). But these complexities almost always point to an anxiety brought about by the destabilization of a social order. The deaths of virgins and criminals, for example, who both would have presumably died in the prime of their lives, “posed a severe threat to society, which was then reduced through the imagery of the ritual” (71). These observations of contradictions and complexities aid my argument in that they call attention to the ways in which people coped with death by constructing predictable performances in order to alleviate anxieties brought about by shifting religious doctrines, superstitions, and social norms. In fact, as I point out in my last chapter, even Phillip Stubbes’s portrayal of his good, Christian wife’s death is strikingly similar to other accounts of this nature, suggesting that even domestic deaths followed a kind of script that was designed to communicate and reinforce social and religious values.

As I’ve mentioned, though, ideas about death were not straightforward. Changes brought about by the Reformation, such as the elimination of purgatory, a concept that provided comfort to dying people since it provided an escape clause, were further complicated by the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Purgatory allowed room for the mourning acts of the bereaved to move the deceased’s soul into heaven, whereas

predestination allowed no room for influence. The doctrine of predestination stated that only God could decide who was saved; a good life did not guarantee a happy afterlife; and one should practice humility by not assuming that he or she was part of the elect. The shift from purgatory to predestination inevitably changed the way that dying people approached their death and destabilized the social order by encouraging more individualistic thought. Clare Gittings has argued, “this uncertainty added a further burden to the dying; indeed it was essential for the true Calvinist to be humble and not presume himself to be among the ‘elect’ (40). As she points out, this doctrine was far more individualistic than the doctrine of purgatory; the abolition of purgatory severed ties between the living and the dead, rendering the dying individual alone and responsible for his or her own fate (40). People believed that the way people died could indicate whether or not they were a part of the elect. These ideas about what constituted a good death, however, led to deathbed performances that would exhibit both humility and stoutness in the face of death. According to early modern thought, a stoic death was a sure sign of election; therefore, this kind of death came to be expected by good, Christian women. Nevertheless, the expectations and anxieties of dying performances did successfully open up a space for women to be heard, in both the deathbed space and on the scaffold. Women’s last words were not only heard, but solicited in this space, and oftentimes they were even written down.

My argument about the performativity of dying and grieving is based on the idea that, as a society, we accept social norms because they provide scripts for us to follow during otherwise unstable events or crises, making these events easier for us to navigate and also easier to interpret by others, since they provide all parties with a predictable and, therefore stable, role. But because part of following these scripts is predicting and interpreting the

other actor's actions, we watch the spaces where others are supposed to perform for the behaviors we expect from them. We expect the other actor's behavior to confirm our own values, but if they don't stick to the script, it causes us discomfort by destabilizing the social order. This is exactly what happened in early modern England. Dying and grieving women could utilize scripts that were designed to demonstrate values about things like the state, gender, and religion and find grounds to express themselves on these 'stages' where they were afforded the opportunity to do so because they were being interpreted for certain prescribed actions, such as the last dying speech. "Death," as Patricia Phillippy explains, "has the power to reconstruct gender relations within the household and in the larger culture before which [women's] last acts are staged" (83).

Women who died good, Christian deaths were sometimes held up as examples for other women, as in the case of Katherine Stubbes, whose husband, as I've mentioned, published *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*. In this work, Phillip Stubbes idealizes his wife's humility in life and in death, recommending her as a model for imitation and in some ways, reversing the gender hierarchy since he affords her license to join in theological debates and praises her stoic (read: masculine) approach to death. While her husband published her words, death granted Katherine an unusual license to speak, suggesting that women could gain some agency in death that they wouldn't have had in life. Bettie Doebler, in *Rooted Sorrow: Dying in Early Modern England*, upholds the idea that funerary rituals and rules of mourning aim to maintain the social order in distinguishing between male and female acts (for example, rules about mourning weeds concerned only women) (11). However, Patricia Phillippy points out that the license given to women on their deathbeds reveals a tension between social and political values and spiritual values, since the deathbed

allows women to “rewrite gender” in their final acts (107). In other words, the value placed on last dying speeches and on a stoic submission to death outweighed the value of femininity and upholding rules about gender.

This opportunity wasn’t just limited to exemplary women, however, because females accused of crime and sentenced to death also found ways to gain agency for themselves in death. The expectation that criminals would perform a last dying speech on the scaffold suspended the social value of keeping women silent. Thomas Lacquer, in his essay, “Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Executions, 1604-1868,” stresses the unpredictability of a condemned person’s behavior in a public execution as complicating the relationships of all of the actors so that the spectacle of a public execution wasn’t simply a performance of the state’s power over the condemned. Frances Dolan also argues that, as the center of the spectacle, the condemned is “at once spectacularly acted upon and an agent” (157). The popularity of public executions provided an audience for the criminal, and chapbooks and pamphlets, as J.A. Sharpe has pointed out, often printed the last dying speeches of criminals. These aspects of the public execution afforded a unique and complex opportunity for female criminals in particular. In fact, Catherine Belsey has argued that the scaffold provided the “supreme opportunity” for women to speak (190). Frances Dolan confirms the significance of this opportunity in arguing that the content of the woman’s speech is of little importance: for the female offender addressing a larger audience – perhaps for the first and only time – from the scaffold, any speech, even one that affirmed the status quo and condemned herself, offered an opportunity to speak publicly that challenged powerful constraints on female assertion and volubility. (169)

In the cases of female martyrs, such as Anne Askew, it seems highly unlikely that accused

women didn't realize their own agency since they fearlessly constructed their own narratives to emphasize their suffering by refusing to recant and betray their religious beliefs or uphold the power of the state. As Dolan notes, Anne Askew "surely saw [her] participation in the rituals of [her] death as having considerable consequence for [her] own soul and for the prospects of religious reform in England" (159). Askew also wrote her own accounts of her examinations, ensuring that her suffering and her narrative, which was sensationalized in the form of a public execution attended by a multitude of spectators, was her own. The seizing of the opportunity to participate in theological discourse by female martyrs such as Anne Askew confirms Phillippy's argument that death allows for a rewriting of gender and a destabilization of social and political values, and furthermore, it reveals that women were aware of this opportunity. Although my thesis doesn't examine criminal women, I have chosen to include a discussion of them here because they provide the clearest example of the ways that intersecting values were demonstrated in the space of the dying. Moving forward, my other chapters focus on the ways in which intersections of grief destabilize otherwise straightforward values, and in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the efficacy of language.

Thus far, I hope to have shown that the complexities of the early modern period's anxieties about spirituality and the rights of the dead and the dying rendered death a particularly unstable space, which society tried to govern through performances that attempted to uphold social values in the face of a destabilized social order, and that, nevertheless, the effort to uphold certain values sometimes allowed room for the subversion of other values; for instance, women in particular experienced some agency in grieving and dying that was not normally available to them. Moving forward, I will take a similar approach in thinking about grief in the early modern period by illustrating the ways in which

religious doctrine and social and political rules constructed a performance of grieving that would implicate the bereaved in a position of responsibility in upholding the social fabric. Grief, following the Reformation, was constructed as a performance because of changes in thinking about the body and soul of the deceased, changes in thinking about funerals, and long-held anxieties about female sexuality and gender.

Following the Reformation, the dying individual ceased to be the focus of funeral rituals, since the soul left the body at death and was immediately a part of the elect or the damned. The elimination of purgatory severed the ties between the living and the dead and raised new questions about the purpose of the bereaved, causing more secular customs to take the forefront of the ritual now intended only to dispose of the corpse. Before the Reformation, the doctrine of purgatory gave mourners a sense of purpose, and funerals focused on praying for the dead. After the Reformation, though, as Peter Marshall points out in *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, ways of remembering the dead and speaking of the dead changed: ministers ceased speaking of the deceased in the second person and began using the third person to keep from giving the impression that the church was bargaining with God concerning the deceased's soul (270). Even the inscriptions on memorials changed to replace invocations for the deceased's soul with biographical information. However, switching to a new doctrine wasn't easy. Michael Neill has pointed out that preoccupations with the proper burial of the dead, adequate mourning, and respect for the remains of deceased persons reveals that the Renaissance held fast to pagan beliefs from the Middle Ages that posited that the happiness of the deceased's afterlife depended on the proper care of his or her mortal remains by those left behind (272). Susan Zimmerman makes similar arguments, stating that, despite Protestant concerns with the Catholic

preoccupation with the body as “dangerously distorting” the relationship between body and soul, “the idea of the corpse as quasi-sentient and empowered was still strongly inscribed in the communal imagination” (9). Clare Gittings has provided a study of the burial rites of the people on the margins of society, such as paupers and debtors, that reveals that even these people often received decent funerals. Her study illustrates the significance of burial and funeral rituals during the early modern period since she has shown that these people expressed anxiety about the kind of funeral they would receive, and parishes often scraped up the money to put together a decent funeral, complete with a coffin, a burial shroud, and food and drink for the attendees (66). The work of these scholars suggests that dealing with the loss of the doctrine of purgatory wasn’t easy and implicated mourners in a new and anxious state when dealing with death.

Clare Gittings’ study of “Funerals of the Unfortunate” uncovers primary sources from funerals in small parishes, which reveal that the values concerning funerals were primarily concerned with maintaining dignity. “Any society,” she argues, “which accorded its poorest members this degree of dignity at their funerals must certainly have held decent burial at a premium.” (63) Concerns with providing every one, short of the most extreme criminals and suicide victims, a proper Christian burial helped to maintain a social order and scripted modes of dealing with death. Even members of the parish who led sinful lives were given proper burials and a proper service. Although, the Reformation’s shifting attention from the deceased to the bereaved meant that, funeral services often held up the deceased’s life and death as an example for those attending the funeral service, whether good or bad. Robert Abbot’s “The Young-mans Warning-peece, or, A sermon preached at the buriall of William Rogers” is one such example of a post-Reformation funeral sermon. In it, Abbot addresses

Rogers's companions, calling attention to their drinking habits and habits of living "luxuriously," holding up Rogers, who was an apothecary with a history of a "sinfull life and woefull death," as an example for how not to live their own lives. Abbot deems Rogers's death a bad one because, while he expressed readiness to come to the church and shed his old ways of life, he fell sick before he could follow through. Therefore, this particular sermon demonstrates the significance of a good death by treating Rogers's bad death as a warning to his friends, and Abbot reinforces the notion that funerals were intended to shape and manage the behavior of the bereaved (2-5).

State funerals were also designed with their own intentions and managed to stage performances to uphold these intentions. Michael Neill argues that higher-profile funerals, such as those of political figures or the aristocracy, functioned as cultural and social events that belonged to the public theatre. These events, as Neill puts it, were designed to "proclaim not just the power, wealth, and status of the defunct, but their place inside a fixed and unassailable social order" (269). Funeral rituals and memorialization, then, were designed to bear lasting testament to the status of the deceased, so that funeral rituals and grieving performances function as social symbols designed to elicit certain reactions and uphold certain values.

Lineage and heraldry, for instance, was often a large part of the monuments and placements of higher-profile deceased, representing a desire to maintain social order and status even in death. Peter Marshall points out that seemingly odd requests, like the request to be buried beneath one's regular church pew in the church, were not uncommon and illustrate anxiety about being forgotten and a desire to assert what they believed to be their rightful place (289). Locations of tombs within the church were even involved in upholding prestige,

as certain locations, such as within the chancel rails, were reserved for the most prestigious (Marshall 288). These issues about placing the dead, as well as ideas about the proper way to talk about the dead, represent the acknowledgement of the finality of death and the inability of mourners to help the dead. Since the dead couldn't speak for themselves, and mourners could no longer pray for them, memorializing them and speaking well of them became a pious duty.

Peter Marshall points out that, according to a primary source entitled, *Huntyng Purgatory to Death*, there were only two ways to care about the dead: give them a decent burial and care for the kin, friends, and children. But the performances of a proper funeral didn't solve the anxieties people felt about how to grieve following the elimination of purgatory. Changes in how people memorialized the dead reveal a discomfort with letting the dead slip from memory. In his chapter, "Remembering the Dead," from his book *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, Marshall traces changes in memorialization following the Reformation. He observes that pre-Reformation tombs and monuments often had inscriptions that invoked prayers for the deceased's soul, as we might expect (270). What's interesting is that following the Reformation, increasing numbers of inscriptions on memorials contained extra-biographical information about the deceased, pointing to, Marshall argues, "sharp differences between the meanings of memory in pre- and post-Reformation England" (270). He notes that after the Reformation, the "act of remembering still involved negotiating an intricate nexus of emotional and social responses, private grief and public duty" (270). It is at the intricate nexus of private grief and public duty where I am interested in the gendering of grief. These scholars' work on post-Reformation funerals and memorialization suggests that following the Reformation, ways of acknowledging the dead changed, and there seemed to

be greater emphasis on honoring the deceased, since the soul no longer needed to be prayed out of purgatory. Because grieving became a way to honor and recognize the status of the deceased, grief wasn't just a private emotion, but a public duty, as Marshall points out, and a gendered performance.

In his interpretations of the gospel, Calvin illustrates the anxious nature of performing grief. Calvin recommends discipline in grieving, pointing out that too much passion was sinful since emotions “rush on unrestrainedly and immoderately” and “the vanity of our mind makes us sorrow or grieve over trifles, or for no reason at all, because we are too much devoted to the world” (12). In *The Sicke Manne's Salve*, Thomas Becon also suggests, “Christians ought to rejoice when any of the faithful be called from this vale of misery unto the glorious Kingdom of God” (124). In these observations, Calvin and Becon communicate the common notion that grief is sinful and associated with the body rather than the soul and earth rather than heaven. But these dangers weren't only spiritual, since, as I've mentioned, grieving was also political. Grief for a king or queen was exceptionally complicated because of ideas about succession and the notion of the king's two bodies. Since grieving too much for a deceased monarch could illustrate a lack of faith in divine right, or the king's political body, restrained grief was safest. Nevertheless, grieving represented a form of respect for the deceased, so that grieving was constructed as somewhat of a balancing act between honoring the dead and protecting one's own soul and reputation.

In fact, discourse on tears and weeping even reflects the precarious nature of grief performances in public opinion, and evoke much of the same rhetoric to which women were subject. Before the Reformation, acts of mourning were seen as closely connected to the deceased since mourners were responsible for praying the soul out of Purgatory. Thomas

Dixon notes in *Weeping Brittainia*, that weeping was in fact strongly connected to Catholicism, and weeping was thought to speed the process of a soul through purgatory (31). Funeral tears, then, as John Calvin argues, were considered blasphemous, ineffective, and also hypocritical. Nevertheless, private weeping for one's sins was generally considered pure, and could be a sign a true repentance and election (Ryrie 189). Broadly, weeping was most consistently associated with females and femininity, and for those reasons, came under the same suspicions as females themselves did, which illustrates the complexity and danger of expressing grief. Margery Lange addresses the associated of tears and femininity, pointing out that men could in fact find power in appropriating that typically female expression of emotion: "tears rarely appear in writing by women . . . since they bring nothing notable or admired in their wake. Women write to re-form their reflections, not to reiterate stereotypes. Tears emerge, rather, in the discourse of the men who can wield them in political-rhetorical freedom, without being stained by their moisture" (3). Lange's observation supports the broad argument of my thesis that due to ambiguous interpretations of grief and of women, grieving sometimes provided the opportunity for gender transgressions and lent power to otherwise feminine or devalued practice, as in the case of male writers 'wielding' tears to bring about notability or value to their religious convictions. To provide another example, the tears of preachers could be a quite impressive display of powerlessness before God (Lange 3). Conversely, though, the potential that those tears could be shed hypocritically to impress or move an audience was suspected, and once again, there are parallels between crocodile tears versus pious tears and virtuous women versus spiritually dangerous women.

For these reasons, funeral sermons and burial practices were altered in order to convey less potentially Catholic or hypocritical language. Perhaps in an attempt to address

the soul of the mourner, since, as Elizabeth Hodgson points out, “the dead ha[d] handed over to the living the dangerous journey to purity that purgatory once represented,” funeral sermons and burial monuments often pointed to the edifying nature of mourning to the soul of the bereaved. In other words, those who have died were sometimes re-imagined in the living through sermons that highlighted the good works of the deceased and encouraged mourners to use them as inspiration (Marshall 279). Peter Marshall proves this point in citing a Kentish minister, Thomas Jackson, who states, “the maine use of the commemoration of the virtuous lives of the godly; that they may be patternes to them that live” (279). To remember the dead was not only recognition of the awareness of the finality of death and the inability of the deceased to construct their own narratives of worldly achievements or status, but also recognition of the implication of the mourner in a now liminal space.

Because grieving moved from an active form of publicly praying for the deceased to a more internal and intimate experience, a certain sense of powerlessness plagued the bereaved and led to anxieties about the proper ways to grieve. Perhaps unsurprisingly, immoderate grief came to be associated with Catholicism and purgatory. Since there was no longer any point in praying for the deceased in terms of salvation, prolonged acts of grieving or commemoration came under suspicion. “As a result,” Patricia Phillippy has argued, “male reformers stress[ed] the ineffectualness of Catholic lamentational practices by casting them as both excessive and feminine.” (9) Moderate grieving, on the other hand, was held up as pious and masculine. But interpretations of mourning were not straightforward because of the need to honor the deceased’s memory. Female grieving was complex, as it was sometimes praised as a sign of spiritual sensitivity, but, like women themselves, it was also often distrusted. Phillippy points out that women were praised when they maintained “humility and

stoutness” and demonstrated control and temperance in regards to grief instead of grieving excessively (83). However, particularly for a widow, not showing enough grief could dishonor the memory of her husband and her virtue could come under suspicion, but showing too much grief could be suspected as a vain display, designed to attract the gaze of other men. Grieving women, essentially, were damned either way.

This isn't to say that men did not feel their own consequences from restrictions about how to grieve. In *Hamlet*, for instance, Claudius analyzes Hamlet's grief for his father, revealing that moderate grief is a “duty” and reflects well on the mourner, but immoderate grief suggests a lack of faith. In the following passage, Claudius reveals a few of the causes of anxiety over prolonged or excessive grief:

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,

To give these mourning duties to your father:

... but to persevere

In obstinate condolment is a course

of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief:

It shows a will most incorrect to heaven. (1.2, ll. 87-95)

If excessive grief is unmanly, as Claudius suggests, then moderated, controlled grief is masculine and therefore preferable, “good” grief. Claudius also associates excessive grief with impiousness, insisting that Hamlet's grief is “incorrect to heaven.” Claudius thereby constructs grief as a performance to be done well, which works to open the quality of the performance up to scrutiny. To construct grief as a performance doesn't define grief as always feigned; rather, it allows for the acknowledgment that manifestations of grief are as important to the onlookers and the grieved as for the mourner himself and open to

interpretation by others. Claudius tells Hamlet that mourners are obligated “to do obsequious sorrow” for family members, which exposes the servile nature of mourners’ performances to the deceased. Recognizing grief as a performance to be interpreted makes possible an exploration of the causes of anxiety that catalyze the scrutiny of grief, namely anxieties about spirituality and the dangers of immoderate emotion.

In *Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern Literature*, Jennifer Vaught supports my own conclusion that men were primarily expected to grieve stoically. She contends, too, that early modern literature indicates that outside of pious, stoic grief, men could utilize another outlet: violence (7). The tradition of the revenge tragedy, for instance, draws on this notion that ‘weeping and wailing’ men were effeminate, and that this form of grief wasn’t acceptable for men; instead, men could honor the life of a murdered loved one by taking revenge on the murderer. In fact, Hamlet’s unmanly grief causes disorder – his inability to grieve “like a man” (i.e. get revenge or take action in some way) causes turmoil and reproduces grief throughout Denmark. Vaught, however, suggests also that many examples from literature actually critique this cultural norm, since “men who ally themselves with women by adopting conventionally feminine forms of expression such as weeping and wailing are often strengthened rather than weakened as a result” (2).

Though Vaught doesn’t explore the constructions of this form of grieving in *Macbeth*, the play highlights masculine and transgressive grief, as well as her notion that men are often strengthened as a result of feeling grief in a more feminine way. Upon finding out that his wife and children have been killed, Macduff grieves for them, to which Malcolm replies, “Dispute it like a man” (4.3 l. 2103). Macduff says, “I shall do so; / But I must also feel it as a man: / I cannot but remember such things were, / That were most precious to me” (4.3 l.

2104-2107). Again, Malcolm encourages Macduff to be manly and take action: “Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief / Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it” (4.3 ll. 2112-2113). Nevertheless, Macduff allies himself with women by exclaiming, “O, I could play the woman with mine eyes” (4.3 l. 2116) before expressing his desire to get revenge. Once Macduff resolves to kill Macbeth, Malcolm praises him for being a man, saying, “This tune goes manly” (4.3 l. 2120). Macduff plays the enforcer of masculinity, as Claudius does in *Hamlet*; each of these characters provides examples of the expectations of grieving males and the consequences of not grieving as such.

It seems that in Act Four of *Macbeth*, though, Shakespeare may be questioning properly masculine expressions of grief. This particular scene acknowledges that expressing emotion is a natural reaction to loss and the expectation that men feel anger instead of loss or sadness is restrictive. In fact, Macduff seems to believe that not expressing true emotion over the loss of what was most precious to him would be unnatural. Although he finally gives over to anger and violence, the proper expression of extreme grief for men, Macduff seems to see value in mourning first. Macduff’s conviction to “feel it like a man” disrupts the traditional masculine experience of grief and calls into question the role of gender in mourning.

I hope to have shown so far that grieving and dying were complex processes, fully implicated in spiritual, political, and social principles. Because ways of grieving both responded to and constructed these principles, grief took on a performative nature, designed to reinforce Protestant values in the newly liminal space of mourning. The ways in which gender constructs grieving conflates the performance of gender with the performance of grief, so that honoring the deceased becomes especially concerned with confirming social values and upholding the social order. But in this particularly anxious space, as we’ve seen

with death, these spiritual, political, and social values are sometimes at odds with another, further complicating the performance of grief and allowing, at times, the opportunity for transgression of some of these values, which is what I take interest in throughout the following chapters.

In the next chapter, I read Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* in light of ideas about gender, grief, and death. Mariam uses her knowledge about performing grief in order to undermine her husband's, the king's, authority, essentially joining in political conversations about divorce, gender, and the politics. Mariam finds agency for herself in otherwise stifling social norms, such as mourning vestments. Furthermore, she goes to her death stoically because she knows she is innocent and that her wrongful death will wreak havoc on her husband's authority as king and his right to carry out justice. This chapter will argue that *The Tragedy of Mariam* is symptomatic of the instability of mourning in the early modern period and exposes the ways that grieving, as a female emotion, comes under the same surveillance and suspicion as women themselves, paradoxically giving women a stage from which to perform their own thoughts and transgressions of social and political values.

My third chapter illustrates the ways in which Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* interacts with commonplace attitudes concerning grieving and dying in the early modern period, and I also pay particular attention to the ways that grief destabilizes the efficacy of language. *The Spanish Tragedy* performs the significance of a proper Christian burial, the gendering of grief, and the ways in which dying and grieving destabilize the power and authority of the state. As a revenge tragedy, Kyd's play is indispensable to considering the ways that grief and death can destabilize otherwise straightforward values, since getting revenge is privileging grief and honoring the dead over law -- the play's very own Viceroy

claims, “they reek no laws that meditate revenge” (1.3 l. 48). This chapter will also focus more on male grief than my previous chapters, both because revenge is considered a masculine action, and because the primary mourner is Horatio’s father. *The Spanish Tragedy*, like *The Tragedy of Mariam*, is symptomatic of changing and anxious attitudes about dying and honoring the dead and can shed light on the ways that these anxieties complicate otherwise straightforward values about gender.

Lastly, I will use Phillip Stubbes’s *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women* to explore gender roles and performances in dying. Some of the questions I plan to discuss consider the complexities of women’s speech and writing about death as well as the agency of females like Katherine Stubbes, whose voice, through her husband’s narrative, is preserved, and whose own death is set up as a model for other women to follow. This chapter sheds light on the complexities of the relationship between gender and dying, noting the ways that these complexities affect women’s abilities to express themselves through performance of values, which undermine the authority of patriarchal and political values. In broad terms, my final chapter attempts to theorize the ways in which death functions similarly to grief in that it opens up space for women to rewrite gender.

Grief as Performance in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*

In Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the notions of grief and mourning are dealt with in unique ways; grief is simultaneously portrayed as a gendered sentiment, a means to gain control, and a vice to be controlled. What is particularly interesting about grief in early modern literature are the ways in which grief and exercising power or control over others' or over one's own emotions relate and work to vex what we might think of as a straightforward emotion. While women in early modern literature limit or perform expressions of grief to gain control over their own circumstances, excess grief is also generally portrayed as a feminine emotion that should be controlled and suppressed. As I argued in the introduction, with the elimination of the idea of purgatory during the Reformation, ways of thinking about death and one's relationship to the dead inevitably shifted, causing the intersections of grief and gender to become particularly vexed. Old practices of mourning gave way to an anxiety surrounding excessive grief and mourning as an indication of lack of faith or as heldover Catholic sentiment. Grief itself was interpreted as feminine and dangerous as reformers aimed to decentralize the monuments and rituals that attended the belief in purgatory.

Because according to the *ars moriendi* tradition, a "good death" began with a good life, the notion of a good death would come to rely on family, friends, and neighbors to preserve in their memory the deceased's life and death (Levy 40). Thus, a good death was characterized by "good grief" and widows were left responsible for constructing the memory of the deceased husband, and in so doing, the masculinity of the deceased male. The deathbed itself became a type of stage at the center of a social context in which power and authority were communicated and upheld. Allison Levy has pointed out that, "dying was a

public occasion where the deathbed served as the center-stage of a moral theater for preparing the soul and for dealing with practical matters of caring for the body, finalizing financial and domestic arrangements and obtaining instructions for the funeral and burial” (42). Because of the communal nature of dying and the implications of the duties of remembrance, gender politics required the navigation of these preparations. In fact, because of assumptions about the physicality and excessiveness of women’s grief, recommendations to bar women from the deathbed weren’t uncommon. For instance, Jeremy Taylor’s *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying* instructs his readers to

take away but the pomps of death, the disguises and solemn bugbears, the tinsel and the actings by candlelight, and proper and fantastic ceremonies, the minstrels and the noise-makers, the women and the weepers, the swooning and the shrieking, the nurses and the physicians, the dark room and the ministers, the kindred and the watches; and then to die is easy . . . and quitted from its troublesome circumstances. (102)

Taylor’s prescription illustrates a theatrical image of the deathbed, clearly calling attention to the constructedness of the social ritual. By associating ‘the women and the weepers’ with one another, he also implies that women’s grieving was excessive and likely to tempt the dying toward despair, or at least make dying a good death difficult. Furthermore, in calling attention to the ‘pomps of death,’ Taylor confirms the social nature of the deathbed, but he also implies that death was something that was crafted through the participation of certain actors. While Taylor condemns the theatricality of the deathbed, his recommendation to bar certain actors from the scene still crafts a type of performance, if a more reticent one, and confirms the significance of dying a good, stoic death.

Taylor’s account of the deathbed scene as overwhelming plays on common notions of

grieving as excessive, fruitless, and even sacrilegious (Cressy 388). In *Hamlet*, Gertrude points out the futility of Hamlet's grief, "Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity" (1.2. ll. 72-73). And, as I pointed out in my introduction, Claudius also tells Hamlet in Act One, Scene Two, that his tears are "unmanly," necessarily gendering grief, at least excessive or prolonged grief, as feminine. As we have seen, the early modern attitude concerning tears is as complex and significant as attitudes concerning a proper death. Both tears and death, done correctly, could be considered signs of election, so that pious worshippers sought and prayed for these experiences, but both were subject to interpretation and only certain manifestations of these occurrences were considered holy. For example, there was a distinction between public and private weeping.

Pious weeping was considered a bodily manifestation of prayer, and because tears could not always be summoned, they were sometimes considered a powerful sign of election (Ryrie 187). Nevertheless, as I briefly pointed out in my introduction, interpretations of weeping were not straightforward. Various Protestant reformers held strong and differing opinions on weeping. Before the Reformation, "acts of mourning were believed to speed the progress of the departed soul through Purgatory . . . Funeral tears could help to wash clean the departed soul" (Dixon 31). This meant that following the Reformation, weeping was quite ambiguous since many Catholic rituals, such as confession and weeping for the souls in Purgatory, were theatrical or motivated in their use of tears. It seems to be the case that Protestants accepted private weeping for one's sins, and generally thought this to be pure, and a sign of true repentance. Funeral tears, however, were considered blasphemous and ineffective because of the connection between weeping and purgatory (Dixon 33). In fact, public weeping was considered hypocritical and shameful, since true repentance was thought

to happen privately. Alexander Ryrie summarizes the importance placed on weeping,

Protestant tears were longed for, striven for, treasured, and if absent, worried about. True penitence was, for Reformed Protestants, a gift of grace, which only the Holy Spirit could give, and which was given only to the elect. But distinguishing true penitence from false was tricky, and tears were the single most important clue -- not an infallible one, but they sometimes came pretty close. (189)

Ryrie's description of tears parallels descriptions of women -- both are considered tricky in that each is just as likely to be false as they are likely to be true and pious. In fact, John Calvin attacked tears associated with Catholic confession as hypocritical and false, and Thomas Dixon points out in *Weeping Britannia* that tears were actually central to Catholicism. He states, "tears were ... directly associated with three of the most Catholic of Catholic institutions: the cult of the Virgin, the practice of confession, and the doctrine of purgatory" (35). Ryrie also suggests that the falling out of favor of public weeping is likely as due to fears about Catholicism as it is due to an increasingly masculine culture that feminized weeping as a womanly expression and a childhood habit (192). Gendering grief as feminine, then, and relegating its expression to the private spaces to which women's expressions were also restricted, encourages grief to come under the same suspicion and anxiety as women themselves.

As a "feminine" emotion, immoderate grief itself came under the same consideration and suspicion as women in general did, who were viewed as either the epitome of vice or the embodiment of virtue. There is certainly an ambiguity about grief that also attends females, which is exemplified in the "tears-as-flood" trope, for which there is no shortage of examples in early modern literature. Most of the examples, however, are from the point of view of

male lovers, implying that interpretations of grief are in fact interested, or sometimes motivated by the interpreter's own feelings or preconceptions. Nevertheless, this trope compares tears to the first Biblical flood, which was both destructive and purifying. The flood imagery addresses the root of the apprehension surrounding grief: that it's difficult to know whether or not the manifestation of grief (tears) is virtuous and innocent or is deceitful and ambitious. In "A Valediction: of Weeping," for example, John Donne employs images of a flood in describing the constructive and destructive nature of tears to convey the anxiety produced by grief. Part of that anxiety, to which Donne's poem also vaguely alludes, is due to the *ars moriendi* tradition, which emphasized dying a 'good death' and provided instructions for how 'good grief' could help to construct a 'good death' for a deceased loved one.

Interestingly, the tension between pious weeping and masculine culture seems also to have inspired the notion of tears as metaphor for repentance of one's sins, but it too becomes increasingly complicated. John Andrewes writes in a devotional book, "they that haue mourned and sorrowed, and truly lamented for their sinne, shall receiue Crownes of glory for euer" (quoted in Ryries 60). Linguistically, the idea that one would lament or mourn *for* one's sins suggests a sense of nostalgia for the sin, in the same way that mourning *for* a loved one is an expression of sadness and nostalgia for the deceased. In that case, it becomes increasingly apparent that interpretations of piety and the signs of election tied to physical expressions of grief could not be relied upon to signify holiness. The intention or source of the physical manifestations of mourning, then, are rendered arbitrary through no shortage of possible meanings, and rely fully on the dialectical nature of the various discourses and interpretations of mourning and also on the subjectivity of those watching. Shakespeare's

Hamlet, provides a good example of the significance of grief as watched or interpreted by others.

For instance, Gertrude is likely one of the best-known examples of the anxiety widows often evoked in the period and the subsequent judgment and interpretation to which they became subjected. She generates anxiety concerning the relationship between mourning and remembrance, and she also illustrates the double bind in which widows were placed as being responsible for honoring the memory of the deceased male, but also not grieving too much so as to be suspected of seeking another husband by exposing this widowhood. Excessive or prolonged mourning could open the widow's grief to suspicion from others that she might be advertising her newly single, financially independent state. It was important for widows to grieve moderately for an appropriate amount of time in order to dutifully mourn the deceased husband. Not grieving enough or taking a new husband too quickly, as Gertrude has done, was disrespectful to the deceased husband and brought the widow under increased suspicion.

As I've shown, the management of grieving bodies reveals that grief was subject to discursive processes and, therefore, cause for anxiety and suspicion after the Reformation. This anxiety concerns coping with the stronger feeling of individual loss over the loved-one. The mourners themselves become the subjects of discourse on grief in advice books, poems, and sermons, whereas before, rituals addressing purgatory involved greater concern over the deceased. During this shift, grieving appropriately, then, became socially and historically constructed so that there became a right way to perform grief. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* considers gender as performative and constructed as well, and will be helpful in forming an idea of the social processes to which

performance lends itself. She writes, “gender must be considered as a corporeal style, an ‘act’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning . . . the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated and public” (139-140). Because grieving came to be constructed and enforced through public social discourse, Butler’s discussion of gender as performative parallels with the ways in which mourning was performative in the early modern period. First, grief certainly became a corporeal style; we need only to think of Patricia Phillippy’s assertion that grief was tied to the body through physical manifestations. Through these physicalities, the act of grief became recognizable, so that grieving involved a public performance open to interpretation by others.

Elin Diamond, in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, also discusses gender performance in a way that may help in thinking about grieving widows before moving into the ways in which these ideas play out in *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Diamond writes that gender “is both a thing doing a performance that puts conventional gender attributes into possibly disruptive play – and a thing done, a preexisting oppressive category.” Performance is a “risky and dangerous negotiation between someone’s body and the conventions of embodiment” (5). I believe that it will become clearer in my treatment of *The Tragedy of Mariam* that gender performance and grief performance intersected continuously, implicating female grieverers in the risky negotiation to which Diamond alludes and revealing grief performance as both oppressive and potentially empowering through the possibility of gender disruption. A close reading of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, which is first concerned with a wife grieving for her husband, illustrates that the performance of grief allows for “possibly disruptive play” on conventional manifestations of or assumptions about grief in much the

same way that Diamond insists gender performance operates.

Similarly, Patricia Phillippy claims that as something to be interpreted and, therefore, censured, grief can function for females as both empowering and constraining (15-21).

Expanding on this idea, Elizabeth Hodgson also proposes that women's writing is political and influential; she asserts that women's writings can be productively understood as interpretations of political and religious movements as well as forms of activism.

Furthermore, Hodgson interprets the linguistic expressions of grief as not merely an expression of the bond between the living and those they mourn, but as a narrative that governed and constrained grief as much as sacramental rites and doctrine (5). In this light, it's perhaps useful to examine the ways in which Elizabeth Cary's closet drama works as the type of linguistic expression of grief that Hodgson discusses and constructs a narrative that governs or represents grief.

First, Cary's play occupies a unique and perhaps precarious position as a play authored by a woman; public and private speech function not only in the play through Mariam, but also in the play's publication and reception. As a closet drama, the play was never meant to be performed on stage; it was designed specifically for reading only since the stage (a public medium) was off-limits to women (Cudar-Domínguez 21). In fact, no woman belonged to an acting company or was ever commissioned to write a play for public performance at the time; wealthier women who had received good educations could translate plays, so long as they were not to be performed publicly (Bevington 616). In *The Politics of Early Modern Writing*, Danielle Clarke points out that "private" did not necessarily mean "domestic," and by allowing women authors more freedom in questioning gender, this closet drama could actually be empowering (81). In writing a closet drama, for instance, Cary

experiences the opportunity that other forms of ‘private’ writing, such as mother’s advice books, would provide to comment on cultural codes surrounding grief, as well as to interpret attitudes surrounding a woman’s right to divorce.

Under the pretense that these genres were to be kept private and concerned solely with traditional feminine constructions such as maternity or religion, such private writing could be empowering, as Clarke points out (81). Like some mothers’ advice books, such as Dorothy Leigh’s, Elizabeth Cary’s drama may have provided space for the author to express her own political convictions. The parallels between Cary’s own life and Mariam’s seem to suggest that Cary may have written about the story of Mariam and Herod to explore issues of marriage and gender from a woman’s point of view. Cary, like Mariam, struggled with her obligation to her marriage, despite being unhappy in it (Beilin “Elizabeth Cary and *The Tragedy of Mariam*” 2-5). In the play, Salome expresses her desire for divorce openly and asks questions about female inequality in marriage that Cary herself likely considered. *The Tragedy of Mariam*, as a form of private speech, also constructs and expresses a narrative of both grief and marriage, in addition to the sacramental rites and doctrines governing those apparatuses. Cary’s daughter’s biography of her mother reveals that Elizabeth Cary was extraordinarily well read by the time she wrote *The Tragedy of Mariam*, and was likely very educated and able to produce a historical play. While the play certainly reflects this, it’s also difficult not to read the play in terms of Cary’s own life; as Elaine Beilin has noted, *Mariam* seems to be an attempt at self-expression, revealing the ways in which reading and writing could provide outlets for grieving women (Beilin “Elizabeth Cary and *The Tragedie of Mariam*” 3).

Indeed, scholars have mostly been interested in the biographical aspects of the play;

much of the scholarship traces the ways in which *The Tragedy of Mariam* could have been a type of working out of inner conflict by Elizabeth Cary. Similarly, there has been a great deal of genre study done on not only Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, but also *The History of the Life, Reign, and Death of Edward II*. The domestic politics of the play have also been of interest to various scholars, including Elaine Beilin, Heather Ostman, and Laurie Shannon; in fact, Beilin has argued that "marriage is the battlefield of the play" ("Elizabeth Cary and *The Tragedy of Mariam*" 13). In some way or another, all of these issues previously explored by scholars influence the ways in which grief as both a social construction and a naturally occurring emotion functions in the play. Within the play, issues of marriage and domestic politics in particular may help to further convey the gendered nature of grief and shed light on the significance of grieving in both political and domestic spaces. Foremost, *The Tragedy of Mariam* depicts grief as always under surveillance, which renders characters' expressions of grief performances to be interpreted as feigned or true, and reveals anxiety about gendered manifestations of grief.

Mariam's first soliloquy delves directly into the idea of grief under surveillance, informing the idea that grief is a culturally constructed performance subject to others' interpretations. Mariam reveals that she has judged Julius Caesar's expression of grief over the death of Pompey the Great, whom he sought to kill anyway, as deceitful and feigned. Her judgment of Caesar's tears works to mark grief as a performance to be interpreted and judged for its motivations, insinuating that grief can be controlled (by stifling or contriving it). She asks forgiveness, though, conceding that her sex is commonly mistaken and prone to rash judgment. Mariam muses,

One object yields both grief and joy:

You wept indeed when on his worth you thought,
 But joyed that slaughter did your foe destroy.
 So at his death your eyes true drops did rain,
 Whom, dead, you did not wish alive again. (1.1 ll. 9-14)

Mariam uses her interpretations of Caesar's grief over his perceived enemy to understand the conflicting feelings of grief that she experiences over the reported death of her husband, Herod. In her introspective scrutiny of Caesar's grief, Mariam becomes aware, and insecure, about her own performance of grief:

Hi death to memory doth call
 The tender love that he to Mariam bare.
 And mine to him; this makes those rivers fall,
 Which by another thought unmoistened are
 ... why grieves Mariam Herod's death to hear?
 Why joy I not the tongue no more shall speak
 That yielded forth my brother's latest doom? (1.1 ll. 31-40)

Mariam's inconsistency and struggle to grieve appropriately reflects the position of conflicted allegiance in which she has been placed in relation to the masculine identities for which she grieves. Her husband has killed her brother so her grief for Herod seems to conflict with her grief for her brother. As Allison Levy points out in "Good Grief: Widow Portraiture and Masculine Anxiety in Early Modern England," a good death was characterized by appropriate grief; a widow's, mother's, daughter's, or sister's performance of grief was necessary in the honoring of masculine memory (150). This being said, Mariam feels that mourning Herod is to disrespect the memory of her brother, but in not mourning

Herod, she fails to be a dutiful widow and “pay him his debt” (1.1 l. 22).

Mariam chastises herself for her perfunctory performance of grief, “How canst thou then so faintly now lament / Thy truest lover’s death, a death’s disgrace?” (1.1 l. 65-66).

Because of the way in which feminine grief has been assigned meaning in maintaining the social hierarchy of gender and the appropriate maintenance of male dominance and female subordination in marriage, Mariam experiences frustration and guilt over not performing her wifely duty despite the pain Herod has caused her. A widow’s public display of grief would have been essential to her representation of herself as a chaste and loving spouse (Phillippy 27). In fact, a widow’s veil marked her “empathetic death” with her husband and worked to keep her confined to her home and her husband’s memory for an appropriate amount of time (Phillippy 27). Mariam’s struggle to manifest her grief appropriately stems from conflicting expectations of her grief over her brother and her grief over her husband. When she is finally able to express real sorrow for her husband’s death, she must quickly stifle it so as not to dishonor her brother in front of her mother: “But, tears, fly back, and hide you in your banks! / You must not be to Alexandra seen, / For if my moan be spied, but little thanks / Shall Mariam have from that incensed queen” (1.1 ll. 75-78). In the first soliloquy of the play, Mariam has already conveyed the precarious nature of expressing grief as a woman due to cultural assumptions about feminine grief as a construction of masculine power, and conflicting loyalties bound up in these cultural assumptions.

Further, Mariam emphasizes the importance placed on tears during the early modern period. As I have mentioned, tears could function as a sign of election, and they often spoke to the spiritual purity of the weeper, but they could also be suspicious and dangerous. Indeed, despite the fact that many competing ideas about the meaning of tears existed, constantly

interpreting emotion was a significant part of Protestant life because of the belief that God might speak through one's emotions (Ryrie 41). *The Tragedy of Mariam* works to support this hypothesis in that the entire play is concerned with constant interpretations of characters' emotions, including by the chorus, which comments frequently on Mariam's discontent. Mariam, in thinking about the emotions that she feels and those that she doesn't feel, expresses the notion that one can suppress emotion, but cannot summon it – her private emotions in the first scene do seem to be God-given, as Ryrie puts it, in that they come and go without her encouragement and at times, to her dismay.

Once Alexandra breaks that private space, however, Mariam's emotions function more as a performance, rather than signs from God to be interpreted. When she hears or sees Alexandra coming, Mariam cries, "But tears, fly back, and hide you in your banks! / You must not be to Alexandra seen" (1.1 ll. 75-76). Mariam realizes that Alexandra will be incensed to see Mariam grieve for the man who killed Alexandra's father and son, but this sentiment also illustrates the early modern aversion to weeping publicly. Alexandra also reiterates the early modern notion that feminine grief was characterized by excess and passion, in contrast to the stoic, masculine ideal of moderate, controlled grief. Because Alexandra interprets Herod's death differently, she views Mariam's grief as misguided. Alexandra believes that Mariam's passion is without reason since she grieves the man who murdered her brother. From Alexandra's point of view, Mariam should be honoring the memory of her brother by celebrating Herod's death, but as the widow of a king, the court will expect her to honor his memory properly by mourning Herod appropriately. Nevertheless, Alexandra tells Mariam, "send those tears away, that are not sent / To thee by reason, but by passion's power. / Thine eyes to cheer, thy cheeks to smiles be bent, / And

entertain with joy this happy hour” (1.2 ll. 73-76). Alexandra privileges Mariam’s role as a sister; a sister who should be happy at the death of her brother’s murderer, so Mariam’s grief is doubly vexed. In Alexandra’s sight, Mariam suppresses her true emotions to perform what Alexandra expects to see, revealing the danger of interpreting emotions as lying in the fact that they may very well be false.

Salome also judges the extent to which Mariam grieves for Herod, and she provides an example of the aspect of performance that Diamond writes about as risky or dangerous in *Performance and Cultural Politics*. Salome calls attention to the risk involved in negotiating one’s body and actions with the conventions of the embodiment of grief, particularly in Mariam’s very public position as the king’s widow. Elizabeth Hodgson, in *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance* observes that political grief became a high-risk game of alliances (4), which is exemplified in Salome’s close surveillance of Mariam’s grief. Salome observes, “Mariam hopes to have another king. / Her eyes do sparkle joy for Herod’s death” (1.3 ll. 3-4). Salome’s policing of Mariam’s grief reveals the subjectivity of the “right” way to grieve: it simply depends upon who is watching. According to Alexandra, Mariam grieves too much; but according to Salome, she grieves too little.

As the play’s female characters illustrate, interpretations of mourning are not straightforward, and the issue of public mourning versus private mourning was linked to shamefulness. Allison Levy argues that widows served as sites of memory both in their position as custodians of wealth and property and as active participants in performing rituals of remembrance (39). As the primary site of memory, community members look to the widow for interpretation of not only her grief, but of her husband’s good life and death. Paradoxically, the importance of the grieving widow disrupts the patriarchal system, putting

the widow at the forefront and allowing room for her to gain some agency by playing a central part in the performance of death rituals and mortuary processes. Mariam realizes this and calls attention to the performative nature of these processes of remembrance by undermining their intent to argue for her own agency and call attention to the wrongs dealt her by Herod. In effect, Mariam uses her role at center stage to position herself to be remembered for her good life and death. Throughout the play, Mariam uses grief to play the part of a victim, so that by the play's end, she is held up as a martyr.

The play continually gives examples of misinterpretations of grief, such as Alexandra's, Salome's, Herod's, and the chorus's. Alexandra, Salome, and Herod misinterpret Mariam's grief because of their own points of view, revealing the importance of the viewer and the viewer's allegiances or perspectives in deciphering grief. Alexandra's loyalty lies with her son and father (both of whom were slain by Herod), which may explain why she would judge Mariam's grief for Herod's death as illogical. Salome, on the other hand, is predisposed to think of Mariam as unfaithful, which Mariam attributes to Salome's own infidelity, "Self-guilt hath ever been suspicion's mother" (1.3 l. 253). Heather Ostman's interpretation of Salome as understanding domestic hierarchies may complicate, however, Salome's apparent interpretation of Mariam's grief. Because Salome and Mariam are both in unhappy marriages and are both marginalized as women, it's likely that Salome does understand Mariam; however, Ostman argues that Salome's manipulation of Herod in order to turn his love for Mariam to hate depends on "her acknowledging the assumptions of patriarchy and then her defiant insistence on the equality between the sexes" (197). Karen Raber expands on this; according to her interpretation, Salome's knowledge of the artificiality of gender differences allows her to "exert an appropriately feminine influence

over her brother for distinctly improper ends, gaining the benefits of an access to Herod that Mariam should, by the chorus's judgment, have" (167-68). Salome's slandering of Mariam, then, illustrates the possible danger of grief as it is open to interpretation. Salome is able to use Mariam's grief, or lack thereof as she perceives it, to produce her own interpretation that allows her to convince Herod that Mariam seeks to poison him.

Salome plays on the common tendency to distrust women that both Herod and Constabarus exhibit. Several works from the period, including Joseph Swetnam's "The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, and Froward Women" and Alexander Niccholes' *A Discourse of Marriage and Wiving*, similarly interpret women's grief with suspicion. In both works, widows are mistrusted because of the fact that they are, unlike other grieving women, sexually experienced and available. Therefore, widows induce the anxiety that in eagerness to secure a new husband, they will shirk their duty of mourning the previous husband. Niccholes writes,

At the decease of their first husbands, [widows] learn commonly the tricks to turn over the second or third, and they are in league with death and coadjutors with him . . . I like them the worse that they will marry, dislike them utterly they marry so soon . . . Who can love those living that he knows will so soon forget him being dead . . . and such a lethe of forgetfulness shall so soon over take thee as if thou hadst never been.

(222-23)

Because the elimination of purgatory severed the responsibilities of the bereaved to the deceased's soul, it makes sense that anxiety about being forgotten would be acute. But Niccholes takes it a step further by asserting that widows are in league with death -- that a widow cannot be trusted to keep the husband's legacy alive through her own good works and

dutiful behavior, so that, like death, she is involved in erasing his existence.

Joseph Swetnam's work, "The Araignment of Women," also draws attention to the imposition of the widow on masculinity itself, "she will say thou art merry because thou hast gotten a wife that is able to maintain thee, where before thou wast a beggar and hadst nothing. And if thou show thyself sad, she will say thou art sad because thou canst not bury her, thereby to enjoy that which she hath" (Swetnam 13). Here, Swetnam illustrates the intersections of religion with manifestations of female grief and the general distrust of female sexuality, which reproduces the feminized trope of women as spiritually dangerous. Danielle Clarke argues, however, that Swetnam's arraignment of women speaks more to men's susceptibility in being misled by their own senses and sexual desires than women's deceitfulness ("The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing" 59). Nevertheless, when Salome chastises Mariam, she plays on commonplace suspicions of widows' immediate desire for new husbands; even the widow's mourning weeds were suspect, a representation of themselves akin to actors wearing costumes to play a part; religious figures and members of the community sometimes suspected that widows' black mourning garments were an advertisement of their new marital and financial statuses (Levy 155).

Widows, then, having no husband to control their finances or their sexuality, came under the suspicion of the community. Widows' performances of grief came under the surveillance of those in the community searching for the appropriate expressions of grief, and they seemed damned whichever path they chose—too much would have been seen as manipulative and seeking attention from another man; too little would reveal that the woman wasn't a chaste and subordinate wife. In either case, a widow's grief directly impacted the masculinity and power of the men associated with the grief in that an honorable wife

reinforced her husband's masculinity and honor, while an unfaithful wife would make a cuckold out of her husband, ruining his reputation and confirming that he had no control over her (Clarke 99). Thus, a woman's grief became subject to a societal gaze and an anxiety that she would fail to honor her deceased husband by grieving enough and exhibiting his worth – or worse, she would grieve too publicly and too extravagantly in order to attract a new husband, thereby further dishonoring the former's memory. Mariam is in a particularly distinctive position as she grieves both her husband and brother; therefore, Herod's death prompts one reaction in her role as a good wife, but another in her role as a sister.

Feminine grief also sparked anxiety in the anticipation that it might be used to manipulate others to achieve an end. For example, Herod anticipates that Salome might perform grief in order to sway him to spare Constabarus's life, which manifests the male anxiety concerning feminine expressions of sorrow discussed in Swetnam's and Niccholes' pieces. Herod exclaims, "Now Salome will whine to beg his breath, / But I'll be deaf to prayers and blind to tears" (4.2 ll. 35-36). While Herod expects Salome's grief over the loss of her husband, noting Salome's duty to mourn Constabarus, he also foresees the effects that Salome's expressions of grief may have on him, or at least the effects Salome thinks she may have on Herod. Herod's determination to be "blind to tears" implies that womanly tears have influence over men and can function as a mode of empowerment for women. Herod's anxiety about Salome's tears also functions to characterize Salome as spiritually dangerous as opposed to Mariam's piety, since Herod actually expects Salome to weep in front of him, thereby using tears to her own purpose. This suspicion further implies that unlike Mariam at the beginning of the play, Salome's emotions are not God-given, but are instead summoned as she sees fit.

Furthermore, Herod's statement reveals that he expects Salome to dramatize her grief in order to sway his decision in executing Constabarus, and it implies that Herod believes that Salome will expect her performance of grief to be so compelling as to change Herod's mind. Herod's anticipation of a conceivably compelling performance of grief on Salome's behalf reveals Herod's prior assumption that Salome has the predisposition to be deceitful and his assumption that women's tears and sorrow have the capability to manipulate.

Elizabeth Hodgson insists that grief was oftentimes "cast in gendered terms as a hyperbolic extreme of effeminacy" (7). As such, it seems to have been suspected as having the capacity to be as duplicitous and uncontrollable as a woman's sexuality. Thus, grieving females – as well as feminine grief – came under the same strict surveillance and rather overt subjection as female sexuality.

Throughout the play, Constabarus (as his name suggests) succeeds at effortlessly keeping his emotions in check and his temperament constant. Even when he faces execution, he exemplifies the Protestant and masculine value of stoicism, "let us resolutely yield our breath; / Death is the only ladder, heav'n to climb" (4.6 ll. 3-4). His insight, skewed by his wife's inconstancy and his sorrow for her leaving him, reflects the assumptions of women as mercurial and uncontrollable, which aligns their grief with the same generalities. In his own performance of grief, Constabarus epitomizes the ideals of good, manly grief characterized by restraint. Constabarus states that for his friends' deaths he will "weakly" or softly lament. In contrast, he characterizes females and feminine grief as "the wreak of order" and the "breach of laws" within the same monologue, judgments that set feminine grief in opposition to masculine, orderly grief induced by the death of an innocent friend (4.6 l. 54). In his monologue to the sons of Babas, Constabarus makes generalizations about the female sex as

wicked, destructive, and untrustworthy:

tigers, lionesses, hungry bears,
 tear- massac'ring hyenas! Nay, far worse
 For they for prey do shed their feigned tears,
 But you will weep, you creatures cross to good,
 For your unquenched thirst of human blood.
 You were the angels cast from heav'n for pride,
 And still do keep your angels' outward show. (4.6 ll. 38-44)

Here, Constabarus portrays women as animalistic and predatorial. In referencing predatory animals that use their teeth and claws to shred and maim their prey, Constabarus evokes the physicality of stereotypical, excessive female grief manifested in the tearing of their hair and the scratching of their skin. The figure of Hecuba, who I discuss in the next chapter, also falls into this model of female grieving. Constabarus calls women “tear-massac’ring hyenas,” meaning they weep while they kill, an image that effectively calls into question the supposed senselessness and uncontrollable passion of women’s grief, suggesting instead the suspicious intentions behind the performance. Constabarus contrasts tears, the innocent response of a victim, with the violence of a massacre, effectively portraying the assumption that women are duplicitous and untrustworthy because their innocent, frail appearances may in fact conceal ill intentions. In contrast to Herod’s worry that women falsely perform sorrow to manipulate those around them, Constabarus insists that women, unlike tigers or lionesses, do not feign tears for their prey, but weep over their unfulfilled desire for human blood. In the last line here, Constabarus again addresses the deceitfulness of women in saying that they still keep the appearance of angels, despite their wickedness.

He goes on to emphasize that women will be the destruction of men, “Did not the sins of man require a scourge, / Your place on earth had been by this withstood; / But since a flood no more the world must purge, / You stayed in office of a second flood” (4.6 ll. 47-50). The flood imagery calls to mind floods of tears, which likewise designates women’s grief as destructive. However, by comparing women’s tears to floods, Constabarus also depicts female tears as cleansing in that God’s flood purged the world of sin. Constabarus’s comparison of women to the original flood successfully reflects the cause of anxiety concerning women and female grief: the seemingly unknowable nature of the manifestations of that grief. The anxiety concerning female tears stems from the unknowable nature of the tears as destructive or purifying – or both. If women’s performances of grief inspire anxiety due to their inconsistencies, as the play seems to suggest, Babas’s second son provides an illustration of the comforting consistency of masculine grief. The second son exemplifies the Protestant ideology of not simply accepting death, but also welcoming it as a release from the misery of life and the earthly, “let us to our death. Are we not blest? / Our death will freedom from these creatures give” (4.6 ll.73-74). In Act Four, Scene Six, Constabarus and the sons of Babas typify the masculine performance of grief as steady, stoic, and sensible, in opposition to the fiendishness, unfaithfulness, and fraudulence more typical of females and feminine grief.

The chorus, which seems to act as the play’s cultural authority repeatedly reflecting on the plot to interject moralistic interpretations between acts, specifically analyzes the characters’ management of their own emotions and reinforces the Protestant emphasis on controlling and reigning in one’s passions. The first chorus alludes to the anxiety expressed in works such as *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and *Sicke Mannes Salve* that interpret grief as

natural but dangerous in that it had the potential to be disabling and disruptive to one's mental faculties. The chorus warns that "no content attends a wavering mind . . . to wish variety is a sign of grief; / For if you like your state as it now is, / Why should an alteration bring relief?" (Chorus I, ll. 6-21). Here, the chorus deals with grief somewhat differently than the play has up to this point: this construction of grief seems to imply that at some point, the performance of grieving and the gendering of that is reflexive. In the same way that excessive grief is gendered effeminate, what's seen as a feminine attribute (inconstancy or discontent) is characterized as grief, which testifies to the success of the construction of meaning concerning grief and gender and shows that gender and grief are constantly intersecting one another. This also speaks to Elin Diamond's notion of performance as a preexisting oppressive category. Within the world of the play, the women are portrayed as never satisfied; Salome wishes to divorce her once-loved husband in favor of a different man, and Mariam struggles with conflicting feelings about her own marriage and agency.

The chorus, then, implies that feminine inconstancy inflicts sorrow and dissatisfaction, whereas if Salome and Mariam were able to control their own thoughts and passions, they would stoically accept their current states and experience less grief. Furthermore, the chorus specifically addresses Mariam's unhappy state,

Mariam wished she from her lord were free,

For expectation of variety;

Yet, now she sees her wishes prosperous be,

She grieves because her lord so soon did die.

Who can those vast imaginations feed

Where in a property contempt doth breed? (Chorus I, ll. 25-30)

Here, the chorus reinforces the cultural stereotype that women are mercurial and prone to excessive grief because of their inability to practice restraint in their emotions, which works to reinforce masculine grief as “good” grief and feminine grief as vacillating. Furthermore, by associating grief with the imagination, the chorus implies that the issue with women’s excessive grief lies in their imaginations; in other words, women have nothing but emotions to occupy the imagination. This wasn’t an uncommon assumption as imaginative therapy, in the form of reading or writing, was sometimes recommended in medical texts to treat melancholy (Pender 56). Nevertheless, we know that the females in *The Tragedy of Mariam* aren’t merely occupied with their emotions, but instead represent increasingly complex responses to gender inequality and marriage. In “The Making of a Female Hero,” Beilin interprets Graphina, Herod’s brother Pheroras’s betrothed, and Salome as representing the opposing sides of Mariam’s inner conflict to be a good, silent wife or to take on male prerogative like Salome (167). Similarly, Danielle Clarke, in her essay “*The Tragedy of Mariam* and the Politics of Marriage,” has argued that the women in Cary’s play are not “unequivocal paragons of virtue or embodiments of vice, but figures who struggle to reconcile what is expected of them with what they expect of themselves” (Clarke 249).

The chorus, then, incorrectly interprets the various performances of grief throughout the play. The fear of grief seems to be that it is fake – particularly when it is too public or too excessive. The irony is that in the play, public performance that is a lie (Salome’s) is praised, while Mariam’s public truth is condemned. The idea of the viewer and the viewer’s point of view becomes important in judgment and interpretation of a grief performance. I would argue that it isn’t in women’s nature to be fickle as the chorus may imply, but women’s insecure position as simultaneously marginal and central to the power structures within the world of

the play causes their changing feelings. Likewise, it is that indefinite position in which Salome and Mariam find themselves that is analogous to the ambivalent interpretation of feminine grief as simultaneously virtuous and deceitful. In the play, Mariam's inner conflict is her recognition of her obligation to the sacrament of marriage, despite being married to a cruel and unpredictable husband. Her situation is exacerbated by the power that Herod holds as a king. As queen, Mariam seems to occupy a position of wealth and power through her marriage to Herod; simultaneously, though, she's oppressed by the power structure and has no real power – she's subject to the whims of her husband. Salome, too, struggles with the intersections of her power and marginality; as a woman, she is unable to initiate a divorce, but as the king's sister, she does have some power to influence through her position in relation to Herod.

The first chorus also maintains the notion of grief under surveillance in its expression of variety as a *sign* of grief. Throughout the play, various characters interpret the manifestations of grief in other characters, reinforcing the idea that grief (particularly feminine grief, but also masculine grief) is surveyed and policed. As I've mentioned, Mariam opens her first soliloquy with a survey and subsequent interpretation of Julius Caesar's seemingly nonsensical grief. However, since discontent is conflated with grief in the play, Pheroras also interprets what he perceives as Graphina's silence as grief in Act Two, essentially expanding the definition of grief from an act of mourning to having a grievance: "Why speaks thou not, fair creature? Move thy tongue / For silence is a sign of discontent" (2.1 ll.41-42). First, Pheroras implies that this kind of grief is also a performance through his admission of having observed what he perceives as Graphina's unhappiness, and we see a similar exchange, as I explore later, between Herod and Mariam. Interestingly, though,

Pheroras reveals that even the ideal – and silent – woman is judged. He also reveals that there are universal signs of grief and discontent, which he has come to recognize as cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, Pheroras aims to control Graphina's emotion by telling her to speak and break her performance of sadness. It is important to note that Pheroras's specifically asks Graphina to perform. He doesn't attempt to discover what ails her; rather, he asks her to change her own performance of emotion. Graphina then reveals that Pheroras, out of anxiety over anticipated feminine grief, has in fact misinterpreted her silence, "Mistake me not, my lord. Too oft have I / Desired this time to come with winged feet / To be enwrapped with grief when 'tis too nigh" (2.1 ll. 45-47).. Pheroras replies, "Let Graphina smile, / And I desire no greater recompense" (2.1 ll. 73-74). Pheroras's and Graphina's exchange constructs grief as constantly under surveillance due to such strong anxiety concerning not the source of grief, but the expressions of grief themselves. Furthermore, though the literature from the early modern period argues specifically that anxiety about women's grief was inspired by their excessive manifestations of grief (Hodgson 7), Graphina's manifestation of grief (silence) was actually an acceptable, moderate form of grief expression, and Graphina was actually performing the role of a good, silent woman. This observation implies that anxiety concerning grief actually develops from assumptions about gender and may not have been as unbiased as religious doctrine claimed.

The Tragedy of Mariam incorporates other cultural conventions to cope with grief; these conventions work to "other" grief, further marginalizing the emotion that is central to the political structures of the court, just as women are marginalized despite their centrality to the reproduction of power and society. Grief is once again aligned with femininity through

marginalization and othering, which becomes apparent in the play's expression of the "rules" of grief. First, Doris reveals that public mourning is not acceptable, "let us now retire to grieve alone, / For solitariness best fitteth moan" (2.3 ll. 69-70). Expression of grief in public, like the expression of women's voices, wasn't authorized, a restriction that works to conserve public anxiety about grief, just as it worked to conserve public anxiety about female speech. Because grief is first feminized in the drama and then removed, like feminine speech, from the public sphere, *The Tragedy of Mariam* expresses grief as a performance of the feminine by aligning the removal of grief from public spaces with the de-feminization of the public sphere through the silencing of females.

In Act Three, Ananell discloses that as a priest, and the moral leader of society, he cannot defile himself by mourning Herod's death since Herod is not his kin. In saying that "mourning may not me pollute," Ananell conceptualizes grief as a contaminating and treacherous emotion. The priest continues to "other" grief, portraying it as dangerous, "I knew his death your hearts like mine did rack, / Though to conceal it proved you wise" (3.2 ll. 17-18). As noted earlier, particularly during the Reformation, mourning became a site of increasing social anxiety due to suspicions surrounding Catholicism and its superstitious practices of memorialization and doctrines of purgatory; however, political grief became an even higher risk game of alliances (Hodgson 4). Too much grief for the body natural would reflect poorly on the body politic, pointing to political unrest in the new monarch's succession. As a priest, Ananell occupies a religious and political position, and he expresses his knowledge that grief is better concealed. Nevertheless, concealing grief is a performance in and of itself, which works to perpetuate the conviction of grief as an emotion to be anxious about and suppress, rather than a natural expression of loss.

Mariam conveys another societal convention that succeeds at othering grief and embodying anxiety concerning the disorder of grief: her mourning garments. In addition to concern over the moral status of widows that I've mentioned, widow's veils and black garments "other" grief by destroying a widow's anonymity. Attention to a woman's status as a widow is in fact solicited by black vestments, which applies a gendered manifestation of grief to women experiencing it, and further constructs grief as a performance that allows for the possibility that that performance could be feigned and therefore deceitful.

Alison Levy argues that the death ritual can be interpreted as a means of restructuring society; she contends that at the vulnerable and disordered experience of death, structure and order could be restored by enforcing gender-specific mourning practices, such as the custom of dark dress and veils for widows (152). In *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature*, Juliana Schiesari has expanded on the notion of grief as connected to cultural imbalance, pointing out that the disorder of women's grief "became part of an ideological apparatus that would empower men to hegemonize the public sphere hence to phallicize the symbolic" (164). These scholars' work supports my argument that Mariam's grief is a performance, and because of the attention her performance gets, she is able to undermine certain patriarchal values. For instance, Mariam dresses in the black vestments of a widow, despite her knowledge that Herod is actually alive.

Elaine Beilin has noted that Mariam "is incapable of using feminine wiles in any situation and is . . . naïve about her powers." ("Elizabeth Cary and *The Tragedie of Mariam*" 12). However, it seems more likely that Mariam re-appropriates the black garments meant to restore order, control widows' sexuality, and fulfill the duty of remembrance to the lost

husband, exercising her ability to use otherwise oppressive characteristics of mourning to empower herself. Mariam knows that performing grief by wearing black mourning attire will bring her under surveillance where she can effectively make a statement about her marriage and her inability to forgive Herod for disposing of her brother and grandfather. Mariam's performance of widowhood and grief despite her living husband concedes that anxiety about widows and women as potentially dangerous may be justified; however, that anxiety once again stems from the marginalized and indefinite circumstance in which feminine grief has been placed by both the cultural expectation that widows dress in black and the dogma of moderate grief as both the appropriate and masculine form of grief. What Mariam does is indeed the opposite of what Schiesari argues typically happens with public grief, illustrating that Mariam, in spite of expectations, actually empowers herself by reclaiming the ideological apparatus meant to control her.

Herod interprets Mariam's signs of grief similarly to the way that Pheroras interprets Graphina's perceived grief: he constructs Mariam's veil and her discontented looks as a performance of grief that undermines Herod's masculinity, causing him anxiety and grief in turn. His reading of her discontent as evidence of adultery reflects on his inability as a ruler and Mariam's ability to destabilize his power and authority (Clarke "The Tragedy of Mariam" 99). Act Four, Scene Three, opens with Herod's challenge of Mariam's display of grief: she enters dressed in black and Herod observes, "Thou dost the difference certainly forget / 'Twixt dusky habits and a time so clear" (ll. 3-4). Herod immediately recognizes Mariam's black attire as a sign of grief; it distracts him from all other aspects of her appearance, denoting the potency of black clothes as a sign of grief. Herod judges Mariam's display as incongruous with his return, but he interprets her performance of grief as a direct

affront to him; he doesn't feel that he deserves to see her grief upon his return and suspects that she may have been unfaithful, "Is this my welcome? Have I longed so much / To see my dearest Mariam discontent?" (4.3 ll. 7-8). Herod continues, "To be by thee directed I will woo, / For in thy pleasure lies my highest pride." (ll.13-14). Herod reveals that his very own masculinity and self-importance relies on his ability to control Mariam, rather than letting her manipulate or dishonor him, which demonstrates that her grief undermines his masculinity and power. I have already suggested that the play is involved in expanding the definition of grief, as in the case of Pheroras' and Graphina's marital strife, to include discontent in the form of a grievance. In discussing the ways in which excessive grief came to be constructed as impious, Bridget Escolme has made the claim that too much grief would suggest that one's grief/grievance is against God (177). This association may help to shed light on how Mariam's grief undermines Herod's power as a ruler and works to enrage him. Mariam's grief is indeed a grievance against Herod – her husband and her ruler.

To an extent, Herod's own legitimacy as a ruler is determined by Mariam's happiness and faithfulness to him. Mariam, in dressing in all black and performing grief, knows that her unhappiness undermines Herod's power; she uses this performance of grief to empower herself and communicate to Herod his misdoings. Furthermore, Herod confirms Pheroras's interpretation of silence as a sign of discontent by asking Mariam to "speak" then demands, "this forward humor will not do you good; / It hath too much already Herod grieved . . . Yet smile, my dearest Mariam would but smile, / And I will all unkind conceits exile" (4.3 ll.139-143). Here, Herod reveals that Mariam's grief has indeed caused him anxiety, but he only offers a solution to his own anxiety concerning her grief, not her grief itself. In "Stop Your Sobbing," Bridget Escolme argues that although Hamlet insists that he grieves more than he

could ever express, he becomes frustrated because his grief only “produces meaning when it is externalized: interpreted or expressed” (175). This seems also to be the case for Mariam; she can’t make Herod understand her grief and she can only externalize it through a performance that becomes open to Herod’s interpretation and risks muddying her intentionality. The manifestations of Mariam’s grief, however, grieve Herod. If she will but smile and end her performance of grief, Herod will be relieved of the vexation she has caused him by performing the unhappy emotion. However, her smiling would simply be another performance of emotion concealing her true feelings, which reveals that it isn’t Mariam’s unhappiness that aggravates Herod.

Herod’s own grief and passions come under the surveillance in the play as well, and his inability to maintain his grief in contrast to Mariam’s stoic acceptance of death positions the play as an interpretation of various performances of grief. In fact, because the play upholds Mariam as a martyr, Herod’s expression that Mariam has “grieved” him implies that Herod’s grievance is ungodly. Additionally, as Laurie Shannon has observed in “*The Tragedy of Mariam: Cary’s Critique of the Terms of Founding Social Discourses*,” passion in Herod’s kingdom is cyclical and tormenting and that under Herod, instability and inconstancy reign (148). Shannon’s argument further illustrates how Herod is implicated in the grieving of his kingdom; that grief exposes his ability as a ruler. Furthermore, in performing grief “like a man” by taking action instead of feeling the emotion first, Herod wreaks havoc and ultimately causes more grief for himself by killing Mariam. Perhaps Herod should have grieved before taking action like Macduff in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* does. In Herod’s case, it seems that *The Tragedy of Mariam* works to critique the gendered restrictions of grief, particularly the impetus to take action or get revenge, an idea I explore in

more depth in my next chapter on grieving and language in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Mariam's death and the other deaths in the play function to uphold Mariam as a Christian martyr and prove her election. Since Mariam performs a good death according to the *ars moriendi* tradition, which I address further in my final chapter, Mariam is considered pious and innocent. In fact, her suffering Alexandra's accusations and ridicule patiently and stoically also work to confirm her election and model Christ's crucifixion. The suicide of Butler, who kills himself for betraying Mariam and exclaims, "go tell the King he trusted ere he tried; / I am the cause that Mariam causeless died" (5.1 ll. 109-110) mirrors that of Pilate in the Christian story and also implicates Mariam in a performance of dying that confirms her goodness and Herod's wrongs against her. According to some interpretations, suicide was seen as proof that God might intervene in this world to punish the wicked (Macdonald and Murphy 41). In this way, then, Butler's suicide functions to reinforce Mariam's grace by revealing that she was innocent. Her innocence, proved through the suicide of her betrayer, renders her a Christ-figure and Herod, Salome, and the servant, evil. The servant's death and Mariam's death, then work to prove that death can also function as a performance that works to undermine or uphold certain values or ideas.

Elaine Beilin has also associated Mariam's quiet defiance of her husband in the face of his passionate accusations with the behavior of a Christian martyr, noting that Mariam gradually becomes the atoner for women, who have been associated with the first fall (17). Mariam's practice of humility in grief and in death works to reinforce the triumph of the spirit over the flesh [and] patience over passion." ("Elizabeth Cary and *The Tragedie of Mariam*" 19). But it also seems to act as an instructive warning against excessive grief. Mariam's silent, stoic acceptance of her execution demonstrates a good death and the sure

sign of election according to the Protestant *ars moriendi*, while Herod embodies vice in his inability to control his passions (Cressy 389-392). *The Tragedy of Mariam* provides a compelling critique of the gendering of grief, as well as the complexities of women's manifestations of grief under surveillance, particularly in political settings.

Grieving and Language in *The Spanish Tragedy*

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,

Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.

-*Hamlet*, Act II, Scene II, ll. 586-593

As Tanya Pollard argues in her essay, “What’s Hecuba to Shakespeare?” Hecuba functioned in many ways as an ancestor to the early modern English revenge drama. Pollard points out that Shakespeare uses the figure of Hecuba frequently, and Hecuba embodies many of the aspects of tragedy that early modern English audiences found compelling, such as the ability of tragedy to confront or subvert tyranny, and, most importantly, the successful translation of extreme passion to revenge. Indeed, Hamlet struggles throughout the play to translate his extreme emotions into action, and to Hamlet, Hecuba functions as an archetype for successful grief. *Hamlet* exposes the ambivalent nature of grief that inhibits true meaning or correct interpretations of grief. I’ve also shown that grief is depicted as ambivalent in the *Tragedy of Mariam*, where the inscrutability of grief as virtuous or feigned leaves room for false, and often motivated, interpretations of grief performances. Hamlet also struggles with communicating any meaning in his grief so long as he is restricted by performing grief through language, and Claudius, like Salome in the *Tragedy of Mariam*, interprets Hamlet’s grief according to negative stereotypes, depicting Hamlet’s grief as unmanly and impious, which plays on commonplace anxieties about excessive grief. That grief can be so easily misinterpreted inhibits the ability of a mourner to express grief successfully without

translating that grief into something else, like revenge or anger. Further, the figure of Hecuba is a useful figure in understanding the complexities of expressing grief verbally since she performs the inability to grieve with language literally when she is turned into a dog in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

A dog's bark, like grief, can be interpreted in any number of ways – to express sorrow, frustration, anger, or make requests, for example – so that Hecuba's barking is no less meaningful than crying, lamenting, or cursing. The fact that she must bark to express her grief further highlights the ambiguity of grief expressions, since they can be interpreted by onlookers in any number of ways according to the prejudices of the onlookers, as I've shown in the case of Claudius. Hamlet, too, recognizes this nature of grief, and he expresses frustration and berates himself for not being able to translate his grief into something more meaningful than barking: he notes that he “must, like a whore, unpack [his] heart with words / And fall a-cursing like a very drab” (2.2 ll. 548-549). Here, Hamlet feminizes and demonizes verbal expressions of grief by associating them with a whore, recognizes explicitly that language has no meaning in communicating his grief, and chastises himself for not measuring up to the ideal form of passionate grief translated into action that Hecuba models.

What's interesting about this translation of inexpressible, excessive grief into meaningful action is that it is inherently gendered (Pollard 1069). In Dante's *Inferno*, Hecuba is located in the Circle of Anger, which is significant because it involves a translation of her grief and sorrow into something else. The fact that grief was feminized brought grieving under the same suspicion as women, and the problem with this was that women, as Beauvoir points out in *The Second Sex*, have historically been depicted and misunderstood through the

use of archetypes, which inhibit the understanding of the true meanings of femininity since it always exists behind uncertain appearances. Grief, then, functions in a similar way in that grief can evidently only be understood once it is translated to vengeance or anger, which are traditionally depicted as masculine. We see this play out not only in *Hamlet*, but also in *The Spanish Tragedy* to an extreme degree, where Bel-imperia continually calls into question Hieronimo's masculinity over his failed ability to translate his sighing and weeping into more meaningful action.

I use the epigraph above to illustrate the ways in which grief is only rendered meaningful through spectacle and action and to illustrate the ways in which Hecuba is set up as a model for successful grieving. In this quote, Hamlet expresses concern over contrived performances of grief, because they allude to the tenuous connection between physiological performances of grief and the somatic, emotional aspects of grieving. He becomes insecure about the ability of an actor to compellingly perform Hecuba's grief in the face of his inability to grieve successfully, and Hamlet's emphasis on what the actor would *do* had he the motivation to grieve that Hamlet has rests on a spectacle that would "drown" the audience. This over-emphasis of grief, spectacle, and consequence reveals Hamlet's attempt to communicate his very real feeling of grief; he is somehow reaching for a distinction between what the actor performs and what Hamlet actually feels. Since both the actor's and Hamlet's performances of grief look similar, Hamlet experiences real anxiety about the ability of an actor to "copy" grief on stage and his own ability to communicate the meaning of his grief. The ability of an actor to compellingly perform grief calls attention to the arbitrariness of the expression to the feeling of grief insofar as nothing in the expression of grief is inherently linked to the feeling of grief itself. This vexes Hamlet, since he can't

“perform” what he thinks of as proper grief for his father by getting revenge, yet he *does* truly feel grief despite his failed performance – an inversion of the position of the *actor* playing Hecuba, who is defined by his *actions* rather than his emotions.

The fact that a figure like Hecuba, who literally cannot speak, became such a powerful symbol of grief implies that the meaning of grief cannot be sufficiently communicated or alleviated through language. Because of the ambivalent nature of grief, and the complexity of performing an already feminized and therefore subjected emotion as a female, Hecuba’s grief cannot be understood. She can only associate her grief with revenge to align it with a desire for justice. A desire for justice in itself is an attempt to gain meaning for otherwise meaningless violence. Hecuba’s grief is only mitigated by her pleasure in getting revenge, but it is no better understood through the action of revenge. Further, in many early modern works, Hecuba’s ability to translate extreme passion into revenge action is held up as the ideal model for the tragic drama, since it brings about the only means of satisfaction or resolution of grief through a translation of grief into something else (revenge) and then a solution to that translation (Pollard 1065). In other words, grief, like Hecuba herself and women in general, as Beauvoir points out, is not lacking language or a means of expression; instead, grief has language that cannot be understood because of the ambivalent nature of the depictions of grief. These same anxieties that govern the figure of Hecuba as a model for successful grief in the revenge tragedy also resonate with *The Spanish Tragedy*, which also explores gendered grieving, the privileging of action over passion, and a pronounced failure of language.

The Spanish Tragedy never mentions Hecuba, but as the model for the revenge tragedy genre, the play is fraught with issues concerning grieving, gender, and revenge, and

we can see how Tanya Pollard's argument that Hecuba functions as an ancestor to the revenge tragedy is compelling. In the play's consideration of the confrontation of grief with tyranny and the connections between grief and language, it becomes clear the ways in which Hecuba serves as a model for successful grief in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Both Bel-imperia and Hieronimo are driven to convert their passion into revenge, like Hamlet, so that Hecuba is once again a model for the revenger. Further, as Pollard points out, Hecuba's maternity in many ways allows her to tap into intense grief because of her experiences in childbirth, which explicitly connects to the grieving mother in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Isabella (1069). Like the story of Hecuba, *The Spanish Tragedy* represents a failure of language to express grief and a privileging of action over language as the characters who experience loss attempt to successfully translate their sorrow into the meaningful action of revenge.

Scholars have recognized issues of gender in approaching grief, and have also picked up on an exploration of justice within the play, but have heretofore failed to consider the ways in which grieving constructs or deconstructs gender and political authority through language in the world of the play. Language has been a major issue in scholarship on *The Spanish Tragedy*, but as yet, the language of grief expressions hasn't been considered¹. Alexandra S. Ferretti, in "'This Place Was Made for Pleasure Not for Death': Performativity, Language, and Action in *The Spanish Tragedy*," focuses on the play within the play to explore how Hieronimo's use of multiple languages disintegrate word and action and prevent the ability of words to effect further action. She doesn't, however, consider how grief is implicated in language and action throughout the play. Concerning justice in *The Spanish*

¹ See Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance: Language Trouble in an Age of Eloquence*, pp. 94- 142. See also Michael Hattaway, "The Language of the Play," in *The Spanish Tragedy: Authoritative Text, Sources and Contexts, Criticism*, and Robert Barrie, "'Unknown Language' and Subversive Play in *The Spanish Tragedy*," *EIRC*, vol. 21, pp. 63-80, 1995.

Tragedy, John Gillies, in “Calvinism as Tragedy in the English Revenge Play,” has suggested that revenge tragedies confront issue of justice in light of Calvinism, which he claims withheld justice in terms of the idea of an elect, since good works and a good life didn’t necessarily mean one would make it to Heaven. He doesn’t reflect on the ways in which dying or grieving work to construct the public justice system as successful or otherwise, however, which I believe is linked to grief’s interactions with language, and is of utmost importance when considering cultural approaches to grieving and dying.

Changing religious doctrines, as well as leftover superstitions from the Middle Ages and even gender politics were all pertinent in shaping how people dealt with dying and with loss in early modern England. The elimination of the belief in Purgatory, as I’ve mentioned in my other chapters, was a psychological loss as well as a doctrinal one that caused increasing anxiety about how mourners should grieve since too much grief might imply a grievance against God and too little would be disrespectful to the memory of the deceased. I’ve pointed out in my chapter on *The Tragedy of Mariam* that a widow’s grief in particular constructed both her virtue and her husband’s masculinity, so grieving became increasingly vexed as it was linked to gender. As a social event, dying and grieving were inherently linked to other values, and *The Spanish Tragedy* illustrates the ways in which death and grief destabilize notions of justice, gender, and spirituality.

From the very beginning, *The Spanish Tragedy* foregrounds acute anxieties involved when dealing with the deceased; for example, the play’s action begins because Don Andrea has not had a proper Christian burial. In fact, the play’s presentation of grief and death suggests that performing these processes involves high risk; again, Don Andrea must watch the action of the play because he wasn’t given a “proper” burial, and Hieronimo, the knight

marshal, loses his faith in the justice of both the heavens and the state following his son's death. The connection to grief here suggests that revenge becomes the preferred, or meaningful mode of grieving in such a circumstance where death and grief function as destabilizing forces to institutions of justice. Once again, the figure of Hecuba comes to mind as an ancestor of this genre, since her grief functions to destabilize tyranny. Further, the issues with grieving and dying that catalyze the action in *The Spanish Tragedy* suggest that there are proper or preferred ways of performing the processes of grieving and dying, which implies that these processes function similarly to the performance of gender, since they involve corporeal acts that provide a script for how to navigate certain circumstances. Part of the reason that the gender binary is so strong is that it's useful to approach other people with assumptions about what they might be like or how we might successfully interact with them according to assumptions about how gender is performed. This isn't so different than how we approach death and grief in that we expect specific behaviors from mourners and the dying in order to more easily navigate an uncomfortable or unfamiliar situation, reinforce our own religious or social values, and maintain a semblance of order in an otherwise disordered or unstable state of being.

In an otherwise disordered and perhaps uncanny experience of caring for a deceased body or attending a funeral with neighbors, social prescriptions for how to grieve properly became increasingly important in constructing a funeral. Knowing to expect specific social behaviors helps people handle otherwise difficult and anxious circumstances, but when onlookers' expectations are not met, disorder and anxiety – precisely the kind demonstrated in the play – ensue. The issue of language and expressing grief, then, became particularly important following the Reformation, when even the sermons given at funerals had to be

altered to reflect new ideas about grieving, further complicating an already vexed emotion. As explained earlier, before the Reformation, for instance, funeral sermons encouraged mourning acts and intercessory prayers for the dead; afterward, however, prayers for the deceased were outlawed, and funeral sermons emphasized the uselessness of praying for the departed (Phillippy 8-9). *The Spanish Tragedy's* fascination with death and grieving underlines the significance of performing grief and death according to social and religious values. Furthermore, the play illustrates that grieving actually has the power to destabilize otherwise well-established social values, such as gender and politics, and as it does so, it empties language of any meaning, as I will attempt to prove in this chapter.

To begin with, the play draws on commonplace notions of feminine grieving to present Hieronimo as mad and unable to carry out revenge because of his excessively emotional grief. As I noted in my chapter on *The Tragedy of Mariam*, feminine grieving was tied to the bodily rather than the spiritual and was marked by excess, while masculine, “good” grief should be stoic and controlled. As Jennifer Vaught has written, the only other socially acceptable form that masculine grief takes in early modern drama is violence (7). Bel-imperia’s shaming of Hieronimo (which I will address further later) and the association of his grief with nature, which is traditionally aligned with femininity, are two of the ways that the play presents Hieronimo’s grief as marked by femininity. Hieronimo shames himself for grieving excessively, comparing himself to a “raging sea, / tossed with the wind and tide” and recognizing that men of lesser classes mourn more stoically than he (3.13 ll. 102-103). Comparing himself to the sea not only associates him with tears through a watery image, but it also associates him with inconstancy, which is typically aligned with femininity. In fact, Hieronimo implicitly aligns himself with femininity in this image, since he says he is subject

to the tides, which are cyclical and controlled by the moon. Since they reflect the cyclical nature of menstruation, both of these images are most often aligned with femininity in early modern drama.

Furthermore, Hieronimo embodies the fear that excessive grief would lead to madness, calling to mind not only Hecuba but also the notion of “feminine fury.” Stephen Pender explains that the idea that excessive grief may lead to madness came from a belief that grieving was an imaginative problem that could be controlled if one could control his thoughts, so excessive grief was due to a weaker mental faculty typically associated with women, who were more prone to going mad with grief (Pender 56). Before he can get revenge in the form of his production for the king, Hieronimo reminds himself to “recall thy wits,” which also implies that feminine grief is without logic and self-indulgent, since this is what moves him to finally carry out revenge (4.3 l. 22). Interestingly, his drive and his inability to translate his extreme, feminine sorrow into more manly anger and action like Hecuba does illustrates how notions of masculine and feminine grieving render oral expressions of grief ineffective and cause social disorder that leads to more transgressions of cultural values. In other words, because grieving was marked by femininity, it was subject to the same interpretations and depictions as women themselves, who were misunderstood through archetypes of vice or virtue, as I have noted. This unfortunately means that grief cannot be understood in its raw form, as Hieronimo performs it; it must be transformed into anger or vengeance before acquiring meaning through concrete actions that cannot be misinterpreted or “tossed with the wind and tide.” As I’ve noted, it seems that only emotions that are gendered masculine create any meaning or function within the play since sorrow doesn’t acquire meaning until it is transferred to anger or vengeance and then resolved

through action. The issue is that while action creates meaning, it doesn't work to resolve or make meaning out of the feeling of grief itself, since it only addresses the feeling of a need for revenge, but not the feeling of sorrow for the loss.

Nevertheless, the play repeatedly calls attention to this ineffectiveness of language in expressing grief and understanding death and continually privileges action over language. First, Hieronimo explicitly laments the uselessness of his cries for justice and relief following Horatio's death:

Yet still tormented is my tortured soul
 With broken sighs and relentless passions,
 That, winged, mount, and, hovering in the air,
 Beat at the windows of the brightest heavens,
 Soliciting for justice and revenge. (3.7 ll. 10-14)

He continues, complaining that Heaven "resist[s] my woes, and gives my words no way" (3.7 l. 18). At once, Hieronimo recognizes the futility of his excessive grief and the inefficacy of his language. Nevertheless, he expresses the need to "breathe abroad" his woes, suggesting that there is a psychological benefit to expressing grief through language. Despite its psychological benefits, though, Hieronimo not only recognizes but actually demonstrates the uselessness of language in a society preoccupied with revenge at several points in the play: when he tears the deposition of another man; when he doubts Bel-imperia's letter; and finally, in his own play in which everyone speaks a different language, rendering communication ineffective. Hieronimo's repeated lament for the deficiencies of language as opposed to taking action represents a failure of his masculinity, since he opts for the more feminine weeping rather than violence for most of the play. All of these failures of language

support Lorenzo's observation that "where words prevail not, violence prevails" (2.1 l. 108). This quote suggests that only action has meaning, and demonstrates the issue with feminizing grief expressed through complaints. In a society in which verbal expressions of grief are ineffective and, in fact, feminine, there are only two viable ways to grieve: stoically or violently. As Hieronimo reveals, it is nearly impossible to remain stoic over the loss of a son, so where one cannot use language to express grief, it makes sense that violence or madness would ensue – and it does in both Hieronimo's and Isabella's cases.

Bel-imperia, on the other hand, defies social norms from the start and is not concerned with performing a gendered form of grief. She realizes from the beginning that her words are meaningless, especially since she is subject to her father and brother, and her feelings for Don Andrea first, and then Horatio, have been grossly ignored by them, to say the least. Bel-imperia twice chooses lovers beneath her class as opposed to the wishes of the men in her family, and instead of passively grieving for the death of another lover, she transgresses gender once again by prioritizing revenge, a male duty, as a means of mourning Horatio's death. Bel-imperia realizes that she has no agency through language, especially since her brother locks her away after Horatio's death. Bel-imperia re-appropriates the stigma that Patricia Phillippy describes of women's grief being tied to sexuality by pricking her own body to write a letter in her own blood "for want of ink" to expose Lorenzo and Balthazar's crime (3.2 l. 26) (Phillippy 15)². In doing so, she collapses action and language as forms of grieving and sets the play's action of revenge in motion. Hieronimo ignores Bel-imperia's bloody letter, underscoring the failure of language to sufficiently express grief, since lingual

² Bel-imperia replicates the actions that Phillippy describes that tie women's grief to the body, but her actions are not purely those of mourning, femininity, or sexuality in that they have a distinct motive that transgresses gender by collapsing two competing manifestations of styles of grief.

expressions are mistrusted as females themselves are. This failure of language exposes reformed mourning as being in opposition to justice, since it privileges an attempt to maintain social and political order by controlling female sexuality and preventing excessive grief. This upholding of the cultural restrictions placed on women works in opposition to justice because controlling Bel-imperia's sexuality and voice also prevents her grief from undermining Lorenzo and Balthazar's authority. Lorenzo locks her up for just this reason; Bel-imperia asks Lorenzo why he's kept her locked away following Horatio's murder: "What's the cause that you concealed me since?" to which Lorenzo replies, "Your melancholy, sister, since the news of your first favorite Don Andrea's death / My father's old wrath hath exasperate" (3.10 ll. 67-68). Lorenzo's anxiety about Bel-imperia's grief suggests that her grief allows her more agency than she would normally have, since her grief, and her words in particular, potentially have the power to incriminate him. As we see in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the fear of grieving widows is that they might feign excessive grief in order to draw attention to themselves to acquire a new suitor (Phillippy 15). This isn't too far from what Bel-imperia does after the death of her lover, Andrea, illustrating that she is sexually dangerous and a threat to Lorenzo's political agenda. In fact, Bel-imperia's grief seems active from the start since she's focused on revenge, and she appears to use her sexuality in order to be vindictive against her controlling masculine relatives even before she begins to grieve. Bel-imperia isn't a widow, but her grief is fearsome in that she knows the power that her grief lends her to undermine these controlling masculine forces. Her grieving draws the attention of onlookers, asks them to interpret the cultural signs of grief, thereby giving her the stage to speak out against the wrong done to Horatio. In locking her away, Lorenzo recognizes the ability of grieving to destabilize political authority and provide a woman with

the opportunity to speak and be heard that she wouldn't normally have. In fact, Christian Billing suggests that female lament is powerful in that it can be an affective force to catalyze violent action (50). The fact that Lorenzo has her hidden away, though, renders her language ineffective, and she must take action in the form of pricking her skin, thereby associating her grief with the corporeal instead of the disembodied. This, too, however, is ineffective, further emphasizing the mistrust placed in females and female grieving, since Hieronimo ignores the letter and doesn't believe its contents. He only comes to believe them once another letter, written by Pedringano, confirms it.

The suspension of the efficacy of language in Bel-imperia's grieving, then, *is* empowering since it prompts her to gain agency and transgress her gender, where with Hieronimo, it is almost a form of castration. The utter inefficacy of his own lingual expressions castrates him in the sense that the pen (a typically phallic image and a male-dominated mode of expression), is symbolically rendered feminine when it comes to grief. Bel-imperia is able to transcend gender and social boundaries and to collapse language and action with her letter, thus revealing the ways in which grief, as a liminal space where gender and other social values are destabilized, can also function as a place that enables transgression. But Hieronimo, who typically relies on language in his profession as knight marshal, has that means of expression taken from him in grief, where verbal expressions aren't effective because they are feminized and depicted as vain in contrast to revenge action. Bel-imperia's devotion to revenging Horatio's death reveals a priority of honoring the dead over honoring her responsibilities to her gender; that she gets away with it illustrates the ways in which grief can operate as a transgressive space. Bel-imperia's strong sense of justice and her desire to get revenge on her brother outweigh her sense of acting according to

her gender, and Hieronimo's failure to perform his proper role as revenger for most of the play urges her to transgress her own social role for the sake of honoring the dead. These complex and conflicting roles illustrate the competition of social values surrounding death and grief.

Hieronimo and Bel-imperia's desires to achieve revenge not only connect them to the ancestral revenger, Hecuba, but also illustrate the ways in which social values like gender work to construct grief as a performance to be done according to those values. Both characters are utterly aware of the intersections of justice, gender, and grieving. First, Hieronimo navigates Bel-imperia's letter according to assumptions about gender and feminine duty to a woman's closest male relations (i.e. her brother, Lorenzo), since he is immediately suspicious of her intent. He warns himself, "Hieronimo, beware, thou art betrayed, / And to entrap thy life this train is laid . . . / This is devised to endanger thee." (3.2, ll. 37-40). Hieronimo doubts Bel-imperia because of his perception of her duty to honor her male relations; he wonders what would move her to accuse her brother even if he really had murdered Horatio. Here, the play exposes preconceived notions of what each character's role in grieving *should* be. Hieronimo *should* be the revenger and Bel-imperia, according to gendered notions of grieving, has no business grieving publicly for Horatio, since he was not her husband and doing so would incriminate her brother. Nevertheless, Bel-imperia's desire for revenge – and her ability to get it later in the play – relies on these values of gender, and she repeatedly enforces them and transgresses them as she sees fit, suggesting that she knows how powerful these values about honoring the dead and performing proper gender roles are in maintaining social order.

In fact, Bel-imperia shames Hieronimo for not getting revenge and calls both his

manhood and his love for Horatio into question: “is this the love thou bear’st Horatio?” she asks him (4.1 ll.1). She also continually calls attention to the fruitlessness of language in grieving by asking him, “are these thy passions, / Thy protestations, and thy deep laments / That thou wert won to weary men withal?” (4.1, ll. 5-6). Here, she points out how, in addition to feminizing himself, Hieronimo is dishonoring himself and neglecting “the loss and life” of Horatio (4.1, ll. 9-13). Bel-imperia’s emphasis on the *loss* and the *life* of Horatio, addresses a sense of loss concerning the belief in purgatory in that she is placing the importance of approaching Horatio’s death on honoring his memory and righting the wrong done to him in death. She leans on nearly every social value imaginable to shame Hieronimo for not honoring this duty. In another instance, she calls into question his role as a father and once again calls attention to the importance of memory:

But monstrous fathers, to forget so soon
 The death of those whom they with care and cost
 Have tendered so, thus careless should be lost!
 Myself, a stranger in respect of thee,
 So loved his life as still I wish their deaths. (4.1, ll.18-24)

Bel-imperia’s strategy of shaming Hieronimo works to construct grief as a performance since it implies that she has been watching him and interpreting his expressions of grief. Already, Bel-imperia has decided that his performance of grief is unmanly, but here she reveals that the process of grieving represents one’s relationship to the deceased. Furthermore, not grieving enough, or not grieving properly, in Bel-imperia’s conception, suggests that the mourner did not care enough for the deceased to honor him by remembrance, or in this case, revenge.

These attitudes that Bel-imperia exhibits are symptomatic of the instability caused by the elimination of the belief in purgatory, since prayers and mourning no longer had the practical purpose of helping the deceased move from purgatory to Heaven. Without purgatory, then, the focus of mourning shifted from the deceased to the bereaved, and the duties of the bereaved shifted from praying for the deceased's soul to honoring the deceased's life and memory. In a sense, this quite literally rendered language fruitless, since it no longer did any good to apply one's voice to the duty of praying for the deceased's soul. Bel-imperia does place a great deal of significance on the duty of remembrance, though, pointing to another anxiety caused by the Reformation: since there was no explicit duty to the deceased, anxiety about being forgotten was only natural. Essentially, Bel-imperia's emotional energies that would, before the Reformation, be conducted through language to give her a sense of purpose in the form of prayers and rituals for Horatio's soul, must now be directed externally to honor Horatio's memory and right the wrong done to him in order to give her grief a sense of purpose. When she vows to get revenge only if Hieronimo fails to, though, Bel-imperia is acknowledging that it is Hieronimo's right to perform this duty since he is a male and he is closer in relation to him:

Nor shall his death be unrevenged by me
 . . . For here I swear, in sight of heaven and earth,
 Shouldst thou neglect the love thou shouldst retain
 . . . Myself should send their hateful souls to hell (4.1 ll. 25-28).

To Bel-imperia, the value of honoring Horatio's life is so great that it takes precedence over properly performing her own gender, even though she enforces gender when it comes to Hieronimo's duty. In other words, Bel-imperia is just as willing to enforce gender

expectations on Hieronimo as she is to neglect her own gender duties, so long as Horatio's murder is avenged and in doing so, she privileges action over language, much like Hecuba does when takes action by stabbing Polymestor's eyes. Nevertheless, Bel-imperia recognizes that the spaces of grieving and death are fraught with anxiety and discomfort due to competing filial values, gender values, and beliefs about the dead, which allows her to make such strong claims about the importance of performing one's gender even while she transgresses her own.

In the same way that death and grieving destabilize social values so that Bel-imperia can enforce Hieronimo's gender while transgressing her own, these events could also work to destabilize other important and otherwise well-established cultural values, like political authority and justice. Throughout the play, the failure of the public justice system is highlighted through the onslaught of violence that goes unpunished. Moving forward, I will attempt to show how *The Spanish Tragedy* presents dying and grieving as having the ability to construct narratives about political authority through the failure of language and public justice.

First, before Isabella destroys the garden and takes her own life, she points to a failure in the justice system as being the cause of her need to take violent action: "Since neither piety nor pity moves / The King to justice or compassion, / I will revenge myself upon this place / Where thus they murdered my beloved son." (4.3, ll. 2-5). The destroyed garden and her body, as Hieronimo leaves it unburied, both become symbols of the court's failure to carry out justice for Horatio's death and the failure of language in moving the King to sympathy or compassion. Isabella also accuses Hieronimo while she grieves, pointing to another failure of justice and of language. She cries, "thou dost delay their deaths, / Forgives

the murderers of thy noble son” (4.3, ll. 32-33). Isabella’s taking action in this scene is recognition of a failure of language both to express grief and achieve justice. Her loss of faith in language represents an increasing reliance on action, since her pleas for justice have not come to fruition, and expressing grief with tears and words has not eased the pain. The inability of language to ease feelings of loss in the play effectively hints at the problem with grieving and dying following the Reformation in that there was no longer any meaningful way to deal with loss verbally, or a practical outlet toward which to direct feelings of grief. In some ways, Isabella is tied, then, to Hecuba – both in her maternity and in her inability to make meaningful language out of grief and to unload her burden. Significantly, Hecuba loses not just language, but also her humanity in being transformed to a dog, which brings up an interesting connection between grieving women and animality. Simone de Beauvoir argues in *The Second Sex* that “woman . . . is more enslaved to the species than is the male, her animality is more manifest” (1267). Hecuba’s grief is inherently tied to her femininity and her position as “a beast of burden” for the species, since she grieves for her children (Beauvoir 1267). Interestingly enough, the word “grief” itself comes from the French “grever,” which is to “press heavily upon, to burden” (*OED*, “grief”). It seems to be the case then, that women, especially mothers, are once again linked to animality where grief is concerned, and perhaps experience a more manifest need to un-burden themselves over the grief felt at the loss of a child. The garden that Isabella destroys is symbolically her body and the tree, which represents her family line, is now blighted with Horatio’s death and her destruction; the garden will now be barren as she is. Further, her suicide calls attention to the failure of Hecuba to grieve successfully, despite the motives of the other actors in the play who model Hecuba-like grieving. Even though Isabella successfully transfers her grief to

action and the anger or vengeance, it is futile since this doesn't address her sense of loss or sorrow over the death of her child. Taking action through vengeance only addresses the feeling of anger and fills the need to "do" something about the feeling of loss, but it doesn't solve or address the feeling of loss itself, since grief cannot be understood in and of itself. The need to "do" something about one's grief, as Isabella illustrates, perhaps stems from the loss in the belief in purgatory, since action was no longer directed toward praying for the deceased's soul. In some ways, then, the revenge tragedy functions as a response to the loss of the belief in purgatory.

In the play, language is not only rendered useless in the form of prayers and laments for the dead, but also in pleas for justice; for example, in Isabella's pleas to the king and Hieronimo as well as the deposition of Don Bazulto. Further, as Colon Semenza argues in "*The Spanish Tragedy and Revenge*," "the near impossibility of negotiating the competing demands of Christian, civil, and personal obligations helps to explain the tormenting ambivalence experienced by the Renaissance avenger" (55). *The Spanish Tragedy* suggests that maintaining manly, inward grief is nearly impossible, but when one fails to grieve properly according to reformed Protestant ideals, disorder and violence ensue from the need of mourners to direct their grief externally to some other action. This implies that grief is in fact embodied rather than something that can effectively be expressed linguistically and perhaps explains why reformers felt the need to encourage people to stifle grief since violence and revenge are both dangerous and threatening to authority. As *The Spanish Tragedy* shows, religious and civil authorities had good reason to suppress excessive grieving in order to maintain political and social stability; and what better way to do so than shame grieving as feminine and sacrilegious?

Hieronimo's feminine grief destabilizes the justice system in several ways. First, as knight marshal and as a father grieving the wrongful death of his son, Hieronimo recognizes that the justice system is flawed and tears the papers of another father seeking justice for his son, once again demonstrating and, in fact, orchestrating the failure of language to express grief and the propensity for violence or action to take over. This need for action, like Isabella's tearing up the garden, again displays the psychological benefits of purgatory, since following the Reformation, mourners' had to find other outlets toward which to direct their energies. Tearing the other father's petition acts as catharsis in a similar way that revenge does, but in this play, both acts undermine the stability of the state and illustrate the arbitrariness of a justice system run by individuals apt to act on grief or other personal motives instead of in the interest of the state. Revenge itself also undermines the state's authority in that it necessarily implies a lack of faith in the public justice system. Furthermore, private revenge is a breach of the law and as the viceroy of Portugal points out, "they reck no laws that meditate revenge" (1.4 l. 48). Hieronimo's actions as the knight marshal, whose position relies on language in the form of documents, depositions, and his verbal judgments, call attention to the slipperiness of language in comparison to actions, which can't be undone or disposed of like the documents that Hieronimo tears, or the letter from Bel-imperia that he ignores.

Furthermore, Hieronimo's use of Latin also necessitates a discussion of the uses of language and the instability of both divine and state justice. Since Latin is the language of Catholicism and the law, Hieronimo's use of Latin not only calls to mind the Senecan tradition with which the play is eager to engage, but it also re-appropriates the use of Latin in political and religious institutions by invoking it for his own violent means and undermining

those structures of authority. Also noteworthy is the fact that Latin itself is a dead language, and that Hieronimo would invoke a dead language in order to express his grief is a recognition of his state as caught in a world where justice and language have failed in a Christian universe, necessitating, in Hieronimo's mind, a reversion to Classical justice. In the third act, Hieronimo, entering with a book of Seneca's plays, exclaims, "Vindicta mihi!" ("vengeance is mine!"). Later, he says, "Fata si miseros juvant, habes salutem; / Fata si vitam negant, habes sepulchrum," which he translates to the notion that if destiny eases his grief, he'll be happy, but if it denies him life, he will yet have a tomb. He continues though, revealing that he doesn't have faith in Seneca's proverbs, and claims that a burial is not necessary for one who dies virtuously, a Biblical notion (3.13, ll. 14-19) (McMillin 203). Then, he claims, "to conclude, I will revenge his death!" (3.13 l. 20) What's interesting is that Hieronimo has appropriated (and misread) Latin, mixing its association with various moral authorities and systems of justice, to lend judicial and spiritual authority to his own revenge plot (McMillin 1). The very desire to get revenge, though, implies a lack of faith in the justice system on earth or in Heaven, so his appropriation of Latin in this context renders his goal of lending authority to his voice meaningless, since he uses Latin incorrectly. Instead, Hieronimo performs the slipperiness of language and the ease of manipulating it out of context. Next, Hieronimo never names Horatio in this scene, and only refers to Horatio when he claims that he'll revenge "his" death, which further emphasizes Hieronimo's carelessness with language and emphasis on the active nature of his own grief; in other words, he doesn't try to contextualize Horatio's death, or make sense of it with language -- the focus of Hieronimo's thinking of Horatio's death is always in terms of his own grief and planned action. Furthermore, by invoking Latin in the terms of Senecan tragedy, Hieronimo

aligns himself with revenge and a Classical morality, but, as I've noted, he implies that he'll also fall back on ideas of Christian burial as a source of comfort. By continuing to mix his Latin sources, Hieronimo comes to justify his ambition for revenge by bastardizing opposing systems of moralities. This is already a common theme in the play, since the underworld is classical and the characters are living in a Christian society, but Hieronimo's invocation of these opposing moralities illustrates the destabilizing power of grief.

Next, dying itself also threatens the stability of power in instances of unnatural or wrongful deaths, as we see in several cases throughout *The Spanish Tragedy*. First, the viceroy expresses doubts about his own right to rule when he thinks that Balthazar has been killed in the war with Spain. The stage directions in the viceroy's monologue in Act One, Scene Three are important in illustrating the degree to which his son's perceived death affects the viceroy's own idea of himself as a ruler; the directions tell us that he falls to the ground, and later, that he removes his crown. The viceroy, falling onto the ground, says, "wherefore sit I in a regal throne? / This better fits a wretch's endless moan . . . this is higher than my fortunes reach, / And therefore better than my state deserves" (1.3 ll. 8-11). "State" here means both "state of affairs" and his kingdom as a state; the viceroy therefore implies that his state deserves a better ruler than he. What's interesting about the viceroy's grief is that he perceives Balthazar's death as his fault. Since he commissioned the war with Spain, the viceroy calls his own leadership and decision making into question once he believes that Balthazar is dead. When he takes off his crown, he is not only recognizing his failure as a ruler, but he also seems to be appropriating the tradition of wearing black mourning weeds, suggesting further that grief is not only a feeling of sadness, but also a performance of sadness. The move to take off his crown calls to mind the notion that mourners should be

humble and suggests that the viceroy acknowledges his powerlessness in the face of death.

Nevertheless, he blames himself,

My late ambition hath distained my faith

My breach of faith occasioned bloody wars;

Those bloody wars have spent my treasure

And with my treasure my precious people's blood

And with their blood, my joy and best beloved. (1.4 ll. 33-37)

The viceroy's grief for his son is so strong that it works to bring into perspective the real effects of war to a king who would otherwise be mostly insulated from it. Balthazar's perceived death works to make the viceroy question his leadership and undermine his own authority and right to rule. Furthermore, while the viceroy is lamenting action or violence here, not in terms of grieving, but in terms of his own ambition, he is recognizing that only acts have meaning and bring the abstraction of the loss of his people's lives into reality when it is his own son that he loses. He continues to point out the value of young life and the discomfort that the death of a young person brings, illustrating that there are natural and unnatural deaths: "I might have died for both. / My years were mellow, his but young and green; / My death were natural, but his was forced" (1.4 ll. 40-43). Balthazar's death and the viceroy's subsequent reaction illustrate the power of dying and grieving to destabilize one of the most carefully constructed and maintained social/political narratives: that of divine right and the authority of the crown.

Furthermore, Pedringano and Horatio's deaths both attest to the problem of public punishment in constructing narratives that work to enforce cultural ideologies. Certainly, the fascination with hanging and Horatio's dismembered corpse could reflect a similar cultural

fascination with hangings and public executions. *The Spanish Tragedy* emphasizes the precarious nature of public hangings and executions as a manifestation of royal power, since unruly criminals could undermine state and royal intentions, as we see in Kyd's play through Pedringano. Public executions emphasized the importance of dying well and reinforced the power of justice, thereby legitimizing the power that brought criminals to their deaths (i.e. the religious and political authority) (Sharpe 90).

In fact, state and religious authorities exploited commonly held religious and social beliefs about death to construct their own authority in the form of public executions. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that public executions function as a way for the state to maintain ideological control. Even in minor cases, public executions, he argues, are meant to reinforce the state's authority and power (47). J.A. Sharpe has also argued that public executions belong to the public theatre and were designed by civil and religious authorities to uphold particular values. He argues that a criminal's farewell speech was one of the most important aspects of this performance in that it was expected to involve a confession of guilt and faith that would uphold the authority of the state to carry out justice and recognize the religious authority of the church. The emphasis on language to control ideologies about death and grieving is foregrounded in literature on the topic during the period. As Sharpe also points out, chapbooks of executions were published in the days after an execution for those who couldn't witness the spectacle firsthand. In the chapbooks, too, the criminals' last dying speeches were recorded and interpreted, and criminals who didn't follow the tradition as expected were often sensationalized (Sharpe 146). As *The Spanish Tragedy* illustrates, unruly criminals could destabilize intended narratives by refusing to confess or, in Pedringano's case, even mocking the hangman. *The Spanish Tragedy* can be read as engaging with the

precarious nature of grieving and dying, revealing the ways that death and grief can destabilize the language meant to provide some semblance of order or justice in an otherwise vexed and disordered circumstance.

Once again, *The Spanish Tragedy* calls attention to the unreliable nature of language. As I've mentioned, Pedringano mocks the hangman instead of reinforcing the state's authority by participating in the tradition of the last dying speech, and by failing to confess any guilt he fails to uphold the state's authority in turning him off the scaffold. His failing to perform the tradition of the last dying speech marks him an unruly criminal who thwarts the state's intentions in carrying out punishment publicly. Moreover, the letter that he leaves in his cell drives the last nail in the coffin, so to speak, as it reveals outright the corruption of the authorities by revealing not only that he was wrongfully executed, but also that Lorenzo, the king's own son, is a murderer. In this scene, then, Pedringano reclaims language in the form of his incriminating letter, but it is only coupled with the action of his death that the letter has any meaning.

Horatio's wrongful and unnatural death recreates the public spectacle of an execution in that he is hanged like a common criminal (Sharpe 90). Horatio's body, then, works to become a symbol for the instability of the court and replaces a linguistic expression of grief with a symbolic, embodied one, as Hieronimo leaves the corpse unburied only to uncover it and reveal Lorenzo's crime during his play. Leaving the body unburied once again recognizes Hieronimo's lack of faith in the process of grieving as a whole to have meaning and privileges spectacle over language, not in an unsimilar way to the Catholic church in its own fascination with the bloody body of Christ. Hieronimo laments, calling attention to the failure of the government and connecting that with Horatio's death, "O world, no world, but

mass of public wrongs, / Confused and filled with murder and misdeeds!” (3.2 ll. 3-4). His use of the word “public” here emphasizes the injustice of civil authority. Further, because Horatio’s hanging recreates a traditionally public spectacle, the irony of public wrongs carried out under the noses of those in charge of the public justice system renders civil authority meaningless and that gives way to revenge plots, which are founded on the notion that public justice has failed. Later, since war is what brought Balthazar to Spain in the first place, Hieronimo blames Horatio’s death on Spain’s government, completely disregarding any nationalistic pride or sense of duty to one’s country involved in being a soldier. He complains, “woe to the cause of these constrained wars” (3.10 l. 61). Horatio’s hanging body, rather than reinforce the power of civil and religious authorities to dole out justice, actually works as a public symbol that public justice has failed.

At the end of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the revenge plot comes to fruition in Hieronimo’s orchestrating a play for the court. In the bloody final scene of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the meaningful impact of Bel-imperia’s and Hieronimo’s grief is ultimately expressed entirely through violence and action, as the language of the play within the play has no meaning to the play’s audience. Since every actor is speaking in a foreign tongue, the audience can only make meaning out of the action that is unfolding. This nonsensical diversification of language is an obvious reference to the story of the Tower of Babel. In the Biblical story, God punishes the Babylonians for the crime of ambition, much like the ambition that incites Lucifer’s fall. In Hieronimo’s appropriation of the story, though, Hieronimo attempts to play the role of God, doling out punishment for Lorenzo’s and Balthazar’s crimes. The play within a play ends up creating an inversion of the Tower of Babel story, however, since the result of the Biblical story is that the physical goal of building a tower to Heaven is rendered

impossible due to the failure of language, and the result of Hieronimo's narrative is the punishment of ambitious grief, an embodied feat in the form of revenge that is inspired by the failure of language. Furthermore, since the characters in Hieronimo's play themselves cannot communicate with each other, they reenact the failures of language in the world of the frame play itself, which allows Bel-imperia to get revenge by stabbing Balthazar, and Hieronimo to revenge himself against Lorenzo. Finally, Bel-imperia stabs herself, further highlighting the association of her grief with the body, and Hieronimo, too, emphasizes the bodily association with grief, since he reveals the corpse of his son in order to bring to light the meaning of his play as revenge for Horatio's death to his audience.

In light of the inherent relationships between audience and actors, Jennifer Waldron, in *Reformations of the Body*, addresses the complexities of the theater as it related to issues of religion and the Reformation. Of revenge tragedies like *The Spanish Tragedy*, she states, "particularly at moments when revengers assert violent authorship over the bodies of actors in their plays of 'satisfaction,' the phenomenology of secular theater emerges from the conceptual space of sacrilege, not from the empty spaces left by disenchantment" (20). In other words, addressing divine matters in the theater was considered sacrilegious, especially in that the notion of 'satisfaction' in Hieronimo's play draws on the Christian discourse of atonement. This also works to shed light on Hieronimo's fascination with the body, and works as an implicit critique of Catholic Spain in its own fascination with and glorification of the body of Christ as an emblem for Christian atonement. Hieronimo recreates this sentiment by privileging the meaning put forth by the corpses of Horatio, Lorenzo, and Balthazar, over the artistic or linguistic teaching of his play, which as Waldron reminds us, is also sacrilegious in its nature. Hieronimo's display of violence mirrors that of the crucifixion in

creating meaning and evoking feeling, but he also puts himself in a position to play God by co-opting the right of Heaven to carry out justice and constructing a narrative to teach the lessons of atonement.

In a final attempt to express his frustration with the fruitlessness of language, Hieronimo refuses to divulge information to the king, the Duke of Castile, or the viceroy; Hieronimo tells them, “Urge no more words; I have no more to say,” thus recognizing his reliance on images and action to communicate, rather than language (4.4 l. 152). The viceroy, king, and duke all ask him why he has butchered their children, to which Hieronimo replies, “Oh, good words!” (4.4 l. 168). This sarcastic outburst makes plain the fact that Horatio was as dear to him as their children are to them, but in a final act of defiance and action, he bites out his own tongue to symbolically represent its uselessness in expressing his grief, pleading for justice, or consoling him and then takes his life. This is the ultimate privileging of action over words, since it highlights the physicality implicit to creating language. In fact, it suggests that there is no divide between the two: words and language, whether they are speech or writing, are always already an action. The physical act of removing his capacity for language obliterates the dichotomy of language and action to suggest that language is not only ineffectual, but that it doesn’t exist as a separate entity from its physical manifestation. The focus on words and language in these final scenes further expresses the success of images and violence to move people to understanding. Once again, Lorenzo’s smart observation that violence prevails where words do not becomes increasingly important in understanding the play’s resolution, and doubly so since Revenge, acting as the divine authority notes that “though death has end their misery, / I’ll there begin their endless tragedy” (4.5 ll. 47-48). Revenge’s words emphasize the cyclical nature of violence and

tragedy, which has been demonstrated throughout the play and will now carry on endlessly in death, further emphasizing the effacement of language as a separate possibility from action.

In conclusion, dying and grieving during the early modern period both constructed and were constructed by cultural values, which were oftentimes at odds with one another so that dying and grieving became precarious spaces of performativity. In this chapter, I view the expectation to uphold cultural values as a means of maintaining a sense of control or stability during an otherwise unstable state of experiencing loss. This preservation of the fabric of society during times of grief seems particularly pertinent to a culture that, following the elimination of Purgatory, struggled with thinking about death and grief. In an increasingly individualistic culture, the fascination with death in the public theatre, both in the form of revenge tragedies and public executions, seems indicative of a need to understand how to approach death and loss and it calls attention to the ways in which dying and grieving are in fact performative of cultural values. The play illustrates wonderfully the disorder caused by new ways of thinking about death and grief, and provides an especially interesting take on the implications of language in expressing an emotion so vexed with religious and cultural values.

Transgressions of Gender in the Deaths of Early Modern Women

In my earlier chapters, I have attempted to illustrate the ways in which grieving is a social performance akin to the performance of gender. In chapters two and three, I explored early modern drama in order to highlight the ubiquity of socially constructed ideas about grieving that placed importance on grieving correctly (i.e. according to Protestant ideals that distrusted femininity and promoted stoicism). I also showed the ways authors of early modern drama played on commonly held notions of grief to both critique and uphold certain social values, such as gender in the case of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, or justice and language in *The Spanish Tragedy*. These plays present grief in a way that betrays the constructed nature of the activity of mourning, revealing that ideas about how to grieve well provide a kind of script recognizable by others. These scripts of grief are essential to upholding social and religious values, but paradoxically, they are actually put in jeopardy because of the intersection of so many values. In the previous chapter, for instance, I argued that because the shift from a belief in purgatory to the Calvin doctrine of predestination eliminated a sense of justice in the afterlife, an increasing interest in revenge and the revenge tragedy arose because of the revenge genre's emphasis on earthly justice. In an attempt to uphold religious and spiritual values that favored Protestant grieving as opposed to the Catholic mode of weeping and praying for the deceased's soul's release from Purgatory, the effort actually gave way to a perhaps unsavory or at least unpredicted expression of frustration and anxiety over justice illustrated through the rise of the revenge drama.

Inevitably, some social values were put in jeopardy because of other motivations; in the case of the rise of the revenge tragedy, the value placed on getting justice competed with Protestant values of grieving and dying stoically, which are almost always thrown out in

favor of mad or vengeful grief in the revenge tragedy. In this concluding chapter, I will focus more specifically on death itself, rather than grief, to illustrate that death, too, could function as a destabilizing force in ways similar to my treatment of grief in the chapters that precede this one. Nowhere are the ways in which death destabilizes gender during the early modern period more apparent than in the narratives of the deaths of women. These deaths illustrate both the social and performative nature of dying in early modern England, and the ways in which privileging the value of performing a good death leaves room for the slippage of other values. The representation of women's last dying words by men after the fact also suggests a threat women posed to societal order, and a need to control women's voices. Before discussing the last dying speeches of Katherine Stubbes, written down by her husband, Phillip Stubbes, in *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, and the last dying speeches of female criminals, I will provide a brief overview of what constituted a good death in early modern England, as well as an overview of some of the broader ways in which women were able to rewrite gender when death was concerned.

Many of the ideas governing what the deathbed space "should" look like seem to have come from the instructional texts that were a part of the *ars moriendi* tradition, which aimed to deliberate on the art of dying well. Texts such as Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Manne's Salve*, or Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, construct death in such a way as to foreground certain Protestant values through death, like stoicism and resisting despair. As a result, death is constructed as a performance to be done well in order to display one's faith and God's sovereignty. Scholarship on death and dying in early modern England also suggests that dying was a social activity, and oftentimes, neighbors, friends, and other community members found their way in and out of the deathbed space during the process.

According to *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern England*, dying was, in fact, a public occasion. The deathbed itself served “as the center-stage of a moral theater for preparing the soul and for dealing with practical matters of caring for the body, finalizing financial and domestic arrangements and obtaining instructions for the funeral and burial” (Levy 42). The notion of the deathbed as a stage in a moral theater upon which certain values were to be acted out is a useful image in coming to understand the ways in which social and religious values collided in this space that sought to communicate the society’s most firmly held values.

Considered the “supreme trial of faith,” as Ralph Houlbrooke calls it, dying a good death was thought to be an indication of an individual’s eternal fate (148). Thus, Godly Protestants prepared and prayed for good deaths even before sickness set in. The vast number of Puritan texts in the *ars moriendi* tradition alone points to an anxiety about death and an extreme importance in fashioning a good one. According to these texts, dying a good death required several things, including the participation of an audience. William Perkins’s *Death’s Knell*, published in 1624, is part of the *ars moriendi* tradition, and it opens with the following passage, which in many ways captures the spirit of the tradition by emphasizing the nature of a good death as the “looking glass” of one’s life:

Let the memory of Death (good Christian) be ever the Looking-glasse of thy life, thy continuall Companion, and inseparable Spouse: let thy solace be ye sighes of a sorrowfull soule; and those the more bitter, the better: whilst Worme-like, thou crawlest heere below, fasten all thy faculties upon the Commandements of thy Creator; for those in thy finall passage, must be the Pylot to steere thee into the Haven of Heaven; Thinke every moment thou art in the waning, that the date of thy

Pilgrimage is wel-nigh expired, and that the lampe of thy life lyeth twinckling upon the snuffe . . . (3)

Perkins emphasizes the Protestant belief in preparing for death, and he emphasizes death's role in determining one's eternal fate by suggesting that one "thinke every moment thou art in the waning" (3). In the rest of this work, Perkins lays out several steps for constructing a good death, including the following rules: first, die in faith, focusing on God's love and mercy, which should be expressed through outward signs, including repentance or prayer, or sobs, sighs, or moans, if the person was incoherent due to illness. Dying in faith, according to Perkins, also included a proclamation of faith in the form of a dying speech, performed with special power and conviction. Next, the dying Christian should die readily in submission to God's will, not praying for recovery from illness, but for release in the form of death. Perkins also recommends giving up all worldly pleasures and "vaine delights." In other texts from this tradition, as well, preventing the discussion of earthly things, including the person's spouse or children, was of utmost importance on the sickbed (Houlbrooke 150).

"The world," Perkins states, "is an Ambassadour of the evill, a scourge of the good, a tyrant of the truth," and he recommends preparing, and even desiring to leave the world early on, suggesting that the sickbed is not the place to prepare oneself for Heaven – "some," he writes, "thinke to snatch Heaven in a moment, which the best can scarce attaine in many yeeres" (4). A good performance of death, therefore, was not able to steer one to Heaven or determine one's fate; rather, a good performance of death indicates the soul's peace and reflects, as Perkins notes, a good life deserving of Heavenly reward. To go stoically and confidently toward death indicated unwavering faith and trust in God's will, so a good death, which constituted peaceful and faithful words, could indicate election and would play a role

in the bereaved's memorialization of their deceased loved one. In fact, it would've been considered unfortunate if the person died without control of their faculties that might cause them to speak nonsensically, or if the person died without an audience to participate in observing and then memorializing the person's death. In her last dying speech, Katherine Stubbes calls attention to the importance of the observers in the deathbed space, calling on them as the reason that she must make a confession of her faith lest anyone think she did not die a good, Christian death.

Indeed, in the drama of a death, last words would have been expected of any dying person, since a confession of faith was a vital element to the construction of a good death, as we see in Phillip Stubbes's account of his wife's death, *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*. This meant that even women were given a voice to express themselves in the space of this moral theater. Alison Levy points out that,

The early modern death rite served to cushion the blow that the death of an integral member represented within a community by maintaining constructive social interaction that imposed meaning and structure on the natural processes of dying. The death ritual as extended in this way provided an arena in which power, authority, and identity were communicated. (41)

The imposition of meaning and structure on dying is an important point, because it reemphasizes a sense of anxiety about the otherwise unstable nature of dying. For instance, there was a dilemma involved in distinguishing between sickbeds and deathbeds, so that if a community member fell ill, death was hoped for as a release from suffering, and recovery was only prayed for if it was God's will; furthermore, a physician would only be called after one's spiritual needs had been attended to (Ryries 460 and Houlbrooke 150). Praying for

death and focusing on the construction of a good death, then, could provide a means of coping with the perhaps frightening, unknown outcome of the sickbed/deathbed dilemma. Furthermore, Levy's calling the deathbed "an arena" where power, authority and identity are communicated, necessarily implies that the intersections of values that communicate power, authority, and identity are in flux, and are sometimes at odds with one another. We see these types of values vying for power in the last dying speeches of women, in which the value of communicating the power and authority of God and the dying woman's identity as a Christian outweigh the value placed in communicating the power and authority of masculinity by keeping women silent, or the value in communicating the dying person's identity as a woman.

The continuity of masculine authority was by no means thrown out of the deathbed space entirely, though. The importance of communicating masculinity was still valued highly, as we see in *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, in which Phillip Stubbes's retelling of his wife's dying speeches constructs his own masculine authority through descriptions of his having had a good and faithful wife. His wife's faithfulness, in other words, reflects well on him as leader of the household. Nevertheless, despite her husband's desire to maintain masculine power Katherine retains some agency in that her words were published, whereas on any other occasion, her speech would likely not be recorded. It is interesting that the value placed in communicating Christian spiritual values in one's performance of death outweighed other social values about keeping women silent. In many ways, women often found agency in death and topics concerning death, experiencing, sometimes for the first time, the license to speak about spiritual or political matters, as we see

in the case of Katherine Stubbes, but also in elegies, mothers' advice books, and even in the last dying speeches of criminal women.

First, elegies were one of the few genres that women were allowed to write, and many women found their public voice by writing on the death of a public official, since mourning the death of a public figure was seen as a public duty (Shohet 439). While elegies could serve to genuinely express grief, they also functioned to aestheticize the performance of grief, so that women who desired to write found a medium through this genre that was open to less schooled poets. Considered a more appropriate genre for women to be writing, elegies also oftentimes provided a way for women to participate in political issues, much in the same way that mother's advice books provided a 'safe' medium for women to express political leanings under the pretext of advice to their children.³ Lucinda Becker has argued that "death provided perhaps the greatest opportunity for those women who wished to write not just for themselves, but also for others and thus, of course, for posterity" (190). The same agency afforded to women through the elegy is also reflected in Patricia Phillippy's point that the license given to women on their deathbeds reveals a tension between social and political values and spiritual values, since the deathbed allows women to "rewrite gender" in their final acts (107). In the case of the elegy, the license given to women to write reveals a similar tension in that this form of writing would communicate spiritual and political values such as honoring the deceased while bending the social values related to gender. Significantly, as I've written in my previous chapters, a good death was necessarily constructed, at least partially, by the performance of good grief by the bereaved, since it was the bereaved who

³ Becker points out that even in these 'safer' genres female authors nevertheless reassured their readership that they were not publicly exercising their voices, but were teaching by example (190). It's important to note that Phillip Stubbes also depicts his wife as an example for others, rather than merely publishing her voice.

were left behind to communicate the nature of the deceased's death. Elegies, and accounts like *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, are a part of this tradition since they are designed to honor the deceased's life and death. Women who wrote elegies, therefore, were actually involved in a great social responsibility. Broadly, it seems that the significance placed on 'staging' a good death constructed death as a sort of liminal space in which one could find the power to reconstruct gender relations in the household and in the community at large.

Another way in which women found agency in death was actually in the staging of another non-normative form of death: public executions. Since, regardless of gender, a condemned criminal was expected to perform a last dying speech, confessing his or her crime, and repenting his or her sins, many female criminals were afforded the opportunity to speak out publicly (Belsey 190). This tradition of criminals giving a last dying speech, as I've mentioned in my chapter on Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* where the condemned mocks the hangman rather than repenting, was designed to recognize and reinforce the power and authority of the state. As we see in *The Spanish Tragedy*, however, giving criminals the license to speak publicly was politically risky, since they could undermine the authority of the state by refusing to repent and therefore acknowledge the state's right and good judgment to put them to death (Foucault 47).

Furthermore, as Susan Staub has pointed out in her book, *Nature's Cruel Stepdames*, the prosecution of females destabilizes the notion of *femme covert* – the idea that a woman was "covered" by her husband, legally (15). In other words, recognizing a woman as punishable by law is in many ways a recognition of her individuality and agency; this also suggests some level of gender equality in death, since women could be punished by death

just as men could (Belsey 190). This is just one of the ways in which criminals' executions destabilized the state's intention to demonstrate power, though, since female criminals are recognized as posing a unique threat to otherwise stable legal definitions. Female criminals, like their male counterparts, were also expected to acknowledge the tradition of the last speech at their executions, despite rules that otherwise restricted women's voices in public (Belsey 190). In this sense, then, women experienced similar opportunities in dying on the scaffold as they might by grieving – suspending the role of gendered values in order to foreground other important cultural establishments. As I noted in my earlier chapter, it is the attention that Mariam's otherwise oppressive black mourning garments gain for her that gives her an audience with Herod to whom she can then express her dissatisfaction. Similarly, criminals like Elizabeth Caldwell, are able to take the opportunity to speak granted by imprisonment and punishment in order to indict their husbands for inappropriate behavior (Staub 16). These examples illustrate how death can indeed function to destabilize notions of domestic duty and marriage. In fact, *The Tragedy of Mariam* is yet another example of this, since Elizabeth Cary uses the death of Mariam, who dies like a martyr, to comment on the nature of a marriage gone awry due to unequal distributions of power in a marriage.

Broadly speaking, suicide could function in a similar way as well, since that form of death could also take on aspects of a performance, or spectacle, that undermined other values, including, for example, religious authority. Suicide was a form of death that also functioned as a destabilizing force in that it was both a crime punishable by law and was considered sacrilegious (Macdonald and Murphy 42). Furthermore, we see in superstitions surrounding suicides the unwillingness to subscribe to fully Protestant beliefs, since desecration of the body or grave of a self-murder was still superstitiously practiced in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a holdover from a Catholic past (Macdonald and Murphy 44). Despite the elimination of the belief in Purgatory, suicide was the quintessential “bad death,” and beliefs about suicides evoke the liminality of purgatory, retaining some elements of Catholic superstition. According to Michael Macdonald and Terence Murphy in *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England*, self-murderers were thought to wander between the world of the dead and the world of the living (46). By the seventeenth century, defenses of self-killing, such as John Donne’s *Biathanatos*, were being published increasingly and such defenses encouraged people to begin thinking of suicide as a medical issue or a rational choice rather than something to be punished, or considered sacrilege. Nevertheless, laws punishing suicide victims by taking their estates from their families remained in tact until the nineteenth century, and the unwillingness to give up superstitious burials of suicide victims, such as burying them at crossroads (Macdonald and Murphy 44), illustrates not only the importance placed in constructing “good deaths,” but the anxiety and disruption caused by non-normative dying.

Thus far, I have attempted to show some of the ways that the early modern period’s emphasis on dying a good death required preparation and construction, which took the form of participation from friends, family, or society both in memorializing and directing a good death. The importance of the performance of a proper last dying confession of faith to confirm the good nature of the deceased’s life and death is also of utmost importance to the drama of a good death. But the emphasis on communicating morality through good deaths wasn’t a straightforward process. Indeed, sometimes the emphasis on certain values allowed for those same, or other, values to be undermined due to the social – and somewhat unpredictable – nature of dying, and because of the number of varying and intersecting social

structures involved at the deathbed competed with one another. Moving forward, I will explore these ideas in the context of Katherine Stubbes's domestic, Christian death, which is held up as a model for other women to imitate. *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women* is essential to an exploration of the ways in which gender values begin to slip in the performance of a good death, which is so concerned with communicating spiritual values.

As Houlbrooke points out in *Death, Religion, and the Family in England*, "the craft of dying" afforded each sex the opportunity to exercise qualities more typically associated with the other sex, and this becomes apparent in *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*. "Men," Houlbrooke states, "normally expected to be active and dominant, were now called upon to submit to God's hand"; he continues, arguing that women, in some respects, were better able to perform good deaths since most of them had gone through childbirth, "a rehearsal for the last act" (185). *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, Phillip Stubbes's written account of the death of his young wife, Katherine, communicates values about gender, spirituality, and politics, and the narrative is performative of the idea that Katherine's femininity, in many ways, plays a role in preparing her for an exemplary death. The presentation of Katherine's death stages her death as drama and as a model for others to follow. Stubbes actively avoids referring to himself directly in the narrative; instead, he writes of himself in the third person and refers to himself as "her husband," in order to both direct attention away from his own biases, and to successfully present his narrative as a model to be imitated, rather than a piece simply praising the deceased. Indeed, we only get Katherine's voice through Phillip, which he says is "set downe word for word, as she spake it" (Stubbes 1). Despite the fact that Katherine's words are filtered through Phillip, she is allowed a prominent role in her own drama. Admittedly, it is difficult to believe that

someone dying of a fever could so coherently and fervently speak on religious matters as her husband's account suggests, but Stubbes's account nevertheless lends agency to feminine qualities in the deathbed space, and it demonstrates the androgynous nature of a good death.

Protestant values, communicated through texts like Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651), recommend stoicism and resolve in death, traditionally masculine traits, advising readers to resist despair or impatience. In fact, Taylor even recommends removing "women and weepers" from the deathbed space, effectively barring displays of femininity from that space, arguing that the social drama they imbue there makes dying difficult. Nevertheless, it is Katherine's femininity that allows her to construct for herself a good death, and contrary to Taylor's distrust of women in the deathbed space, it is Katherine's husband who supposedly selfishly encouraged her to pray for recovery, something that might have indicated too strong an attachment to the earthly life, and could have tempted Katherine toward despair. Phillip, in that sense, shirks his duty as an attendant at the deathbed by in fact tempting Katherine to cling to her earthly desires. In some ways, Phillip depicts himself as having made Katherine's death harder, and despite his actions, her virtue alone constructed a perfect death. To Phillip's request, for example, Katherine reportedly responded, "I beseech you, pray not that I should live, for I thinke it long to be with my God . . . death is to me advantage" (3). In Phillip's narrative, it is Katherine's feminine humility throughout her life that appears to prepare her for an easy submission to God's will in death. The degree to which Katherine's voice is present in this text is contested today; for instance, David Cressy warns that eulogies demand special caution, asking "are [women's] lives revealed, or are they veiled, by the eulogies written about them after their deaths?" ("Response" 192). Nevertheless, the emphasis on Katherine's submission and

humility preserves at least some degree of feminine agency and a privileging of feminine qualities in the deathbed space.

First, Phillip constructs Katherine's femininity and his masculinity by describing her good nature and easy recognition of her husband's and God's authority in life. Phillip notes that Katherine was nearly always studying the word of God, "for her whole delight was to be conversant in the scriptures, and to meditate upon them day and night" (1). As I've mentioned, instructional texts such as William Perkins's argued that the performance of a good death began with a good life, so Phillip's rather lengthy description of Katherine's upbringing, her zeal for reading the Bible, and their short, happy marriage is indispensable to characterizing her death. In fact, it is his portrayal of her extreme feminine qualities that makes the drama of her death such an appealing one, especially when she shifts to a more masculine countenance as she confronts Satan in the very end of *A Chrystall Glasse*.

Phillip's account of Katherine's death is indeed framed as a model for other Christian women to follow in thinking about their own lives and deaths, but this act of memorialization also performs the idea that part of dying a good death was having an audience who would memorialize the death properly. Phillip's publishing and circulating Katherine's death narrative preserves her good death and her voice, though filtered through him, after she is gone. Patricia Phillippy points out that due to Catholic superstitions about too heavy a focus on the deceased, oftentimes, as in the case of *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, the memorialization was framed in such a way as to set the deceased's death up as a model for imitation, since it was generally agreed upon that praising the dead should not be an end in itself (85). While some of her feminine agency is preserved in Phillip's act of memorializing her, it is important to keep in mind that Phillip has other motives in that he is involved in

preserving, through her narrative, certain beliefs about marriage and femininity.

Nevertheless, Phillip's narrative reveals important qualities in the constructing of a good death-drama.

The beginning of Phillip's narrative focuses heavily on depicting Katherine as the ideal, virtuous wife. He states that she was never given to vanities or pride, and she always respected his spiritual leadership by asking him for guidance in spiritual matters. She always "obeyed the commandement of the Apostle, who biddeth women to bee silent, and to learne of their husbandes at home" (2). Phillip's characterization of Katherine's life in this way not only communicates her femininity and virtue, as well as state-sanctioned models for marriage, but it also makes her last dying speeches that much more impressive since she takes on a much more adamant demeanor, expressing her own beliefs with conviction and even giving spiritual advice to her husband. In some ways, Katherine's dying speeches could be read as suggesting that the successful melding of masculine and feminine traits is required to construct a good death, an illustration of the importance of rewriting gender in one's last act. Furthermore, it is Katherine's experience in life as a woman that allows her to construct not just a good death, but a "*perfect Christian*" death (Stubbes 3, emphasis mine). In fact, *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women*, in some ways, actually implies that constructing such a death may be more difficult for men.

First, Katherine's relationship to Phillip as provider and leader in her marriage models her submission to the ultimate patriarch: God. In this way, Katherine and Phillip's marriage, and particularly Katherine's position in it, prepares her for the type of humble, unassuming behavior required to be a good Protestant. In fact, the words of the Scripture, as Phillip points out, state, "wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church . . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5: 22-24). A man’s authoritative position as husband, then, may conflict with his subordinate position as Christian, and a man, responsible for acquiring the earthly possessions of his household, such as wealth and material goods, may in fact be more prone to cling to earthly things, or to pray for recovery, especially if he is leaving behind financial dependents in the form of a spouse or children. In contrast, though, Katherine is subordinate in both relationships, and so subordination is a practiced routine. In other words, Katherine’s extreme femininity in life has forced her to give up herself by submitting to her husband as well as to social rules and to continually practice humility; therefore, submitting to death is part of a practiced ritual that men would not have experienced in the same way.

Second, in Katherine’s account, her maternity is paramount to her ability to perform a good death, thus her gender is evident throughout the text, and instead of passing into a non-gendered space, Katherine’s gender actually affords her more credibility and a more impressive victory in the face of the temptation to despair, making her narrative an even more compelling model to be imitated. I have already mentioned that it has been argued that a woman’s experiences in childbirth served as preparation for death, since there was a fairly high likelihood of dying in labor (Houlbrooke 185). Katherine, too, believed “that child should be her death” (2). Leading up to the birth of her first child, then, according to Phillip, Katherine prepared herself for death by always studying the word of God and meditating, not on this world, but the next, stating, “if I should be a friend unto this world, I should be an enemy to God” (2). The anxiety of childbirth, in ways that men could not experience,

provided women with a particularly acute motivation for preparing early for death, as Perkins suggests.

Katherine nevertheless survived childbirth and grew strong, before falling ill at a later time with a fever, but this maternal motivation for preparing for death, and the preparation of leaving her child behind allowed her to construct a more perfect death when she finally fell into terminal illness. Having already resigned herself to not being able to raise her child, she bequeaths her son to her husband before her final confession of faith, saying, “I bequeath this child unto you, hee is no longer mine . . . I forsake him, you, and all the world . . . And I pray you sweet husband bring up this child in good letters . . . and above all things see that he be brought up and instructed in the exercise of true religion” (3). Her manner, here, not only exhibits the authority given to her in maternity, but it also models a more masculine duty of creating a will, or leaving a legacy. Married women were typically barred from making a will unless they were given permission by their husband to do so (Becker 151). It is important to recognize that Katherine does leave a legacy in the form of a living child, so that in this act of bestowal, Katherine marks her legacy, and therefore her death, with maternity. Moreover, she even positions herself as the spiritual head of the household as she instructs Phillip to teach their son in her image, effectively writing her will in the form of her own beliefs, and encouraging Phillip to use her memory as inspiration for that instruction. Katherine also gives away a puppy that she and Phillip had taken in, repenting the vanity of keeping a pet, and in this instance, she takes on the role of spiritual leader once again, going so far as to chastise her husband for keeping the dog as well. While this action could be read as a giving up of her maternal duties and what might be seen as a feminine impulse to nurture other beings, it seems more likely that Katherine’s maternity, specifically the anxiety of carrying a

child, has motivated her to prepare to give up the earthly things most dear to her. These acts of bestowal also function as a symbolic shedding of her earthly responsibilities to her gender.

It is Katherine's femininity, then, that makes her a prime model to be imitated in life and in death. In fact, Phillip depicts her feminine gentleness and meekness as Christ-like, claiming that she never gave over to any anger (2). In life, Katherine is portrayed as the epitome of feminine virtue; she is mild, she acts as a spiritual role model, and she submits to her husband, always recognizing him as the head of the household in spiritual and domestic matters. This mildness and willingness to submit to Phillip makes it all the more compelling a drama when Katherine so fervently confesses her faith and her anti-Catholic sentiment. She not only confesses her faith, but she also provides spiritual instruction and her own interpretations of scripture to those at her bedside. In one instance, she explains why purgatory does not exist: "Christ saith, he went into Heaven to prepare a place for us, then not into Purgatorie . . . thither shall all the soules of the faithfull ascend immediately. And therefore is the opinion of popish Purgatory, both blasphemous and sacrilegious" (5). Katherine also predicts the nature of relationships between souls familiar with one another on earth in the afterlife, offering her own interpretations of Scripture. At one point, she even calls the Pope the Antichrist, refers to Catholic doctrines as "popish trash," and speaks at length about various other original interpretations of scripture (5-7). As women were forbidden to speak in church, and Phillip tells us that Katherine looked to him for answers on spiritual matters, Katherine's lengthy confession of faith and interpretations of scripture are dramatized by the fact that it is unusual for her to speak so absolutely on so many matters and at such length. If these are truly all Katherine's words and Phillip did not fabricate them, they reveal that death functioned as a space that encouraged gender bending, since it is Phillip

who becomes listener and transcriber, and Katherine who has a voice that is preserved and even circulated after the fact. On the other hand, if Phillip wrote a false account of Katherine's last dying speech, it still reveals the power of a last dying speech and the potential of women's voices to communicate religious beliefs with a particular power because of the fact that they are typically silenced. Further, the appeal of the text is contingent on the belief that they were Katherine's words, not Phillip's, which gives her the agency whether her "speech" was fabricated by Phillip or not. Regardless of authorship, *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women* presents feminine humility as indispensable to dying a good death.

No sooner than Katherine confesses her faith, however, Phillip brings the narrative to its climax, stating that "Satan was ready to bid her combat" (9). Here, Katherine's sweet, feminine demeanor, described before as "lovely" and "flushing," changes, and "she bent the browes, shee frowned, and looking with an angry, sterne, and fierce countenance . . . she burst forth into these speeches following, pronouncing her words (as it were) scornfully, and disdainfully, in contempt of him to whom shee spake" (9). After she rejects Satan, angrily preaching God's word, she supposedly "fell suddenly into a sweete smiling laughter, saying: Now is hee gone, now is he gone: doe ye not see him flie like a coward, and runne away like a beaten cocke? He hath lost the field, and I have wonne the victory, even the garland and crowne of everlasting life" (8). Katherine's victory is rendered particularly extraordinary since we might fear for her frailty in the face of such a masculine figure as Satan, who is depicted here in masculine terms along with the fight and victory itself. Through the evocation of the garland of victory, and even cock fighting, Katherine's victory is placed among the cultural accomplishments of men, and it works to lend strength to the cultural

assumptions that a good husband provides spiritual leadership and strength to a wife, since this relationship is modeled by Katherine's shedding the credit for her accomplishment in attributing it to "the power and might of Jesus Christ," who is also traditionally depicted as a bridegroom. This victory over Satan, then, in many ways, reveals how the memorialization of deaths may be written to reaffirm social, religious, and political values. Katherine's victory over Satan is by far the most prideful depiction of Katherine that we get in Phillip's narrative, and its contrast to her otherwise sweet and feminine nature makes her victory over Satan all the more dramatic and impressive, further highlighting the way in which gender informs and lends power to the narrative of a death. Alexander Ryrie notes that confrontations with the devil were common in women's deathbed speeches, and based on Susan Staub's interpretations of the representations of female criminals as weak and easily led astray by Satan due to that frailty, it is not difficult to imagine that this type of conflict between a woman and Satan would make for a particularly exciting or sensational story (Ryrie 464, Staub 13).

Furthermore, Stubbes's account of his wife's death mirrors the recommendations that William Perkins writes in *Death's Knell*, illustrating that the drama of the deathbed became somewhat of a popular script. As I've noted, Perkins's text sets up several elements of dying a good death, all of which Katherine follows methodically. Further, *A Chrystall Glasse for Christian Women* was printed in thirty-four editions between 1591 and 1700, attesting to the popularity of the narrative and to Katherine's exemplary death (Phillippy 81). The sensational nature of narratives about death is also apparent in the number of pamphlets that reprinted the last dying speeches of criminal women, which further reveals a great interest in women's last dying speeches, and exemplifies the social nature of dying. It also reveals a

certain anxiety about uncensored or unregulated dying speeches performed by women since these accounts were primarily written by preachers or clergymen, recognizing, in a perverse way, a threat to the social order posed by dying women. The wide circulation of narratives like Katherine's and like the dying speeches of criminals also participates in a certain kind of memorializing act which, as I noted earlier, was necessary to determining the nature of a death, but also in confirming social, political, and religious values as a culture, often at the expense of gender values. Furthermore, narratives about the executions of criminals heighten the notion of death as a drama, since the scaffold functions as a stage and the execution itself as a performance of cultural values that uphold the authority of the state.

Executions themselves are part of another kind of moral theater that is involved in the communication of power and authority. One of the most significant ways in which power was communicated in the early modern period were these last dying speeches of women, which were printed and circulated as models to follow, in Katherine's case, or as warnings to heed. In a similar way to the printing and circulation of Katherine Stubbes's deathbed performance, the reprinted confession speeches of dying criminals also functioned to communicate power and authority by upholding domestic values inherently linked to the state.⁴ Nevertheless, Susan Staub points out that the women in early modern crime literature are presented as deviants, but as all women were seen as "imperfect, deformed men," they represent another norm – not an exception (13). The notion of "a chrysell glasse" for Christian women, obviously the title of Phillip Stubbes's narrative, becomes somewhat vexed, since women were also encouraged to "see" themselves in the narratives of less

⁴ In fact, Foucault calls our attention to the performative nature of state apparatuses like prisons and executions in *Discipline and Punish*, arguing, "the delinquent is an institutional product" (Foucault 1494).

savory examples of femininity. For instance, “A Warning for Wives by the Example of One Katherine Francis,” encourages “all good wives a warning take/ in Country and in City, / And thinke how they shall at a stake / be burned without pittie” (“A Warning for Wives” qtd. in Staub 12). This ballad, written about the execution of Katherine Francis, participates in a similar process of setting an example that Phillip does in *A Chrystall Glasse*. In death, as in grief, then, women are characterized primarily by ambivalence, since in both of these processes, women pose threats to an established social order.

In many ways, these seemingly polar examples of early modern female death share some commonalities, particularly in the valuation of femininity. The sensationalizing of both of these types of deaths reinforces the same ideas about women in the period that are involved in the interpretation of grief, since grief, as a feminized emotion, came under the same suspicion as females, and interpretations of both women and death hinge on ambivalence. As I have explained in the chapters that precede this one, grief was distrusted, as were women, as either the epitome of vice or virtue, and it came under the same suspicion as females themselves due to anxieties about excessive emotion in a Protestant culture. Furthermore, women are consistently portrayed as frail and easily tempted by the devil during the period, so while this cultural depiction of femininity makes Katherine’s life and death a model to be imitated, those same feminine traits also mitigate women’s guilt in crimes such as adultery or murder. Narratives about female criminals and female deaths in the early modern period both imply that only the spiritual guidance of a husband can manage a woman’s frailty, sheltering her from spiritual danger. In other words, when husbands fail to provide proper guidance, a woman’s characteristic frailty is bound to lead her astray, and conversely, when a woman successfully resists temptation, it also due in part to the

husband's good leadership. The structuring of marriage in terms of the husband as spiritual leader clearly removes some female agency from a good death, and in the case of Katherine Stubbes, it is easy to miss the fact that her maternity plays its own role in giving her strength and resilience in facing death. A similar problem occurs in the cases of female criminals when their crimes are mitigated on the basis of their frailty, since the basic values of the family and the state are nevertheless upheld, and the woman's agency and individuality are taken away (Staub 22).

In conclusion, in grieving and in dying, women pose unique threats to the order of the family and to the state, since neither event can be fully navigated according to gender expectations; due to the privileging of religious stoicism; and because of the requisite preservation of the last dying words of an individual. Specifically because of the threat that grieving and dying women pose to established hierarchies, though, women do experience some agency, if limited by the censorship of their accounts by their male survivors. In this project, I hope to have broadly spoken to the idea that the processes of grieving and dying are particularly vexed by notions of "good" and "bad" ways of "doing" both, which are predicated on the basis of gendered descriptions and a patriarchal culture. There is much more to be done concerning the evaluation of women and grieving and dying during the early modern period, particularly in deaths like suicide, since ideas about suicide are doubly vexed by superstition. Finally, I hope to have sufficiently emphasized in this chapter that, like grieving, death provided an important site for rewriting or renegotiating ideas about gender and culture.

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Vita

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