

Article

# Appetite, Anatomy, and Desire in Caroline Era Poetry and Theatre

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**Abstract:** The Caroline Era in early modern England was characterized by political instability and theological revolution. In response, there were ideological attempts to regulate desire and a distinct focus on the creation of a public persona. These crises led to anxieties about gender, performance, and the body. Literary production at this time was founded in political conflict and was both a response to and an escape from these events. In this article, I argue that early modern writers literarily regulate gender and bodies through the personal, political and theological happenings that they respond to within their work. John Donne's metaphysical poetry and George Herbert's *The Temple* express the anxiety of desire involved in the process of seeking God. These texts translate this through the language of eros, bodily sacrificial connection to the Divine Logos, and communion that focuses on digestion and inclusion in the corporeal universe as a means to achieve the divine moment. Similarly, John Ford's *The Broken Heart* portrays anxieties about desire and appetite through female anatomization. The portrayals of desire, anxiety, and appetite in these texts (all first published in 1633) are representative of the historical, political, and religious ideological structures that informed their creation.

**Keywords:** early modern; gender; anxiety; anatomy; appetite

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17th-century England was a time of great political instability, theological revolution, and distinct focus on the creation of a public persona. By 1633 Puritans had started migrating to the Americas and producing texts attacking the English Renaissance theatre; food insecurity led to social unrest; and the first church since the English Reformation was erected. Writing was a convoluted process in which the individual had to enact a fashioning of self—a presentation of an artificial identity that was in agreeance with courtly custom. This invented persona concealed intense civil unrest and anxieties about gender and sex. Writers would invoke a specific self-fashioning and design a peculiar frame in which literary, religious, and political communities intersect, and intimacy and society engage in a carefully constructed interplay. The conflict and division at the time became writers' source of creativity in asserting not only aesthetic significance, but also moral, social, sexual, religious, and political implications through allegory and metaphor. Depictions of sex that is divinely ordained, or procreative sex, were allowed and even encouraged but lust-driven sex forced violent response and active removal. To make sexual imagery pleasing and seductive but also shameful and wrong, writers would present sex in terms of anatomy. They show the reader (or viewer) the pleasures of the flesh by scientifically categorizing and denying it. By placing the reader in the position of a voyeur, they render them anatomist. Emblazoning the body is a means of stripping imagery of its power, and exposing the body's parts became a way to dismantle the power of images. Writers would celebrate physical beauty but be aware of the dichotomy between lust and innocence; any explicit description of the body renders it anatomized and objectified by the viewers' voyeuristic ventures.

## 1. Appetite and the Divine

The poetry of John Donne and George Herbert, both first published posthumously in 1633, largely responded to anxieties about desire through the lenses of eros and divinity. Early modern English writers expressed the anxieties of the time through notions of space, place, and appetite both secular and divine. The “decenteredness” of the Copernican Revolution and expansion into the new world led to a sense of displacement and loss (Hollingsworth 2012, p. 82). The 39 Articles of the Church of England were sporadically enforced, which also contributed to a chaotic mindset. Though the articles deny transubstantiation, they purposely leave room for interpretation because of the Anglican desire to achieve a common ground between the Catholic and Puritan churches. Article XXVIII specifically outlines the eucharistic experience of the Lord’s Supper:

“The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ’s death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ. Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions. The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith. The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped”. (“39 Articles of Religion” 1563)

In 1628, Charles I of England started enforcing literal adherence to the articles, but there was still disagreement over their individual interpretations. This, amongst other forms of political and theological conflict, led to the English Civil War of 1642–1651, which saw the monarch fighting the Parliament and ultimately lessened the power of the Church of England. The uncertainty of the time led to anxieties about desire and appetite. The discourse of ideal politics was “part of the mental landscape of the time” (Appelbaum 2002, p. 4), which began as a self-fashioning in response to Jacobean culture. The author who addresses his own appetites “constructs himself as an authorial ‘I’ out of whose own rationality a realm of ideal politics may be fashioned, making himself the productive subject of an alternative world” (Appelbaum 2002, p. 73), thus establishing his own desire-based poetics.

In his metaphysical poetry, John Donne harshly critiques societal practices and daringly conflates the religious with the erotic. Donne’s literary works act as a criticism of English society that simultaneously explore the nuances of desire. His poetry experiences a marked evolution from biting social commentary to more devout manifestations, yet prominent throughout his corpus is his use of the language of eros (Sherwood 1984, p. 231). With this language, Donne responds to the semiotic interplay between intimacy and society by creating an overlap between the two: he contracts communion with God to “the space of most exquisite intimacy” (Schwartz 2008, p. 88). Donne also affirms theological anxiety and “imagines the Lord’s Supper as a means of training devotees to respond to an already existing divine presence” (Netzley 2011, p. 107). Only access to the Divine Logos beyond self-persuasion will allow association between signifier and signified (Netzley 2011, p. 115).

“The Flea” represents Donne’s conflation of divine and secular appetite, as the eucharistic experience takes place in the body of a flea. Donne’s narrator says that he and his lover could reach the orgasmic moment in the “marriage bed, and marriage temple” (Donne and Hayward 1950, 2.4). Because this moment is not achieved, there is then a literal sacrifice in order to achieve the Eucharistic moment: the flea is squashed and killed. The conceit of the flea does not reduce God in its corporeality but instead demonstrates his presence in and of the world. As God himself is capable of, the flea joins the narrator and his lover in a way “more than we would do” (Donne and Hayward 1950, 1.9). The flea’s inevitable death is then reminiscent of Christ’s sacrifice, which becomes a translation of desire. This demonstrates Donne’s rejection of transubstantiation and his Catholic heritage, but simultaneously exposes the mystical

nature of the Eucharist. Donne “seeks Christ’s presence in the most chaotic of places: the body’s organs and fluids” (Sloane 2006, p. 16). This demonstrates the “symbolic coherence and unity that is lacking in physiological accounts of the body” (Kuchar 2001, p. 35). That is, Donne does not require Christ’s body to become bread in order to achieve the moment of sacrifice, but simply needs bread and body to be associated. This association becomes a matter of anxiety about appetite, which necessitates prayer; it is this prayer which allows connection to God.

The *Holy Sonnets* further establish this sacrificial connection to God through prayer by calling for a “rearticulation and transformation of the very values that we ascribe to devotion” (Netzley 2011, p. 120). Connection to God is found in eucharistic sacrifice but may only be achieved through desirable fear and devout anxiety. This masochistic moment demonstrates that self-sacrifice and suppression of appetite may also lead to the Divine Logos. Donne’s poetry creates its own Eucharistic poetics and politics by exposing the desire and absence of erotic love as a means through which to experience “relational impossibility from within” and a revealed God (Hollingsworth 2012, p. 79). That is, Donne’s lyrics demonstrate theological revelation through the language of erotic communion. Eros becomes a space in which appetite is suppressed and reinvigorated, desire subsumed and renewed. God is accessed through the language of eros, and God is present through erotic appetite. A theology of erotics informs Donne’s writing as much as strictly religious theology (Schwartz 2008, p. 96). The anxiety of accessing an “absent-present God” is expressed through the interplay of appetite for the erotic (Hollingsworth 2012, p. 81). By applying oneself to the pleasurable pain of devotion, his writings imply, one may achieve the exquisite intimacy of connection with God.

George Herbert’s poetry denies Donne’s overt eroticism and instead focuses fully on anxiety and desire to achieve access to the Divine. Herbert was headed down a political academic path before becoming ordained, and this politicism informs his work. *The Temple* is a collection of poems that represent a man’s spiritual journey to be closer to God but at the same time shows a literal journey—that is, the reader is taken through the architecture of an actual temple or church. Herbert portrays a three-part journey, representative of the Holy Trinity: spiritual, spatial, and temporal. The book itself is also divided into a trinity: the Church-Porch, the Church and the Church Militant.

The spiritual action within the Church-Porch serves to prepare a young man who is not yet prepared for more serious devotions. He then moves on to the Church, which secures his faith, and finally to the Church Militant, or the corporate body of the church. The main interest in *The Temple* is the heart and mind of the worshipper. Spatially, the poems move from the outside of the Church—the Church-Porch, where the reader undergoes a regenerative action and metaphoric baptism, to pass through the “Sumperliminare,” or door, and into the Church, where the first thing encountered is “The Altar,” which offers up the sacrificial Christ. Then a journey through “The Church” leads to “The Church Militant,” or the holy of holies. This is also a journey through time, as the speaker—and ostensibly the reader—grow closer to God. The poems represent the various moods and rhythms of a faithful believer. There is a constant ascension and movement toward God throughout the text, but it is a stuttering movement, representative of crises of faith and doubt. Just as the poems themselves incorporate various forms of doubt, a return to belief, and doubt again, so does the poetic form. When the poems are obviously linked together, the reader understands the structure, and when the form wavers, experiences doubt; but when form is restored, so is understanding.

Herbert was a member of the Church of England, which was a sort of amalgamation of European Protestantism and Catholicism. The Church was ripe with conflict about which parts of each religion they should incorporate. For example, the arranging of church interiors was highly contested. With the Reformation came a re-evaluation of the uses of the church building, and attempts to demystify sacred space led to crisis. A new idea of church as community was beginning to overtake the older concept of church as a place of awe and wonder, which led to a variety of fights and disagreements about what exactly the church was and should represent. One of these major fights was about the eucharist.

European Protestantism, however influential on early Reformed Church of England, failed in its attempts to settle the question of Christ’s presence in the eucharist. This made the eucharist a huge issue

within the church. There was a vicious debate between the concepts of Calvin, Zwingli, and Luther, or between the eucharist as transubstantiation, memorialism or consubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the doctrine that in the Eucharist, bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. Those who were anti-transubstantiation thought it was essentially cannibalism. Its opponents were instead proponents of Christ's presence as spiritual in the eucharist. This led to a huge distinction between table and altar as used for communion; the table represented more of a communion, and no Christ in or as bread, while the altar represented sacrifice: Christ's blood and body.

Due to this theological struggle, *The Temple* and specifically "The Altar" are political texts. Not only does Herbert mention an altar instead of a table in his work, but he makes it the title, subject, and form of one of his poems. Thus, Herbert sought to make the eucharistic experience an actuality through poetry. *The Temple* shows how communion, sacrifice, and devotion as expressed through architectonic order may work together (McLaughlin and Thomas 1975, p. 104). Herbert asserts the church building's literal architecture as a text to be read. This assertion is a response to the reevaluation of the uses and arrangement of the church building caused by the 16th-century Reformation and subsequent growth of the Anglican church (Schwartz 2008, p. 3), which was played out in the distinction between table and altar. The table represented more of a communion, while the altar represented sacrifice and Christ's blood (Schwartz 2008, p. 3). "The Altar" plays on this distinction by focusing on the construction of the altar as God-made and accessed through Christ's sacrifice. A union with Christ is both heavenly and substantial, and heavenly blood is the means by which to access this divinity: Christ's crucified body, as conveyed through (but not literally present in) eucharistic bread, bears God's love, and the union with holy blood is the effect of faith and word made flesh.

Herbert's purposeful conflation of space, place, and connection to the Divine Logos demonstrates anxieties about desire and appetite. Herbert depicts this desire through physical spaces and the materiality of the church, which has status and can be read as a sacred text. In *The Temple*, he specifies the physical components of a church: the floor, the choir, windows, and so on, but they are material ciphers until brought together through the Divine Logos. Earthly and spiritual conflation does not bring God down to a base level, but instead allows the architectural to elevate the individual to a sacramental level. Herbert seeks to make his eucharistic experience an actuality through perfecting actual place and through poetry. For Herbert, "wine becomes a wing" to "heav'nly bloud" (Herbert 1927, p. 3). This winged ascension is cosmological; it is a movement that has to do with body, space, appetite and movement from this earthly place to the heavens. The eucharistic experience allows a movement toward God and heaven.

The first thing the reader encounters in Herbert's temple is the altar, the place of sacrifice and offering. The altar is the place of Jesus' bodily sacrifice and where the faithful offer up their praise and devotion. Herbert's depiction of the altar as a heart renders it symbolic rather than literal. However, though the altar may be metaphorical in praise, it is literal in practice. The heart was initially supposed to be alive to God's will, but in Adam's fall the heart became hardened. Herbert paradoxically seeks to erect an altar for worship with this dead heart-stone; but this paradox is fixed, as always, by God. God says in Ezekiel 36, 26-7:

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws". (King James Bible 1633)

That is, only God and Divine Logos can render a heart true, and only through proper physical space, personal devotion, and regulation of desire can one achieve connection to the ideal. By making this poem in the shape of an altar, Herbert is once again re-creating God's works, since God made the physical world and everything therein. Though Herbert found architecture and architectonics to be important, it is only with God's presence that they allow ascension. This is especially evident in Herbert's focus on the body in this poem. God is praised in and from the heart, which is a metaphor for the altar; and the poem's catalogue of other body parts—heart, hand, tears—presents the image of a consuming body. With this image of a body we are also meant to imagine Christ's body, and then to reconstruct his presence on the altar.

*The Temple* shows that time and place lose existence when confronted with God, and yet a discrete focus on desire and its regulation allow for satisfied appetites. Herbert's poems are set in a place only God knows: the temple of the human heart. The human heart becomes a visual representation of the need for the Divine Logos to penetrate and dwell in the heart of the subject. These ejaculatory poems are spiritual discourse attempting to recreate God's discourse through the act of offering and sacrifice. Herbert's sacrifice is his poem, but it is also his (consuming/consumed) body. Herbert is not only calling to mind the sacrifice of Christ; he is also masochistically presenting his own body as sacrifice to God. In doing so, Herbert takes Donne's notion of masochistic self-sacrifice and literally embodies it, as he offers himself up for sacrifice upon his altar in masochistic devotional frenzy. However, neither "pleasure or pain is adequate to indicate or seal God's love" (Netzley 2011, p. 51). It is instead the act of devotion, being in God's temple, and partaking in the Eucharist that allows the divine moment.

## 2. Performative Anatomy

Translating desire for the body through the language of eros, or "sacred anatomy" (Sawday 1996, p. 85), was one way that writers in the Caroline era consolidated anxieties about anatomy. However, society also had a "despairing contempt for body" (Hunt 1988, p. 27). This contempt inspired many playwrights to portray the body as something to be penetrated and dissected. I extend this to the natural culmination of bodily anatomization. Renaissance-era scientific endeavors were specifically tailored to explore the body's limits and understand its inner workings. A "culture of dissection" arose (Sawday 1996, viii), during which the human body became anatomized and dissected for social consumption. This "new science" was represented through scientific processes prominent during the Renaissance and the rise of penal anatomy (Sawday 1996, viii). Historical anatomy theatre and its culture of dissection both reflected and provoked interest in the body as something separate from the self (Sawday 1996, p. 3). This division happened at a specific sociohistorical moment that was "highly theatrical in character, and occurred in a theatrical space" (Bleeker 2008, p. 14). The spectacle of early modern theatre helped shape the audience itself. Theatre professionals at this time "knew the extent to which their audiences controlled them economically and, as a result, aesthetically" (Low and Myhill 2011, p. 5). Instead of being mere passive recipients to the action onstage, the audience engaged in a sort of active communication with the performance itself. The theatre was an interactive space, where audience cheers—or silence—could change the course of action onstage. Anatomy theatre peaked in the seventeenth century, after which "theatre and theory drifted apart" (Bleeker 2008, p. 14). While interest in the body and its parts still informed theatrical performances, rabid audience interest in anatomy subsided after its initial phenomenology.

Anatomy portrayal in theatre correlated with new laws dictating penal anatomy (Sawday 1996, p. 48). Severe criminals were punished with public death, dismemberment and anatomization, which was meant to be a humiliating and dehumanizing process. This punishment involved being hanged, quartered, and disembowelment. In this claiming of the body for science, "punishment is reinforced" and the criminal's identity is changed to "that of the scientific subject" (Gent 1990, p. 116). This process of anatomization correlates with an emasculation. Sawday and others argue that the dehumanizing process of anatomization is necessarily a feminization. Presenting the interior of a body onstage for audience consumption renders it powerless and therefore, in a patriarchal hierarchy, female (Sawday 1996, p. 13). The popularization of anatomy also makes the corpse a fragile protection since it is constantly in danger of being opened and consumed. Through death tragic female characters onstage become even more thoroughly consumed and degraded. When the audience enacts visual anatomy through watching female bodies onstage, it requires a further dehumanization of the characters than what takes place within the play itself. It is a violation of body, which necessarily becomes a violation of the female. The human body became emblazoned and embellished through its representation onstage, but it also became blazed—dissected purely for the enjoyment of a ravenous audience. This violation of body and its anatomization and feminization is represented in male anxieties and the eschewing of sensual pleasures in favor of corporeal imagery in Caroline era plays.

Performative anxieties about gender and the body were even further exacerbated by the fact that most, if not all, female roles were played by boy actors (some contend that grown male actors must have played the more complex roles, but this is heavily disputed by most theatre historians). Children at this time were often viewed as unsexed: neither male nor female, but pre-gender. This meant that boy actors taking on sexualized female roles was subversive but simultaneously also more palatable than if a woman had taken the role. Many religious people, especially Puritans, found boy actors taking on female roles to be scandalous, as they believed it put lustful homoerotic thoughts into the minds of confused playgoers. However, to most audience members the knowledge of boy actors combined with a purposeful suspension of disbelief meant that they could further enjoy onstage female degradation and anatomization without feeling guilty for having lustful thoughts towards women. The use of boy actors created a disconnect that both further compounded anxieties about gender while also ironically soothing them. In fact, the use of boy actors likely further enhanced the patriarchal worldview of John Ford's *The Broken Heart* and similar plays, since it implies that everyone who is not a man should be subject to male rule and law.

Female characters in early modern theatre ceaselessly experience rape, murder, commodification and objectification, among countless other outrages. This establishes a sort of immediate hierarchy within tragedies, in which a woman must be either chaste or dead to exist at the top of the in-play social structure. The way gender is approached in *The Broken Heart* is "deeply contradictory" (Barker 2004, p. 70), since the only noble characters are women—but women must be chaste in order to survive. The play has mostly male characters, with only two prominent female characters. The men exude an "apparent liberality" with an "undercurrent of misogyny" that dictates female station and interactions (Barker 2004, p. 70). However, by presenting the female body onstage and exposing it for audience consumption, it creates a separate hierarchy with the aid of the viewer than exists purely within the confines of the social world of the play. Onstage representation of the female body in *The Broken Heart* dictates a discourse of female madness in terms of anatomy theatre and feminized degradation. In the play, appetite for the female body leads to desire to see the body objectified. By inviting the audience to digest the visual feminine tragedy of Penthea and Calantha, the playwright ensures that these female tragediennes are anatomized and objectified by the viewers' voyeuristic ventures. These women therefore become flattened versions of otherwise emotional characters to be consumed by a hungry audience. Witnessing this visual display and exploitation of the tragedienne makes the audience a consumptive force that is able to commit crimes of desire while still existing within societal restrictions.

An extreme appetite for bodily madness is played out in *The Broken Heart*. The audience ironically hungers for Penthea, who visibly starves herself onstage. Her body is then used as a catalyst for the death of Ithocles. This play further conflates the female body with anatomy and a means for audience consumption by equating watching onstage bodies with the satisfaction of eating. The prologue invites the audience to "partake a pity with delight," offering an "intellectual and aesthetic pleasure" to the audience through the process of anatomy and consumption (Gutierrez 2003, p. 57). Appetite is enacted within the play as well; love becomes interchangeable with consumption and marriage with anatomy, as Orgilus' love for Penthea is like relishing a feast but not eating it and Ithocles' love for Calantha is a "banquet with the gods" (Ford and Neilson [1633] 1911, IV.iii.). His heart becomes destroyed because the banquet is not eaten and is embodied in Penthea's physical being later as she literally refuses to eat. Like anatomy, marriage represents male social and physical control over the female body, which remains open for consumption, dissection, and appraisal. Marriage then becomes equated to anatomy in that it is controlled by men and represents the trafficking of women (Gutierrez 2003, p. 59).

Penthea's food refusal is her attempt to reject the active male rule of anatomy in a specifically feminine denial of society. By forcing the other characters and the audience to watch her body degenerate while she is still alive and arguably in a stable mental state (and so avoiding the normative representation of feminine excess), Penthea attempts to rebel both against the in-play social practices and the theatrical practice of anatomizing women. She assumes self-starvation as a means of correcting

her sexual excess (Gutierrez 2003, p. 70), which was forced upon her by men. Rather than the crazed, passionate madness of Ophelia or Calantha, Penthea enacts a deliberate, nearly scientific rendering of lunacy through the lens of appetite regulation. This depicts her as nearly masculine, as she self-anatomizes and is able to control the dissection and portrayal of her body onstage.

However, due to the rigidity of the social order within the play and masculine control within the theatre, Penthea's attempts at revolution ultimately fail as her corpse is utilized as a catalyst for Ithocles' murder. Immediately upon becoming a dead body, Penthea is reduced back to a passive female corpse and able to be manipulated for the purposes of an active male character. Penthea becomes "metaphorically anatomized as a symbol of the social practice of trafficking in women" as she is physically anatomized and presented for audience consumption (Gutierrez 2003, p. 62). Ithocles is likewise anatomized onstage in this scene as he is dissected and opened by Orgilus' knife, but his body becomes feminized upon death and so serves to compound the degradation of onstage death and of Penthea.

Calantha's madness and her body onstage follows the more typical course of female insanity as represented in plays of the early modern era. She dances wildly as her short-lived madness overtakes her body and is presented in visual terms for the audience's enjoyment. Her madness is literally embodied, as it is represented in purely physical terms; she is still able to speak eloquently, make sound decisions regarding her kingdom and retain her loyalty to Ithocles all while visibly and violently lamenting her grief. Calantha had perpetuated the patriarchal and masculine act of arranging marriages, an anatomy within itself (Gutierrez 2003, p. 75), and her punishment for assuming a masculine position is death and the further degradation of her body being anatomized onstage. She gains the ultimate position of masculine power in her inheritance of ruling over the kingdom, but this pushes the boundaries of her female undertaking too far and she is condemned to die, an onstage spectacle. As she is dancing, she says,

Thus I new-marry him whose wife I am;  
Death shall not separate us. O, my lords,  
I but deceiv'd your eyes with antic gesture. (Ford and Neilson [1633] 1911, V.iii.65–67)

Calantha realizes that she crossed the boundaries of feminine assumption of a masculine authority and so apologizes to the "lords" for deceiving their eyes "with antic gesture." In her madness and corporeality she is reduced to being just a female, rather than the ruler of the kingdom, and so must apologize for previous presumptions. Even her act of contrition is dictated in bodily images, as the "antic gesture" she describes focuses attention once again on the visual exhibition of her thrashing body and the madness it conveys. According to Gutierrez, "Calantha wills her own death at the end of the play, but it is also clear that her body is too weak to sustain the load of grief that has been placed on it" (Gutierrez 2003, p. 54). Through the humiliation of death, Calantha is reduced to strictly physical terms and anatomized, as her "broken heart" causes her body to collapse and become an exhibition. This is specifically female, as through death her body becomes re-feminized. Her broken heart is presented as the result of female assumption of male power, which the feminine form is not strong enough to handle.

As Calantha nears death, a song is performed, adding to the audience's voyeuristic consumption of the scene. The song alludes to the upcoming dehumanization of Calantha's body as it becomes dead onstage through references to beauty that "fades away" (Ford and Neilson [1633] 1911, V.iii.86) and youth that must "lie down in a bed of dust" (Ford and Neilson [1633] 1911, V.iii.88). These physical and bodily indications introduce the idea of Calantha's reduction to mere body and designate both the ravages of time on a live form and its even worse mortification after death. After her heart betrays her and her body collapses onstage, Calantha's body is remarked upon and drawn attention to, as Bassinus remarks that he weeps to see "her smile in death" (Ford and Neilson [1633] 1911, V.iii.97). Audience appetite is directed towards the exposition of the dead female form, anatomizing Calantha onstage and punishing her for her assumption of power and the weakness of the female body. Her

death is an erotic spectacle of appetite as the female form is presented and adulated purely for the purpose of its impending degradation onstage.

### 3. Conclusions

Anxieties about gender and the body are a prevalent theme throughout Caroline era poetry and theatre. In poetry, access to the divine is largely articulated through desire, consumption, and the Eucharistic moment. John Donne's metaphysical poetry and George Herbert's *The Temple* explore the corporeality of desire and hunger for the divine. These writers respond to personal, political, and theological upheaval to negotiate these desires. The eucharistic moment of communion with the unknowable yet desirable and omnipresent God thus creates a utopian moment of mutual appetites. For John Ford's *The Broken Heart*, audience appetite for the dead female body onstage represents the degradation of women. Anatomy theatre enacts dissection upon these passive female forms purely for the enjoyment of the audience and their appetite. Penhea and Calantha are reduced to corporeality, as their madness is expressed in visual terms and their death a feast for the audience. The audience is made automatically masculine for their ability to commit this consumption and anatomization. Embodiment of visible madness and the corpse itself become an erotic spectacle that feeds a hungry audience. The dead female onstage is penetrated by the eyes of the audience and offered purely for their titillation and consumption. By exploring the vectors of desire, appetite, and consumption in these texts, I argue that anxiety about gender and consumption is one that pervades early modern English literary products, particularly those published in the Caroline era. Consuming these texts anew parallels the hunger and desire that led to their creation.

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