

The Changeling

(In) Visibility, Knowledge and Subaltern Power

Act 2: SCOPIC ECONOMY

- Defined by a trope of SURVEILLANCE:
 - 2.1, 2.2: 24 references to SIGHT
- Beatrice is surrounded by OBSERVING MEN:
 - Authorized: Vermandero, Alonzo;
 - Unauthorized: Alsemero, De Flores, Tomazo
- All "see" a different "Beatrice"

Act 2: COMPETITION FOR (SELF) DEFINITION

- STRUGGLE between men to define Beatrice = a struggle for masculine SELF-DEFINITION:
 - Vermandero
 - Alonzo
 - Tomazo
 - Alsemero
 - De Flores
- REVEALS the vulnerability of masculine selfhood to reliance on the feminine MIDDLE TERM

Act 2: the RIGHT TO LOOK

- Competition for Beatrice
 - Transaction for STATUS between men
 - De Flores: "And were I not resolved in my belief / That thy virginity were perfect in thee" (3.4.117-18)
- Masculine power defined as the RIGHT TO LOOK = THE RIGHT TO DEFINE, TO APPROPRIATE, TO TRANSFER
- Feminine positioned as the OBJECT of SCOPIC and SOCIAL TRANSACTION


SUBALTERN POWER: FEMININE DISSIMULATION

- IF masculine power is defined by the RIGHT TO LOOK; feminine power is defined by the RIGHT TO DISSIMULATE or DEFLECT the gaze:
 - Beatrice shows DIFFERENT SURFACES to different men;
 - Reflects men's desires back to them;
 - Protects the secret interior (figured as virginity)

SUBALTERN POWER: DISSIMULATION: LANGUAGE/BODIES

- How does this power of DEFLECTION manifest itself in the text:
 - DOUBLE ENTENDRES and ASIDES: divide the space into exterior/interior; excluded/included;
 - BODY DOUBLE: if women are \$\$, they can be "exchanged" or "substituted" for one another:
 - Virginity test
 - Bed trick
 - APPROPRIATION OF MASCULINE KNOWLEDGE
 - The "opening" of Alsemero's secret chest
 - "Forbidden" knowledge

Act 3: SUBALTERN POWER: INTERCEPTION

- DE FLORES: doubled access:
 - Masculine RIGHT TO LOOK;
 - Servant  MAN => ABILITY TO BE INVISIBLE = ACCESS
- INTERCEPTION of HOMOSOCIAL EXCHANGE:
 - "STOLEN" KNOWLEDGE reveals Beatrice to HERSELF and effaces difference;
 - "Look but into your conscience, read me there, / 'Tis a true book, you'll find me there your equal" (3.4.133-34);
 - Interception of Beatrice's love-token, the glove, meant for Alsemero;
 - APPROPRIATES the power of other men to SEE Beatrice and therefore to USE her

ACT 5: THE "DIVINE" COMEDY: KNOWLEDGE

- "The prospect from the garden has showed / Enough for deep suspicion" (5.3.2-3).
 - SURVEILLANCE from INSIDE the Garden → the Fall of Man
 - De Flores = the serpent whose "gift" is FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE
 - KNOWLEDGE = double entendre: intellectual and sexual intimacy
 - Diaphanta's death: "It was the wages of her knowledge" (5.3.58);
 - Beatrice: "I have kissed poison for't, stroked a serpent" (5.3.66);
 - Vermandero: "We are all there [in hell], it circumscribes [us] here" (5.3.164)

Act 5: "DIVINE COMEDY": *felix culpa*

- EXCISION OF DISEASE:
 - "I am that of your blood that was taken from you / For your better health" (5.3.149-50);
- ANAGNORISIS?
 - "upon yon meteor / Ever hung my fate, 'mongst things corruptible" (154-55);
 - "Your change come too, from an ignorant wrath / To knowing friendship" (5.3.202-3)

Act 5: *hortus conclusus*?

- ▶ "Sir, you have a son's duty living" (5.3.216).
- ▶ The PERFECT HOMOSOCIAL EXCHANGE
 - ▶ Alliance between Alsemero and Vermandero ELIDES the MIDDLE TERM
 - ▶ Feminine body:
 - ▶ unpredictable,
 - ▶ resistant to scopic penetration,
 - ▶ DUPLICITOUS because INTERCHANGEABLE.
- ▶ FORECLOSES the vulnerability of DEPENDENCE upon the SUBALTERN for ratification of the masculine identity.

Is it a tidy little ending? THE OPACITY OF THE CLOSET

- ▶ "Enter DE FLORES bringing in BEATRICE [wounded]" (5.3.s.d.43)
- ▶ We do not see what happens in the closet:
 - ▶ Does De Flores stab Beatrice?
 - ▶ Does she stab herself?
 - ▶ What difference does it make?
- ▶ What is the SIGNIFICANCE of this concluding moment of OPACITY?
