



Death and Eroticism

ANATOMY IN JACOBAN TRAGEDY

Anatomy Theatre



Designed by Inigo Jones for the Company of Barber Surgeons, 1636



Frontispiece for *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543), Vesalius



PARADIGM OF THE AGE OF EXPLORATION: DIS-COVERY

Frontispiece for *Atlantica* by Olaus Rudbeck (1689)



Death the Leveller

"La Danse Macabre" by Leonie Justin Alexandre Petit



"Adam, Eve and Death" by Hans Sebald Beham (1543)

- Death enters the world at the same time a SHAME and NAKEDNESS.
- Death as the EXPOSER OF HIDDEN INTERIORS.

EPISTEMIC PARADOX:

To truly see into the hidden interior of things is to "kill" them:

- Reification;
- Death;
- Exposure as dissolution.

The bastard and his duchess have appointed

Their meeting too in this luxurious circle,

Which most afflicting sight will kill his eyes

Before we kill the rest of him.
(3.5.21-4)



"Death and the Family" by Hans Weiditz (1532)

DEATH AND DOUBLENESS

- Masques, masks, painting;
 - Danse macabre;
 - Temporal vs eternal values, pleasures and rewards;
 - Machiavellianism;
 - *Pharmakon* (poison and cure);
 - Onstage vs offstage action;
 - Asides
 - Disguise
- DOUBLENESS: Irony, conspiracy, self-delusion, disguise
- OPPOSITION/DICHOTOMY: purity/corruption; body/soul; interior/exterior; life/death
- DEATH both COLLAPSES distinctions and CLARIFIES values.

EXPOSURE AND DEATH: VISION

"Muscle Man," Vesalius's *De Fabrica*

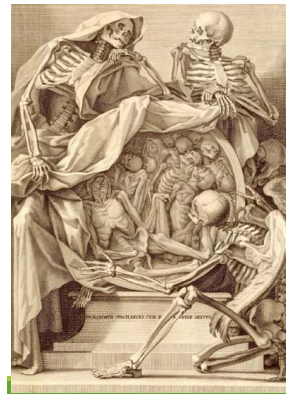
The Revenger: a self-exposing anatomy;

An ANATOMIST with PRIVILEGED PERSPECTIVE;

MEDIATES between life and death;

Revenge drama: a machine to "bring to light" the hidden interior of things.

"To be honest is not to be i'th world" (RT 1.1.94)



The "mingle-mangle" of death

The horror of the "confounded" self

frontispiece for *Anatomia* by Bernardino Genga (1691)

PSYCHIC COLLAPSE

What is the PRICE of the anatomist's vision?

O suffering heaven, with thy invisible finger
E'en at this instant turn the precious side
Of both mine eyeballs inward, not to see myself!
(2.1.128-30)

What is the PRICE of revenge?

What is the NATURE of the tragedy in *The Revengers Tragedy*?

"I'm lost again! You cannot find me yet" (3.5.29)

"I must be killed, and stand to kill myself" (5.1.6-7)

DEATH AND EROTICISM

Conspiracy is by nature EROTIC:

- The half-seen/half-hidden;
- Masquerade of partial, teasing exposure;
- Death as the TELOS:
 - the stripping away of pretense;
 - the collapse of SURFACES into SUBSTANCE.

"Death and the Maiden" by Hans Baldung (1520)



DEATH AND EXPOSURE

"Twas we two murdered him"
(5.3.107)

'Tis time to die when we are
ourselves our foes.

When murd'ers shut deeds close,
this curse does seal 'em:

If none disclose 'em, they
themselves reveal 'em.

(5.3.18-20)



Mechanisms of Exposure

•REUNITE APPEARANCE AND REALITY

1. DISGUISE (self-revealing surfaces E.G. Rapine and Murder in *TA*);
2. EAVESDROPPING (dramatic irony; transforms "insides" into "outsides/privacy into public display);
3. SPECTRAL VISITATION (outside knowledge or projection of inner anxiety);
4. MADNESS (SELF-LOSS → SELF-DISCOVERY)
5. ENGINEERING CHARACTERS (servants, dependents);
6. PREGNANCY/VIRGINITY TESTS ("Truth is the daughter of time");
7. SEXUAL PENETRATION (breaching of boundaries between inner/outer worlds);
8. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS (trials, executions, gallows speeches)