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Résumé de l'article

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With its glorified ghost, godly avenger, and idolatrous Tyrant, Thomas Middleton's The Lady's Tragedy *appears to offer a thinly veiled allegory of Protestant triumphalism. Little attention has been paid, however, to how its characters do — or do not — respond to the play's many crises of conscience. This essay sets Middleton's tragedy against English Protestant understandings of the trembling body and vexed conscience. It demonstrates that while the play's multiple instances of trembling seem to unsettle its Protestant triumphalism, its special effects, intended to provoke audience trembling, might nevertheless deepen playgoers' attachment to the Protestant cause.*

The stunning apparition of the Lady's ghost in Thomas Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*[1] couples the genre's call for earthly retribution with Protestantism's belief in glorification. Clad in white and bedecked with jewels and a crucifix, the ethereal Lady appears beyond earthly cares. This heavenly image, however, seems incongruous with the play's events: namely, that the Lady recently committed suicide to escape from the lecherous plans of the Tyrant. In a flurry of treachery, the Tyrant usurps the throne from the Lady's fiancé, Govianus, and tries to take the Lady for himself. Death, however, does not free the Lady. After the Tyrant purloins her corpse for his own lustful ends, the Lady appears to Govianus and demands that he return her body to its tomb. Critical responses to this scene tend to explore the vexing theological status of the ghost.[2] Nonetheless, critics say little about the intriguing reaction of Govianus, who interprets the apparition as a call to vengeance. At the sight of the ghost, Govianus experiences trembling and horripilation, a reaction commonly reported in staged encounters with ghosts.[3] But while other characters express fear or dread, Govianus proclaims,

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> I take delight
> to have my breast shake and my hair stand stiff.
> If this be horror, let it never die!' (B4.4.46–8)[4]

Govianus's desire for eternal 'horror' marries perturbation to prurience. This unorthodox reaction offers just one of many affective divergences in this play. Moreover, viewing this response in light of these divergences more broadly illustrates how *The Lady's Tragedy* complicates both the generic expectations of revenge tragedy and the devotional expectations of English Protestantism.

This essay argues that *The Lady's Tragedy* offers a case study of the often complex and occasionally contradictory relationship between trembling and the conscience within the emotional imagination of English Protestantism.[5] I first demonstrate how reformed Protestant ministers within the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century were deeply invested in the affective nature of sermons. As such, they frequently linked the trembling body to the reception of a divine message — in this case, the sermon itself — creating an affective script that connects somatic response to spiritual insight. These ministers, drawing on the work of John Calvin, suggested that trembling could signal an unresolved crisis of conscience. To illustrate this affective script at work, they highlighted biblical figures whose trembling transformed otherwise inchoate encounters into numinous ones. Such exempla provided affective models for sermon-goers who could use them to understand and respond to their own episodes of trembling and, perhaps, to meet God in them. Ministers thus deployed these affective scripts to transform autonomic bodily responses into tokens of spiritual import.

The second part of this essay examines how these affective scripts emblematize the crises of conscience suffusing *The Lady's Tragedy*. The play's multiple instances of trembling challenge, rather than confirm, the conventions of the pulpit as they become embedded in the tragedy's political concerns. For this reason, while the tragedy appears to champion a triumphalist Protestantism when it overthrows its idolatrous Tyrant and restores its godly ruler, its portrayal of trembling unsettles its protagonist's role as 'scourge and minister' of heaven. In closing, I explore how the play's special effects, intended to provoke audience trembling, might foreclose theological scepticism, and instead deepen attachments to the Protestant cause.

Affect Theory and the Numinous

Literary and historical studies of English Protestantism have increasingly explored the enmeshment of affective, somatic, and spiritual experience within lay and

ministerial institutions.[6] This critical turn resists an earlier tendency to elide a Weberian account of English Protestant distrust of ritual and ceremonies with a suspicion of the body and emotions.[7] Although English Protestants remained wary of the sinful inclinations of bodies, they also acclaimed them as signifiers of holiness. According to Jennifer Waldron, Protestants built upon the apostle Paul's description of bodies as temples of the holy spirit, contending that they 'were ultimately spaces inhabited by the divine'.[8] This belief manifests in supernatural encounters in which numinous qualities of the body intensify as flesh and spirit, mortality and immortality unexpectedly confront one another.

Attention to how English Protestants situated bodily response within spiritual experience highlights questions around the historicity of affects, specifically how singular affective experiences become scripted through and within social practices. As Evelyn Tribble points out, affects are 'notoriously amorphous concepts'.[9] This essay treats affect as a form of 'embodied meaning-making' that knits together emotional and social practices.[10] As Alice Isen and Gregory Diamond observe, many cultures encourage specific emotional responses toward external stimuli, the practice of which evolves into autonomic reactions that they term 'chunking'.[11] Isen and Diamond cite the contemporary example of parents teaching their male children to express anger rather than sadness when faced with frustration.[12] This practice of directing and redirecting bodily response constitutes an 'affective script', which prescribes and inscribes meaning upon otherwise spontaneous bodily reactions.[13] In the case of the trembling body, these scripts govern the relationship between somatic response and spiritual insight. And the sites, pulpit and stage, where performers promulgated these scripts illustrate how ministers and players helped shape the affective landscape of post-Reformation England.

Inward Promptings and Outward Actions: Trembling and the Pulpit

For reformed Protestants, trembling alerted the sensitive Christian to one pillar in the life of faith: a crisis of conscience. Conscience played an intermediary role between human and divine. In his *Institutes*, Calvin defines it as 'a certaine meane betwene God & man: because it suffreth not man to supresse that which he knoweth but pursueth him so farre till it bring him to giltinesse' (4.10.3).[14] Calvin describes the conscience as a 'keeper' (4.10.3, 3.15.19) whose sole duty is to 'mark and watch all his secretes, that nothing should remaine buried in darkenesse', the purpose of which, he maintains, is to dispel any illusion between the self and the divine (4.10.3). Calvin thus remarks that the conscience is 'nothing els but the

inward purenesse of the hart' (4.10.4). As it executes its duties, the conscience operates through the affective faculties. For the impious and the godly alike, the conscience manifests as 'a *feling* of Gods iugeme[n]t' and, as Calvin illustrates, is physically expressed through trembling (4.10.3, emphasis mine). Calvin offers a taxonomy of tremblers whose bodies portend affliction or assurance. For the reprobate conscience, trembling results from a 'seruile and constrained fear' of God's judgment (1.4.4). Faced with divine wrath, the impious body quakes at the retribution to come. The godly also tremble but for different reasons. They shake because God burdens their conscience with the remembrance of sin, prompting them to repent. The primary difference between these tremblers again is rooted in affect, namely, feelings of despair or comfort.

Calvin's commentary on Christ's resurrection contrasts these two types of trembling through the reactions of the Roman guards (Mt 28:4) and the women who visit the tomb (Mk 16:8), both of whom tremble at the appearance of the angels.[15] Calvin points out that although both prostrated themselves, 'no power raised' the guards while the women 'received comfort', allowing them to return to their senses, regain their hope, and proclaim Christ's resurrection. He then applies this contrast to the godly and the wicked. While both can be stricken with fear, God relieves the fear of the elect 'wyth the sweetenesse of his grace'. The reprobate, on the other hand, experience fear that causes them to 'pine away with many slowe tormentes'.[16] While both the elect and reprobate suffer a sickness of the soul, expressed in their quivering bodies, God heals the sickness in one but allows the other to fester.

English reformed ministers expanded upon Calvin's taxonomy of tremblers, but they notably tied the affect to the metaphysical potency of the sermon and, thus, the office of preaching itself. In his Paul's Cross sermon, puritan John Stockwood uses the Roman centurion Cornelius, who trembled before an angelic visitation, to model how sermon-goers might gauge their receptiveness to a minister's message.[17] Stockwood here argues that trembling joins a conscience stricken with godly fear to a mind disposed to the angel's message. Like the women at the tomb, Cornelius's trembling results from the shock of a human body encountering the divine, 'whiche hauing a taste of the maiestie of God, quiuereth and quaketh at his presence'.[18] But this reaction also conveys openness to the angel's message. As Stockwood explains, the humility apparent in the centurion's shaking body 'sheweth forth a readie and willing minde, euen before he knoweth, to doe whatsoeuer the Lorde shoulde commaunde hym'.[19] He then urges sermon-goers to strive for the same, exhorting them to follow Cornelius and say, 'What is it Lorde? and by thy mercifull assistaunce, wée wil performe and doe it'.[20]

Stockwood thus admonishes listeners to examine their alacrity toward the sermon with Cornelius as an exemplum.

Another biblical trembler appears in puritan Richard Bernard's sermon manual *The Faithful Shepherd.* Bernard encourages fellow clergy to consider Paul's message to the unregenerate Roman governor Felix when selecting a suitable text on which to preach.[21] He explains, 'If S. Paul preach before a Heathen Felix, intemperate and vniust, his words shall sound out temperance, righteousnesse, and iudgement, that Felix may heare and tremble'.[22] Like Cornelius, Felix also trembles in the face of a divine messenger; however, the ends of this quivering — reprobation — differ.[23] Thomas Horton, a minister with puritan leanings, also uses Felix to consider how preaching might pierce obdurate consciences: 'And thus Felix the Governor, when Paul preach'd to him, it is said, He trembled, and could not endure it. The Word of God meeting with his Conscience did so shake him, that he could hold out no longer; He was impatient of any further discourse in that matter'.[24] Even in the negative exemplum of Felix, ministers suggest preaching produces a somatic response.

While ministers exhorted listeners to attend to the message, they frequently downplayed their own rhetorical capabilities, arguing that audience response came from the spirit of God working through the sermon. Stockwood adopts this technique when discussing why some sermon-goers might not tremble at a minister's message:

> What is the cause (beloued) that at this day the word of the Lord worketh not in vs this effect of reuerence, trembling and feare? forsooth, bicause we fasten our eyes vpon the person that speaketh, with the basenesse of whome we are nothyng moued, wheras if we would, as indeede we ought, consider that it is GOD whiche speaketh vnto vs in the person of man, then would be driuen into this sluggishe nature of ours, suche a feare and reuerence of the word of God, as ought to be in vs.[25]

Stockwood's concern that God, rather than the minister, 'worketh', 'moue', and 'speaketh' to sermon-goers attests to a belief shared by ministers across post-Reformation England, namely, that ministers contained a 'basenesse' by which their preaching possessed no power. Only 'GOD whiche speaketh vnto vs in the person of man' could awaken consciences through the message. Preachers provided the vessels through which that awakening occurred. But for sermon-goers, whether focusing on the preacher or the message, bodily response offered one piece of promising evidence that a minister's message had penetrated the conscience.

The centrality of the conscience to Protestant spiritual life meant that threats to its liveliness were approached with great seriousness. Sin, of course, presented one threat but so did false teachings. Calvin himself depicts this peril in a chapter titled 'Of the power in making of lawes: wherin the Pope and his have vsed a most cruell tyranny and butcherie upon soules', where he contends,

> the ende of our striuing is, that the immeasurable and barbarous Empire [of the Roman Church] may be restrained, which they vsurpe vppon soules, that would be compted pastors of the Church, but in very dede are most cruel butchers. For they say that the lawes which they make are spiritual, and perteining to the soule, and they affirme them to be necessarie to eternal life. But so (as I euen now touched) the kingdome of Christ is inuaded, so the libertie by him geuen to the consciences of the faithful is vtterly oppressed and throwen abrode. (4.10.1)

The imagery of violent invasion and tyranny highlights Calvin's contention that the Roman Church oppresses Christian consciences. To counter these spiritual assaults, Calvin follows Martin Luther by enjoining readers to separate their conscience into an 'inward court', bound to the spiritual government of the soul, and an 'outward court', bound to the magisterial government. Citing the apostle Paul's guidance on obeying magistrates, Calvin opines that the apostle never teaches that outward laws 'belong to the inward gouernement of the soule'; rather, he raises 'both the worshipping of God & the spiritual rule of liuing righteously, aboue al the ordinances of men, whatsoeuer they be' (4.10.5). The inward court, where God reigns, in other words, eclipses the outward court, under the reign of civil authorities; therefore, a person might disobey the laws of the outward court if they violate the laws of the inward one. Taken together, the spiritual and secular dimensions of the conscience comprise a fulcrum upon which pivot obedience and resistance. This balance not only informed Protestant political theory regarding possible actions in the face of tyranny, it also provided playwrights like Middleton opportunities to explore the avenging conscience within the confines of revenge tragedy.

Haunted Consciences: Trembling and the Stage

Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy* depicts both the dangers of an ensnared conscience as well as how responding to spiritual promptings might free it. First performed at Blackfriars theatre in 1611,[26] the play contains an interwoven, double plot that follows two couples who struggle with libidinous desire. The primary plot, which

this essay will analyze, follows the rampant lusts of a character simply called the Tyrant, who usurps the throne from its lawful claimant, Govianus. Not only does the Tyrant seize the throne, but he also desires Govianus's betrothed, the Lady. Despite the Tyrant's offers of power and the pleas of her weak-willed father Helvetius, the Lady defiantly proclaims her devotion to Govianus. The Tyrant ignores the couple's resistance, sending guards to surround Govianus's house, take the Lady by force, and, presumably, return her to himself. The Lady commits suicide in a desperate move to preserve her honour, leaving Govianus to lay her body in his family's tomb. But the Tyrant robs the tomb, insisting he will possess the Lady in life or in death. He returns the corpse to his palace, and, in an idolatrous display, ornaments it with jewels and a crown while commanding his soldiers to worship it. The Lady's ghost thwarts the Tyrant's goal of necrophilia when it appears to the mourning Govianus to warn him of the Tyrant's schemes.[27] To avenge the Lady and preserve her chastity, Govianus disguises himself as a make-up artist and coats the Lady's lips with a sheen of poison. The Tyrant thus dies by a fatal kiss, allowing Govianus to reclaim the throne.

On the one hand, *The Lady's Tragedy* displays a seemingly straightforward dramatization of Protestant triumphalism in its allegorized characters. In this portrait, the Tyrant epitomizes the despotism and idolatry that Protestants decried as part of the Roman church while the Lady's father, Helvetius, connotes a weakened Protestant church.[28] The victorious Govianus, whose name suggests the mythical Jove, personifies the Protestant virtue of godliness. Themes from Protestant polemical works also suffuse the play, particularly in the narrative surrounding the Lady. An image of single-minded Protestant devotion, the Lady exemplifies a model of virtuous resistance found in Reformation sermons and literature. Anne Lancashire suggests the Lady resembles the godly martyr Sophronia, who appears in an episode of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, republished the same year that Middleton's play was performed. Sought by the emperor Maxentius, Sophronia stabbed herself to avoid dishonour.[29] That the tragedy adopts such polemical and hagiographical threads signals a potential response to a vulnerable political moment in the early seventeenth century, namely the assassination of France's Henri IV in 1610 by a Catholic zealot. Adrian Streete's research suggests that that the play was staged to fortify English Protestant identity following the assassination, which threatened England's relationships with continental powers.[30]

Other scholars contend, however, that the tyranny evident in the play may not necessarily come from abroad, nor may it illustrate a Protestant response to Catholic threats. Eileen Allman suggests that revenge tragedies like Middleton's demonstrated growing concern over the monarchical absolutism that threatened

to extend into the private lives of subjects.[31] Allman concedes that the tyrants in these tragedies 'are images not of James himself but the ruler his opponents feared he might become'.[32] And, indeed, Middleton's tragedy comes on the heels of James's *Triplici Nodo Triplex Cuneus, or an Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* (1608) followed by his *Premonition* (1609). James ostensibly directed such works at Catholics, commanding that they adhere to the oath of allegiance, but he couched justifications for allegiance in his own God-appointed sovereign authority. This shoring up of monarchical authority may explain why master of revels George Buc cut much of the play's anti-court satire.[33] Should audiences interpret the play's themes of rape and resistance with domestic rather than international matters in mind, the play's allusions adopt unsettling overtones. After all, besides Sophoronia, another historical antecedent for the Lady's suicide is the rape of Lucretia, the event that resulted in the overthrow of the Tarquins by Lucius Junius Brutus and the transformation of the Roman empire into a republic.[34] These vexing interpretive valences also extend to the play's multiple instances of trembling, which appear to present a dramatic universe different from other revenge tragedies. In this case, providence seems to overrule the ironic shifts of fortune and reciprocal justice common to the genre and favours its avenger.[35] When the play's trembling protagonists transgress the boundaries of the affective scripts, they nevertheless call into question the interplay between trembling and conscience imagined by the pulpit and, in so doing, the play's seemingly triumphalist Protestantism.

Examining a conventional awakening of the conscience will perhaps underscore these divergences. One such scene occurs when Govianus fires off a gun to revive the moribund conscience of his future father–in-law. Helvetius typifies the oppressed conscience deadened to spiritual promptings. Using his daughter, Helvetius acts as pander to the Tyrant to curry favour for himself. When she departs, he follows, pleading with her to return. Govianus confronts Helvetius with a sudden and unanticipated crack of the pistol, causing Helvetius to drop to the ground — and, presumably, audiences to startle. The effect operates as a theatrical memento mori that literally puts the fear of God into Helvetius, shocking his soul back to life.[36] In the A-text, Govianus admonishes his father–in-law to look to his 'dead feeling / Of all things fatherly and honest' (A2.1.117–18). In the language of Protestant introspection, Govianus then exhorts Helvetius to examine himself:

> Thou'rt called within; thy very eyes look inward
> To teach thy thoughts the way, and thy affections.

> But miserable notes that conscience sings,
> That cannot truly pray, for flattering kings. (B2.1.109–112)

Once Govianus sufficiently elicits guilt from Helvetius, he can prescribe a remedy for the man's diseased soul. The affective movements mirror the demands in sermon manuals that ministers highlight the sins of auditors before providing spiritual comfort. In this case, Govianus's auditor produces an ideal response. Helvetius praises the young man as a 'pitiless surgeon' who heals an infected 'wound' (115). Helvetius's surgical metaphor evokes Calvinist discourses of soul therapy and appears in Middleton's other revenge tragedies as well as his devotional works.[37] The emotional and physical horror of Govianus's pistol shot liberates Helvetius from his moral and spiritual torpor, and, in so doing, theatrically depicts the penetration of the conscience described in the pulpit.

Unlike Helvetius, however, goading Govianus and the Lady's consciences prove more complicated. The two initially offer a portrait of single-minded devotion impervious to the assaults of tyranny, political or otherwise. The Lady, for example, enters 'clad in black', to advertise her rejection of the Tyrant's affections (B1.1.92 sd). She proclaims to the perplexed Tyrant, who wishes to attire her in 'jewels … worth ten cities', that 'I have a mind / that must be shifted ere I cast off these' (101–2,105–6). The Lady's choice to dress in a plain suit of mourning suggests inner virtue, a point affirmed when she states that she seeks not 'to please the eye of glory, but of goodness' (110). The 'goodness' the Lady seeks is the rightful 'match' with Govianus and restoration of order (111). After showing her preference for Govianus by kissing him and addressing him as 'the king', the Lady announces, 'I would not change this misery for that scepter' (151). Contrasted with the Tyrant's desire for greatness or earthly fame, the Lady seeks 'goodness' or even godliness.

The Lady's resistance to the Tyrant, however, results from her devotion not only to Govianus, but also to the ideals of early modern neo-stoicism, which advocated for right action and subdual of the passions, even in times of turmoil.[38] She chastises Helvetius and the Tyrant by declaring, 'Fortunes are but the outside of true worth. / It is the mind that sets his master forth' (159–60). The Lady concludes that her interest lies in the virtue of her beloved rather than the churning of political intrigue, the 'reeling fortune of great state' (153). That the Lady places her security in the 'mind' rather than 'fortunes' recalls Justus Lipsius's popular treatise *De Constantia*, which proclaims that one 'must not forsake thy countrey, but thy affections. Our mindes must be so confirmed and conformed, that we may bee at rest in troubles and haue peace euen in the midst of warre'.[39] Amidst

political upheaval, the Lady prioritizes and is praised for her 'constancy', a singleness of mind that resists the tyranny of others as much as the ephemeral desires of her own flesh (A5.2.123).

When Govianus and the Lady discover that the Tyrant has sent armed guards to seize her, however, both wrestle with their ideals. In this case, the outcome of the Lady's 'constancy' is death rather than forsaking her chastity, for her the only way to preserve her inner liberty.[40] As Govianus struggles with the thought of her death, the Lady charges him with being 'idle', 'cold', and 'dull' — indications of spiritual malaise (B3.1.64, 67, 93). She then accuses him of failing in his role as 'captain' and 'master' who alone must 'dispatch' her (69, 91).[41] After Govianus finally agrees to end her life, he races toward her with weapon drawn. But the Lady herself falters, crying, 'Hold, sir!' (98). She suddenly begins to tremble and then chides herself: 'Cowardly flesh, / Thou show'st thy faintness still: I felt thee shake / Even when the storms came near thee' (103–5). According to the Lady, her trembling is not a moral reflex against suicide; rather, it suggests a base desire for self-preservation. She evinces her disgust when she rebukes her 'flesh', a term of derision in both Pauline and neo-stoic discourse. She then proclaims, ''twas not for thy fear I put death by' but a 'chief and worthy business', that of prayer (106, 107). In other words, the Lady's trembling signals a spiritual deficiency she must address before carrying out her death, and she responds by assuming a devotional posture of kneeling. Her response in the form of trembling nevertheless perverts the affective script: while her quivering body exemplifies the pricked conscience of reformed Protestant thought, her subsequent prayer exposes her fatal intent.

When Govianus faints during his next attempt to run her through, the Lady now decides it is she who must master her flesh. Calling the sword her 'servant' and declaring that she 'scorns death / as much as some men fear it', she plunges the blade through her body (159–60). Threaded throughout this scene are allusions to Lucretia, neo-stoicism, and the Pauline epistles, all of which appear to justify her actions. But most striking is the suicide itself, which literalizes the victory Protestants claim over the unruly flesh. Govianus, who finds himself altered by the Lady's death much in the way Helvetius was by the pistol shot, also confirms this resonance:

> Faith, she told me
> Her everlasting sleep would bring me joy,
> Yet I was still unwilling to believe her,
> Her life was so sweet to me. Like some man
> In time of sickness that would rather wish,

> To please his fearful flesh, his former health
> Restored to him than death; when after trial,
> If it were possible, ten thousand worlds
> Could not entice him to return again
> And walk upon the earth from whence he flew. (A3.1.232–41)

Echoing the soul-sickness that struck Helvetius, Govianus realizes that the 'trial' he has undergone transforms his mortal desire into a contemptus mundi. Doing so liberates him from the need for self-preservation, forsaking 'ten thousand worlds' to be in eternity.

The Lady's spectral return, however, impedes Govianus's moral liberation. The apparition is as theologically salient as it is troubling. The Lady enters,

> on a sudden in a kind of noise like a wind, the doors clattering, the tombstone flies open, and a great light appears in the midst of the tomb; his Lady, as went out, standing just before him in all white, stuck with jewels and a great crucifix on her breast. (B4.4.42, sd)

The ghost's costuming notably differs from that of the Lady's corpse. While stage ghosts often appear wrapped in shrouds or burial clothing, the Lady's ghost is attired in garments associated with biblical martyrs and saints, indicating immediate glorification.[42] Special effects such as the wind and light recall the resurrection of Christ, an allusion echoed in the ghost's words, 'I am not here' (40).[43]

At the same time, several issues cast doubt on this ghost's exemplarity, the foremost being Govianus's reaction to and interpretation of its appearance. As mentioned in the introduction, the bout of trembling Govianus experiences while encountering the ghost disconcertingly strays from the script provided by ministers. He first responds with alarm, crying, 'Mercy, look to me! Faith, I fly to thee' (43). But his terror quickly converts to ecstasy. Calling his fear 'pleasing', he declares,

> I take delight
> to have my breast shake and my hair stand stiff.
> If this be horror, let it never die!
> Came all the pains of hell in that shape to me,
> I should endure 'em smiling. (46–9)

This response is unsettling both physically and theologically. While Govianus's trembling may evoke the comfort of those who encountered angels and the

resurrected Christ, his words offer no hint of holy desire. Lost in erotically charged 'delight', Govianus proclaims that even if this ghost proves to be a demon, a live possibility according to English Protestants, he will gladly tolerate its form as his beloved.[44] When speaking to the ghost, Govianus quickly abandons earlier renunciations of his passions:

> Keep me still
> In terror, I beseech thee: I'd not change
> This fever for felicity of man
> Or all the pleasures of ten thousand ages. (50–3)

Begging the ghost for an eternal 'fever', Govianus subverts his earlier metaphor of illness. He desires neither life on earth without the Lady nor eternity where, like the angels, he would neither marry nor be given in marriage. The ghost interrupts this effusive bliss by informing Govianus that the Tyrant has robbed her body from its tomb and now 'woos' it (67). The ghost then demands the 'peace that death allows' her body, a concern that appears incongruent with her outward appearance as a glorified soul (60).[45] Govianus interprets this request with an eye toward murder. He declares the Lady's ghost has 'opened' to him 'the way to the revenge' (B5.1.191), which presumably evokes the ghost's revelation that the Tyrant will hire a make-up artist to 'dissemble life' on the face of the Lady's corpse (B4.4.75). In other words, while the ghost does not demand the death of the Tyrant, it provides the means by which he might die, and Govianus interprets this information according to his own whims of vengeance.

If expressions of trembling in the tragedy have thus far skirted the moral underpinnings of Protestant orthodoxy, the next occurrence directly transgresses them. As he enters the court in disguise, Govianus condemns the Tyrant in Calvinist terms, claiming that the Tyrant's carnal desire can only come from one 'that wears security so thick upon him, / The thought of death and hell cannot pierce through!' (B5.2.44–5). However, as Govianus prepares to coat the Lady's lips with poison, he finds himself struck by a crisis of conscience, observing, 'A religious trembling shakes me by the hand / And bids me put by such unhallowed business' (76–7). But he steels himself by concluding, 'Revenge calls for't, and it must go forward' (78). In the moral universe of revenge tragedy, Govianus's disregard for his 'religious trembling' would spell his death.[46] He acknowledges this consequence when he reveals himself to the Tyrant. At the same time, he suggests that he has resolved the crisis underscoring his earlier bout of trembling:

> Doom me, tyrant!
> Had I feared death, I'd never appeared noble
> To seal this act upon me which e'en honours me
> Unto my mistress' spirit — It loves me for't.
> I told my heart 'twould prove destruction to't,
> Who, hearing 'twas for her, charged me to do't. (122–5)

In recognizing his place in this fatal tableau, Govianus departs from other avengers in Middleton's corpus such as *The Revenger's Tragedy*'s Vindice, who is surprised to receive a death sentence for murdering a similarly lecherous ruler. Govianus accepts his impending death, however, only because he has engaged in introspection, reckoning with his 'heart' the 'destruction' that would follow the murder. The moment recalls Calvin's definition of the conscience as purity of heart that disperses the mists of self-delusion. Govianus has sinned, and he will accept the wages due him.

And yet, the reappearance of the Lady's ghost to both Govianus and the Tyrant upends this moral universe. In a decidedly un-Protestant declaration, the ghost not only sanctions Govianus's vengeance but also forgives him for it, noting that he will 'live ever honoured here, and blest above' (140). The ghost's promise causes the Tyrant to tremble. With death's 'evil scent' plaguing him, the Tyrant quivers with the fear of the damned, referring to the ghost as 'thou enemy to firmness, / Mortality's earthquake' before succumbing to Govianus's poison (109, 128–9). Immediately, a flourish of trumpets declares Govianus king. This triumphant climax blurs the generic conventions of revenge tragedy. Even Govianus recognises its deep strangeness when the nobles Memphonius and Helvetius 'obey' the Tyrant's orders to 'lay hands on [Govianus]' only to swear their allegiance to him as rightful ruler (A5.2.172). A surprised Govianus remarks that he is filled with 'astonished silence' and, in the A-text, alludes to Psalm 18, saying that 'I'm like a man plucked from many waters / That never looked for help' (181,184–5). Streete notes that this psalm is part of a series in which David triumphs over Saul and links the allusion to the play's legitimation of monarchical deposition.[47] One could also argue, however, that the allusion recalls the providential overtones of the Davidic narrative. And it is the very nature of this providentialism that appears so troubling. As Bruce Smith suggests, 'it is the end of tragedy that counts, and either way that end remains the same: to warn men to put no trust in their own power'.[48] But as a revenger who does ultimately trust in himself, who never suffers the consequences for his actions, and in response, receives homage from nobles and assurance of eternal life, Govianus seems excused from this trajectory.

This reversal raises crucial questions about any possible Protestant triumphalism underlying the play. On the one hand, the political backdrop of Henri's IV's assassination is unignorable, especially when the Tyrant threatens Govianus with 'the Frenchmen's tortures' — an allusion to the execution of François Ravaillac, the king's Catholic murderer (141). This allusion ostensibly demonstrates the play's alignment with Protestant resistance theory, a link that also appears another potential namesake of Govianus, the emperor Jovianus who overthrew Julian the Apostate.[49] At the same time, the name undeniably connotes godly rule — and God-ordained rule. However, as the play demonstrates such rule only comes about through ignoring the promptings of conscience that proscribe murder. Even if his murder of the Tyrant could be sanctioned within Protestant resistance theory and his violation of conscience justified by self-sacrificial devotion, the motivations for Govianus's actions are ambiguous, springing from erotic as much as political and moral concerns. Moreover, there remain the actions of the ghost. While the ghost's guarantee of forgiveness and glorification neatly excuse the murder, they reach beyond the spectrum of Protestant thought, as does the scene in which Govianus 'crown[s the Lady] our queen' before bearing her to the grave (201). The scene appeared to discomfit the master of revels so much that he removed it from the text. This expurgation reflects one response to a tragedy that wants it both ways: offering a way into — and out of — revenge while remaining within a Protestant framework.

Middleton's tragedy offers a glimpse into both the potency as well as the complications of affective scripts preachers prescribed from the pulpit and actors performed on the stage. The play uses trembling to blend homiletic theory with theatrical effects: pricking consciences and penetrating souls. But what of audiences? The staged effects after all — a pistol shot, bright light and loud wind, even suicide — must have surely provoked physical and emotional responses from playgoers. Paul Budra observes of the initial apparition scene: 'The use of the sound effects to manipulate the audience and raise the tension is positively cinematic, and the direction that the tombstone *flies open* is a clear indication that Middleton wants the audience to jump in fright'.[50] While there exist no accounts of audience responses to the play, one can imagine what it might be like for London playgoers, nearly all of whom frequented sermons, to watch a scene that so dramatically alludes to the bible. In viewing the brilliant light and hearing the loud wind, startled playgoers, who perhaps found themselves trembling in fear, might also connect their bodies to those surprised women who encountered the angel at Christ's empty tomb.[51] These piercing echoes of the resurrection offer more than theatrical sensationalism: they manifest emotional associations

with the afterlife, namely, the comfort of election sought by innumerable English Protestants.[52] Such emotional resonances might have led audience members, who would otherwise balk at such ideas, to overlook the theological conundrums posed by the ghost's appearance. If so, such effects — and the affects they evoke — may ironically bolster the play's Protestant overtones. In short, these expressions of piety in the middle of a revenge tragedy may have the potential to lead audiences to interpret their own bodily responses in ways that diverge from the ideas prescribed by the pulpit. And it is these divergences that provide a glimpse into the complex negotiations between bodies and souls within the culture of reformed English Protestantism.

Notes

1 Traditionally referred to as *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, the title came from master of revels George Buc. The play, however, does not contain the term maiden; thus, this paper will follow Julia Briggs's edition which, following the name of its female protagonist, titled it *The Lady's Tragedy*. See Julia Briggs, 'The Lady's Tragedy: Parallel Texts', in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works,* ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), 833–8, 833.

2 For the problems of the Lady's corpse and ghost appearing on stage simultaneously, see Sheetal Lodhia, '"The house is hers, the soul is but a tenant": Material Self-Fashioning and Revenge Tragedy,' *Early Theatre* 12.2 (2009), 135–61, 135, https://doi.org/10.12745/et.12.2.820, and Susan Zimmerman, 'Animating Matter: The Corpse as Idol in *The Second Maidens Tragedy* and *The Duke of Milan*' in *The Early Modern Corpse in Shakespeare's Theater* (Edinburgh, 2007), 90–127, 98, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748680764.

3 Macbeth and Brutus react this way before Banquo and Caesar's ghosts while Hamlet asks his father's ghost why he appears 'So horridly to shake our disposition / With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?' (1.4.55–6). William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London, 2006).

4 Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from Thomas Middleton, *The Lady's Tragedy*, ed. Julia Briggs, in *Thomas Middleton: The Complete Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), 839–906, https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198185703.book.1.

5 This essay acknowledges Thomas Dixon's observation that the category of emotions is a 'presentist' one that incorporates an array of terms including the 'affections', 'passions', and 'desires', terms inextricably linked to pre-Cartesian ideas about body and

mind. See Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, 2003), 3, 7, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511490514.

6 Several recent studies have explored the emotions and the body within early modern Protestant thought and practice. A select number of these studies include: Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge, 2011); John Craig, 'Bodies at Prayer in Early Modern England', in *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (Brookfield, 2013), 173–97, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315546254; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199565726.001.0001; Alexandra Walsham, 'The Happiness of Suffering: Adversity, Providence, and Agency in Early Modern England', in *Suffering and Happiness in England 1550–1850: Narratives and Representations: A Collection to Honour Paul Slack*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and Joanna Innes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 45–64, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198748267.001.0001; and Ceri Sullivan, *Shakespeare and the Play Scripts of Private Prayer* (Oxford, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198857310.001.0001.

7 In the words of Max Weber, reformed Protestantism maintained an 'entirely negative attitude … to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion, because they are of no use toward salvation'. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. Richard Sweberg, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 2009), 53. This argument continues to appear in discussions of early modern religion, but scholars increasingly push back against it. For contemporary appearances of this belief, see Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Feeling*, 60. For push-back, see Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 16, and Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theater* (New York, 2013), 25, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137313126.

8 See Waldron, *Reformations of the Body*, 56. Waldron specifically cities 1 Cor 6:8.

9 Evelyn Tribble, 'Affective Contagion on the Early Modern Stage', in *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*, ed. Mario DiGangi and Amanda Bailey (New York, 2017), 195–212, 197, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56126-8_10.

10 Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (Washington DC, 2012), 4, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250945.

11 Alice M. Isen and Gregory Andrade Diamond, 'Affect and Automaticity', in *Unintended Thought*, ed. James S. Uleman and John A. Bargh (New York, 1989), 124–52, 133, 140.

12 Ibid, 144.

13 Other scholars who take up affective scripts include Frederika Bain, 'The Affective Scripts of Early Modern Execution and Murder', in *Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan (Manchester, 2015), 221–240, https://doi.org/10.7765/9780719098956.00018, and Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia, 2010), https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812202786.

14 All citations of Calvin's *Institutes* taken from John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion Written in Latine by M. Iohn Caluine, and Translated into English According to the Authors Last Edition, by Thomas Norton* (London, 1578; STC: 4418).

15 Calvin's interlinear commentary sets these two gospels, as well as Luke, alongside one another to demonstrate the harmony between the narratives. While the 1584 edition of Calvin's commentary uses the Geneva bible's translation, that the guards were 'astonied', the King James bible translates the verb as 'did shake' (Mt 28: 4).

16 John Calvin, *A Harmonie Upon the Three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke with the Commentarie of M. Iohn Caluine: Faithfully Translated Out of Latine into English, by E.P. Whereunto Is Also Added a Commentarie vpon the Euangelist S. Iohn, by the Same Author* (London, 1584; STC: 2962), 774.

17 'Puritan' is a contested label because it not only glosses a spectrum of reform but also originates as a term of abuse. This essay uses it to distinguish ministers who conform with the English church but remain concerned with demonstrating a godly life through a behavioural code. See Patrick Collinson, 'Antipuritanism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge, 2008), 19–33, 19, https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521860888, and Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, 'Introduction', in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700*, ed. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (London, 1996), 1–33, 2, 3, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24437-9.

18 John Stockwood, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse on Barthelmew Day, Being the 24. of August. 1578* (London, 1578; STC: 23284), 153.

19 Ibid, 161.

20 Ibid, emphasis in original.

21 See Richard Bernard, *The Faithfull Shepheard the Shepheards Faithfulnesse* (London, 1607; STC: 1939), D2r.

22 Ibid.

23 Besides the sermons mentioned here, others that feature Felix's trembling include Robert Barnes, *A Sermon Preached at Henly at the Visitation on the 27. of Aprill, 1626 Vpon Those Words of the 9. Psalme, Vers. 16* (Oxford, 1626; STC: 1474), 25, and Richard Sibbes, *The Brides Longing for her Bride-Groomes Second Comming A Sermon*

Preached at the Funerall of the Right Worshipfull, Sir Thomas Crevv, Knight, Sergeant at law to his Maiestie (London, 1638; STC: 22478), 108, 109.

24 Thomas Horton, *Sinne's Discovery and Revenge* (London, 1646; Wing: H2882), 31.

25 Stockwood, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse*, 159.

26 Anne Lancashire believes Middleton wrote the play in the summer or fall of 1610. Two texts of the play exist: the A-text, which is the original manuscript of the playwright, and the B-text, which underwent the censorship of George Buc and became the performance text. While this essay defaults to the B-text, it draws on the A-text for moments that highlight the play's philosophical coherence.

27 Not all agree. According to Kevin Crawford, by kissing the Lady's corpse, the Tyrant steals more than a chilled peck on the lips and commits necrophilia. See Kevin Crawford, '"All his intents are contrary to man": Softened Masculinity and Staging in Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 16 (2003), 101–29, 106–7.

28 Lancashire notes that Helvetian was shorthand for Protestant, pointing out that the 'Helvetii' were a people from Switzerland and that the Geneva bible was sometimes referred to as the Helvetian translation. Thomas Middleton, *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, ed. Anne Lancashire (Manchester, 1978), 87n5.

29 Anne Lancashire, '*The Second Maiden's Tragedy*: A Jacobean Saint's Life'. *The Review of English Studies* 25.99 (1974), 267–279, 270, https://doi.org/10.1093/res/XXV.99.267.

30 Adrian Streete, '"Mere Idolatry?": Resistance and Rome in Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy*' in *Apocalypse and Anti-Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Cambridge, 2017), 94–121, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108235914.

31 Eileen Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (Newark, 1999), 43.

32 Ibid, 41.

33 Streete, '"Mere Idolatry?"', 95.

34 For the role of Lucretia in early modern visions of republicanism, see Thomas Maissen, 'The Helvetians as Ancestors and Brutus as a Model: The Classical Past in the Early Modern Swiss Confederation', in *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination*, ed. Wyger Velema and Arthur Westeijn (Boston, 2007), 259–84, 276–7, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004351387, and Stephanie Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington, 1989).

35 In many ways, this shift unsettlingly confirms J.W. Lever's social critique of tragedy that revenge tragedy is 'a drama of adversity and stance, not of character and destiny'. See Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London, 1971), 34, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367351670-1.

36 Briggs, 'The Lady's Tragedy', 833.

37 In Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a similar scene occurs in 4.4 when Gratiana, the mother of Vindice, attempts to pander her daughter as a prostitute. When Vindice discovers the plot, his mother confesses to an 'infectious spot' plaguing her soul that is only cured by Vindice's death threats. See Middleton, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. Macdonald P. Jackson, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), 543–93, 4.4.52, https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199580538.book.1. See also the description of Christ as the coming 'Phisition' in his *Two Gates of Salvation, or the Mariage Old and New Testament* (London, 1620; STC: 17904.5), B1v.

38 For the contribution of neo-stoic thought to early modern drama, see G.E. Montsarrat, *The Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature* (Paris, 1984); A.A. Bromham, '"Have You Read Lipsius?": Thomas Middleton and Stoicism'. *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 77.5 (1996), 401–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/00138389608599041; and András Kiséry, *Hamlet's Moment: Drama and Political Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198746201.001.0001.

39 Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie. Written in Latine, by Iustus Lipsius. Containing, Principallie, A Comfortable Conference, in Common Calamities. And Will Serue for a Singular Consolation to all that are Priuately Distressed, of Afflicted, Either in Body or Mind. Englished by Iohn Stradling, Gentleman* (London, 1595; STC: 15694.7), 2–3.

40 For the role of suicide in early stoic thought, see Peter Burke, 'Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State' in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700,* ed. J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge, 1991), 477–498, 491, https://doi.org/10.1017/chol9780521247160.018.

41 The Lady calls herself a 'sufferer' — a term that Lancaster argues connotes feminine submission. See Middleton, *The Lady's Tragedy*, 175 n92.

42 See Stanley Wells, 'Staging Shakespeare's Ghosts', in *Shakespeare on Page and Stage* (Oxford, 2017), 225–70, 256. The appearance also contrasts with the stories of ghosts from purgatory whose garments, in Stephen Greenblatt's words, 'displayed their progressive purification by the whitening of their robes'. Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, 2001), 223, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400848096.

43 See Lancashire, 'Saint's Life', 272

44 The only biblical support for ghosts appears in 1 Sam when the witch of Endor summons the dead prophet Samuel for the rebellious and despairing King Saul. Many Protestants dismissed the spectre as a demon or illusion. The commentary to the 1599 Geneva text notes that the apparition was in fact 'Satan, who to blinde [Saul's]

eyes toke vpon him the forme of Samuel'. See 1 Sam 28:14, '1599 Geneva Bible', *Bible Gateway*, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+28&version=GNV.

45 Zimmerman contends that the Lady's 'sainted spirit' alongside her 'desecrated corpse' creates ideological confusion. See 'Animating Matter', 98.

46 Govianus's actions betray Fredson Bowers's contention that 'The revenger and his agents may fall at the moment of success, and sometimes even during the course of the action', *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587–1642* (Princeton, 1940), 64, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400877300, and Tonya Pollard's assessment that 'revenge invariably exceeds the original crime, creating new victims, and the revenger is *always* eventually punished for taking the law into his or her own hands', 'Tragedy and Revenge' in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr (Cambridge, 2010), 58–72, 59, https://doi.org/10.1017/ccol9780521519373.005, emphasis mine. However, Christopher Crosbie argues the problem lies with the genre itself, which 'requires ancillary conventions that, at the same time, appear optional, dispensable', *Revenge Tragedy and Classical Philosophy on the Early Modern Stage* (Edinburgh, 2019), 8, https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781474440264.001.0001.

47 See Streete, '"Mere Idolatry?"', 118.

48 Bruce Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500–1700* (Princeton, 1988), 206, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400859399.

49 Streete, '"Mere Idolatry?"', 111.

50 Paul Budra, 'The Emotions of Tragedy: Middleton or Shakespeare?' in *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Middleton,* ed. Gary Taylor and Trish Thomas Henley (Oxford, 2012), 488–501, 497, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199559886.013.0031.

51 For an analogue of fear circulating from stage to audience in *Macbeth*, see Alison P. Hobgood, 'Feeling Fear in *Macbeth*' in *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, ed. Katharine Craik and Tonya Pollard (Cambridge, 2013), 29–46, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139235587.003.

52 For how the theatre cultivates these experiences, see Katharine Craik and Tonya Pollard, 'Introduction' in *Shakespearean Sensations*, 1–26, 8, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139235587.001.