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Mark Albert Johnston

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Johnson, Sarah E.
Staging Women and the Soul-Body Dynamic in Early Modern England.
Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014. Pp.185. ISBN 978-1-4724-1122-8 (hardcover) $104.95.

As a tool of patriarchal oppression, the conceptual arrangement privileging soul over body was insistently gendered in early modernity, thereby validating and naturalizing a gender hierarchy that tended to privilege men—commonly associated with the power of the mind, reason, and intellect—over women—generally associated with the weaknesses of the flesh, sensuality, and materiality. A vast network of association developed around this gendered dualism, which became so culturally engrained that even depictions of the soul as feminine only rarely produced empowering representations of women. As one of the early modern period's most common analogies for conceptualizing gender relations, the soul-body dynamic features as a principal concern in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century devotional, philosophical, and theological treatises, sermons, meditations, prayers, and the like; yet Sarah Johnson turns instead to the period's drama in order to demonstrate how pervasively the stereotype inflects cultural representations of women and to interrogate the convention's potential deployment as a means of subverting rather than supporting oppressive gender ideology. Focusing on a relatively small selection of stage plays and court masques, Johnson uses both performance-based and more traditional textual criticism to analyze dramatic moments that she argues challenge this gendered construction of the soul-body dynamic and thereby open spaces for more positive readings of women. Focusing primarily on theatrical metaphors rather than literal stage representations of the dynamic, Johnson arranges her discussion into topical chapters, each of which details the material-spiritual significance of a different dramatic relationship: puppeteer-puppet; tamer-tamed; ghost-haunted; and observer-spectacle.

Reading the puppet generally as any inanimate figure moved by human agency, metaphorically as a property exemplifying the relationship between body and soul, and etymologically as term denoting femininity, inferiority, and manipulability, Johnson proceeds in her first chapter to draw evocative parallels between early modern puppetry and gender relations that resonate: verbally, in Kate's fear that Petruchio means to make a puppet of her at 4.3.103 of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*; materially, in the puppet show that

animates act 5 of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*; and figuratively, in Vindice's manipulations of his dead fiancé Gloriana's skull in Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*. In the book's second section, Johnson considers how the widowed Petruccio's second wife, Maria, frames her resistance to her husband's authority in John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed* by making an explicit connection between her will and her soul, thereby recasting female resistance to male authority as a confirmation not of stubborn female desire in need of male governance but rather of female intellectual and rhetorical competence. Johnson turns to Thomas Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy* (a.k.a. *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*) in her third chapter, wherein she considers how the eventual death and bifurcation of the Lady into separated soul and body resonates with the play's thematic juxtaposition of the virtuous, spiritual Lady with the libidinous, carnal Wife. Johnson here argues that the Lady's ghostly concern for her abused body as her rightful property constitutes a political claim that insists on the body's value and its continued connection to the soul, which functions in tandem with the play's presenting the Lady as more fit to wield authority than either the legitimate governor Govianus or his deposer, the Tyrant, to muddy the ostensibly clear cultural distinctions differentiating masculine virtue from feminine immorality. Finally, Johnson analyzes a selection of Jacobean masques in the book's last chapter, considering how the form's dual structure as poetry and dance elaborates the soul-body dynamic; how the silent, performing body of the female masquer itself engages in rhetorical manipulation of the gendered soul-body divide; and how the tendency for the masques influenced by Queen Anna of Denmark's patronage to insist on the role of female physicality as a means to the spiritual constitutes a vehicle for political intervention by prompting audiences to reconsider women's roles in state affairs.

Johnson's interest throughout the book is in pointing to ways in which representations of the soul-body dynamic onstage could challenge women's subordination, but some of her examples—such as Maria's explicit appeal to the female soul—are more convincing than others—like the potentially disruptive effects on early audiences of Gloriana's putatively grinning skull. Moreover, Johnson's focus on dramatic analogues often results in her argument's vehicle overshadowing its tenor. Some of the performance-based arguments that Johnson deploys succeed better than others: her arguing that, because one actor likely played both the Lady and the Wife in Middleton's tragedy, the Lady rescues the Wife from reductive stereotyping is far more convincing than is her

suggesting that the Lady's ghost might have been played as annoyed, angry, and accusatory toward Govianus. Although Johnson's conclusion recognizes that early modern gender can be properly understood only in relation to other social categories, such as race and class, the book might have benefitted from this analysis earlier on. At the outset, Johnson never considers how the foundational reversal of status that informs the frame of Shakespeare's *Shrew*—in which the socially inferior Sly, together with the cross-dressed servant boy Bartholomew, become puppets of the Lord's desires—conditions the main play's depiction of stereotypical marital ideals, whereby husbands are the puppet-masters of their docile, obedient wives; Johnson's discussion of the Lady's physical bifurcation into body and soul in Middleton's tragedy never elaborates the stakes in whether or not a given performance opts to stage the Lady's ghost using an actor's body; and, despite an earlier allusion to Elizabeth's two bodies, her final chapter, by extending to women generally the subversive significance of Ana and her ladies' performances of divine spirituality, does not acknowledge the inextricably imbricative relationship between gender and status. Minor quibbles aside, however, Johnson's book ably demonstrates not only how pervasively the soul-body stereotype informed cultural representations of women in the period but also how creative staging could deploy the dynamic not only to confirm but also to challenge the gender hierarchy.

MARK ALBERT JOHNSTON
University of Windsor

Jurdjevic, Mark.
A Great and Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. 295. ISBN 978-0-674-7546-1 (hardcover) $49.95.

Mark Jurdjevic offers a convincing new interpretation of Machiavelli's republicanism, his view of Florentine politics, and his attempts to find political solutions for Florence in the 1520s. Scholars, he argues, overemphasize Machiavelli's dependence on ancient Rome as a model for his republicanism and read his