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Literary Anthologies: A Case Study for Metacognitively Approaching Canonicity[1]

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This article is the first entry in a debate on "Literary Anthologies and Canonicity" (http://www.connotations.de/debate/literary-anthologies-and-canonicity).
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Abstract

Anthologies promote and perpetuate what amounts to a canon. The roots run deep in the Western tradition, with the *Anthologia Graeca*, a collection of Classical and Byzantine Greek literature modelled on Meleager of Gadara (first century BCE), using the term "flower-gathering" (ἀνθολογία) to describe this literary exercise. Mixing his own works with those of forty-six others, Meleager arranged "a garland" that ended up establishing a paradigm for the ages. The trope reached a kind of apogee in Tudor England, buttressed with criteria for critical assessment and instructions for the proper way to enjoy, for example, Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet nosgay, or pleasant posye contayning a hundred and ten phylosophicall flowers*. The "anthology," as such, raises important questions about the curation, preservation, and even the prefigured afterlife of literary works notwithstanding shifts in aesthetic sensibilities and once-novel stylistic inventions. The decisions underlying the culling and arrangement of material for anthologies—most notably those produced and disseminated by corporate titans who impose their imprimatur on a wide range of "anthologies" and thus set standards for a generation at least—warrants closer scrutiny. As editors of two such anthologies (*The Memory Arts in Renaissance England* and *The Death Arts in Renaissance England*, both with Cambridge University Press), our team experienced periodic crises of conscience when confronting the reality that our determinations implicitly were setting the canon for a period-specific collection of literary excerpts. We therefore sought intentionally to foreground our deliberations concerning canon formation and to articulate our principles for proceeding, resulting in a metacognitive approach to producing—as duly is reflected in the subtitle: "A Critical Anthology."

> Plucking for you the flowers of Helicon and clipping the firstborn blooms of the famous Pierian forests, reaping the ears of a newer page, I have in my turn woven a garland to be like Meleager's. You know, noble Camillus, the famous writers of old; learn also to know the concise expression of more recent ones.
> *Greek Anthology* IV.2 (181)[2]

Reviewing the Historical Terrain of Literary Anthologies

Anthologies—by their very nature—promote and perpetuate what amounts to a canon. The roots run deep in the Western literary tradition, most notably with the master-text at the heart of the earliest canon conclaves, the Bible (see McDonald 431-38); and with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the Roman poet carefully curates, narratively interweaves, and successfully preserves over 250 ancient stories (see Gildenhard and Zissos 48-52). Later, the influential collection of Classical and Byzantine Greek literature known as the *Anthologia Graeca* (*Greek Anthology*) took as its model Meleager of Gadara (first century BCE) who had referred to the poems in his book as carefully gathered flowers. The Greek word ἀνθολογία (anthology), denoting an assemblage of blossoms, came to describe this literary exercise insofar as Meleager published his epigrams along with those of forty-six other authors as "a garland" (*GA* xvi). Owing to subsequent editions and continuations (most notably the tenth century compilation by Constantine Cephalus which served as the basis for Renaissance manuscript versions), the term anthology, understood as a garland of poems taken from a number of different authors, was applied to any such collection.

> To whom, dear Muse, do you bring these varied fruits of song, or who was it who also wrought this garland of poets? The work was Meleager's; he produced this gift as a keepsake for the illustrious Diocles. He wove in many red lilies of Anyte, and many white lilies of Moero; a few of Sappho, but they are roses [...] He also wove in the blossom of a barb-haired thistle from Archilochus' fodder [...] Then he inserted Polystatus' marjoram, blossom of songs [...] He wove in Posidippus and Hedylus, wildflowers of the field [...] (*GA* 175, 179)

Thus the idea of the garland established a literary paradigm that has persisted through the ages.

The anthological trope reached a kind of apogee in Tudor England. In large measure this stems from Richard Tottel's much-reissued *Songes and Sonettes* (1557), among the first of the printed anthologies of English lyric poetry, and the one that subsequently served as a prototype for all manner of anthologizers (see Hamrick 329). Moreover, Tottel's effort deliberately aimed at creating a more critically informed common reader by marketing the book to the increasingly literate mercantile and clerical sectors of society: "And I exhort the unlearned, by reading to learn to be more skillful, and to purge that swine-like grossness, that maketh the sweet marjoram not to smell to their delight" (1574, fol.1^{v}).[3] Putting to good use the standard metaphorics of the florilegia, his miscellany was at once a taste-making exercise and a concerted effort to elevate the aesthetic sensibilities of the general reader. Although having made a name for himself as the printer of John Lydgate's copious verse translation of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (*On the Downfall of the Famous*), consisting of fifty-six mini biographies exemplifying the vicissitudes of fortune, Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* far and away was "his most famous imprint during the period" (Gillespie 221). It came out the same year that Queen Mary signed the London Stationers' Charter and as the founding of the Stationers' Register with the result of formalizing, regulating, and expanding the English print trade, including book production and sales (see Gillespie 225).

George Gascoigne likewise labored in the literary garden, tapping into the anthological trope with the aim of promulgating and promoting superior literary standards. Like Tottel, he rightly anticipated a market of general readers eager to have ready-at-hand a choice gathering of estimable poetry, as can be seen in his descriptively titled *A hundreth sundrie flowres bounde vp in one small poesie Gathered partely (by translation) in the fyne outlandish gardins of Euripides, Ouid, Petrarke, Ariosto, and others: and partly by inuention, out of our owne fruitefull orchardes in Englande: yelding sundrie svveete sauours of tragical, comical, and morall discourses* (1573). In the preface to the 1575 revised and augmented version of his collected works, *The Posies of George Gascoigne Esquire*, Gascoigne strategically highlights for "gallant gentlemen, and lusty youths

of this my native country" (¶¶2^{r}) what should be valued in contemporary verse. His metacritical literary practice recently has been dubbed "The Anthology Effect" in an extended etymological analysis pinpointing Gascoigne's contribution to the tradition (see Pfeifer 178-80). Gascoigne draws directly on the metaphoric field associated with Meleager's project, using "horticultural language for his master trope" (Pfeifer 178); and, moreover, like his classical predecessor, carefully arranges the material with an eye toward ease of access, handling, and profit.

> If you (where you might gather wholesome herbs to cure your sundry infirmities) will spend the whole day in gathering of sweet-smelling Posies, much will be the time that you shall misspend, and much more the harm that you will heap upon my head. Or if you will rather beblister your hands with a nettle, than comfort your senses by smelling to the pleasant marjoram, then wanton is your pastime, and small will be your profit.
>
> I have here presented you with three sundry sorts of poesies: Flowers, Herbs, and Weeds. In which division I have not meant that only the Flowers are to be smelled unto, nor that only the weeds are to be rejected. [...] Beware therefore, lusty gallants, how you smell to these Poesies. (¶¶3^{v}-¶¶4^{v})

In the 1575 version, he also includes a section titled "Certain Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English" (T2^{r}-U2^{v}; also appearing in his *Whole Works*, 1587). Often considered England's first printed manual of versification, "Notes of Instruction" had a considerable and lasting impact on poetic practices and the printing of lyrics during the English literary Renaissance (see Schott 371).

> For it is not enough to roll in pleasant words, nor yet to thunder in *Rym, Ram, Ruff* by letter (quoth my master Chaucer), nor yet to abound in apt vocables or epithets, unless the invention have in it also *aliquid salis* [something of value]. By this *aliquid salis* I mean some good and fine device, shewing the quick capacity of a writer: and where I say some good and fine invention, I mean that I would have it both fine and good. [...] Your invention being once devised, take heed that neither pleasure of rhyme nor variety of device, do carry you from it: for as to use obscure and dark phrases in a pleasant sonnet, is nothing delectable, so to intermingle merry jests in a serious matter is an *indecorum*. (T2^{r-v}; original emphasis)

Around the same time, Isabella Whitney, the first Englishwoman to have written original secular poetry for publication under her own name, sought to cash in on this interest in printed collections with *A Sweet nosgay, or pleasant posye contayning a hundred and ten phylosophicall flowers*. Her title, and indeed the impetus for her well-marketed publishing venture, builds creatively on the anthological metaphor. More specifically, her title cannily if obviously capitalizes on Hugh Plat's *The Floures of Philosophie* (1572),[4] with its successful textual formula already very much in the consciousness of London's book-buying public (see Skura 149-67). And, moreover, Whitney's collection promises her readers ten more "flowers" above the number offered in Gascoigne's gathering.

In the wake of the pioneering anthological work in England by the likes of Tottel, Gascoigne, and Whitney, compilers and editors of eighteenth-century miscellanies and anthologies were successful in their own sometimes quite novel ways of transmitting particular tastes while being influenced by the larger culture they helped to create. Barbara Benedict speaks directly to this situation in her landmark study of premodern cultural mediation, *Making the Modern Reader* (1996).[5] The carefully assembled bank of evidence enabling her to reach this conclusion consists of "a six-page compilation, in chronological order, of English anthology titles from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century" (Spacks 349). Benedict poses the perennial question "Do anthologies reflect or shape contemporary literary taste?" and answers by way of a cultural dialectic. Not unreasonably, some of the critical distinctions raised in her assessment of premodern aesthetic predilections and taste-making gestures continue to resonate in current deliberations about canonicity today, especially with reference to "the contrary impulses of the anthology to consolidate a canon and to debunk it" (Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader* 221). The anthologies from the eighteenth-century discussed in her survey are showcased as being literary objects in their own right and treated as works that not only defined canons of the day but also shaped readers' ways of understanding functions of literature as much as their techniques of reading. As Patricia

Spacks has remarked on Benedict's tracing a legacy of decreasing reader autonomy, by "the time of the Restoration, collections, highly miscellaneous in substance and style, had come to celebrate aesthetic variety, thus implicitly granting readers the right to make their own literary judgments," and then, in the "early eighteenth century, anthologists evolved a distinct set of values (beginning with 'elegance') that placed readers in the role of discriminating consumers of art; a few years later, powerful critics and booksellers provided rankings of authors, enjoining or assuming their readers' assent to a proclaimed critical consensus" (349).

One useful take-away from Benedict's foundational monograph for this present study is the difference to be drawn between primary anthologies, namely those compiled for essentially commercial and literary purposes (like those exemplified by the early modern texts treated in the first part of this essay), and the scholarly or academic anthologies of works from the past which obviously have different goals and audiences. Alastair Fowler (97-119) goes further still in "differentiating among different types of canon," calling attention to important distinctions that subsequently have been instructively glossed by Barbara Mujica:

> The *potential canon* includes all literature; the *accessible canon*, those books that are available; *the selective canon*, specific works that have been singled out for study, such as those that comprise anthologies; *the critical canon*, those works that have the subject of critical study; *the official canon*, books that fall into the second, third, and fourth categories; and *the personal canon*, the preferred readings of a given individual. These categories are not distinct and isolated, but overlap; the canon is not static, but changes and develops as new works become accessible and then subject to critical scrutiny and classroom study. (209)

Fowler, Benedict, and others who have contributed significantly to discussions of canonicity all imply or state outright that the pleasure of reading—and the attendant sense of edification from that experience—associated with premodern printed anthologies has for the most part disappeared in the contemporary classroom. Anthologies published to-

day are of a different sort, although still tending essentially toward either the purely literary on the one hand, and the academic or pedagogical on the other.[6] Mindful of such considerations, *The Death Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology* was conceived and designed to bridge the implicit gap between what might be thought of as the primary anthology and the academic one. Our editorial team judged that reinforcing this binary opposition was counterproductive when it came to dealing authentically with the kinds of canonical concerns and critical determinations we were encountering. This is what led us ultimately to extract from the archive works that both preserved a sense of the pleasure of reading (as calculated by the original printers and authors to appeal to their audiences) and also offered inroads for contemporary readers to rediscover a diverse range of representative and yet historically underrepresented literary samples of cultural significance.

Participating in an Anthological Project: Limitations and Liberties

As a genre in its own right then,[7] the anthology raises important questions about the socio-economic circumstances underlying the curation, preservation, and even the prefiguration of an afterlife of a literary work. The decisions behind the culling and arrangement of material for anthologies in modern times—most notably those produced and disseminated by corporate titans such as Norton, Longman, Oxford, and Cambridge, who put their imprimatur on a wide range of different kinds of anthologies and thus set standards for a generation at least—warrant closer scrutiny. As a co-editor of two such anthologies, *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England* (2016) and *The Death Arts in Renaissance England* (2022), plus a bridge volume *Memory and Mortality in Renaissance England* (2023) consisting of case studies that put into practice the principles set out in those two anthologies, I have watched our team experience periodic crises of conscience when confronting the reality that our determinations implicitly were setting the canon for period-specific collections of literary excerpts. And so we decided intentionally

to foreground our deliberations concerning canon formation—and reformulation—and to articulate in the anthology itself our principles for proceeding, which resulted in a metacognitive approach to producing (as duly is reflected in our subtitle) "A Critical Anthology." I use the term *metacognitive* in its pedagogical sense, as a process of thinking about one's own thinking and learning. David Perkins isolates four ascending levels in metacognitive learning (tacit, aware, strategic, and reflective), where reflective learners are not only strategic about their thinking but also able to reflect on their learning while it is happening. They monitor the relative success of the strategies being used to achieve their goals and incrementally alter their determinations to achieve better results overall.[8] Accordingly, our editorial team self-consciously sought to model reflective metacognitive learning in the composition of our anthology.

By way of fleshing out the role of our textual rationale guiding our much debated selection of entries which came to comprise *The Death Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology*, we were careful to discuss the following key themes informing our engagement with the archive in an introductory section divided into two main parts. First, "The Legacy of the Death Arts," with two subsections, "The Productive Ends of the Death Arts" and "The Visual Proliferation of the Death Arts"; and, second, "Representing The Death Arts," with three subsections on "Gendering Death," "Sexualizing Death," and "Racializing Death." Four main overarching and essentially epistemological categories for grouping the individual entries eventually suggested themselves as we went about sifting through, while seeking to select, a manageable number of entries from the first cull of some 400 representative possibilities: (1) Preparatory and Dying Arts; (2) Funereal and Commemorative Arts; (3) Knowing and Understanding Death; and (4) Death Arts in Literature. Our critical determinations along the way impelled us to include excerpts from what we deemed to be the most fruitful and imaginative literary engagements with the death arts, keeping in mind the following considerations:

> Our selected entries take stock of death's thriving economy by making visible the extensive symbolic latticework—not just the verbal patterns and occupational patter embedded in writing, but speech acts, images, artefacts, and activities—that the death arts built around "the real" of the corpse.[9] Stretching throughout the civic social sphere, such scaffolding can be seen to have far-reaching implications for the cognition of early modern individuals, when we consider the findings of distributive psychology and extended mind theory: thinking involves the collaboration between the brain and its environment so much so that culture installs into human ecosystems feedback mechanisms in order to offload cognitive functionality and extend people's minds. (9-10)

Accordingly, we made every effort to identify and include traditionally overlooked authors who were by all accounts deemed important in their own day (such as Margaret Tyler and Samuel Rowlands). Still, we were cognizant of the need to include also some of the more canonical if historically marginalized authors (for example, Christopher Marlowe and Aphra Behn). In this, however, we sought to select authors who were not "too canonical," for to have done so would have been merely to replicate prior assumptions about literary value and thereby reify the very patterns of privileging long-unexamined presuppositions about canonicity that we were seeking to twist free from and situate more critically. Indeed, there are some obvious "much loved" authors and works we determined early on would not be included as main entries but certainly would need to be mentioned given their place of prior primacy. Donne, Shakespeare, and Milton, for example, are excluded owing to ease of access elsewhere, and because their expressions of the death arts have been covered adequately in the long, triumphalist tradition of anthologies from earlier times. Any new anthology runs the risk of leaving out some readers' much-cherished favorites, but it is a risk well worth taking if the goal is to produce a more objectively and metacognitively derived "Critical Anthology."

The resulting entries forming *The Death Arts in Renaissance England* seek judiciously to represent a broad spectrum of the early modern English death arts. But, as we stress throughout, what we are presenting for the reader's consideration "is a selection and not the final say" (44). Our project—our "Critical Anthology"—is conceived as a prelim-

inary effort designed to point the way toward the horizon of possibilities for future, more open-ended continuations to be reflectingly carried out by others along similar lines. And, by way of limiting the scope of contenders for inclusion so as to conform to market conditions and our publisher's word-length limitations, we determined that our remit would involve the mediation and circulation of ideas through print. We foregrounded this decision by explaining our rationale for not including examples drawn from manuscript-only primary sources while acknowledging that such a project, of course, would be of immense value, finding evidence of the death arts in personal diaries, commonplace books, correspondence, and what often has been referred to as coterie writing (cf. May).

One unavoidable consequence of focusing exclusively on the production of the press (as we point out in the Introduction) is that "the recovered voices tend to be white, male authors, a demographic that, for the most part, controlled the early modern publishing trade along with authorship networks" (26). Even so, people of the lower socio-economic orders who fully inhabited oral traditions necessarily are underrepresented by vehicles of literacy. Printed matter of the period tended to promote the concerns and cater to the needs of the rising mercantile and patrician educated classes. Folk beliefs, rituals, and lore about dying, death, and the dead accordingly are mentioned as being beyond our anthology's scope. Death comes to all, but the early modern death arts in print obviously cannot articulate the full extent of the collective attitudes, understandings, hopes, and fears of Britain's heterogenous population. Notwithstanding the ideological constraints of the publishing record, however, "issues of gender, sexuality, and race have strong implications for studying the death arts" (27).

Apropos of which, in the introductory section on "Gendering Death," we point out that one strand tracked throughout the anthology is the involvement of women writers in the death arts. We excerpted passages from an abundance of genres in which women regularly engaged, including prayer, elegy, mother's legacy, epistle, polemical pamphlet, religious and philosophical treatises, consolation, lyric, religious writing,

tragedy, and romance. In doing so, our aim was to foreground the complexities of gender relations imbricated in the cultural production of mortality. We opine in the strongest terms that the death arts should be understood as collaborative enterprises rather than strictly solitary ventures—for even individualistic *memento mori* contemplation presupposes the artefacts, techniques, and emulation of others. One must learn how to be taught to be mindful of death and made to recognize the consequences for not being thus guided and well advised. To emphasize the most prevalent strands of venerable exemplars of community-facing aspects of the death arts, within each entry is a section headed "About the author" in which, as appropriate, we identify cooperative authorship as well as those cases where printers are working from commonplace and often unattributed source material harkening back to the manuscript tradition. It is also observed that, as a consequence of the politics of patriarchal precedency and the concomitant historical imposition of socio-religious norms (even during periods when the regent of sovereign was a woman, such as respectively Henry VIII's last wife, Anne Parr, and Elizabeth I—both of whom are given entries in the volume), women were barred from the period's official institutions, such as politics, law, the military, the Church, medicine, universities, and membership in the Royal Society. Translating continental and classical works was an obvious choice for many women of learning, such as Elizabeth Tudor, Anne Cooke, Anne Dowriche, Margaret Tyler, and Mary Sidney Herbert, all of whom are included in our Critical Anthology.

Some have argued that seventeenth-century manuscript culture better represents female authorship than does print (see, for example, Wall 279-80). Manuscripts enabled women to write for family members and friends without the impediments of social prohibition, thereby providing research scholars with a fuller range of expression of female attitudes—including those on death—not hobbled by inhibitions and self-censorship. None of this means, however, that early modern women occupied the sidelines of the public-oriented death arts. Unlicensed teaching of literacy, medical treatment and midwifery, family devotion, and religious instruction were just some of the vital activities that

women generally performed in a non-institutional and non-state-sanctioned capacity for their households and immediate communities. Insofar as the print record obscures the extent to which women were active in the paperworld concerning the death arts, we make a point of highlighting the deeply committed cultural and social engagement of early modern women with the entire death cycle: family members, female servants, and neighboring women—whether or not paid—commonly attended the individual in his or her final sickness and act of dying. Attentiveness to the archive's gaps, innuendos, and in-between spaces can help reveal and recover further female participation in the death arts. The same, of course, applies to issues of race, a consideration that likewise goaded us to work steadily toward developing and producing a metacognitively oriented "Critical Anthology."

The Racialization of Death

Regarding the issue of race (and of "race before race"),[10] it is fitting now to turn to the section of the Introduction on "Racializing Death" (36-43) since any substantial and sustained investigation of the Renaissance death arts almost at once runs into the blatant racism that permeates early modern European thought. To some extent, this is the result of very ancient prejudices in the West that link blackness to evil and death, such that, as Michael Neill has observed in *Issues of Death*, "blackness proves to be oddly like death" (147). The connection is reinforced by the medieval vernacular name for the sporadic waves of virulent pestilence, "the Black Death," owing to the dark-hued subcutaneous haemorrhaging that bruised and "blackened" the bodies of those infected by the bacterium *Yersina pestis*. Gangrene of the fingers, toes, and nose likewise were visible signs of the Black Death, thus turning victims into living corpses that resembled allegorical depictions of Death (which were after all based on images of decaying human bodies). Throughout Europe death personified could be referred to as "Der schwarze Mann" ("the Black Man") and embodied the characteristics of an alien whose

unwelcomed otherness betokened an eerie mirror image of what otherwise was familiar. Death was the foreigner *par excellence* in the European popular imagination. By the fifteenth century, this construction of the dark and dangerous foreigner had become associated with the "moor," often expanded to the term "blackamoor," which turned the already terrifying image of the so-called "oriental" infidel into an avatar and harbinger of death as well as of malignant forces in the world (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Dance of Death turbaned belligerent. Spreuerbrücke, Luzern.
Photo credit William E. Engel, with permission.

Figure 2
Moor with horn, *Calender of Shepherds* (1528, sig. U4^{v}).
Image used courtesy of The Newberry Library.

Additionally, as sometimes was the case, for example in entry I.2, *The kalender of shepardes* (modernized as *The Calendar of Shepherds* in the anthology), this iconographic stereotype could be dialled down, domesticated, and contained in terms of the racialized pitch-black subaltern and subservient herald of Death (see Figure 2). His deadly spear is pointed toward the ground. As is covered at length in the Introduction with respect to visual literacy and the death arts, the Moor often was depicted holding Death's main iconographic attribute, the spear or dart (see Figure 3), a five-metre pole-weapon known colloquially in Elizabethan England as a Moor's or Moorish pike (because of its putative origin). For example, Dromio of Syracuse in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* quips about an arresting officer: "he that sets up his rest to do more exploits with his mace than a Moorish pike" (4.3.25).[11]

Figure 3
Death with dart. "Office of the Dead," *Book of Hours* printed by Thielman Kerver (Paris, 1503). Image used courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The long, menacing projectile wielded by the figure of Death—or Death's representatives in the world of allegory—has a long and enduring legacy in the West, a commonplace visual trope that finds its way into many imaginative works of the period (see Figure 4). And in lands closer to the Ottoman Empire, where there was always a threat of Turkish incursions into Christian Europe (a theme showcased, for example,

in entry III.9, Abraham Holland's over-the-top grisly account of the 1571 Battle of Lepanto, *Naumachia, or Hollands sea-fight*), the recurring character in the Dance of Death, a spry cadaver visiting people of all social stations and leading them away from this life, from time to time was depicted distinctively as a near-Eastern turbaned warrior (see again, Figure 1). Whether referred to as Turk or Moor, as a Blackamoor or Saracen, there is no mistaking that this socially coded figure of the foreigner stood in as an agent and simulacrum of death. While there was of course some historical precedent in the sixteenth century for fearing adjacent foreign nation-states, as well as those coded as foreign who dwelt in European metropolitan areas, the image of the death-dealing Moor persisted as a symbolic reminder, becoming a kind of stark *memento mori*, of the fragility and transience of life. The easy commerce between perceived reality and the symbolic register, signaling the concrete embodiment of abstract themes especially where issues of race are involved, at times marked, at times crossed, and at times melded zones of communally experienced tension and social anxieties associated with the recognition—and misrecognition—of cultural difference. Thus, through fairly typical displays of displacement and transference, the anxieties traditionally felt about Death often were transposed onto "the Moor" and vice versa.

Figure 4
Death with dart. *Allegory of Man* [inset right] (*c.*1569), The Tate Britain.
Used by permission and with license, Tate Images.

One such entry, already mentioned with respect to its compelling imagery (see again Figure 2), *The kalender of shepardes*, includes the "Horner's song" which is prefaced by the admonitory heading "How every man and woman ought to cease of their sins at the sounding of a dreadable horn" (M4^{r}). This rhyme royal poem, ostensibly delivered by the "horner," a moor, benignly holds the iconographic attribute associated with the figure of Death—which is to say, a Moor's Pike—and, in his other hand, the horn associated with a herald or town-crier. The latter iconographic prop gives special resonance to Iago's derisively calling attention to the distinctive sound preceding Othello's entrance in act 2, scene 1: "The Moor! I know his trumpet." In reading the final stanzas of this poem reproduced below, you are invited to attend especially, in the penultimate stanza, to the insistent line opening and midline resumption and repetition of the word "cease" which mimics the sounding of a horn of warning. In the final stanza, you cannot help but hear the *tour de force* "f"-alliterative effect of the whole, punctuated with the anaphora-inflected "flee," resolutely resonating with the perennial *memento mori* message about amending one's ways in the face of our mortal temporality. In this case, however, it has the effect of being conveyed with a sense of insistent difference expressed through hyperbolic sameness. In this sense it resembles death itself, as in a typical Dance of Death, where people of different stations and degree are encountering one person after another with the same end-result. In these stanzas of the Horner's song, each line-opening "Cease" and "Flee" respectively, recalls and indeed mimetically echoes the urgent blast of a horn to be heeded by all people regardless of status or gender before it is too late.

> Cease of your oaths, cease of your swearing,
> Cease of your pomp, cease of your vainglory,
> Cease of your hate, cease of your blaspheming,
> Cease of your malice, cease of your envy,
> Cease of your wrath, cease of your lechery,
> Cease of your fraud, cease your deception,
> Cease of your tongues making detraction.
>
> Flee faint falsehood, fickle, foul, and fell
> Flee fatal flatterers, full of fairness

Flee fair feigning, fables and favel[12]
Flee folks' fellowship frequenting falseness
Flee frantic facers, fulfilled of forwardness
Flee fools' fallacies, flee fond fantasies
Flee from fresh fablers, feigning flatteries.

Thus endeth the horner.

For any of a number of reasons, you will not find this poem in previously published anthologies. But, for all of the reasons alleged and discussed above, it is a document in the early print archive of English literary history that we deemed essential for inclusion in our "Critical Anthology."

By way of continuing this analytical survey of the first such critical anthology of the death arts in Renaissance England, let us move on to three further representative examples taken from different sections of the anthology, each in its own way shedding light on the diverse approaches to tapping into and repurposing the commonplaces of the period while at the same time seeking to advance the frontiers of knowledge about the materiality of mortality. Also, it is hoped that these exemplary passages will make for lively discussion and debate among readers of this journal in future issues.

Skirting the Rules of Decorum and Still Getting Anthologized

From the second division of *The Death Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology*, let us consider a much reprinted and frequently anthologized poem by Francis Beaumont, "An Elegy on the Lady Markham" (entry II.14). Beaumont was well known for his playful and occasionally irreverent wit, evident in this self-conscious reflection on and clever approach to sporting with the commercial elegy, a popular literary form for paying tribute to the recently deceased. Far from being considered too outré for publication owing to the grotesque imagery of the woman being thus dubiously celebrated, one such comparable piece attributed to Beaumont was selected to lead-off Henry Fitzgeffrey's *Certain Elegies* (1618), containing the tongue-in-cheek lines:

"Where if I sing your praises in my rhyme / I lose my ink, paper, and my time" (A3^{r}). Our selection for the anthology (the last half of which is given below), likewise is characterized by Beaumont's signature style of literary parody. He regularly called upon well-known models and catch-phrases only to apply them in unexpected and decidedly topsy-turvy ways. This somewhat raunchy approach to commemorating the death of a loved one, however, would have been appreciated by the patron of this endeavour, Henry Hastings, given the refined aesthetic sensibilities he shared with his first cousin, Bridget Markham (a lady of Queen Anne's bedchamber), who was buried 19 May 1609.

> You worms (my rivals), whilst she was alive,
> How many thousands were there that did strive
> To have your freedom? for their sake forbear
> Unseemly holes in her soft skin to wear:
> But if you must (as what worms can abstain
> To taste her tender body?) yet refrain
> With your disordered eatings to deface her,
> But feed yourselves so as you most may grace her.
> First, through her ear-tips see you make a pair
> Of holes, which, as the moist inclosed air
> Turns into water, may the clean drops take,
> And in her ears a pair of jewels make.
> Have ye not yet enough of that white skin,
> The touch whereof, in times past, would have been
> Enough t'have ransomed many a thousand soul
> Captive to love? If not, then upward roll
> Your little bodies, where I would you have
> This epitaph upon her forehead grave:
> "Living, she was young, fair, and full of wit;
> Dead, all her faults are in her forehead writ."

This seemingly indecorous treatment of Lady Markham deploys in unusual ways the usual tropes associated with the *contemptus mundi* and *vanitas* traditions. The poet's saying that he never met her gives him license in this elegy (or, more properly, this anti-elegy) to jest that in death she is incapable of putting him through the agonies as have his former mistresses. The result is a send-up of shop-worn tropes of the *carpe diem* style of erotic poetry, unsettlingly coupled with the *memento*

mori theme of funeral elegies. Instead of writing about etching her virtues in a mirror or eternizing her beauty through verse, he conjures up lurid images of worms penetrating her body, especially her ears and forehead, thereby transforming Petrarchan conceits used for blazoning the beloved's physical beauty into a *vanitas* image. Beaumont thus recycles in verse sepulchral representations of the deceased undergoing bodily decay; and, more specifically, vermiculation (tracks left by worms) often depicted on the recumbent figures (or *gisants*) of transi tombs (see Cohen 29-31, 91-93; and Welch 357).[13] Given Lady Markham's reputed delight in such sophisticated *jeux d'esprit*, this grisly elegy seems less out of place. Further, her will, made public the day before she died, calls for *memento mori* rings with death's heads to be purchased for three specifically named mourners. In all then, this entry (one of seventeen in the second division of the critical anthology), brings out some important satirically understood elements of the "Funereal and Commemorative Arts" not otherwise covered.

Anthologizing Medical Anthologies

More seriousness of purpose, as befits the material in the critical anthology's third division "Knowing and Understanding Death," is evident in Helkiah Crooke (entry III.11), physician to James I, who published the first comprehensive anatomy text in English for the benefit principally of barber-surgeons. Crooke's main sources, which he duly cites, include works by Caspar Bauhin, chair of anatomy at Basel; André du Laurens, anatomy professor at Montpellier and physician to Henri IV; and, in the "corrected and enlarged" second edition, Ambroise Paré, that pioneer of surgical techniques and battlefield medicine who served four French kings and whose book is based largely on the De *Humani Corporis Fabrica* of Andreas Vesalius, physician to Emperor Charles V. Thus, something of an anthology in its own right, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615) presented in English the extent of European anatomical knowledge of the day (see Figure 5). Also, an epitome, mainly of the illustrations, came out in 1616 (reprinted 1634); but whether in small or

large format (the latter over 1,000 pages), Crooke's work was designed for empirically-minded, dispassionate surgeons to perform operations correctly and with the appropriate tools of the trade. In so doing, and with the aid of this medical anthology in English, they would contribute to keeping death at bay one person at a time.

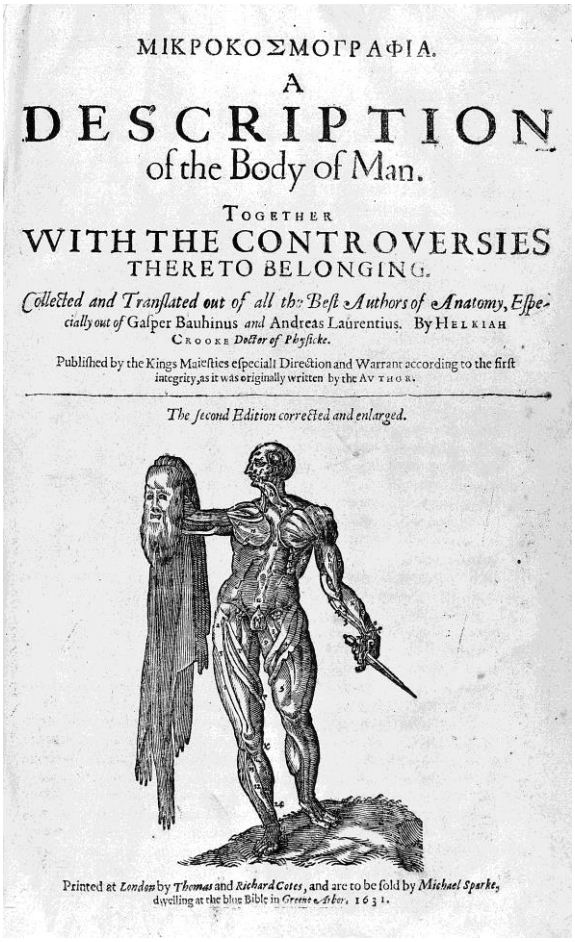
ΜΙΚΡΟΚΟΣΜΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ.
A
DESCRIPTION
of the Body of Man.
TOGETHER
WITH THE CONTROVERSIES
THERETO BELONGING.
Collected and Translated out of all the Best Authors of Anatomy, Especially out of Gasper Bauhinus *and* Andreas Laurentius. By HELKIAH CROOKE *Doctor of Physicke.*
Published by the Kings Maiesties especiall Direction and Warrant according to the first integrity, as it was originally written by the AVTHOR.
The second Edition corrected and enlarged.
Printed at *London* by *Thomas* and *Richard Cotes*, and are to be sold by *Michael Sparke*, dwelling at the blue Bible in *Greene Arbor*, 1631.

Figure 5
Titlepage. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1631).
Image used courtesy of the Huntington Library.

Owing to warfare, high infant mortality, and periodic pestilence and pandemics, dead bodies were a common site in the early modern world. Where and when the law permitted, fresh corpses regularly were opened up for investigative purposes. Notwithstanding the observational approach to experimental anatomy practiced by university trained surgeons such as Crooke, the human body remained a site of inescapable reflection on mortal temporality (see Figure 6).

Figure 6
Medical book skeleton with hourglass.
Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1631, sig. B4^{v}).
Image used courtesy of the Huntington Library.

Unlike other anatomical writers of the day, Crooke, however, so frequently refers to the soul as inhering in every part of the human body—as a mirror of our divine nature—that it stands out as a distinctive thematic element of his text. His frequent references to the soul (harkening explicitly to Plato's formulation in the *Timaeus* of each person being a little world, or microcosm) serve collectively as a defence mechanism against the desacralizing materialism inherent in the investigative enterprise of early modern surgery. Our entry highlights Crooke's revival and use of commonplace poetic analogies whilst describing cutting-edge approaches for disclosing the mysteries and minutiae of human anatomy.

> [I]t is a very vain thing to take in hand to learn anatomy by the bare inspection of figures, without practice upon the body itself. And because our art concerns the cure not of beasts but of men, we must, therefore, exercise ourselves chiefly in the anatomy of the body of man, and that not alive but dead. (18; C3^{v})

> This body, therefore, which, indeed, is but the sepulchre of that which God at first created, although to the eye it is very specious and beautiful, yet it is but infirm and weakly defended [...] for to death and diseases we lie open on every side. […] It shall be sufficient in this place to draw the curtain and to show you the case, rather the coffin or winding-sheet wherein nature hath wrapped this living body of death. Those are four: besides the hairs, wherewith as with flowers the coffin is garnished, that is, the cuticle or scarf-skin,[14] the skin itself, the fat, and the fleshy membrane. (61-62; G1^{r}-G1^{v})

Epitomizing the Anthological Enterprise: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*

And finally, from the fourth and last division, "Death Arts in Literature," we come to Aphra Behn's *Oronooko* (entry IV.17), which offers an especially apt way to conclude our volume, and likewise this essay about the metacognitively derived decisions driving our anthological project. First, because Behn's epitaph in Westminster Abbey echoes a prevailing theme running throughout *The Death Arts in Renaissance Literature*: "Here lies a Proof that Wit can never be / Defence enough against Mortality"; and, second, because *Oroonoko* was the last work to come from her pen, written and published within a year of her death. Behn was the first Englishwoman successfully to have earned her livelihood as a writer. She is best known perhaps for her enormously popular Restoration plays which were highly praised and patronized by Charles II, as well as for her poetry, treatises on materialism, translations, and five prose works.

Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave. A True History mixes travel literature with romance, historical narrative with epic conventions, as well as the language and themes of broadsides concerning "runaway slaves" and anti-slavery captivity stories so much a part of the emerging coffee house print culture of Behn's London. Indeed, *Oroonoko* can be considered the result of and to some extent can be seen as epitomizing distinctive aspects of the premodern anthological enterprise as it draws from several seemingly divergent literary currents of the time (as will be discussed further in the conclusion). While primarily a work of prose fiction, it recounts by way of memoir the exploits of a West African prince tricked into captivity by a slave trader and sold to a plantation in the

British colony of Surinam in South America. Behn writes with a high degree of accuracy based on her experiences there as a visitor (and perhaps as a spy) in 1663-64, before the colony had become a Dutch possession. She, along with her mother and sister, stayed on a plantation and apparently embroiled herself in political quarrels with the colonial administrators. Six years after her death, Thomas Southerne adapted *Oronooko* into a tragedy which met with such great success on the London stage that it revived interest in Behn's novel and thus gave it—and her bid for fame—a second life. In due course her popular narrative became a standard-bearer for abolitionists and remained so well into the nineteenth century. The African king Oroonoko, whom the colonialists mockingly call Caesar, is abducted by Banister, the henchman of the governor who wants to make an example of the high-spirited slave.

Early in the novel, Behn idealizes Caesar by way of an amorous blazon drawn from the canons of conventional European beauty:

> His nose was rising and Roman, instead of African and flat. His mouth, the finest shaped that could be seen; far from those great turned lips, which are so natural to the rest of the Negroes. The whole proportion and air of his face was so noble, and exactly formed, that, [excepting] his colour, there could be nothing in nature more beautiful, agreeable and handsome. (C3r)

Behn similarly displays values typical of her time and place in her account of Caesar's execution, notwithstanding her extreme sympathy for the plight of enslaved Africans laboring against their will under colonial rule and subject to arbitrary acts of cruelty and mutilation.

> And turning to the men that bound him, he said, "My friends, am I to die, or to be whipped?" And they cried, "Whipped! no, you shall not escape so well." And then he replied, smiling, "A blessing on thee"; and assured them, they need not tie him, for he would stand fixed like a rock and endure death so as should encourage them to die. "But if you whip me", said he, "be sure you tie me fast." [...] He had learned to take tobacco; and when he was assured he should die, he desired they would give him a pipe in his mouth, ready lighted, which they did; and the executioner came, and first cut off his members, and threw them into the fire; after that, with an ill-favoured knife, they cut his ears, and his nose, and burned them; he still smoked on, as if nothing had touched him; then they hacked off one of his arms, and still he bore up, and held his pipe; but at the cutting off the other arm, his head sunk, and his pipe dropped;

> and he gave up the ghost, without a groan, or a reproach. My mother and sister were by him all the while, but not suffered to save him, so rude and wild were the rabble, and so inhumane were the justices, who stood by to see the execution, who after paid dearly enough for their insolence. They cut Caesar in quarters and sent them to several of the chief plantations: one quarter was sent to Colonel Martin, who refused it and swore he had rather see the quarters of Banister and the Governor himself than those of Caesar on his plantations, and that he could govern his negroes without terrifying and grieving them with frightful spectacles of a mangled king. (237-39)

Literary critics usually characterize this scene as one of martyrdom, in which Caesar, following in the footsteps of saints, endures great pain and suffering to resist a godless state power. And yet, the trouble with settling on this interpretation alone is that the silent Caesar does not resemble a Protestant or Catholic martyr who calls upon divine authority for strength and comfort, inspiring others to take up the spiritual cause. Caesar also encodes and invokes the seventeenth-century abstraction of kingship by allusively reminding readers of the recent Stuart executions—of Charles I, as well as Charles II's eldest illegitimate son, James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, who tried to usurp the throne from James II. And so we are left with the interpretive conundrum of resolving his sovereignty with a punishment reserved for regicides or high traitors, particularly noted by his castration and the scattering of his limbs (see Griffin 110). British nobles of that era would have been beheaded, not subjected to the brutal corporeal degradation of dismemberment and quartering. At no point does Caesar betray any recognition of the ignoble treatment in store for him and instead conducts himself according to an altogether different honour-code. He passionately prefers death over whipping, whose import his blood-lusty captors fail to understand, believing that they will inflict upon him greater harm. His superhuman impassivity towards dismemberment allows them no sadistic pleasure and recalls the aboriginals who earlier in the narrative cut off pieces of their faces to prove their fitness for military leadership. Before the executioner works his cruel knife, Caesar's boast that he will "endure death so as should encourage them to die" (237) suggests his intention to instruct his captors in a kind of noble, resonantly stoic *ars moriendi*—a lesson lost on the spectating mob.

Caesar's execution raises more questions than it answers about how to apply the traditional notions of the death arts in Renaissance England to Behn's royal African in the colonial New World. In what might be considered a radical anthological approach, by representing the singularity of Caesar/Oroonoko drawn from a range of by then familiar narrative accounts written by and about enslaved black people,[15] Behn takes race in stride to the point of ignoring racial difference altogether.[16] Her portrait of the long-suffering Oroonoko insists on foregrounding the hero's stoic nobility along "classical," which is to say Greco-Roman, lines. This commonplace theme, most often associated with and personified by Socrates and Seneca, likewise was anthologized in many epitomes, treatises, and works of moral philosophy over the centuries. Behn thus had ready-at-hand a template she might overlay onto the composite figure of nobility drawn from narratives of black enslaved people, which by this time were recognized as following certain key themes and expressed in terms of familiar literary tropes. By weaving these anthological elements from both the classical tradition and more recent abolitionist tracts into a portrait of the singular heroism of an African king, Behn deftly uses expected narratological elements to achieve novel and unexpected effects. The result is that Oroonoko is put on equal footing with the Europeans—and perhaps even elevated further to higher moral ground. Far from falling prey to unreflecting "Eurocentrism," however (to use contemporary "presentist" terminology), Behn subtly engages with the available, operative semiotics of heroism found in moral philosophy, recently printed narratives of enslaved people, and sentimental novels of her age. To be clear, Behn is not deploying what might be termed a "proto-ethnographic register but rather an axiology of heroic value" (see again n16). And it is precisely this sort of composite and undoubtedly troubled representation of the death arts found in the print archive that our critical anthology seeks to recover, make available, metacognitively analyze, and keep in play for future readers.

The University of the South
Sewanee

NOTES

[1]I am grateful to Matthias Bauer, Burkhard Niederhoff, and Angelika Zirker for hosting the 17th International *Connotations* Symposium on "Textual Reasons for Canonicity," 31 July to 2 August 2023, in Ellwangen, Germany, where a preliminary version of this paper was presented. The foundation of this work is indebted to a long-standing and truly felicitous collaborative arrangement with Rory Loughnane and Grant Williams.

[2]The *Greek Anthology* is hereafter abbreviated *GA*.

[3]Spelling and punctuation in quotations from early modern texts have been modernized and silently regularized (i for j, v for u, w for uu, and so forth), printers' abbreviations expanded, and compositors' accidentals corrected—except in those cases where retaining the original orthography preserves or helps bring out some special meaning otherwise lost. Titles of printed works, however, are given in their original forms in the Works Cited to make it easier for modern readers to recognize and locate these volumes for future reference. All early modern works cited have been examined in their original forms either in special collections or, as needed, photocopied originals using *Early English Books Online* (via ProQuest). Short Title Catalogue (STC) numbers, and for later works Wing numbers, are included. Square bracketed material in quoted excerpts indicates editorial interpolations; bracketed ellipses signal material omitted from quoted sections of the target text being excerpted.

[4]On this particular work by Plat and with special reference to the printing of his manuscript miscellanies, see Vine (164); on the vogue for "poetry masquerading as garden growth" in sixteenth-century English works, see Solomon (i-v).

[5]In what follows here I am indebted to the anonymous reader who reminded me about the importance of Barbara Benedict's foundational contribution to ongoing discussions concerning canonicity and canon history.

[6]With regard to the latter type, and with reference to the selective body of works intended for use in the classroom, the aims and utility of such modern anthologies of limited length and scope have been discussed by Wendell Harris in terms of the "pedagogical canon" (113).

[7]On the development of the anthology as a genre, with special reference to the early-eighteenth-century form known as "the literary collection," see Benedict: "Literary collections are commonly perceived as including two forms: the anthology and miscellany. Anthologies are characterized as volumes that contain material selected self-consciously for consistency and quality, usually long after the individual pieces within had first been published, whereas miscellanies contain new material, published for the first time" ("The Paradox of the Anthology" 231).

[8]On metacognitive approaches to literary analysis ("recursive intention-reading" or, more simply put, "embedment," with reference to "people's awareness of their own and other people's states") and cognitive approaches to literary criticism more generally, see Zunshine (2, 157-72).

[9]This is a clarifying note given in the original text which reads as follows: "Catherine Belsey asserts by way of Lacan's concept of the real, 'Death doesn't do fiction, but eliminates the body and the speaking subject, with all it thinks it knows. Death puts an end to the cultural game for each of us' (14)."

[10]"RaceB4Race" is an ongoing conference series and professional network community by and for scholars of color working on issues of race in premodern literature, history, and culture; see https://acmrs.asu.edu/RaceB4Race: "Bridging many traditional disciplinary divides, RaceB4Race not only creates innovative scholarly dialogues, but also fosters social change within premodern studies as a whole." See especially in this regard the Newberry Library's exhibition catalog, *Seeing Race Before Race* (2023).

[11]All quotations from Shakespeare follow the New Oxford edition (2016), listed in the Works Cited.

[12]A form of ingratiating flattery; "Favel" is among the personified vices encountered on the allegorical ship of state in John Skelton's *Bowge of Courte* (London, 1499; STC 22597).

[13]Worms feasting on corpses has been a staple for reflecting on mortality at least since the twelfth century, with Innocent III's *De contemptu mundi* and Bernard of Clairvaux's meditations on the human condition. In the vernacular literary tradition, the anonymous *A Disputacioun betwyx þe Body and Wormes* (see Conlee 52-54; Rytting 217-32), a Middle English dream-vision debate poem, gives voice to a dead noble lady undergoing decay and the worms consuming her entombed corpse (see Blum 107).

[14]Glossed by Crooke in the margin: "void of sense itself, is ordained as a monument to defend the skin from the violence of outward injuries."

[15]On the recurring plot patterns and composite elements drawn from a variety of enslaved peoples' experiences and applied to a single person's published autobiography, see for example Carretta (2-15); as well as, of course, the personal stories gathered in Carretta's anthology of Black authors' narratives in the English-speaking world of the eighteenth century. We do well to recall in this regard that what was to become the gold-standard of British abolitionist writing, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written By Himself* (London, 1789) was published a hundred years after *Oroonoko*.

[16]This phrasing, as well as the revised drift of the argument concluding my treatment of Behn's *Oroonoko*, is indebted to helpful suggestions offered by one of the anonymous readers.

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