

The Aporia of Reproduction in *The Duchess of Malfi*

Kumiko Yoshioka

The Duchess of Malfi における生殖のアポリア

ルネサンス期イングランドの王権 (kingship) は、父系制の親族関係 (kinship) にもとづく制度として形づくられた。しかしながら、単線的世襲制という自然化された神話は、両性生殖の必然性・不妊の可能性という身体の論理の侵襲を免れず、養子・側室・重婚などによる代補をつねに必要としてきた。親族関係的王権 (kin(g)ship) にとって、生殖は決定的に重要なモメントである。父系制の親族関係的王権は、王位継承のために肉体関係・生殖をどうしても必要としながら、同時にそれが、母の介入によって単線的世襲を脅かす瞬間ともなるという矛盾に突き当たる。父系制と生殖は本質的に相いれず、したがって「合法的婚姻」はありえない。婚姻はいかなるものであれ、チャンスであると同時に危機であるという危うさははらむ。

The Duchess of Malfi は、結婚と出産をめぐるアポリアが王権の危機と二重写しになる瞬間をいきいきと描く。様々な象徴性や地口を駆使したドラマの重層的テキストのありさまは、ジェームズ1世が王位継承の正当性を主張するために紡ぎ出す歴史的テキストの装いと呼応する。本稿は、*The Duchess of Malfi* を、自由主義的な解放された女性の物語としてでもなければ、政治・経済的構造の物語としてでもなく、包括的なプログラムをはみ出す余剰としての身体の物語として読む試みである。

Renaissance England fashioned kingship as an institution of patrilinear kinship: a monoliner succession from the father to the son. But in reality lineage cannot be singular, for it always takes two to produce the next generation. Since there can never be reproduction without a mother, patrilineage entails repression of maternal kinship. Kingship as patrilinear kinship must continuously cover up matrilinear kinship. On the other hand, a couple may not necessarily be fertile. Patrilinear succession is haunted by a threat of barrenness, which was imminent in the case of Elizabeth. The natural myth of monoliner kingship needed to be continuously constructed, and supplemented by such artificial institution as adoption, concubinage, and plural marriage in order to concentrate inheritances effectively (Goody, qtd. in Boehrer 86).

Physical relationships between human beings, especially those of high ranks, constitute a critical moment of regeneration, which is at once indispensable to and undermines the continuance of the patriarchal dynasty. Patrilinear kin(g)ship, as Bruce Thomas Boehrer calls it, is caught up with in double-bind of female fecundity. On the one hand, it desires fecundity, as it is indispensable to succession, and therefore fears barrenness. On the other, fecundity is abhorred as a perilous moment fraught with the risk of dispersion of the inheritance. One can easily imagine such ambivalent attitudes toward fecundity being juxtaposed with sexual desire and awe of the natural process of reproduction that go beyond the grasp of reason.

Control of female fecundity is pivotal to the preservation of order. It must be endorsed by legitimate marriage, but it is impossible to be both endogamous and exogamous at the same time. Perhaps the ultimate dream of a patriarchal monarch would be reproduction of a son by marriage to a twin sister. It would be an ideal monolinear succession, but besides being practically impossible most of the time, it is inhibited by the taboo on incest. On the other hand, exogamous marriage, especially across different ranks, leads to diffusion of inheritance and destabilization of the social order.

The aporia is recurrently crystalized in Jacobean dramas. As Boehrer points out, the theme of incestuous kinship in Jacobean drama is closely related to that of social mobility. "These works [of Jacobean drama] regularly connect the issue of incest with that of social mobility; it is as if the latter automatically generated the former." He argues that "the Jacobean drama inaugurates a new way of looking at incest, coextensive with its focus on social ambition and the decay of ascribed rank" (Boehrer 93). The present essay examines how reproduction as a critical moment for kin(g)ship is played out in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.

The first scene of *The Duchess of Malfi*, as is suggested by Antonio's words "It is a noble duty to inform them[Princes] / What they ought to foresee" (l.i.21-22), functions as an overture to the entire drama. Antonio, speaking of the French court as a model, establishes the theme of kingship as kinship.

In seeking to reduce both State and people
To a fix'd order, their judicious King
Begins at home. Quits first his royal palace

Of flatt'ring sycophants, of dissolute,
 And infamous persons, which he sweetly terms
 His Master's master-piece, the work of Heaven,
 Consid'ring duly, that a Prince's court
 Is like a common fountain, whence should flow
 Pure silver-drops in general. But if't chance
 Some curs'd example poison't near the head,
Death and diseases through the whole land spread.

(I.i.5-15)

The royal household is the head and source of the nation's social order, and therefore its corruption could invite social anomie.

But this is not the only assertion of the play. Indeed the social order is far from being fixed. Bosola, as he laments the unjust treatment given to him, prognosticates on the social mobility that is to develop in the play.

... for places in the court are but like beds in the
 hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and
 so lower and lower.

(I.i.66-68)

Apparently he is speaking of the stratification of ranks that impedes his advancement, but it should be noticed that the scene is set in a hospital, probably one on a battle-field, where the sick and disabled are housed. The social order is impaired, and the implication is confusion and displacement, "where this man's head lies at that man's foot."

In fact the sense of displacement represented by Bosola is typical of the Jacobean period, and it is another key note of *The Duchess of Malfi*. As Frank Whigham tells us, "At this point in English history, at the beginning of capitalist dominance, service was undergoing the momentous shift from role to job, and the ways in which it could ground a sense of self were changing." Up until the Elizabethan period, rank conferred by crowned head of state was natural, heaven-sent, and unnegotiable. But through James's sales of honors, rank was liquidated. Thus "[the nature of identity] became

visible as something achieved, a human product contingent on wealth, connection, and labor" (Whigham 177). Hence the ambition for social mobility and the discontent with displacement.

In this regard, in *Malfi*, we see the brothers, Ferdinand and Cardinal, as they leave the country for Rome, giving their sister, the widowed Duchess of Malfi, counsel to remain chaste. Their cause is to guard her "fame" and "high blood" against widows' voluptuousness. They join forces to obstruct Duchess's remarriage.

FERDINAND	Marry? they are most luxurious,
Will wed twice.	
CARDINAL	O fie!
FERDINAND	Their livers are more spotted
Than Laban's sheep.	

(I.ii.218-220)

However, the Duchess will not conform to her brothers' will. She argues against them, "Diamonds are of most value / They say, that have pass'd through most jewelers' hands" (I.ii.220-221). Her recognition of exchange value is novel compared to her brothers' feudalistic values; the audience will be reminded of the metaphor of diamonds later.

The Duchess is quite right in her recognition of her own uselessness in herself in terms of the values of her times. As long as she remains widowed, she is left outside the mainstream of lineage. She ponders, with Antonio attending, on "what's laid up for tomorrow" (I.ii.286), and accurately assesses that if she stays childless there is no hope in her future. Her last resort for hope is fecundity. She grieves, "If I had a husband now, this care were quit" (I.ii.301). The Duchess's wooing of the steward, Antonio, then is a reasonable, rational decision.

In her opposition against the brothers, the Duchess says, "Will you hear me? / I'll never marry—" (I.ii.222-223). The sentence is not completed, but the context allows us to infer that the Duchess is denying a double marriage, an illegitimate marriage. Contrary to her alleged lust and deviance from the rule, the Duchess is prudent in justifying her marriage to Antonio. It is known that in spite of Elizabethan and Jacobean so-

cial sentiments against a widow's remarriage, it was in fact common among the upper class (Kusunoki 24-26). As the Duchess herself claims later, "I have not gone about, in this, to create / Any new world, or custom" (III.ii.111-112). She is very attentive to conservation of order. She says, "I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber, / *Per verba de presenti*, is absolute marriage" (I.ii.391-392), and makes sure the conditions are met for "absolute marriage." Whether the Duchess actually sought the sacrament of marriage in the Church is not known, but as she proclaims, "We now are man and wife, and 'tis the Church / That must but echo this" (I.ii.405-406). Hence, her marriage to Antonio at least in her consciousness is as sacred as a marriage by the Church, if her notion of a constitutional authority was still novel and not predominantly recognized.

In contrast, the brothers' motives for dissuading the Duchess from remarriage later turns out to be evil, laden with their own interest. Ferdinand, as he confronts the corpse of his sister, confesses: "Only I must confess, I had a hope, / Had she continu'd widow, to have gain'd / An infinite mass of treasure by her death" (IV.ii.277-279). The brothers' apparently ethical act was in fact a conspiracy to appropriate the inheritance of a female member of the family. As is pointed out by Lisa Jardine, a major issue during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was

a head-on conflict between land (the nobleman's asset) and cash (the increasingly powerful asset of the expanding mercantile class). And at the heart of every "tinkering" to be found in the meticulously drawn up wills of the nobility and gentry of the period [to keep their dwindling estates together], one is almost certain to find a woman. (Jardine 122)

According to the prevailing inheritance practices explained by Jardine, the Duchess, upon the Duke's death, must have inherited one-third of his lands. From the brothers' point of view, the Duchess's singlehood is a necessary condition for estate concentration upon her death, that is, for acquisition of the Duke's lands in addition to the reversion of the lands the Duchess had taken as a dowry.

Thus the conflict concerning the Duchess's remarriage reveals two antithetical perspectives and desires concerning the Duchess's fecundity. For the Duchess, it is the only chance for legitimizing her own existence and securing her share of inheri-

tance from the Duke, while for the brothers, it is a crisis that threatens to diffuse the family fortune and diminish their inheritance. Whigham correctly recognizes the two opposing forces in the play, characterized respectively by the brothers, particularly Ferdinand, and the Duchess. "Ferdinand ... is pathologically endogamous, investing his energies much farther inward toward the nuclear core than is normatively fitting. ... In contrast, the duchess is excessively exogamous" (Whigham 171).

It is significant that the Duchess is the active agent in setting up her marriage to Antonio. As she helps the kneeling steward rise, she says, "Sir, / This goodly roof of yours, is too low built, / I cannot stand upright in't, nor discourse, / Without *I raise it higher*, raise yourself, / Or if you please, *my hand to help you*: so." (I.ii.332-336, emphasis added). She feels Antonio's social position does not match his true virtue. Regardless of her own gender, she believes that she has the power to help his advancement. She believes in meritocracy, and self-determination by an autonomous subject. Later, when Ferdinand tries to arrange her marriage to Count Malatesta, she again takes the role of an agent.

Fie upon him,

A count? He's a mere stick of sugar-candy.

You may look quite thorough him: when *I choose*

A husband, I will marry for your honour.

(III.i.41-44, emphasis added)

In clear contrast with the Duchess's hope and desire for fecundity, Antonio, originally a conservative advocate of kingship as kinship as we have seen in the opening of the play, abhors birth of illegitimate offsprings and seeks security in barrenness. His reason orders or beseeches, "Conceive not", but he is thrown into a deep conflict between the public injunction in favor of fixed social order and his own personal, sexual desire. After all, he follows the Duchess's lead toward satisfying his sexual and social ambition.

ANTONIO Conceive not, I am so stupid, but I aim
 Where'to your favours tend. But he's a fool
 That, being a-cold, would thrust his hands i'th' fire

To warm them.

DUCHESS So, now the ground's broke,
You may discover what a wealthy mine
I make you lord of.

(I.ii.342-347)

The marriage of Antonio and the Duchess is thus symbolically consummated. The "thrust" of "hands" is phallic, the broken ground evokes the image of a broken hymen, and "a wealthy mine" implies fertility as well as immediate material wealth.

By this time Antonio has been moved to supplement his initial, key notion of home as the root of fixed social order with an idea that ambition and uncontrollable desire is nurtured at home, in the family, among "prattling visitants" or babbling babies to come.

ANTONIO Ambition, Madam, is a great man's madness,
That is not kept in chains, and close-pent rooms,
But in fair lightsome lodgings, and is girt
With the wild noise of prattling visitants,
Which makes it lunatic, beyond all cure.

(I.ii.337-341)

But even after the secret marriage is consummated, Antonio's heart inclines to static and quiet conservation, while the Duchess is after motion, change, and multiplicity.

ANTONIO And may our sweet affections, like the spheres,
Be still in motion.

DUCHESS Quick'ning, and make
The like soft music.

ANTONIO That we may imitate the loving palms,
Best emblem of a peaceful marriage,
That nev'r bore fruit divided.

(I.ii.395-400)

Here again we hear the Duchess's hope for a new life with the "quick'ning" lively movement of a fetus, and "the soft music" of the prattling of an infant, in contrast to

Antonio's wish for stillness and barrenness.

For the Duchess, pregnancy by Antonio is no accident. Rather, it is a result desired from the beginning, if not the primary purpose of her secret marriage. Her desire for fertility is strongly rooted in the physical and the sensual, but it is not mere, wanton lust stereotypic of a widow. Instead, a fertile body is the only equipment available for the Duchess to counter her tyrannical brothers' conspiracy. Fertility is the only way to depart from "the path of simple virtue." The expression is equivocal; it suggests her conventionally virtuous and yet helpless singlehood as well as the myth of singular, patriarchal monolineage.

DUCHESS We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us:
 And as a tyrant doubles with his words,
 And fearfully equivocates: so we
 Are forc'd to express our violent passions
 In riddles, and in dreams, and leave the path
 Of simple virtue, which was never made
 To seem the thing it is not. Go, go brag
 You have left me heartless, mine is in your bosom,
 I hope 'twill multiply love there. You do tremble:
 Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
 To fear, more than to love me. Sir, be confident,
 What is't distracts you? This is flesh, and blood, sir,
 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
 Kneels at my husband's tomb....

(I.ii.358-371)

The first scene of Act Two carefully prepares for the Duchess's parturition in the next scene. The jesting exchange between Bosola and the old lady is full of implications of young infants. Bosola mentions a lady in France who, after having removed the scabs of smallpox, "resembled an abortive hedgehog" (II.i.31). He suspects the old lady's closet is filled with cosmetics made of "the fat of serpents; spawn of snakes, Jews'/spittle, and their young children's ordure" (II.i.39-40). The "fat" also suggests the figure of a pregnant woman. He continues:

... We account it ominous.
 If nature do produce a colt, or lamb,
 A fawn, or goat, in any limb resembling
 A man; and fly from't as a prodigy.
 Man stands amaz'd to see his deformity.
 In any other creature but himself.

(II.i.49-54)

Considering the close relationship between the body and the body politic, images of naturally deformed young creatures are appropriate precursor of the birth of a politically corrupt bastard. Bosola then moves on to an account of bodily decay hidden within.

But in our own flesh, though we bear diseases
 Which have their true names only tane from beasts,
 As the most ulcerous wolf, and swinish measles;
 Though we are eaten up of lice, and worms,
 And though continually we bear about us
 A rotten and dead body, we delight
 To hide it in rich tissue:

(II.i.55-61)

The juxtaposition of sexually transmittable leprosy, parasites that remind us of embryos, and a decomposed body suggests toward the birth of an illegitimate bastard. In Bosola's eyes signs of pregnancy are nothing but symptoms of disease. The image of sickness again suggests the irregular descent of the newborn.

... I observe our Duchess
 Is sick a-days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
 The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
 She wanes i'th' cheek, and waxes fat i'th' flank:

(II.i.66-69)

Dmpna Callaghan interprets the monstrosity of the pregnant Duchess and the deformity of the fetus more generally as examples of women and children's deviance from adult

tion will carry me / To see her in the shameful act of sin" (II.v.39-41). He cries out of reason, "Go to, mistress! / 'Tis not your whore's milk, that shall quench my wild-fire / But your whore's blood" (II.v.47-49). It is not maternity in the Duchess but her sex appeal that is the object of Ferdinand's desire. The incestuous desire, although concealed for the moment, foreshadows the coming tragedy.

FERDINAND So, I will only study to seem
 The thing I am not. I could kill her now,
 In you, or in myself, for I do think
 It is some sin in us, Heaven doth revenge
 By her.

(II.v.63-67)

In Act Three Scene Two, Ferdinand's fantasy is acted out on the stage. As Antonio leaves the Duchess's private bedroom in jest, Ferdinand enters in turn. Not knowing the replacement, the Duchess asks, "Have you lost your tongue?" That question, with an implication of an erotic request, is answered not by Antonio but by her brother in his action of holding a poniard against her. The association of a tongue, a poniard and a phallus reminds the audience of a previous scene where, as the brothers dissuade the Duchess from remarriage, Ferdinand shows her their father's poniard.²

FERDINAND You are my sister,
 This was my father's poniard: do you see,
 I'll'd be loath to see't look rusty, 'cause 'twas his.

 And women like that part, which, like the lamprey,
 Hath nev'r a bone in't.

DUCHESS Fic sir!

FERDINAND Nay,
 I mean the tongue: variety of courtship:
 What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale
 Make a woman believe? Farewell, lusty widow.

(I.ii.249-259)

Thus the father's poniard is not only phallic but symbolic of patriarchal lineage. An incestuous implication is obvious. But the incestuous fantasy is not played out thoroughly. The Duchess recognizes her brother instantly, and challenges: "'Tis welcome: / For know, whether I am doom'd to live, or die, / I can do both like a prince" (III.ii.69-71). The vigilance of the Duchess is significant. She again assumes an independent, active attitude. She does not simply render her fate to the will of the brother. Whether she lives or dies, the Duchess is the agent of the action. Faced by the Duchess's determined subjectivity, Ferdinand gives the poniard to the Duchess, saying, "Die then, quickly." He resigns his responsibility, his role as an agent. The scene illuminates in reflection Antonio's comment on Ferdinand early on: "He speaks with others' tongues" (I.ii.95). By thus giving away the father's poniard, Ferdinand has virtually opened the way to a female succession.

The Duchess speaks to Ferdinand, "I am married—." Ferdinand allows the sentence to be completed this time. "Happily, not to your liking" (III.ii.83-84). She is married happily to Antonio, unlike the unmarried and childless brother, in a socially legitimate marriage, with more than one children between them. On the other hand, she is married, perhaps, not to a man of equal rank, which is a deviance from monolinear succession and violation of the Natural Law. Ironically, stability is now on the Duchess's side, with proliferation and dissemination, while Ferdinand's cause for preservation of familial homogeneity is on the verge of violation of the taboo on incest. If, as Antonio has foretold, order in the honorable household is the assurance of stable social order, it is better to let the Duchess's family alone and thrive as it is.

The Duchess asks her brother to see her husband, but Ferdinand refuses. He speaks to the unseen husband off stage, heard but unseen. "Let me not know thee. I came hither prepar'd / To work thy discovery: yet am now persuaded / It would beget such violent effects / As would damn us both"(III.ii.93-96). Unless he confronts vis-à-vis the secret husband as the other presence, the latter can play the incestuous fantasy for him, as an understudy. Thus Ferdinand seeks to mediate the aporia by covering and substitution.

In apprehension of imminent danger, the Duchess expels Antonio for an allegation of financial flaws. The mercenary causation and calculation of the Duchess's plot is in accord with her meritocracy of "[preferring a] man merely for worth: without these

shadows / Of wealth, and painted honours" (III.ii.277-279). She laments her lack of liberty: "The birds, that live i'th' field / On the wild benefit of nature, live / Happier than we; for they may choose their mates, / And carol their sweet pleasures to the spring" (III.v.17-20). As a woman in a court, the Duchess is deprived of autonomy, and even singing lullaby to offspring—an act of maternal nature—is a luxury for her. The Duchess's strategy for survival is that of multiplication. She suggests that the family be divided into two, to disperse jeopardy. Antonio and the eldest son flees to Milan, while the Duchess assumes a pilgrimage to Loretto with the rest of the children, but her party falls captive to the brothers.

Ferdinand visits the imprisoned sister, this time in darkness so she cannot see him and he does not have to look at her body. He speaks of the children of Antonio and the Duchess: "Call them your children; / For though our national law distinguish bastards / From true legitimate issue, compassionate nature / Make them all equal" (IV.i.35-38). Thus he acknowledges the maternal lineage more explicitly than before. He does so in the name of the nature, therefore inadvertently admitting the discrepancy between the national law and the Natural Law. He is drawn more and more to the logic of the body, rather than that of the artificial institution of the body politic. I believe the following lines are to be spoken in response to actions, or imaginary actions invisible to the audience since the scene is enacted in darkness.

DUCHESS	Do you visit me for this?
	You violate a sacrament o'th Church
	Shall make you howl in hell for't.
FERDINAND	It had been well,
	Could you have liv'd thus always: for indeed
	You were too much i'th' light. But no more;
	I come to seal my peace with you: here's a hand,
	To which you have vow'd much love: the ring upon't
	You gave.

	I will leave this ring with you, for a love-token:
	And the hand, as sure as the ring:

(IV.i.38-48)

Ferdinand's long entertained incestuous desire is almost consummated. However, in spite of his resolution "I will no longer study in the book / Of another's heart" (IV.i.16-17), he gives the Duchess a dead man's hand disguised as Antonio's, instead of his own. Once again he depends on a substitute. As we have already seen, phallic implication of a hand can be traced back to the metaphor of the thrust of hands into the fire in the scene of Antonio and the Duchess's consummation (I.ii.344). In its association, the ring evokes not merely a marital but a more specifically vaginal image: a ring, wringing, and an ecstatic ring in the heart. Ferdinand once warned the Duchess, "Your darkest actions: nay, your privat'st thoughts, / Will come to light" (I.ii.235-236). The words now echoes back to himself. Whigham considers the madmen's masque in the following scene is "*Ferdinand's* masque; its ritual structures convict not the married widow but her barren brother—as can be seen when the madness slides from masque to master" (172). Rather, I would argue it is a marriage-masque of the aberrant union of the brother and the sister, which is polygamous, incestuous, and incomplete.

Deceived by the figures of the dead husband and the son, the Duchess becomes desperate and desires her own death. To her says Bosola, "Come, you must live" (IV.i.69). It is crucial for Bosola that the values embodied by the Duchess survive—meritocracy, autonomy, respect for individual happiness and all that are fundamental for social mobility. But the Duchess scorns Bosola's pity on her and proclaims, "I am full of daggers" (IV.i.89). In a sense she possesses the father's poniard, for the female body is indispensable for succession. On the other hand, the aporia of reproduction has rendered her go through multiple penetration—a triple marriage to the Duke, Antonio, and Ferdinand—in order to be exogamous and endogamous at the same time, and yet remains impossible. With her faculty of procreation, the Duchess's curse is not confined within the private household but extends through lineage to the next generation and to the society at large. "Remember, my curse hath a great way to go: / Plagues, that make lanes through largest families, / Consume them" (IV.i.100-102).

The sexual, fertile body of the woman is what upsets Ferdinand. Ferdinand turns down Bosola's petition for pardon: "Damn her! that body of hers, / While that my blood ran pure in't, was more worth / Than that which thou wouldst comfort, call'd a soul" (IV.i.119-121). The brother's blood runs pure in the Duchess's body because, for one thing, they are of the same descent, and, for another, the blood can be kept tru-

ly pure through future generations only by incestuous unions, which are of course forbidden. In relation to the dilemma of exogamy and the taboo on incest, Ferdinand recognizes that the body exceeds pure formality. There is more to the female body than mere instrument for preservation of patrilinear succession, and Ferdinand, as he succumb to the incestuous sexual desire, admits fundamental supremacy of such excess of the body. It is corollary to such recognition that he desires extinction of the body as he attempts to reconcile the aporetic situation. The brothers mandate Bosola to murder the sister, and Bosola, though reluctantly, accepts the order.

When Bosola visits the Duchess for execution, she asks him in half-madness who she is. He identifies the Duchess exactly as a female body. "Thou art a box of worm seed, at best, but a salvatory of green mummy: what's this flesh? a little cruded milk, fantastical puff-past" (IV.ii.123-125). We have already heard Bosola speak of embryo-like worms hidden in the body (II.i). If one does not overlook the polysemy of "green mummy," the implication of an embryo by "worm seed" and "earth-worms" (IV.ii.126) is unmistakable.¹ True, "mummy" could signify mummia, a medical preparation made from Egyptian mummies (Brennan 94), or "green mummy," as John Russell Brown suggests, could be a "living" corpse, or flesh that is not "ripe" enough to be mummy (qtd. in Brennan 94). But it could also mean a green "mammy", that is, a young, prenatal, or latent mother, as is coherent with the adjoining images of "cruded milk" and "puff-past." The preposition signifies apposition. The Duchess is a salvatory of green mummy, a salvatory that is green mummy, a container or an instrument that is called the mother, the ovaries and the womb. Thus Bosola identifies the Duchess as an at least potentially fecund body. She asks back, "Am not I thy Duchess?" But Bosola does not consider the socially and institutionally defined identity of hers essential. Instead, he reiterates the significance of femininity: "Thou art some great woman" (IV.ii.133).

The Duchess's last will corresponds to Bosola's identification. "Dispose my breath how please you, but my body / Bestow upon my women, will you?" (IV.ii.224-225) Her major concern after death is her body, the remains. And her women, that is, her maids and more generally her fellow women at large, inherits the legacy. Cariola, the waiting-woman who is killed with the Duchess also manifests the female body. Her resistance against the executioners is physical. "She bites: and scratches" (IV.ii.247). Then it turns out that she had been pregnant. The slaying of Cariola is nothing but

suffocation and repression of the fertile female body.

Without the physical existence of the Duchess, Ferdinand can now safely bemoan over his sister without the risk of incest. In a manner fit for a precarious tyrant, he accuses rather than rewards Bosola for the murder he had ordered. Precisely because she is lost, he can moan and long for the Duchess explicitly. He recites the consanguinity and unity of the Duchess and himself: "She and I were twins" (IV.ii.261). Yet there still remains the body of the Duchess, her corpse. Although the pitiful figures of the slaughtered children do not move Ferdinand at all, he cannot fix his eyes on the Duchess's face. "Cover her face. Mine eyes dazzle" (IV.ii.259). He becomes obsessed by the body. Suffering from lycanthropy, Ferdinand is witnessed wandering "with the leg of a man / Upon his shoulder" (V.ii.14-15). With a leg on the shoulder, the body is totally displaced, and so is the law and order of patrilineage.

After all, Ferdinand's dream of an incestuous union, and therefore that of ideal patriarchy, fails. The unity of the brother and the sister is not acknowledged by others. Bosola says, "You have bloodily approv'd the ancient truth, / That kindred commonly do worse agree / Than remote strangers" (IV.ii.264-266). From the beginning the audience has been informed of the reputation in the court that he and the Cardinal, not the Duchess, were "twins" "in quality" (I.ii.94). His repeated attempts to 'kill' his sister, literally and with an erotic implication, prove a final failure when the Duchess dies a feminine death. She is strangled, not stabbed, by her own order: "Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength / Must pull down heaven upon me" (IV.ii.226-227). She scorns the fantasy of her brother. "What would it pleasure me, to have my throat cut / With diamonds" (IV.ii.212-213)? Instead of being killed, she puts herself to death. With no fear but much vigilance the Duchess says, "Tell my brothers / That I perceive death, now I am well awake, / Best gift is, they can give, or I can take" (IV.ii.219-221). Once dead no one can kill her any more, though her body remains.

The excess of the female body is not exactly tied up to the physical body. It survives and returns even after the corpse is buried in the grave. First the Duchess literally comes back to life as Ferdinand and Bosola converse in front of her body. When she is really dead as "the cords of life broke" (IV.ii.348), it is not yet complete termination of her life but only a birth into another life, as if she has broken the umbilical cord. The Duchess's body comes back as a shadow to Ferdinand. He discourses the

FERDINAND Leave me.

MALATESTES Why doth your lordship love this solitariness?

FERDINAND Eagles commonly fly alone. They are crows, daws, and starlings that flock together.

Look, what's that follows me?

MALATESTES Nothing, my lord.

FERDINAND Yes.

MALATESTES 'Tis your shadow.

FERDINAND Stay it; let it not haunt me.

MALATESTES Impossible, if you move, and the sun shine.

FERDINAND I will throttle it. [Throws himself upon his shadow]

MALATESTES Oh, my lord: you are angry with nothing.

FERDINAND You are a fool. How is't possible I should catch my shadow unless I fall upon't? When I go to hell, I mean to carry a bribe: for look you, good gifts evermore make way for the worst persons.

MALATESTES Rise, good my lord.

(V.ii.28-44)

ANTONIO Echo, I will not talk with thee;
For thou art a dead thing.

ECHO *Thou art a dead thing.*

(V.iii.37-38)

After Ferdinand's incest dream is shattered, his power of reason is lost, and even medicinal attempt to repress the madness turns out to be in vain, what is still left is the excess of the body and sexuality. Ferdinand says, as he throws the doctor down, "there's / nothing left of you, but tongue and belly, flattery and / lechery" (V. ii.78-80). Ferdinand dies in madness by the sword of Bosola, still in mourning but finally with an insight of the aporia of reproduction that undermines the kingship from within.

My sister. oh! my sister, there's the cause on't.

Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,

Like diamonds we are cut with our own dust.

[Dies]

(V.v.70-72)

The ambition for concentration of inheritance, the ambition for social mobility, the desire for succession of homogeneous kinship, the injunction of blood against incest, the lust that is indispensable for and yet conjures the crisis of kin(g)ship—all hinge upon the reproductive body of the female that escapes the patriarchal order.

In the last scene of the play, both the brothers are killed by Bosola, in revenge for the Duchess, Antonio, lustful Julia and Bosola himself who was "an actor in the main of all, / Much 'gainst [his] own good nature, yet i'th' end / Neglected" (V.v.84-86). The conservative values of stable patrilineage is seemingly defeated by novel values of meritocracy, ambition, and social mobility. But it is not a total victory of the new standards. Bosola is also killed in the fight. The drama does not end with free social mobility or total anomie. The order is restored as the son of Antonio and the Duchess succeeds the dukedom.

DELIO

... and join all our force

To establish this young hopeful gentleman

In's mother's right. These wretched eminent things

Leave no more fame behind 'em, than should one

Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow,

As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts

Both form and matter. . . .

(V.v.110-116)

Through the pun of "the sun" and "the son," and the symbolism of the sun-king, the audience learns that the successful succession solves all the problems and saves the Duchess, Antonio and Ferdinand from the infamy of the "fall" and the stigma of illegitimate marriage. Here is a critical move. Delilo says, "To establish this young hopeful gentleman / *In's mother's right*" (emphasis added). It suggests legitimization of the offspring of the Duchess and Antonio by his maternal pedigree. The Duchess of Malfi had a son by her first husband (III.iii.68-69), who should be the heir according to the principle of the patriarchal courtly law. But in the end the logic of the body is cunningly fused with that of the formal order. Obviously the result is aberrant of the orthodox patriarchal story of kin(g)ship. However, this digression should be permissible in consideration of the historical context.

King James, though in fact an issue of a cousin marriage between Mary Stuart and Henry Stuart, "is never characterized by his enemies as a product of incestuous union (Bohrer 87). Unlike the case of Elizabeth, who embodied "extremely endogamous orientation" (Bohrer 111) and was often accused as such, an urgent problem for James was the allegation of being a bastard son of David Rizzio, secretary of Mary Stuart. Hence James resorts to the rhetoric of consanguinity in legitimization of his English succession. As is indicated by the diction in his letter, James fabricates his relation to Elizabeth first as brother and sister, and later as son and mother (Bohrer 88-89). And it is precisely in the right of the fictitious mother that James justified his throne to England. Thus both in history and in the drama, Jacobean consciousness manages to preserve patriarchal order by keeping an eye from logical digression from patrilineage, by naturalizing succession in the right of the mother and thereby covering the truly exogamous implication which is an unextinguishable constituent of the aporia of the female fecundity.

Notes

- 1 It is not uncommon to discern Ferdinand's incestuous desire. Indeed M. C. Brabrook considers Ferdinand's fixation on his sister to be an "almost orthodox" interpretation for a modern audience.

- 2 The phallic implication of the tongue and the poniard in this scene is underscored by Callaghan, too, but with significantly different emphases. She associates the two with power, that is, male violence and paternal authority, while the implication of patrilineage is not accentuated (Callaghan 169-170).
- 3 OED does not document a written record of "mummy" for mother before 1784, while early usage of "mammy" and "mamma" for the same meaning can be traced back to the sixteenth century. It is, therefore, difficult positively to prove that the polysemy was recognizable by the contemporaries of Webster as well as a modern audience. However, considering its probable formation from young children's instinctive utterances, it is presumable that "mummy" could be understood as a variant of a child word for mother, particularly when the word was produced orally, well before it was recorded in a written document.

Works Cited

- Boehrer, Bruce Thomas. *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Pr, 1992.
- Bloom, Harold ed. *John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Bradbrook, M. C. "Renaissance Contexts for *The Duchess of Malfi*." *John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist*. M. C. Bradbrook and George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, London. Columbia U P, 1980. Rpt. in Bloom 41-63.
- Brennan, Elizabeth M. ed. *The Duchess of Malfi*. By John Webster. 3rd ed. London: A & C Black, 1993.
- Callaghan, Dymrna. *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of King Lear, Othello, The Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.
- Jardine, Lisa. "The Duchess of Malfi: A Case Study in the Literary Representation of Women." *Teaching the Text*. Eds. Suzanne Kappeler and Norman Bryson. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983. Rpt. in Bloom 115-127.
- Kusunoki, Akiko. "The Representation [sic] of Selfhood in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Eibei Bungaku Hyoron*. 34 (1988): 23-59.
- Whigham, Frank. "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *PMLA*. 100.2 (March 1988): 167-186.