

in the introduction, Shakespeare himself is 'native' to postcolonial art: 'native — the place to which one returns' (2) for those artists who find within his writing the inspiration to sink their teeth into a postcolonial dialogue.

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**Will Fisher. *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Pp xii, 223.**

Will Fisher's study *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* contributes to the ongoing discourses surrounding materiality, the body, and the relationship between subject and object in early modern England. But rather than attempt to overhaul the way we read the early modern sex/gender system (à la Lacquer) or reframe the way we understand self-fashioning through the material world (à la Greenblatt), Fisher opts for subtlety, rooting his project in the minutiae of everyday life. He pursues this project by highlighting four 'prosthetic parts' (33) of the early modern body: the handkerchief, the codpiece, the beard, and the hair of the head.

To flesh out his study Fisher calls on an impressive variety of textual sources, from medical texts, political treatises, and dramatic texts and performances to diaries, painted portraits, sermons, and physical material artifacts. His referents include such canonical gratuities as Shakespeare's *Othello*, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, and Bulwer's *Anthropometamorphosis* as well as some pleasantly surprising choices such as the detailed prop list from the 1605 Oxford schoolboy performance of *Alba* and Henry VIII's actual codpiece on display at the Tower of London. His theoretical framework is no less diverse; new historicism, feminist theory, queer theory, post-structuralism, and disability studies are particularly prominent influences. Though this expansive body of primary and secondary texts might threaten to open a veritable Pandora's box of scattered possibilities, Fisher's specific focus on the handkerchief, codpiece, beard, and hair of the head effectively limits the project.

As his book's title suggests, Fisher borrows from Butler to show how gender 'matters' — that is, both comes into being (materializes) *and* gains significance (matters) simultaneously. As he asserts, 'it is through the process

of modification that the body (and, for that matter, the social norms themselves) comes into being' (24). This radical view of the body-that-matters is tempered by the intense focus Fisher gives to the tangible and material realities of the body, like the fact that some women grow prominent facial hair or the fact that all bodies sweat and smell and thus can be dried and perfumed by handkerchiefs. Fisher argues that his chosen four 'prosthetic parts', far from merely attachable or detachable, are in fact constitutive of early modern gender. Fisher relies on modern disability studies to frame his 'prosthetic parts', using such phenomena as phantom limbs to delimit received boundaries of the body. But rather than attempt to pin down a more workable definition of the prosthetic, Fisher welcomes the slippery 'conceptual tensions' (32) he finds already at play in disability studies. Fisher seems to relish plural possibilities: a preference that makes for some interesting thought-experiments but sometimes left this reader wondering which approach Fisher actually favors.

Chapter one professes to be concerned with the prosthetic nature of the early modern handkerchief but quickly reveals itself to be more about the loaded potentiality of the early modern hand than the handkerchief it holds. Chapter one is the most predictable chapter of Fisher's book. It opens with a decidedly new historicist anecdote, pursues a close reading of references to hands in *Othello*, and relies on Paster's theory of the leaky female body to theorize the role of the drying handkerchief in early modern woman's physicality. It successfully illuminates what Fisher calls 'a new morphological form of the hand' (45) which took the hand and the handkerchief for a single unit. By using *Othello* to demonstrate the consequences generated by the disarticulation of such a morphological unit, Fisher manages to underscore his thesis that bodies 'matter' and shows how a prosthetic functions: it can be disarticulated, but tragic consequences will ensue. Though this reading of the early modern handkerchief is illuminating, it seems ultimately truncated. It would have been nice to see Fisher more thoroughly explore the cultural work of the handkerchief in the early modern gentleman's hand, especially since the chapter opens with portraits of Robert Dudley and Thomas Howard sporting handkerchiefs. This could have productively expanded his reliance on the theory of the leaky female body this chapter otherwise upholds.

While chapter one examines the ways a prosthetic item could reform the early modern body physically, chapter two examines the ways a prosthetic item, namely the codpiece, could reform the early modern body ideologically. Fisher's work differs from previous scholarship on the codpiece in that he

pays particular attention to the specific ways codpieces signaled two alternative versions of masculinity: testicular codpieces evoked procreation, whereas phallic codpieces evoked penetration. But rather than theorize this significant distinction as radically paradigm-shifting Fisher backs away and simply refers to two 'slightly different versions of masculinity' (69). Yet he pays particular attention to the way these two ideologies could both emerge from a cross-section of discourses centered on the same object: Henry VIII's codpiece. By examining the dueling ways in which Henry VIII's codpiece was discussed throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — sometimes as penetrative, other times as reproductive — Fisher implicitly exposes a central problem: that material objects always carry the signification mapped onto them by their readers. What makes this chapter stand out is the fact that the codpiece is the only one of Fisher's prosthetic items to wane in popularity over the course of the early modern period. This fact allows Fisher to examine the 'systematic *disarticulation* of a prosthetic part from gendered identity' (75). Fisher ultimately suggests that the overuse of the transferable codpiece — especially when used by cross-dressed women as dramatized in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Roaring Girl* — made it ideologically empty.

At almost fifty pages, chapter three is the longest and most comprehensive chapter in Fisher's study. Its impressive breadth is both a strength and a weakness. One feels that Fisher could have written a book-length study on the beard given the exhaustive nature of his research. This chapter is particularly valuable in its examination of beardless boyhood as a distinct gender separate from bearded manhood, which contributes to the growing scholarly interest in boyhood and girlhood studies. Fisher also examines anecdotes recounting encounters with early modern bearded women and shows how beards — like the other prosthetic parts he highlights — were constitutive of masculine identity but could be counterbalanced and made socially acceptable for women by 'feminine' qualities like a high-pitched voice, breasts, or sewing and weaving talents. In this way Fisher continues in the recent scholarly trend that challenges sex/gender and nature/culture binaries. In place of such binaries, Fisher shows how early modern gender was constitutive, comprised of a number of 'weighted' primary and secondary gender characteristics. This point becomes theoretically muddled when Fisher invokes the metaphor of the weighted scale (115) in addition to the metaphor of the linear continuum (120) in relation to gender identity but does not reconcile the two.

Chapter four continues the discussion of early modern hair but focuses specifically on the ways tonsorial discourse gendered men and women

through hair length and ornamentation. Fisher moves beyond humoral readings of hair growth to explore the way religious doctrine and discourse shaped the gendering of hair. In this vein, Fisher illuminates the early modern concept of the natural. As Fisher explains, 'instead of basing their claims about "nature" on empirical observation and analysis, they often base them on biblical authority' (139). By exploring the way religious discourse influenced early modern ideas about the 'natural' status of hair length, Fisher is able to illuminate the religious tensions between Anglican and Roman Catholic factions during the sixteenth century as well as the political tensions between puritan 'roundheads' and royalist cavaliers during the civil war. Fisher's attention to Salmasius's *Epistola* reveals the way politics collided with religious particularities when it came to women's hair binding and ornamentation. Fisher's reading of Milton further complicates the elision of politics and religion. Fisher pays his respects to Milton's *Samson Agonistes* but a biographical reading of Milton's own tonsorial preferences colors the way he reads Samson. Fisher sees Milton's re-telling of Samson as an 'intervention with regard to the current discourses on hair' (150). Fisher argues that Milton asserts his politics not by championing the roundhead aesthetic (Milton loved his own flowing locks) but by rejecting the ornamental prosthetics of Dalila and Harapha. By showing how the hair of the head was imagined to be prosthetic only once it was cut, Fisher complicates the extent to which a prosthetic can be integrated into or disarticulated from the body.

Fisher's short conclusion riffs off early modern atomic theory and in particular the image of Hobbes's *Leviathan* to further explore the in-divisibility of the in-dividual. This addendum opens an interesting next step for future studies but is not integral to the important cultural work Fisher has already illuminated with respect to the handkerchief, the codpiece, the beard, and the hair of the head. In his style Fisher is readable, personable, and conversational, though at times his prose could benefit from more direct assertiveness when it comes time to drive home an argument. Fisher's most powerful accomplishment is the way this study celebrates the potentiality of the prosthetic and his approach will certainly pave the way for future single-object studies in the early modern field and beyond.

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