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“Youth is Drunke with Pleasure,
and therefore Dead to all Goodnesse”:
Regulating the Excess of the Erotic Early
Modern Body

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the erotic and youthful body in John Fletcher’s play *The Faithful Shepherdess*, written for The Children of the Queen’s Revels c.1607. For many early modern scholastic, medical, and conduct manual writers, the life stage of Youth was a particularly dangerous moment in an individuals’ life, a time where the body was in a constant state of flux and ruled by unhealthy bodily excess. Fletcher’s play presents an assortment of characters who are all ruled by or obsessed with their own youthful passions. This article engages with Galenic humoral theory, an area that has been neglected in scholarship on Fletcher’s play, to provide a close analysis of Youth and erotic excess on the early modern stage.

ABSTRACT

My title quotation is taken from *The Discoverie of Youth and Old Age* (1612). According to the author of the pamphlet, Youth “glorieth in pride, swelleth with envy, boasteth of its strength, sacrificeth to its owne faire face, it is carried along with self love, and so becomes worse then a very foole” (7). The life stage of Youth was understood as a moment that was steeped in and governed by excess; an increasingly destabilizing and disruptive moment. Youth was characterized by its pursuit of pleasure, a time of life without regulation that defined a body that was both uncontrollable and unstable. Youth was affected by the extremes of pride, envy, strength and beauty and all of these qualities resulted in a dangerously unstable humoral body that was constantly steeped in excess. A disrupted body often resulted in disruption to society, as the author of the pamphlet realized: “youth is alwaies litigious, & troublesome” (8). The anonymous author of the pamphlet, writing under the guise of “Youth,” critically suggests how Youth was easily provoked to the utter disruption of social harmony:

and therefore if any bee so audaciously bold, as to give me the lye, or (in any sort) to abuse mee, my advise to him is, that he warily looke to himself, for otherwise I protest unto him, upon the word of a gentleman, that I will sheath my rapier in the best heart hee hath. (19)

Youth was easily inflamed, excessively angry and excessively disruptive to conventional societal regulations and “the control of youth was essential to social order more generally” (Griffiths 37). For Francis Lenton, author of the pamphlet *The Young Gallants Whirligigg: Or Youths Reakes*, the sins of Youth were that young men were prone “[t]o sweare, to lie, to kill, to steale, to whore, / With thousand other petty vices more” (9). This article will explore the social problems that arise through youthful bodily excess, via an exploration of the youthful body ruled by lust in John Fletcher’s play for The Children of the Queen’s Revels, *The Faithful Shepherdess* (c. 1607).

Early modern men and women inherited a Galenic medical understanding of their bodies that ultimately resulted in the notion that a body was an unstable and constantly changing vessel that was subject to the sway of bodily humours. “Men’s bodies were thought to be hotter and drier, women’s bodies colder and more spongy” (Paster 77). Men were therefore naturally subject to the consequences of excess bodily heat, anger and lust. Alexandra Shepherd usefully summarizes Renaissance understandings of the bodily humours:

According to humoral theory, all matter consisted of the four elements, each of which was associated with a combination of qualities: air (hot and wet); fire (hot and dry); earth (cold and dry); and water (cold and wet). In the human body these four elements were associated, respectively, with blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm, which were in turn linked to four bodily temperaments or humours: sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic. There was a distinct hierarchy of bodily qualities and their associated humours. Although all four qualities were necessary for a body to function, different proportions produced differences in bodily capacity according to temperament, age, and gender. Heat and moisture were life-giving, while coldness and dryness sapped energy. Thus gender difference was accounted for in terms of women's comparative coldness and moistness in relation to men who were, in contrast, privileged by their relative heat and dryness. (50–1)

Youthful choleric and melancholic bodies dominate Fletcher's play with its bodily investigations into how the passion of lust affects a range of shepherds and shepherdesses. Gail Kern Paster writes that

[L]ike other contemporary playwrights, Shakespeare found in language of the humours and their four qualities of cold, hot, moist, and dry a discourse for signalling the relationship within his characters between embodied emotion and perceptible behaviours, between the mind's inclination and the body's temperature. Extremes of emotion correlate with extremes of temperature. (85)

This article will suggest that John Fletcher is one such of those other contemporary playwrights fascinated by the youthful humoral body and the extremity to which humours can enforce the way that men and women act. As Robert Y. Turner briefly suggests, Fletcher's "shepherds contain within them their source of trouble—their passions—which they must struggle to control" ("Slander in *Cymbeline*" 192). Indeed, the Youthful body is a body that is difficult to regulate, and furthermore, it is a body that is constantly fluctuating and has no finite sense of selfhood. An excessively unbalanced humoral body can signal a complete transformation from a balanced and controllable body. Gail Kern Paster observes this transformative capability of the humoral body, a "bodily transformation from the inside out, from the mind's inclination to follow the body's temperature" (87). The humorally balanced bodies of the leading actor for the company, Nathan Field, and his fellow boy actors are also dangerously unstable as young men who are expected to perform a variety of passions and emotions. If the material disguise and physical performance was successful, the young body of the actor may also be at risk from a bodily transformation. As Dymphna Callaghan suggests, "Theatre as an institution

was, however, implicitly based on the forced expropriation of child labor and the threat of sexual victimization. Further, these economic and sexual practices molded the boys, aesthetically, if not surgically, into the shape of eunuchs” (67). The body of the boy actor is at its most unstable when performing as a woman, “Eunuchs, then, are understood as male *representations* of women” (Callaghan 66). Neither masculine nor feminine, indeed reminiscent of the body of a eunuch, the boy actor need always ensure that he was in control of his own susceptible body during the performance.

As Shepard has commented, “[y]oung bodies were represented as dangerously overpowered by heat and moisture” (51) according to early modern humoral theory, and Fletcher’s play explores the policing of lust and the power of chastity. However, the youthful body is notoriously difficult to regulate, whether this be in the form of internal or external attempts at regulation. “Additional differences in bodily complexions were attributed to the impact of external influences such as diet, exercise, emotional demands, the environment, the climate, the season of the year, and even the time of day” (Shepard 51). The time of day is crucial for *The Faithful Shepherdess* because it is during the night and under darkness that the shepherds and shepherdesses seem to be affected by a series of dangerous humours that are difficult to police and regulate as well as damaging to their youthful bodies. What is particularly important here is how consuming the bad humours are in the play. As we shall see below, the characters are at the total mercy of their humoral bodies and display only the most miniscule moments of self-reflection that reveal that how they are acting is incorrect or dangerous to their own bodies. Furthermore, the characters that are subject to bad humours display no inklings of any kind of attempt to control or regulate these bad humours; such a thought does not even occur cognitively. All of this demonstrates that according to scholastic, philosophical, and medicinal knowledge, many men and women in the early modern period were at the total mercy of their humours and locked in a continual battle to ensure that they are humorally balanced and in control of their performative and changeable bodies. Shepard provides support for such an idea:

One of the most striking aspects of humoral accounts of the body is their emphasis on how difficult the ideal was to achieve, especially given the body’s temperamental changeability. The bodies described in these terms were not static but in an almost constant state of flux. An even-tempered bodily complexion was not a given—even for (gentle)men—but a largely unrealizable standard used both to gauge illness and health and to account more generally for differences in physical and emotional potential. (53)

This article will explore the changeability of the erotic youthful body in Fletcher's "ironic pastoral" (Munro 3), particularly the vulnerable body of the choleric Perigot.

Previous literary scholarship on the play has tended to explore Fletcher's engagement with the pastoral tradition, tragicomedy, and with attempts to account for the play's failure on the stage in the Blackfriars theatre in 1607. Lee Bliss blames the indoor audiences' "kindred lack of sophistication" as a primary reason for the play's failure (296), and implicitly summarizes the lack of contemporary critical response to the play by suggesting that scholars, likewise, have been unsure exactly how to respond to Fletcher's play. Bliss comments:

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The Faithful Shepherdess should not, I think, be dismissed either as a bloodless literary exercise plagued by the undramatic stasis of its Italian inspiration or as a hot-house flower whose occasionally stunning verse is marred by Fletcher's lamentable (and life-long) prurience of imagination. (296)

Bliss is certainly correct that Fletcher's tragicomedy should not be dismissed as bloodless. Indeed, as Philip J. Finkelpearl observes, Fletcher is clearly influenced by "the latest developments on the Continent and interested in seeing how Guarini and Spenser might be combined" (286). For James J. Yoch the result of this combination is primarily conservative and moralistic: "Fletcher's design conforms with the conventional use of tragicomedy to illustrate the advantages of moderation in private and public life" (128). Lucy Munro interprets the influence of Guarini and Spenser as complex. Munro writes that "*The Faithful Shepherdess* represents an attempt to integrate Italianate pastoral with the English tradition exemplified by the Spenserians, drawing on both versions of pastoral in ways in which each is complicated and ironised" (124). Accounting for the play's failure on the Blackfriars stage, Lucy Munro suggests that "without a prologue to guide them, Fletcher suggests [in his address to the Reader], the confused spectators fell back on versions of pastoral and tragicomedy very different from those he aimed to promote" (97). What Fletcher was promoting however was innovative drama. William Proctor Williams also perceives the genre of tragicomedy as influential with regards to what he interprets as a positive message seeping into the audience's cognitive thought processes through an engagement with the play. Williams comments that

Fletcher's form of tragicomedy is, if nothing else, hopeful in outlook; even its bad characters are seldom punished. The Fletcherian form, though it may grow out of generic concerns, grows out of social ones as

well. It grows out of the belief on the part of Fletcher, his followers, and their audiences that the proper view of life is an optimistic one. (142)

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Robert Y. Turner meanwhile suggests that “characters . . . act with passionate disregard for the dictates of reason” (“Heroic Passion” 109), but this is surely an observation that ignores the influence of scholastic humoral theory on Fletcher’s play. There are two crucial elements that previous scholarship on Fletcher’s play has failed to comment upon. Firstly, critics have ignored Fletcher’s interest in early modern humoral theory. *The Faithful Shepherdess* is obsessed with how youthful bodies are uncontrollable and subject to constant fluctuations when experiencing feelings associated with love. Fletcher’s shepherds and shepherdesses experience significant humoral imbalances throughout the play which reveal and complicate Fletcher’s interest in male and female bodies. Secondly, critics have been largely quiet in commenting upon the fact that Fletcher’s play was written for and performed by a child acting company. Fletcher, like Field, is interested in the regulation and changeability of the youthful early modern body. The significance of “boy-ing” lust warrants further investigation.

There is an external stimulus that affects Fletcher’s shepherds’ and shepherdesses’ humoral bodies: love. It is the policing of these bodily emotions that is the primary concern of the play. As Bliss observes, “[n]aive emotions also reveal man’s inner contradictions, for love paradoxically breeds violence and hate as well as gentleness and reverence” (300). It is the careful regulation of lustful bodies, instigated and controlled by the faithful shepherdess Clorin, that is fundamentally in balance in the play. Every body in *The Faithful Shepherdess* is subjected to the sway of the humours. The young shepherdess Cloe is particularly affected by heated bodily humours and is utterly masculine in her quest to lose her virginity. After an unsuccessful attempt to get Daphnis to have sex with her, Cloe comments, “Is it not strange, among so many a score / Of lusty bloods, I should picke out these thinges / Whose vaines like a dull river” (I.iii.146–48). Her own hot humoral body only encounters cool, and thereby effeminate men, who are not up to the task of relieving her of her virginity. Cloe immediately encounters a rather more willing shepherd, Alexis, who is easily corrupted by Cloe’s lust, speaking “oh how I burne / And rise in youth and fier!” (I.iii.190–91). As Cloe later remarks, her body is so governed by lust, that “It is Impossible to Ravish mee, / I am soe willing” (III.i.212–13). Amarillis, who is likewise heated with hot lustful blood at the mere sight of Perigot, scoffs at his rejection by speaking a soliloquy where she acknowledges, “I must enjoy thee boy” (I.ii.192). Daphnis meanwhile, attempts to regulate his own humoral body when faced with the prospect of being polluted by Cloe’s lust. Daphnis speaks:

“I will not entertaine that wandring thought, / Whose easie currant may at length be brought / To a loose vastness” (II.iv.11–13), instead choosing to regulate and police his own rebellious blood:

... I charge you all my vaines
Through which the blood and spirit take their way,
Locke up your disobedient heats, and stay
Those mutinous desires, that else would growe
To strong rebellion. (II.iv.16–20)

77 Daphnis is aware of the need for self-regulation in Youth to control and inhibit lustful desires from entering the bloodstream of the body against the will of the individual. Hot lustful blood is “disobedient,” “mutinous,” and rebellious, actively fighting against the temperate body. The temptations for many young men, in particular, those newly apprenticed in the metropolis, must have been staggering. As Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos reports, as

Ian Archer has shown, during the 1570s there were at least 100 bawdy houses operating in London, located mostly outside the walls but often also in the city’s commercial heart, where quite a few apprentices lived. Some prostitutes in these establishments were allegedly enticing young men “to their utter ruine and decay.” The merchant apprentice who kept a wench in Covent Garden spent some £40 or £50 for her clothes and other expenses. (201)

The Sullen Shepherd is one such character governed by lust as Amarillis suggests. He is “One that lusts after every severall beauty, / But never yet was knowne to love or like” (I.ii.200–01) and is represented as a hyper-deviant individual, deeply dangerous to the health of society.

The Sullen Shepherd is an extreme example of a body corrupted by excessive humoral imbalance. Governed by lust and at the mercy of his bad humours, the Sullen Shepherd speaks “I do not love this wench that I should meet, / For never did my unconstanteie yet greet / That beautie” (II.iii.1–3). The Sullen Shepherd is so consumed by lust that he has lost his ability to rationalize, instead choosing only to be a slave to his hot passion:

... all to me in sight
Are equall, be they faire, or blacke, or browne,
Virgin, or careless wanton, I can crowne
my appetite with any. (II.iii.10–13)

Furthermore, the Sullen Shepherd is an expert deceiver, fully able to “perform” a range of amorous and honest suites to a woman that his fancy

leads him to: “Offer her all I have to gaine the jewell / Maidens so highly praise: then loath and fly, / This do I hold a blessed destiny” (II.iii.18–20). Later, excited by the beauty of Amoret, the Sullen Shepherd debates how his humours could have led him to rape Amoret, “if she had denied / Alone, I might have forced her to have tried / Who had bene stronger” (III.i.128–30). Acknowledging that his “blood is up” (III.i.132), the Sullen Shepherd demonstrates his dangerously excessive body; dangerous to society, dangerous to women, and dangerous to his bodily health: “now lust is up, alike all women be” (III.i.135).

Early modern society recommended numerous activities to police and regulate lust. “Lust could be subdued by Bible reading, meditation, fasting, labour, hard fare, and hard lodging” (Mendelson and Crawford 20), and the chosen outcast Clorin practices many of these forms of temperance in her wood side retreat. The youthful Perigot is at the mercy of his uncontrollable humours throughout the play because of the external stimulus of “love” that unbalances and upsets the body’s humours. In Act I Scene ii, four couples of shepherds and shepherdesses are gathered to await the coming of the Priest of Pan. The Priest regulates the lustful thoughts of the young men and women and controls their bodies with his discourse that champions the power of purity and chastity (I.ii.9–28). Just as the youthful body is subject to several external stimuli that dangerously corrupt the correct flow of the bodily humours, it is the external influence of the Priest of Pan who can govern and police the youthful body back to “normal.”

The Priest of Pan, like many early modern commentators writing about the youthful body, believed that the hotness associated with youth was dangerous and difficult for the individual to gain self-control over. As Alexandra Shepard states, “[w]hile the hot vigour of youth was frequently celebrated, it was nonetheless also approached as a continued source of instability which could easily overpower the brain and hinder the capacity for rational action” (56). If the Priest of Pan does not continue to closely police the shepherds and shepherdesses then their capacity to control their bodily lust will not only pollute and destroy their own youthful bodies but will also pollute and destroy the theatrical pastoral Arcadia, and the young men and women will neglect their sheep. Many early modern commentators suggested that it was to old age that Youth should turn for advice on how to live life sensibly and in moderation. The anonymous author of the pamphlet *The Discoverie of Youth and Old Age* asked

Proud and scornfull youth: heare old age with patience, & answer unto her demaunds: for shee asketh thee, where is thy chastity? Where is thy discretion? Where is thy constancie? Where is thy humilitie? Where is thy temperance? Where is any thing whereby to commend thee? (34–35)

In early modern England, excessive heat in youth was also particularly relevant to an individual's social station in life. For social harmony, excessive heat and lust needed to be carefully regulated:

heat needed bridling. This could be achieved through a careful regime of diet and exercise, and, more significantly, with "civil and vertuous education"—something that was beyond the reach of the majority. Thus the venerary associated with hot bodies ungoverned by civil manners correspond to the disruption feared from the unruly and uneducated lower orders. Men's bodies, therefore, were not rated simply in meritocratic terms, but were ranked within the confines of contemporary assumptions about the social order, as physical inferiority was grafted onto social inferiority. (Shepard 61)

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The Priest of Pan, therefore, possesses a significant role in Fletcher's pastoral world because it is through his cleansing discourse that social harmony and good government of the said world is maintained. Crucially, in Fletcher's play, after the Priest of Pan has suitably indoctrinated and thereby regulated the lustful thoughts of the young men and women and left the stage, Perigot and his lover Amoret are left alone. Perigot's conversation with Amoret becomes increasingly sexualized and "hot," revealing his own fiery humoral body. It appears that the Priest of Pan has failed to regulate this particularly hot male body. Perigot praises the beauty of Amoret (I.ii.61–67), commenting that her "haire [is] more beauteous then those hanging lockes / Of young *Apollo*" (I.ii.68–69). Amoret is quick to regulate and chastise his language, interrupting her lover to suggest "Shepherd be not lost, / Ye are saild too farre already from the coast / Of our discourse" (I.ii.69–71). Like the hot fluid sailing through his veins, Perigot is slipping into lustful language, objectifying the body of Amoret and praising her overpowering beauty. Amoret advises Perigot not to lose himself, that is, that he not lose control of his body. It is also intriguing that in this moment when Perigot is unable to contain his praise, he likens the beauty of Amoret to the body of the beardless and athletic youthful *Apollo*, surely a playful piece of metatheatricality from Fletcher, reminding his audience of the beardless boy beneath the feminine attire of Amoret.

With his blood heated by his sexual passion for his lover, Perigot unintentionally renders that desire onto a masculine body. This links to a common concern of the anti-theatricalists, such as Stephen Gosson, that the spectator at a play would become erotically attached to the body of the boy actor beneath the female costume. Gosson writes in his pamphlet, *The S[c]hoole of Abuse* (1579), about the dangerous experience of attending a play at a public theatre. There are "straunge consortes of melodie, to tickle the eare, costly apparrell to flatter the sight, effeminate gesture to

ravish the sence, and wanton speache, to whette desire to inordinate lust” (B7). The spectator is indoctrinated by an alluring assault on the senses, apparently drawn to the effeminate gesture of the boy actor playing the part of a woman, furthermore enticed by the wanton speech that arouses feelings of lust. The enticing words are particularly dangerous according to Gosson because the infectious words that are spoken by the actor pollute the air and are drawn inside the body of the spectator to their utter ruin. The words, “by the privy entries of the eare, slip downe into the heart, and with gunshotte of affection gaule the minde, where reason and virtue shoulde rule the roste” (B7). The polluted words, inside the body of the spectator, enter the bloodstream and affect judgement and rational thought, altering the perception of the spectators who find themselves sexually attracted to the boy player. As Edel Lamb comments, “the plays effectively advertize and display the young players as sexual, or as Mary Bly describes them, ‘erotic commodities.’ Furthermore, this example specifically locates the boy in homoerotic discourse” (51).

Gosson’s fears are certainly accurate in the surviving reports of audience experiences of attending a play. With reference to two foreign visitors who saw plays performed by The Children of the Chapel in 1602, who were both captivated by the performances of the boy actors, Edel Lamb writes that “[t]he representation of the voice of the English boy performer in both accounts is loaded with sexual connotations, as the boy charms his audience and the writers recording these performances seem almost enraptured by this experience” (77). Here are two audience members who experience pleasure from the performance of the boy actors and experience an altered, and for Gosson a negative, bodily experience from watching a play. Thomas Middleton would, in his pamphlet *Father Hubbard’s Tales* (1604), suggest that a theatregoer may “call in at the Blackfriars where he should see a nest of boys able to ravish a man” (173), once more suggesting the alluring capabilities of the boy actors. Gosson’s pamphlet is obsessed with the personal bodily abuse that spectators inflict upon themselves by attending a play. Gosson advises his reading public not to “go to Theaters for being allured, nor once bee allured for feare of abuse” (C5). The healthy balanced body is at risk from sensorial assault in the theatres. Socially, foul words, meanwhile, were also damaging to easily impressionable and swayable young men in the early modern period. Paul Griffiths describes an extraordinary and highly comic situation which also takes place in a pastoral retreat. Griffiths reports that:

One day in 1696 . . . 12-year-old John Cannon of Somerset “took a ramble to the river” with his schoolfellows. At the riverside an older youth who is mysteriously called “the elder of the Scrases then about 17 (years

old) after some aquarian diversions took an occasion to show the rest what he could do if he had a female in place, and withal took his privy member in his hand rubbing it up and down till it was erected and in short followed emission, the same as he said in copulation.” This “elder of the Scrases” then “advised more of the boys to do the same, telling them that although the first act would be attended with pain yet by frequent use they could find a deal of pleasure, on which (Cannon reported) several attempted and found as he said indeed.” (243–44)

This remarkable account describes what later commentators would deem bodily “self-pollution” and once again suggests how Youth is governed by lustful desires.

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The character of Perigot is one such unhealthy body that is negatively swayed by alluring discourse. Perigot is heedless, or unable, to self-regulate his body despite Amoret’s verbal advice for him to control his humours and he speaks in response to her cautious conference that she loves him:

I take it as my best good, and desire
For stronger confirmation of our love,
To meete this happy night in that faire grove,
Where all true shepherds have rewarded bene
For their long service. (I.ii.82–86)

Perigot, with his veins truly fired, attempts to gain a promise from Amoret that they will have sex that evening. Amoret, however, is not swayed by Perigot’s sexy discourse and is in control of her humoral body. She replies to him:

Deere friend you must not blame me if I make
A doubt of what the silent night may doe
Coupled with this dayes heat to moove your blood:
Maids must be fearefull, sure you have not bene
Washd white enough, for yet I see a staine
Sticke in your liver, goe and purge againe. (I.ii.87–92)

Amoret is aware of Perigot’s dangerously hot humoral body and coupled to some external factors, such as the darkness of the night and the previous heat of the day, is fully aware of his bodily imbalance. In particular, darkness and the moon were perceived by early modern conduct writers to be particularly dangerous to the bodies of women. “The moon, associated with the menses, marked women as wandering, changing, mentally and morally unstable. During her menstrual periods, Queen Anne was considered ‘a little mad’ by her male advisers” (Mendelson and Crawford 72). However, it is the male body that is in danger here.

As Amoret observes, Perigot's blood has been stirred up by lust and she urges him to purge his lustful body, citing Perigot's liver as the seat of his amorous passion. Amoret's chastising words appear to have an effect on Perigot as he flatly denies that he was trying to coerce her into sexual activity: "onely my intent / To draw you thither, was to plight our troths, / With interchange of mutuall chaste imbraces" (I.ii.96–98). It could be that Amoret's verbal chastisement has quelled the heat of Perigot's blood, or, that Perigot is deliberately scheming in his calculated response that reassures Amoret that he is in control of his humoral body whilst plotting for an amorous coupling later that evening, or, that Amoret has simply misunderstood and misinterpreted the strength of chaste affection that Perigot champions. Perigot does maintain that he possesses only "chaste desires" (I.ii.122) and Amoret agrees to meet him that evening. Perigot's affirmation that his desires are chaste is found in a curious speech that, once again, is steeped in ideas of humoral imbalance and polluted bodies. Perigot's parting speech to his lover states that:

... When I leave to be
 The true admirer of thy chastity,
 Let me deserve the hot polluted name,
 Of a wilde woodman, or affect some dame
 Whose often prostitution hath begot,
 More foule diseases, then ever yet the hot
 Sun bred through his burnings, whilst the dog
 Pursues the raging Lyon, throwing fog
 And deadly vapour from his angry breath,
 Filling the lower world with plague and death. (I.ii.128–37)

Perigot desires that when his chaste desires fail him his own identity be changed to identify his bodily state, that of a "hot polluted" wild woodman like the Sullen Shepherd, whose identity is encapsulated in his name. Perigot further likens his impure and hot body as comparable to the body of the diseased prostitute, who fares worse than the body that is continually sunburnt. Sunburnt in this context appears to be related to bodily humours, that is that the heat of the Sun makes one lustful and heats the blood to dangerous levels which cannot be controlled. The image of the dog is particularly pressing as early modern society believed that dogs carried the plague virus, adding further images of rotten decay and disease that are emitted from the body of the dog; its breath a foul vapour that brings "plague and death," infecting and polluting, in this instance, the pastoral haven. Plague was a pressing concern for early modern England; as the heart of the body of England, London, regularly suffered from the foul breath of infection, particularly devastating in 1603. Whether

the plague had shut the theatres in 1607 or not, the outbreak was so violent by 1608, the year that the first quarto of *The Faithful Shepherdess* was printed, that Fletcher mentioned it in his printed dedication to Sir Walter Aston. Fletcher writes of the “infection” (493) that along with the “common prate / Of common people” (493) can silence plays. Infection and pollution were pressing concerns during the composition of *The Faithful Shepherdess* and its subsequent preparation for publication and it is hardly surprising that Fletcher obsesses over bodily health and contamination during the course of the play.

Perigot is of course also affected bodily by an external stimulus that upsets his humoral balance: love. “Love upset the humours: it inflamed the heart inducing an excess of heat which could, without strict vigilance, overthrow the reason associated with manhood” (Shepard 79). Perigot’s body, and the body of Youth in general in the early modern period, was genuinely at risk from the effects on the passions that love may cause. Perigot’s reason, and manhood, is called into question when he is eventually overpowered by love, and he loses control of his own body when he feels aggression towards what he believes to be the sexually charged Amoret; it is in fact Amarillis transformed into the likeness of Amoret. Act III scene i focuses on Amarillis, disguised physically and verbally as an exact likeness of Amoret, as she attempts to seduce Perigot into having sex with her. Alone in the woods together, Perigot is seemingly in control of his bodily humours as the pair sit down together: “’Twas only that the chaste thoughts might bee shown, / ’Twixt thee and mee, although we were alone” (III.i.283–84). The heated and lustful body of Amarillis will not settle for chaste thoughts during this secretive meeting and becomes forcibly active; governed by excessive passion she makes a bold move on Perigot:

Come, *Perigot* will show his power that hee
 Can make his *Amoret*, though she weary bee,
 Rise nimbly from her Couch, and come to his.
 Here take thy *Amoret*, embrace and Kisse. (III.i.285–88)

The sexually aroused Amarillis throws herself into Perigot’s arms, expecting to heat his blood and fire him into a performance of manly lustful sexuality. Instead, the chaste Perigot asks bewilderingly “What means my love?” (III.i.289) to which the ungovernable body of Amarillis lustfully and hotly replies:

To do as lovers shud,
 That are to bee injoyed not to bee woed.
 Ther’s nere a Sheapardesse in all the playne,

Can kisse thee with more Art, ther's none can faine
More wanton trickes. (III.i.289–93)

84 Amarillis's youthful body, fired by lust, effectively reverses the conventional gender hierarchy of early modern England. Made bold by her lustful heat, Amarillis woos Perigot forcibly and in an aggressively masculine manner, which horrifies the chaste yet emasculated Perigot. Amarillis's unruly body champions a form of love that is purely sexual. Amarillis believes that lovers should have sex rather than spend time courting each other, attempting to fire Perigot's blood with such saucy suggestions that there is no other shepherdess that can kiss him "with more Art," which may imply passion or perfection and also that she is superior to any other shepherdess for the "wanton trickes" that she is willing to perform.

Perigot is not interested by what he perceives to be a chastity test, wishing rather to die than dare to dishonour his Amoret (III.i.293–95). Amarillis's response amplifies the typical misogynistic early modern interpretation of women as dominated by lust and, once again, is forceful and governed by her desire to have sex with this young man:

Still thinkst thou such a thinge as Chastitie,
Is amongst woemen? *Perigot* thers none,
That with her love is in a wood alone,
And wood come home a Mayde. (III.i.296–99)

Perigot, so far, has been able to control his own bodily humours and has carefully self-regulated his temperature to ensure that his veins are not fired by the saucy discourse of Amarillis. However, Perigot becomes increasingly agitated during the following exchange:

PERIGOT. My true heart thou hast slaine.
AMARILLIS. Fayth *Perigot*, Ile plucke thee downe againe.
PERIGOT. Let goe thou Serpent, that into my brest,
Hast with thy Cunning div'd, art not in jest?
AMARILLIS. Sweete love lye downe. (III.i.301–05)

It is clear, however, that despite regulating his body from lust during this exchange, Perigot's anger is beginning to take control of his person and his passion is becoming harder to suppress and remain balanced. Inflamed by an excess of yellow bile and resulting in a body dominated by excessive choler, Perigot begins to act in an uncontrollable manner, losing all traces of masculinity:

Then here I end all love, and lest my vaine
 Beleeife should ever draw me in againe,
 Before thy face that hast my youth mislead,
 I end my life, my blood be on thy head. (III.i.311–14)

In this heated decision, unable to control his passions and overcome with anger and grief, Perigot sinisterly suggests that he will commit suicide to prevent his misled youth being tempted again by the dangerous trappings of love. Within a moment, the changeability of Perigot's passions and unregulated body demonstrate a further dangerous display of bodily instability and excess. As Perigot has been indoctrinated by the Priest of Pan that lust is a polluting sin, Perigot takes it upon himself to violently regulate the lustful body of Amarillis.

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In a moment of extreme bodily excess, Perigot decides that “[t]his steele shall peirse thy lustfull hart” (III.i.318), attempting to plunge his knife into the heart of Amarillis. Amarillis manages to flee and the stage directions indicate that “*He runs after her,*” allowing for the Sullen Shepherd to appear and uncharm Amarillis so that her transformation is ended. Perigot appears, chasing in Amarillis and after observing that Amarillis is not the same woman that he chased off stage, at least to his deceived eye, Perigot admits that he cannot control his passionate anger. Apologizing to Amarillis, Perigot speaks “my rage and night / Were both upon me and beguild my sight” (III.i.333–34), drawing attention to the dangerous bodily state that his uncontrollable anger has put him into. His passions are so uncontrollable that his sight is beguiled and, coupled to the darkness of night, further indicates that Perigot is humorally imbalanced. Such a dangerous excess of anger is quickly demonstrated to the audience as the real Amoret enters to Perigot and with the briefest of exchanges, Perigot stabs Amoret before speaking, “Death is the best reward thats due to lust” (III.i.346), next fleeing the stage, an attack that Lucy Munro describes as “sexualised, if not [a] figurative rape” (129). It is, however, problematic to suggest that the moment that Perigot attacks the body of Amoret be a sexualized moment akin to rape, considering how excessively chaste the body of Perigot is in the play. Perigot is a character fearful of sexuality and aware of the dangers of the polluting nature of bodily lust. It is difficult to account for the bodily excess of Perigot and why such a brutal form of policing lust is enforced by his character. No longer in control of his body and governed by anger, Perigot may represent the early modern fear of a man that cannot suitably regulate his own passions becoming beastly and monstrous. Such a bodily extreme would aptly demonstrate Fletcher's insistence on the general themes of temperance and moderation with regards to love and sexuality in this play. But it is also important that Perigot may

act in an unmanly fashion precisely because of his inability to regulate his own lover (despite the fact that it is the lustful Amarillis rather than the chaste Amoret). As Alexandra Shepard suggests,

losing authority over women amounted to relinquishing both manhood and admittance to male society. Such representations serve to reinforce the patriarchal blueprint by emphasizing the dangers of an inverted gender hierarchy, and by scapegoating women for any breakdown in male authority. (80)

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Such societal ideas may suggest why Perigot isolates himself after attacking Amoret in the play after he has attempted not only to kill himself but also to kill Amoret, since he has lost his place in conventional society because of his failure to construct a healthy and chaste relationship. At this moment, an outcast from conventional society, Perigot's emasculation is the direct result of his inability to control and suppress the masculine lust of Amarillis disguised as Amoret.

This article has offered a tentative reading of the problems of early modern erotic desire that depicted young men and women as dangerous bodies that needed careful policing. Fletcher is evidently a playwright interested in bodily excess and it is this engagement with the excessively uncontrollable male and female humoral body that appears liberating yet destructive. Finally, in conclusion, it is fitting that Alexandra Shepard suggests that "[m]ale youth was widely characterized as an age of extremes, marked both by an unrivalled capacity for spirited and courageous action and a seemingly unlimited potential for vice" (24). This observation on early modern society shares many parallels with Fletcher's play, which explores the dangerously unstable bodies of shepherds and shepherdesses in an Arcadia which is marked by the fantastical and the courageous and, in the darkness of the forest, exemplifies the vices of the human body.

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