

Notes

¹ Marks, Alfred. *Tyburn Tree: Its History and Annals*. London: Brown, Langham and Company, 1901.

² The road to which Marks refers is the three mile long Via Dolorosa, the ritual path labored by condemned individuals on their way to the triple tree. It was common practice for spectators to line the road and witness the procession much like a modern day parade and then follow the felon up the hill, symbolically cutting off his means of escape. Here, the spectators are active participants in the execution process; they contain the criminal in a pen wrought by their own public bodies.

³ Nunn, Hillary. *Staging Anatomies and Spectacle in Early Stewart Tragedy*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2005.

⁴ "Shakespeare in Performance." *Shakespeare Survey 60: Theatres for Shakespeare*. Ed. Peter Holland. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 358.

The early modern mindset was peppered with images of death. High mortality rates rendered dying, typically of malnutrition or sickness, an everyday occurrence. Renaissance era paintings not infrequently included the skeletal personification of death stalking the righteous and the sinful alike, along with a multitude of corpses, plague victims, craniums, etc. So how did one come to grips with death constantly at the doorstep? This issue confronts that very question. The erudite elite of the period pondered at great length on the subject as the golden age of reasoning emerged. The liberal humanist, unlike his Classical Greek forbears after whom he aspired, chose the path of contemplation on death during life. For this purpose real and replica human skulls served as *memento mori*, a reminder of life's brevity and the Christian necessity to think on the self and afterlife. But, as our contents will demonstrate, these mementos also came in a variety of mediums and genres; gravestones, nonfiction religious tales, and the most inventive of literary minds grappled with the omnipresent threat. Literary depictions of death often strayed from the ubiquitous modes of dying to the irregular or downright extravagant in order to address the issue without hitting too close to home for the audience. Even still, the variety of ways to discuss death can be impressive. Hence prepare for our editorial farewell issue, a meditation on death in its multitude of forms and meanings in the early modern period.

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