Desire and Dramatic Form in Early Modern England

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JUDITH HABER

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DESIRE AND DRAMATIC FORM IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

This wide-ranging study investigates the intersections of erotic desire and dramatic form in the early modern period, considering to what extent disruptive desires can successfully challenge, change, or undermine the structures in which they are embedded. Through close readings of texts by Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Middleton, Ford, and Cavendish, Haber counters the long-standing New Historicist association of the aesthetic with the status quo and argues for its subversive potential. Many of the chosen texts unsettle conventional notions of sexual and textual consummation. Others take a more conventional stance; yet by calling our attention to the intersection between traditional dramatic structure and the dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality, they make us question those ideologies even while submitting to them. The book will be of interest to those working in the fields of early modern literature and culture, drama, gender and sexuality studies, and literary theory.

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To Stuart, with all my love

Contents

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Textual note

My text for Shakespeare's plays is *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd edn., ed. G. Blakemore Evans, *et al.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

I have modernized Renaissance i/j and u/v throughout, except when quoting from Spenser.

Introduction: consummate play

I began this study with a dual interest in sexuality (and sexual difference) and in the aesthetic, and with a belief that these two were interconnected. My project was sparked by a resistance to claims, seemingly ubiquitous in the heyday of New Historicism, that any foregrounding of aesthetic concerns was necessarily both essentializing in outlook and complicitous with a conservative status quo.[1] While such assertions were clearly responding to the conservative bias evident in much (though not all) earlier formalist analysis (and while the focus in the past two decades on the historical embeddedness of texts has been both salutary and illuminating), they struck me as essentializing in their own right, as inadvertently reproducing and reinforcing patriarchal modes of thought – and, quite simply, as wrong. The counterexample that immediately suggested itself was the case of Christopher Marlowe, whose writings became a touchstone for this work. For Marlowe, undirected aestheticism, insofar as it can be imagined (and his writings repeatedly acknowledge that it can never be fully so), offers a means of thinking outside the constructions of his culture, of questioning their seemingly fixed, immutable truths.[2]

The extreme aesthetic of Marlowe's texts is inseparable from (is, from one perspective, identical to) their unorthodox sexuality. What is subversive about art here is its potential for radical non-instrumentality – for what I will term "pointless play" – a potential that is duplicated in the non-reproductive, unconsummated sexuality towards which these texts repeatedly gesture.[3] Marlowe, as we shall see, makes these connections explicit. And similar, though not identical, connections are suggested in the later plays about women by John Webster, Thomas Middleton, John Ford, and Margaret Cavendish that I examine here; these often attempt (with varying degrees of success) to imagine a non-phallic sexuality, whose very existence, in the terms of Webster's *Duchess*

of Malfi, is bound up with and dependent upon "sportive action," rather than "action indeed."[4]

Central to this study is my deep and abiding investment in what Joel Fineman has called the "literariness" of the literary,[5] which I am perhaps in danger here of hiding behind a polemic point (which is necessarily a version of the same old point). But I also believe that, for those of us interested in problems of gender and sexuality, it is crucially important not simply to recover the stories of marginalized groups (although that is important), but to consider the extent to which the forms of these stories work in concert with the ideology that marginalizes them. Thus, while I have taken into account as much as possible the historical specificity of my texts, I have foregrounded formal and textual rather than "historical" questions as these terms are currently understood. Indeed, one of the implications of my work is that narrative "history" necessarily partakes of the same culturally created connections to patriarchal, heteroerotic masculinity as all narratives, and needs to be radically reconceived if it is really to represent other positions.[6]

Recent examinations of the New Historicist distrust of formalist analysis have linked it to anxieties about women and others characterized by "fluid sexualities." Heather Dubrow comments:

> Surely it is relevant that the formal as it is generally conceived has characteristics often gendered female and associated with a female subject position, though it is at once intriguing to speculate and impossible to determine to what extent formalism is demonized because it is feminized as opposed to vice versa . . . Our professional dismissal of formalism coincided chronologically with the increasing presence and power of women in the profession. This was no accident . . . because deflected resentment of highly visible female colleagues arguably intensified the rejection of the putatively feminized formal mode. Is it not possible as well that formalism's associations with the fluid sexualities of Bloomsbury and of other writers associated with art for art's sake further encouraged the rejection of it in some quarters? Real men don't eat villanelles.[7]

Dubrow's analysis is very acute. But the relations she notes are even less fortuitous and less locally limited than her account implies. In the early modern period, one can see somewhat similar anxieties surfacing in the complaints of the antitheatricalist pamphleteers. The most frequently cited is a passage from Phillip Stubbes's *Anatomie of Abuses*, which connects the theater to sodomy:

> These goodly pageants being done, every mate sorts to his mate, every one bringes another homeward of their way verye freendly, and in their secret conclaves (covertly), they play *the Sodomits*, or worse.[8]

But the continuation of this passage is also worth considering. Stubbes declares:

> And these be the fruits of Playes and Enterludes for the most part. And wheras you say there are good Examples to be learned in them, Trulie so there are: if you will learne falshood; if you will learn cosenage; if you will learn to deceive; if you will learn to play the Hipocrit, to cogge, lye, and falsifie; if you will learn to jest, laugh, and fleer, to grin, to nodd, and mow; if you will learn to playe the vice, to swear, teare, and blaspheme both Heaven and Earth: If you will learn to become a bawde, uncleane, and to deverginat Mayds, to deflour honest Wyves: . . . If you will learn to rebel against Princes . . . If you will lerne to deride, scoffe, mock, & flowt, to flatter and smooth: If you will learn to play the whore-maister, the glutton, Drunkard, or incestuous person . . . [9]

And Anthony Munday describes an audience in similarly sexualized terms:

> For while they saie nought, but gladlie looke on, they al by sight and assent be actors . . . So that in that representation of whoredome, al the people in mind plaie the whores. And such as happilie came chaste unto showes, returne adulterers from plaies. For they plaie the harlots, not then onlie when they go awaie, but also when they come.[10]

As various readers have noted, these passages are marked by the insistent repetition of the word "play" (and the action it denotes), which crosses linguistic and theatrical boundaries and erases distinctions between truth and fiction.[11] This erasure is, moreover, repeated in all the vices – sexual and otherwise – that "play" encourages: they all have in common a perceived inauthenticity, an intrinsic "fictionality," if you will, that distances them from a "reality" imagined as natural, moral, and true. Jonathan Goldberg, who has characterized Stubbes's view of sodomy in similar terms ("a debauched playing that knows no limit") comments: "Worse than playing the sodomite would be to be a sodomite . . . a being without being . . . This 'worse' is worst not least because it also dissolves the boundary between being and playing."[12] I would suggest, though, that Stubbes's locution already implies this dissolution: to "plaie the *Sodomit*" – like "to play the Hipocrit," "to playe the vice," "to play the whore-maister," to "plaie the whores [and] . . . harlots" (or, in a relevant phrase from *Edward II*, to "play the sophister"[13]) – is to inhabit a condition of permanent unreality, in which one is always, in effect, playing a player, in a dizzying, Escher-like regress of unstable fictions and masks.

In the antitheatricalists' anxious fantasies, theatrical performances enact a particularly strong version of the subversive power of the aesthetic, as it has been described by Murray Krieger:

> Unlike authoritarian discourse, the aesthetic takes back the "reality" it offers us in the very act of offering it to us. It thus provides the cues for us to view other discourse critically, to reduce the ideological claims to the *merely* illusionary, since there is in other discourse no self-awareness of their textual limitations, of their duplicity – their closures, their exclusions, their repressions . . . The sociopolitical function of literature in its aesthetic dimension, then, is to *de*stabilize the dominant culture's attempt to impose *its* institutions by claiming a "natural" authority for them.[14]

And the power to call what we normally perceive as reality into question, to see it, in Kaja Silverman's terms, as merely the "dominant fiction,"[15] is something that imaginative creations share with the culturally defined and despised sodomitical and feminine, both of which possess the capacity to interrogate the phallic point upon which that dominant fiction rests.

But the "play" I invoke in the title of this introduction has another, conflicting meaning as well. The linear, teleological structure we have come to associate with narrative is much more evident (or at least more expected) in Renaissance drama than in narrative poetry or prose, as any reader of Spenser can readily attest. Early modern critics like Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson repeatedly insist on the importance of obeying the dramatic unities, while allowing much more leeway to narrative romances, which were understood to be "thing[s] recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment."[16] Renaissance dramatists do, of course, regularly subvert and defy these dicta: Sidney criticizes even *Gorboduc*, the only play he seems to admire at all, for being "faulty both in the place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions,"[17] and among later playwrights, the principal example of one who usually adheres strictly to the rules is Jonson himself.[18] Nevertheless, as we shall see, many plays of the period demonstrate both a clear consciousness of the expectations of unity and an acute awareness of the implications of failing to fulfill them.

In recent years, postmodern criticism has connected the "logical," linear form of narrative with heterosexual consummation and reproduction. Judith Roof, for example, declares: "Our very understanding of narrative as a primary means to sense and satisfaction depends on a metaphorically heterosexual dynamic within a reproductive aegis."[19]

Although her analysis focuses on twentieth-century fiction and media, Roof is bringing to the surface here some of the most central and enduring assumptions in Western culture.[20] In his seminal analysis of sexual aberrations, Freud associates "perversion" with excessive "lingering," a refusal to attain proper consummation and closure:

> Perversions are sexual activities which either (a) extend, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or (b) linger over the intermediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim.[21]

And his developmental account of sexuality also ensures, as Leo Bersani points out, that "the perversions of adults become intelligible as the sickness of *uncompleted narratives*."[22]

Despite differences in earlier constructions of sexuality – which are extremely important, and to which I will give careful consideration – similar equations are perceptible in the Renaissance. Conventional "unified" dramatic structure is regularly associated with orthodox male sexuality and disrupted by deviations from that norm. Once again, Marlowe makes this linkage explicit, connecting linear narrative – which is productive of meaning – with sexual reproduction and setting it against lyric stasis and unconsummated "frolicking."[23] From a very different perspective, Margaret Cavendish also identifies reproductive sexuality with dramatic closure and presents both in an ambivalent light. Webster, on the other hand, highlights the implicit masculinity of conventional tragic structure and disrupts it, in a manner that might be surprising to some – though not to readers of Irigaray – with a sexuality that is founded in feminine reproduction. And, like Marlowe's texts, all of the exemplars I have chosen enact a tension between the two opposed connotations of "play" – between unified, teleological dramatic structure on the one hand and static lyric or improvisational performance on the other – a tension that is characteristic of early modern texts in general and that, as Marshall Grossman has cogently demonstrated, both responds and contributes to changing ideas about time, history, and sexuality in the period.[24]

My primary focus in the following pages is on tragedy, conventionally considered the highest and most masculine of dramatic forms in the Renaissance.[25] But I have also included analyses of relevant lyrics and poetic narratives, to provide a broader view as well as a clearer perspective on what is peculiar to the drama of the period. And my examination of Cavendish further necessitates a movement away from tragedy into other

dramatic genres. The criticisms of narrative that underlie my argument necessarily pose a problem in the structuring of my own story. I have tried to give them their due by avoiding an overly constricting master narrative, while I also attempt to avoid the imitative fallacy (and to respect institutional strictures) by charting clear connections among the texts I examine – and between them and other contemporary texts – and by considering how they respond to the constraints of their time.

The first section of the book examines several of Marlowe's plays and poems in detail, focusing particularly on the construction of sodomy in these texts, and more generally, on their attempts to disrupt and denaturalize societal structures of masculinity and meaning. As I have suggested, Marlowe is an important reference point for this study, both because he makes the associations I am examining particularly clear, and because he radically challenges received structures and ideas – much more so than Shakespeare, the usual focus for studies of early modern drama.

The first chapter begins with an analysis of Marlowe's famous lyric, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and explores what happens when the lyric and the assumptions behind it are enacted in drama; I seek here, among other things, to rectify the anti-lyric bias (expressive of an anti-aesthetic bias) that is evident in much recent criticism.[26] I then examine the ways in which the tension between lyric and drama works, in *Tamburlaine*, Part One, to suspend consummation of all kinds. The following chapter discusses the connection between that suspension and sodomy in *Edward II* and considers the force of the play's conclusion, in which both are fixed and defined, shut up and closed down. The final chapter of this section then returns to Marlowe's nondramatic poetry and looks at the somewhat different, more optimistic perspective achieved in his (significantly unfinished) poem, *Hero and Leander*.

The second section of the study deals primarily with seventeenth-century drama, examining various attempts in the plays of the period to represent female sexuality and desire. Although the conflation of sexuality and gender that occasionally occurs here may disturb some readers, I would argue that it is inevitable when examining Renaissance texts, in which even the most conventional female desire is potentially subversive.[27] I introduce this part of the book with a brief chapter that forms, as its title indicates, a "Shakespearean interlude." As I have made clear, I did not wish to follow other critics in making Shakespeare the center of my work;[28] neither, however, did I wish simply to ignore him, looking only at "non-Shakespearean drama" (which is defined precisely by his exclusion). Many later plays concerning women seem haunted by his

creations – especially by the image of romantic love and death in *Romeo and Juliet* – and attempt repeatedly to rethink and revise them. I therefore look briefly at *Romeo and Juliet* and its Shakespearean progeny in order to consider the relation of those plays to their successors, which often position themselves as less orthodox.

I then examine *The Revenger's Tragedy*. Although the numerous revenges in this play revolve around the question of female chastity, both its form and concerns are clearly marked as "male": images of swelling and detumescence pervade the text and define its movement, which turns on the self-defeating paradoxes involved in the masculine desire for purity. While the anonymous playwright (now usually assumed to be Thomas Middleton) criticizes his male characters for displacing their desires and anxieties onto women, he constructs similar displacements himself, and he seems to revel in his own self-canceling creations.

John Webster, by contrast, takes the problems involved in constructing a female subjectivity much more seriously. In Chapter 5, I briefly examine Webster's analysis of gender and power relations in *The White Devil*, focusing on his presentation of gender as performance. I then turn to *The Duchess of Malfi*. Here, the playwright questions to what extent it is possible not merely to parody, denaturalize, and decenter the structures of patriarchal power, but to imagine himself out of them. *The Duchess of Malfi* is particularly interesting to consider after Marlowe's plays, because Webster's challenge to the erotics of patriarchy and the structure of tragedy – to the fantasy of a self-defining, self-defeating moment of phallic orgasm and death – is conceived precisely in terms of reproductive sexuality: the Duchess's pregnancy is the central fact of the play. Throughout this chapter, I explore problems of enclosure (and closure) in seventeenth-century drama and look at the frequent, paradoxical presentation of enclosure as violation and rape.

My investigation of these problems – and of the contradictions apparent in Webster's construction of the feminine – leads me to (re)turn to Middleton. I consider his later plays, especially *The Changeling*, in the context of contemporary epithalamia, which often imply a queasy equation between virginity and whoredom, fear and desire, marriage and rape – an equation that is frequently figured by a popular literary device, the "bed-trick." *The Changeling* emphasizes this equation as it both explores erotic compulsion and enacts that compulsion structurally. While anatomizing its society's myths and fantasies about female sexuality, the play simultaneously participates in and derives considerable erotic power from them, presenting us with an inexorable chain of events

that we, like its characters, "[can]not choose but follow."[29] By comparing *The Changeling* with both similarly themed lyric and an episode in a narrative romance, I explore further the difference among these genres, and I demonstrate the importance dramatic form plays in constructing the illusion of inevitability.

The following chapter glances backward over the early modern tragic canon, as it reconsiders the relation between John Ford's "belated" play *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and its predecessors. I argue that Ford's play inhabits a masculinized tragic space that it simultaneously criticizes from within, unsettling the categories of masculinity and tragedy as it does so. *'Tis Pity* turns *The Duchess of Malfi*'s criticism of *Romeo and Juliet* – of a patriarchal erotics of "unity" in consummation and death – back upon itself, placing Ferdinand's fantasy once more at center-stage and once more subsuming the feminized space of pregnancy within the patriarchal sphere. Incest is presented here as enabling the fiction of paternal parthenogenesis, silencing anxieties about fatherhood by effectively eliding the troublesome woman. Thus, while Giovanni's actions effectively destroy his father, they also prove him to be – as he claims – an excellent student and a true son. And Ford situates himself in a similar, contradictory relation to his own literary forefathers; he simultaneously revivifies conventional structures and ideas and presents them critically, as outdated fictions – as, in the words of his play, "old men's tales."[30]

Examining so many images of female desire leads me to consider, in my final chapter, how one woman writer approached the questions these images raise. The plays of Margaret Cavendish provide us with a particularly good vantage for contemplating the problems explored throughout this book; for even though they are predominantly comedies (a genre thought to be more suitable to the dramatist's gender), they repeatedly engage and challenge the ideas and forms deployed by their tragic predecessors. More than any other playwright here (with the possible exception of Marlowe), Cavendish makes the tensions between the two opposed meanings of "play" explicit and their implications for constructions of gender and desire clear. She sees cohesive dramatic structure not only as expressive of reproductive sexuality but as reproducing a patrilineal tradition that both champions conventional "logical" structure and is constituted by it. This chapter examines both her prefaces and plays and considers her revisions of earlier dramatists (especially Ford), which repeatedly suggest the possibility, never fully realized in her work, of letting go of the "old men's tales" of the past and creating something new – something that she images as the tales of young virgins.

Throughout the book, I attempt to keep my eye both on specific early modern constructions of desire and on the larger, persistent patterns of Western European culture of which they are part. And I consider to what extent – and how – disruptive desires can effectively challenge, change, or undermine the structures in which they are embedded. This is perforce a formal as well as a historical problem; as I have suggested, it is a problem that ultimately necessitates revisiting and rethinking our conception of "history." In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Luce Irigaray suggests that "in order to make it possible to think through, and live [sexual] difference, we must reconsider the whole problematic of space and time." She further asserts that doing so adequately would result in "the production of a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: the creation of a *new poetics*."[31] Several of the texts in this study, especially those by Marlowe, Webster, and Cavendish, clearly attempt, with varying degrees of optimism and success, to participate in such a creation. Others accede more fully to the dominant fiction that masquerades as reality. But by making the underpinnings of that fiction more visible (and by showing its connections to texts we commonly conceive of as "fictional"), they all help us to understand more fully the forms and fantasies we still inhabit, to consider anew the implications of our involvement in them, and to contemplate the possibility of constructing alternative fictions – and alternative "realities."

PART I

"Come . . . and play": Christopher Marlowe, beside the point

CHAPTER 1

Genre, gender, and sexuality in "The Passionate Shepherd" and Tamburlaine

Criticism of Christopher Marlowe has frequently acknowledged that there exists a tension between lyric and narrative modes throughout his *corpus* – and readers have sometimes connected this to the sexual tensions contained therein. Too often, however, as Diana Henderson has pointed out, they have tended unthinkingly to privilege narrative,[1] viewing it as more expressive of "reality." While such a valuation may well reflect the judgment of certain segments of Marlowe's culture (and certainly reflects the dominant judgment of our own), it does not do justice to Marlowe's complex deployment of the tension between genres. In all of his works, there exists a clear relation between conventional, causal narrative structure, which is productive of meaning, and other forms of orthodoxy, particularly conventional reproductive sexuality. And *pace* the current tendency automatically to associate an interest in the aesthetic with an investment in the status quo, for Marlowe, "pointless" aestheticism and "pure" lyric (insofar as they can be imagined) offer means of thinking outside the constructions of his culture, of evading, if never wholly avoiding, their seemingly immutable truths. Careful examination of his plays and poems can therefore help us to rethink and complicate prevailing assumptions about both literature and criticism. I would like to begin this examination by looking briefly at his lone lyric, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love"; I will then explore the force – and the sexual politics – of lyric and dramatic narrative in *Tamburlaine*.

DELIGHTS OF THE MIND

Douglas Bruster's influential essay on "The Passionate Shepherd" provides us with an excellent example of the critical distrust of lyric – excellent both in that it is extremely intelligent and in that it makes the consequences of its assumptions particularly clear.[2] The lyric invitation, Bruster claims, hides the "truth" of the speaker's potential for violence

and rape – a truth that is uncovered when the lyric is placed in a dramatic context in Marlowe's plays. Not coincidentally, the privileging of linear narrative here goes hand in hand with a straightening out of erotic possibilities. The sexual politics of "The Passionate Shepherd" are completely conventionalized, as Marlowe's poem is read through Ralegh's lens. While attempting to adopt a feminist point of view, this approach unquestioningly accepts the priority and the primacy of the male, the heterosexual, the (patri)linear – and of violence, sadism, and rape; the homoerotic is completely ignored. Not surprisingly, Bruster (like other similarly minded critics) neglects the influence of Virgil's second eclogue – in which the shepherd Corydon pines for beautiful Alexis – a neglect that seems to date back to Frederick Forsythe's "authoritative" article on Marlowe's poem, which declared that *Eclogue* 2 was irrelevant here precisely *because* Corydon's beloved is male.[3] But Virgil's poem combines homoeroticism with a highly self-conscious aestheticism that is absent from other versions of this story (it has, in fact, been demonized, at different historical moments, on both of these counts).[4] And it was precisely this combination – by no means a necessary one – that, I believe, made it so attractive to Marlowe.

In contrast to Bruster, Bruce Smith is acutely aware of both the importance of Virgil's influence and the homoerotic potential of Marlowe's poem: in his fascinating and persuasive study of the image of the Passionate Shepherd in early modern England, he goes so far as to argue that the addressee of the poem may very well be a man – that the clothes described (particularly the "kirtle," 11) could, and probably would, be seen as male.[5] But Smith's argument seems to me to approach the problem from the wrong angle; and neither the *OED*[6] nor the responses of Marlowe's contemporaries wholly support his contention. The primary suggestion here, I believe, is not that the clothes are "really" masculine, or that the beloved is "really" a man, but that gender, insofar as it exists, inheres *only* in clothes – just as sexuality here is diffused through aesthetics. This is not to deny the "presence" of homoeroticism in the poem, but to suggest that it is present only by inference, that it is, indeed, equivalent here to inference, to lyric ellipsis.

The poem opens in a characteristically Marlovian fashion – with an invocation to movement and consummation ("Come") that is immediately short-circuited and turned to stasis ("live with me, and be my love"). Rather than presenting "love" as a dramatic, verbal action, the second half of the line converts it into a nominative condition, a simple state of "be[ing]." This pattern itself appears to derive from Virgil's second

eclogue – Corydon's invitation there begins "*huc ades*" (44), which literally means "hither be present"[7] – and it recurs, in slightly different forms, throughout Marlowe's works. One thinks most readily of the variation in the opening of *Dido Queen of Carthage* – "Come, gentle Ganymede, and play with me" (1.1.1)[8] – but other examples abound, as we shall see.[9] Sexual invitation metamorphoses here into pointless play, as the passion for consummation becomes "timeless" aestheticism.

The lyric goes on to enumerate "delights" that are finally represented as moving only the "mind" (23):[10]

> And we will all the pleasures prove
> That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
> Woods, or steepy mountain yields.
>
> And we will sit upon the rocks,
> Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
> By shallow rivers, to whose falls
> Melodious birds sing madrigals.
>
> And I will make thee beds of roses,
> And a thousand fragrant poesies,
> A cap of flowers, and a kirtle,
> Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.
>
> A gown made of the finest wool
> Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
> Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
> With buckles of the purest gold.
>
> A belt of straw and ivy-buds
> With coral clasps and amber studs,
> And if these pleasures may thee move,
> Come live with me, and be my love.
>
> The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
> For thy delight each May morning.
> If these delights thy mind may move,
> Then live with me, and be my love. (2–24)

Sensual passion is repeatedly subsumed into sensory "pleasures" in these lines (seeing, hearing, touching), in the same way that "beds" become "beds of roses" (9), and the Fall, while never completely banished, is momentarily bracketed while we consider the musical and aquatic meanings of the word (7–8).[11] The passion and the struggle against time suggested by the opening word (and by the non-Marlovian title)[12] are further dissipated by the non-hierarchal structure of the poem, which appears to proceed by simply

accreting descriptions ("And . . . And"), does not deign to place locations in an obvious relation of opposition and similarity ("valleys, groves, hills and fields, / Woods, or steepy mountain"), and cycles back on itself through the refrain-like repetitions at the end ("live with me and be my love"), appearing to support its claim to exist outside of linear time ("each May morning").[13] The urgency of the *carpe diem* poem, which is assumed in Sir Walter Ralegh's famous answer, "The Nymph's Reply," seems almost completely absent here; while we are made aware of the pressures that exist outside the boundaries of this lyric, they exist only "under erasure."[14] By the end of the poem, conditional hypotheses ("If . . ." 19, 23) have replaced the imperative of the opening; in "The Nymph's Reply," these conditions are insistently presented as contrary-to-fact, but while imaginative creation is at the center of "The Passionate Shepherd," its contrafactual nature remains necessarily implicit.

Within this context, the poem seems almost effortlessly to conflate the artificial and natural, the sophisticated and the simple, the rhetorical and the real. Perhaps the most telling examples are the gifts offered to the beloved in the fourth stanza, which both recall and revise the imaginary offerings of Virgil's Corydon:

> A gown made of the finest wool
> Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
> Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
> With buckles of the purest gold. (13–16)

The utilitarian value of these gifts (they keep you warm) is finally overshadowed by their matching aesthetic qualities ("pretty" . . . "fair" . . . "purest" . . . "finest"), which manage to hold the high and the low in solution. The adjectives in the first and last lines point subtly to the fact that, as the simple wool becomes sophisticated ("finest") by being valued for the aesthetic pleasure it brings, so the courtly gold becomes simplified ("purest") by the same process; and while these words inevitably point to the costliness of the objects in the external world (their "natural" endpoint, which is never entirely erased), monetary worth, like all use-value here, is delicately balanced by and converted into aesthetic appreciation.

What is "queer" about "The Passionate Shepherd," I would suggest, is precisely this flattening out of hierarchies, this celebration of the artificial, this (necessarily only) implied argument that desire has no natural or inevitable end. The poem, in effect, conflates two images that are frequently juxtaposed in Marlowe's dramatic and narrative works – the image of a female beloved in which conventional desire is presented as

wholly rhetorical – as artificial, aestheticized, and unconsummated – and the image of an eroticized male, which similarly diverts desire from its expected end (and which, though more physical and literal in its terms, is never wholly so). As we shall see, the blazons at the beginning of *Hero and Leander* follow this pattern, as do the matching persuasions of Zenocrate and Theridamas in *Tamburlaine* (quoted below).[15] The introduction of linear narrative in both these cases unpacks the equations that are present in the lyric, transforming it into something more like (though not identical to) Bruster's reading. In *Hero and Leander*, I will argue, the epyllion's "unfinished" form allows oppositions to be finally suspended, and homoeroticism is equated with the poem's refusal to come to the point. In Marlowe's dramatic works, however, the tension between lyric and narrative is more extreme: I would now like to turn to *Tamburlaine*, to examine this tension in one of its earliest and its most striking forms.

"VAUNTS SUBSTANTIAL"

Tamburlaine's first great speech, his blazon and persuasion of Zenocrate, is, as many readers have realized, related both to "The Passionate Shepherd" and to its sources.[16] This long lyric aria halts the movement of the play (its duration, like those of similar succeeding speeches, is unavoidably reflected even in my abbreviated quotation); Tamburlaine creates the world with his words and offers it to Zenocrate, whose beauty is imaged in terms of icy, impenetrable chastity and its equivalent throughout Marlowe's work – elaborate artifice:[17]

> Zenocrate, lovelier than the love of Jove,
> Brighter than is the silver Rhodope,
> Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills,
> Thy person is more worth to Tamburlaine
> Than the possession of the Persian crown,
> Which gracious stars have promised at my birth.
> A hundred Tartars shall attend on thee
> Mounted on steeds swifter than Pegasus;
> Thy garments shall be made of Median silk,
> Enchased with precious jewels of mine own
> More rich and valurous than Zenocrate's;
> With milk-white harts upon an ivory sled
> Thou shalt be drawn amidst the frozen pools
> And scale the icy mountains lofty tops,
> With which thy beauty will be soon resolved;

> My martial prizes with five hundred men
> Won on the fifty-headed Volga's waves
> Shall all we offer to Zenocrate,
> And then myself to fair Zenocrate. (*Tamburlaine* I.1.2.87–105)

The speech then ends with an exchange, which in both its flat, dramatic form and its content seems to deflate its earlier claims and to admit the pure rhetoricity of its words: Techelles asks abruptly, "What now? In love?"; and Tamburlaine replies, "Techelles, women must be flatterèd." Immediately, however, our perspective is turned around once more, as Tamburlaine suggests that in this case artifice is real, and flattery is equivalent to truth: "But this is she with whom I am in love" (106–8).

The speech to Zenocrate is paralleled by the persuasion of Theridamas, which follows hard upon and which emphasizes the force of the union between the men. These lines have been described (rightly I think) as forming part of "a more passionate love scene than any with Zenocrate"[18] and they contain even more direct evocations of "The Passionate Shepherd." Significantly, though, the union here is not itself realized physically but instead displaced onto images of the martial. In this second burst of over-the-top lyricism, Tamburlaine once more creates and offers an image of the world with his words, this time conceiving it in terms of power and domination:

> Forsake thy king and do but join with me
> And we will triumph over all the world.
> I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains
> And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about,
> And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
> Than Tamburlaine slain or overcome.
> . . .
> *If thou wilt stay with me*, renownèd man,
> And lead thy thousand horse with my conduct,
> Besides thy share of this Egyptian prize
> Those thousand horse shall sweat with martial spoil
> Of conquered kingdoms and of cities sacked.
> Both we will walk upon the lofty cliffs,
> And Christian merchants, that with Russian stems
> Plow up huge furrows in the Caspian Sea,
> Shall vail to us as lords of all the lake.
> Both we will reign as consuls of the earth,
> And mighty kings shall be our senators.
> *Jove sometimes maskèd in a shepherd's weed*,
> And, by those steps that he hath scaled the heavens,
> May we become immortal like the gods.

Join with me now in this my mean estate
(I call it mean, because being yet obscure
The nations far removed admire me not)
And when my name and honour shall be spread
As far as Boreas claps his brazen wings
Or fair Boötes send his cheerful light,
Then shalt thou be competitor with me.
And sit with Tamburlaine in all his majesty. (1.2.172–7, 188–209; my italics)[19]

His promises are then capped by an assertion which, if not as jarring as the one following the persuasion of Zenocrate, is equally paradoxical; he tells Theridamas: "Nor are Apollo's oracles more true / Than thou shalt find my vaunts substantial" (1.2.212–13). "Vaunts" are literally empty boasts (the word is related to Latin *vanus*); here, however, they are explicitly given body and substance.[20]

Both separately and together, then, these two persuasions present us with the equation of beauty and power, rhetoric and substance, word and sword – the equation upon which Tamburlaine's early triumph depends. Some of the implications of this equation are suggested in the brief interchange between the speeches. When Theridamas and his army approach, Tamburlaine asks: "Then shall we fight courageously with them, / Or look you I should play the orator?" (1.2.128–9).[21] Techelles predictably answers, "No: cowards and faint-hearted runaways / Look for orations when the foe is near. / Our swords shall play the orators for us" (1.2.130–2); and the other men concur:

USUMCASANE: *Come* let us meet them at the mountain foot
And with a sudden and an hot alarm
Drive all their horses headlong down the hill.
TECHELLES: *Come* let us march. (1.2.133–6; my italics)

But Tamburlaine interrupts their progress, commanding, "Stay Techelles, ask a parley first" (1.2.137). What is striking here is not merely the substitution of rhetoric for war, of word for sword, and of "play" for reality, but the equation of these substitutions with the refusal of linear movement and the denial of consummation. The stasis that Tamburlaine demands is, of course, apparent in the surrounding lyric speeches, both of which not only halt the dramatic movement of the play but also focus literally on the stopping of movement. The figures of impenetrable chastity and non-consummation that are at the heart of the praise of Zenocrate are matched in the speech to Theridamas by Tamburlaine's boasts that he "hold[s] the Fates bound fast in iron chains" and controls the spinning of "Fortune's wheel" (as well as by his request, "If thou wilt

stay," and his conclusion, "And sit with Tamburlaine in all his majesty"). And the parallels here insistently suggest a connection between the hero's deferral of heterosexual intercourse and his defiance of retributory providence – of the comeuppance that never comes. Later, Marlowe will call attention to his refusal to satisfy conventional sexual expectations (as well as dramatic and moral ones) when Zenocrate complains to Argydas that despite her "rape" (*raptus*, kidnapping) by Tamburlaine, he displays no sexual interest in her (3.2.6 ff.);[22] and, indeed, the threat of rape (*stuprum*, sexual violation) that Bruster perceives under the lyric invitation will not, significantly, materialize until Part Two (in the exchanges between Theridamas and Olympia).

Throughout Part One, we are repeatedly confronted by images of conquering swords that remain ever raised and wheels that, stopped at their high point, never turn. Tamburlaine compares himself to the sun, "First rising in the east with mild aspect, / But fixèd now in the meridian line" (4.2.37–8), and, as he unveils the map upon which he will inscribe his conquests, he declares: "Here at Damascus will I make the point / That shall begin the perpendicular –" (4.4.80–1), his sentence remaining appropriately incomplete. Detumescence never occurs because consummation is continually deferred. One may think here of Othello's two-edged line, "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2.59). Tamburlaine, like Othello, keeps his sword up (always erect, masculine, firm, and conquering) by keeping it up (disdaining to use it).[23]

As the comparison with Othello suggests, Marlowe's creation takes to an extreme one Renaissance conception of the masculine, and, paradoxically, of the (male) homoerotic,[24] as martial and phallic but antisexual and ultimately anti-physical – purely intellective and abstract. And indeed, the play begins by positioning both itself and its central character as hypermasculine – separating Marlowe's tragic "high astounding terms" and Tamburlaine's warlike "conquering sword" from the low, comic, "jigging veins of rhyming mother wits" that come to be associated with Mycetes ("mother" here suggesting female and bodily as well as native, "wit" suggesting phallus as well as intelligence).[25] The first scene opens with Mycetes' complaint for his own lack of "wit":

> Brother Cosroe, I find myself aggrieved
> Yet insufficient to express the same,
> For it requires a great and thrund'ring speech
> Good brother, tell the cause unto my lords,
> I know you have a better wit than I. (1.1.1–5)

Inarticulate and impotent, bereft of both intellect and phallic power, Mycetes is forced to use others to speak and fight for him. Theridamas, in particular, is viewed as a prosthetic device, "the legs whereon our state doth lean, / as on a staff" (1.1.60);[26] Mycetes tells him:

> Go, stout Theridamas, thy words are swords,
> And with thy looks thou conquerest all the foes.
> I long to see thee back return from thence
> That I may view these milk-white steeds of mine
> All loaden with the heads of killèd men,
> And from their knees, even to their hoofs below,
> Besmeared with blood; that makes a dainty show. (1.1.74–80)

Here and elsewhere, the king's effeminacy serves to diminish what he can't perform: war is viewed simply as a charming spectacle, and poetry later becomes but a "pretty toy" (2.3.54).

The contrast with Tamburlaine and his "working words" (2.4.25) could not be clearer.[27] But Marlowe is also acutely aware of the way this opposition collapses upon itself. As the absence of closure, the sign of Tamburlaine's power, simultaneously deprives both him and the audience of conventional satisfaction, so Tamburlaine's all-determining words, lacking an external referent, become ultimately arbitrary and meaningless. During the encounter at Damascus, for example, his multicolored flags become their own justification, requiring and indeed admitting of no other explanation ("And know my customs are as peremptory / As wrathful planets, death, or destiny," 5.2.64–5). And his most famous line (Marlowe's mighty line *par excellence*), "And ride in triumph through Persepolis" (2.5.50, 54),[28] begins as it is repeated to approach sonorous emptiness – "pretty simple huffe-snuffe bombast," as T. S. Eliot termed the rhetoric of the play – as if Marlowe had decided (to reference another great poet, Lewis Carroll) to "take care of the sounds and the sense will take care of itself."[29] I have no doubt that Marlowe presents the paradoxes here with deliberate, self-conscious irony – and Tamburlaine is represented as being similarly self-aware. When his men speak of the glory of winning a crown, he declares, "'Twill prove a pretty jest, in faith, my friends." And when Theridamas demurs ("A jest to charge on twenty thousand men? / I judge the purchase more important far"), Tamburlaine reiterates his (pointless) point:

> Then shalt thou see the Scythian Tamburlaine
> Make but a jest to win the Persian crown.
> Techelles, take a thousand horse with thee

> And bid him turn his back to war with us
> That only made him king to make us sport. (2.6.90–3, 96–100)

It is no coincidence that Tamburlaine's words here recall those of Mycetes.[30] If the witless Persian king reduces war to a pleasing color scheme and poetry to an amusing toy, the all-powerful Tamburlaine ultimately does the same – indeed, it is of the essence of his power to do so. In the familiar terms of Sidney's *Apology*, "the poet, freely ranging only in the zodiac of his own wit,"[31] is also trapped within it, the prisoner of an autoerotic fantasy that has no issue. From one perspective, the wholly potent and utterly impotent, the purely masculine and the purely feminine, Marlowe's high astounding tragedy and the laughable conceits of his predecessors ultimately come together.[32]

But from another perspective, the problem is that they do not. As Part One progresses, the play begins to move out of lyric self-enclosure into dramatic narrative and action, and the images of Zenocrate and Theridamas move further apart. Narrativity itself here necessitates the physicalized, sadistic enactment of the rhetorical and the metaphoric. Considered in this context, Tamburlaine's extended meditation on beauty is an attempt to recreate the play's earlier lyricism, to bring together the oppositions that have become disjoined. After killing the virgins, Tamburlaine first attempts to aethesticize the pain that Zenocrate feels, turning her tears into highly artificialized images of beauty (5.2.72 ff.). Then, in a long sentence whose end is repeatedly deferred, he acknowledges his own inadequacy and the inadequacy of all words to contain, conquer, and comprehend that pure aestheticism toward which they aspire:

> What is beauty saith my sufferings then?
> If all the pens that ever poets held
> Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
> And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
> Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes:
> If all the heavenly quintessence they still
> From their immortal flowers of poesy,
> Wherein as in a mirror we perceive
> The highest reaches of a human wit,
> If these had made one poem's period
> And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
> Yet should there hover in their restless heads,
> One thought, one grace, one wonder at the least,
> Which into words no virtue can digest. (5.2.97–110)

He concludes, however, by justifying his "effeminate" submission to beauty, arguing that it inspires efforts to make the world submit to him:

> But how unseemly is it for my sex,
> My discipline of arms and chivalry,
> My nature and the terror of my name,
> To harbor thoughts effeminate and faint!
> Save only that in beauty's just applause,
> With whose instinct the soul of man is touched –
> And every warrior that is rapt with love
> Of fame of valor and of victory,
> Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits –
> I thus conceiving and subduing both
> That which hath stopped the topmost of the gods,
> Even from the fiery spangled veil of heaven,
> To feel the lovely warmth of shepherds' flames
> And march in cottages of strowèd weeds,
> Shall give the world to note, for all my birth,
> That virtue solely is the sum of glory
> And fashions men with true nobility. (5.2.111–27)

"Love" is transformed here into "love of fame," and if beauty "beats" on the warrior's conceits, he responds by "beating" upon the external world. In this resolution, Tamburlaine posits himself ("I thus conceiving and subduing both")[33] as both dominant and submissive, both masculine and feminine (the despised mother seems particularly present in "conceiving"), both rapist and "rapt." But what is held together in the lyric speech comes apart once more as the play shifts abruptly back to its narrative:

> Who's within there?
> Has Bajazeth been fed today? (5.2.128–9)

Tamburlaine's curt dramatic questions – recalling, in a more disruptive fashion, the lines that followed the persuasion of Zenocrate – simultaneously enact the images of the lyric in the external world and point toward the disjunction between the two. As the lyric's metaphors of feeding and digesting become literalized in the grotesque sadism and unregenerate physicality of Bajazeth's punishment, an unbridgeable – and indeed laughable – gap seems to be opened. Still, even after the braining of Bajazeth and the collapse of Zabina's speech (5.2.246–56),[34] Tamburlaine manages to hold the play's oppositions tenuously together, presenting himself to Zenocrate's father at the very end as an absolutely chaste "shedd[er of] blood" (5.2.415), the exemplar of unconsummated potency.[35]

In Part Two, however, it is all over before it has begun. In the space between the two plays, consummation and reproduction have occurred, and the second play – which could be titled *Son of Tamburlaine* – is hardly underway when we learn that Zenocrate is dying. The speech Tamburlaine gives as she approaches death repeats the movement of his lyric speeches in Part One, with both sides of the earlier oppositions having become more extreme:

> Now walk the angels on the walls of heaven
> As sentinels to warn th'immortal souls
> To entertain divine Zenocrate.
> Apollo, Cynthia, and the ceaseless lamps
> That gently looked upon this loathsome earth
> Shine downwards now no more but deck the heavens
> To entertain divine Zenocrate.
> The crystal springs whose taste illuminates
> Refinèd eyes with an eternal sight,
> Like trièd silver runs through Paradise
> To entertain divine Zenocrate.
> The cherubins and holy seraphins
> That sing and play before the King of Kings
> Use all their voices and their instrument
> To entertain divine Zenocrate.
> And in this sweet and curious harmony,
> The god that tunes this music to our souls
> Holds out his hand in highest majesty
> To entertain divine Zenocrate.
> Then let some holy trance convey my thoughts
> Up to the palace of th'empyreal heaven
> That this my life may be as short to me
> As are the days of sweet Zenocrate. (2.4.15–38)

The speech itself is even more self-consciously static than its predecessors. Here, Tamburlaine explicitly describes the transformation of Zenocrate into an immortal, artificial object; and he creates the stasis he describes with the refrain-like repetition of the line "to entertain divine Zenocrate," which gives his speech the appearance of a lyric dirge. He seems to achieve decisive closure in a final couplet (37–8) – but these lines are then abruptly (though inevitably) followed by a jarring dramatic question that once more calls attention to intractable, untransmutable physicality: "Physicians, will no physic do her good?" (2.4.39).

Zenocrate's death is followed by a series of wounding penetrations ("What, is she dead? Techelles, draw thy sword / And wound the earth that it may cleave in twain," 2.4.95–6) – and by a series of attempts to

transform those wounds into static, aesthetic objects that are, in turn, metamorphosed into signs of Tamburlaine's power. After injuring himself, for example, Tamburlaine declares:[36]

> A wound is nothing be it ne'er so deep,
> Blood is the god of war's rich livery.
> Now look I like a soldier, and this wound
> As great a grace and majesty to me,
> As if a chair of gold enamellèd,
> Enchasèd with diamonds, sapphires, rubies,
> And fairest pearl of wealthy India,
> Were mounted here under a canopy,
> And I sat down clothed with the massy robe
> That late adorned the Afric potentate
> Whom I brought bound unto Damascus' walls. (3.2.115–25)

The killing of his son Calyphas can be seen as a more extreme version of this process. Here, Tamburlaine tries to ensure the immortality of his own flesh by effectively cutting out its mortal part: he asserts that his son is "a form not meet to give that subject essence / Whose matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine, / Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves," and then explains that Calyphas' soul was "created of the massy dregs of earth, / The scum and tartar of the elements" (4.1.112–13, 122–3); he later tells his two remaining sons: "My flesh divided in your precious shapes, / Shall still retain my spirit, though I die, / And live in all your seeds immortally" (5.3.172–4). His repeated, paradoxical attempts to immortalize the flesh by wounding it – to bring together powerful, physical penetration with impenetrable, chaste artifice – are brilliantly parodied in the interchange between Olympia and Theridamas: she claims to possess a "magic" salve that will render "tender skin" impervious to the "pierc[ing]" of a "weapon's point," thereby persuading the soldier to try it on her "naked throat" – and, of course, to kill her (4.3.65–81).

Throughout the play, as many readers have noticed, the metaphors of Part One are literalized and physicalized (often with ridiculous effect; e.g., the chariot drawn by kings, which enacts both the figure of Tamburlaine as the Scourge of God and his repeated association with Phaeton). And Zenocrate herself is quite literally artified: she is first "embalmed with cassia, ambergris, and myrrh" (2.4.130) and then explicitly turned into a picture.[37] After Tamburlaine burns the town in which she died, he places there "the picture of Zenocrate / To show her beauty which the world admired" (3.2.25–6), and he addresses the image:

> Thou shalt not beautify Larissa plains
> But keep within the circle of mine arms.

> At every town and castle I besiege,
> Thou shalt be set upon my royal tent,
> And when I meet an army in the field
> Those looks will shed such influence in my camp
> As if Bellona, goddess of the war,
> Threw naked swords and sulphur balls of fire
> Upon the heads of all our enemies. (3.2.34–42)

The description here of a static picture of a dead women from whose "looks" issue "naked swords and sulphur balls of fire" is an extreme version of the earlier juxtaposition of Zenocrate and Theridamas – of impenetrable, artificial beauty, and sadistic, homoerotic power. And it is perhaps when Marlowe has pushed this juxtaposition as far as he can that the play comes to an end.[38]

From one perspective, it appears that an inescapable physicality is pulling Tamburlaine down;[39] the physician tells him:

> I viewed your urine and the hypostasis,
> Thick and obscure, doth make your danger great;
> Your veins are full of accidental heat
> Whereby the moisture of your blood is dried –
> The humidum and calor, which some hold
> Is not a parcel of the elements
> But of a substance more divine and pure,
> Is almost clean extinguishèd and spent,
> Which being the cause of life imports your death. (5.2.82–90)

But that physicality seems inseparable from the dramatic movement of the play, from its need to come to some kind of definitive conclusion (after the playwright has, of course, made it perfectly clear that he could continue to *Tamburlaine, Part Thirteen*, if he chose). As we shall see, Marlowe will return obsessively to the oppositions explored here, but he will never again suspend them so completely in his drama. That will occur only in his nondramatic poetry, which can, by virtue of its own (relative) lack of direction, more radically call into question the tyranny of all external ends, be they textual, utilitarian, or sexual. Before considering this, however, let us look at a play whose protagonist seems mired in physicality from its beginning, a play that, after appearing to interrogate causal structure, performs an extremely disturbing submission to linearity and all that it implies – *Edward II*.

CHAPTER 2

Submitting to history: Edward II

Marlowe's presentation of the brutal, iconographically "appropriate" murder of the king in *Edward II* has often posed a problem for critics. Traditionally, those who wished to avoid an orthodox interpretation of the play have appealed to some version of ambiguity, and this strategy survives in many more recent, historicized reconsiderations. In a discussion of closure and enclosure in Marlowe's plays, Marjorie Garber has provided a particularly cogent statement of this position, using Mortimer's "unpointed" Latin letter as support. The letter, designed to hide "the cause of Edward's death" (5.4.1–17),[1] is unpunctuated ("unpointed") and therefore ambiguous;[2] it can mean either "Fear not to kill the king, 'tis good he die," or "Kill not the king, 'tis good to fear the worst." Garber comments: "The letter reflects the essential ambiguity of the play. Is it good to kill the king, either politically or morally? . . . The letter sums up the conflict in the center of the play, for both of its statements are true."[3] While I would agree that the letter is presented as centrally important, I believe that this formulation underestimates its force; the conflict between the two possible, positive interpretations of the letter – and of the play – is subsumed in, and ultimately negated by, a dialectic between socially constructed, causal meaning and the threat of no meaning at all, a dialectic (in the play's terms) between "point" and pointlessness.

This paradoxical dialectic, I have suggested, operates in some form in every Marlovian text, but nowhere so killingly as in *Edward II*. The idea of "pointlessness" emblematized by the letter pervades the play. In contrast to Marlowe's other dramatic works, which repeatedly invoke theocentric (and often specifically Christian) structures in contesting them, *Edward II* contains few theological references: one of the few times God is mentioned Edward asks, "Who's there?" (1.2.199). In the absence of a clear external point of reference, structure and meaning

become undecidable: the act of reinterpretation necessitated by the letter becomes the characteristic action of the play. The audience is, of course, repeatedly forced to shift its sympathies and is manipulated generally from a position opposing Edward to one supporting him.[4] These shifts occur, however, not for the positive reasons that Garber and others have suggested, but as each successive position becomes insupportable – as Kent is compelled to shift, in the space of a few minutes on stage, from the condemnation of an "unnatural king" to the condemnation of an "unnatural revolt" (4.1.9; 4.5.18).

The audience's perplexing experience is encapsulated in a remarkable scene in which the barons are forced to reinterpret their own actions (1.4.187 ff.). Having succeeded in banishing Gaveston, they are persuaded to recall him, on the grounds that the significance (the consequence, the "point") of these acts is exactly the opposite of what it originally appeared to be. During the course of this scene, almost everyone echoes the Archbishop of Canterbury's earlier resolution concerning the banishment – "Nothing shall alter us, we are resolved" (1.4.74, cf. 214, 231, 233, 251) – and then discovers that "his mind is changed" (236), until Lancaster finally erupts in despair:

> Can this be true 'twas good to banish him?
> And is this true to call him home again?
> Such reasons make white black and dark night day.
> . . .
> In no respect can contraries be true. (1.4.244–9)

He is, of course, right. The situation here (and throughout *Edward II*) is not one in which contraries are equally "good" and "true" (the equivalence made by Lancaster's elision) but one in which they are equally false and "unnatural."[5] The linguistic and structural contradictions that pervade the play serve to unsettle the category of the natural and to subvert significance itself. During their meeting, the barons criticize Mortimer for "play[ing] the sophister," and declare, "all that he speaks is nothing" (1.4.255, 251); these comments come to define, not a particular fault, but the normal condition of speech in the play: unfixed, arbitrary, reversible, and self-canceling – i.e., pointless. It is this condition that paralyzes Isabella just before the meeting, when she wishes she had been "stifled" by Edward's first marital embrace, since whether she cries out unthinkingly against her husband's actions or attempts, craftily, to "speak him fair," her efforts necessarily return on themselves and undermine her position (1.4.175–86). And it is this condition that is evoked by the characteristic

linguistic tic of the play, the antithetic exchange between adversaries.[6] To cite but a few examples:

EDWARD: Lay hands upon that traitor Mortimer.
MORTIMER SENIOR: Lay hands upon that traitor Gaveston. (1.4.20–1)

QUEEN: Villain 'tis thou that robbst me of my lord.
GAVESTON: Madam, 'tis you that rob me of my lord. (1.4.160–1)

KENT: Sister, Edward is my charge; redeem him.
QUEEN: Edward is my son, and I will keep him. (5.2.114–15)

And, of course (last but not least):

WARWICK: Saint George for England
And the barons' right!
EDWARD: Saint George for England and King Edward's right! (3.3.34–5)

Each of these exchanges (and there are many such in the play) is a contest over the definition and ownership of the signs of hierarchical structure – political, religious, familial, or rhetorical; they all serve to destabilize these structures, to reduce them to indefinition.

Throughout most of *Edward II*, the only consistent reference point is death – which is variously viewed as an end, a consummation, and a center, and which is specifically termed a "period" (3.1.4–5; cf. 4.6.61–2). But death is presented as an empty center, a hole in the middle of meaning, whose point is precisely its pointlessness, its capacity for erasing distinctions; Gaveston declares, when he is accorded the "honour" of an aristocratic beheading (rather than suffering the humiliation of being hanged):

> Then I perceive,
> That heading is one, and hanging is the other,
> And death is all. (2.5.29–30)

The nominal center of the play is, of course, Edward; and Edward – who is "loose," "pliant," and "flexible" (all similarly multivalent terms), impotent, theatrical, sexually ambiguous, and endlessly self-contradictory – is the embodiment of "pointlessness" in all its senses. The various connotations of the word coalesce in the representation of his homoerotic relationship with Gaveston, which is repeatedly presented as pointless play ("frolicking," 1.4.68, 73; 2.2.62), and is opposed, theoretically at least, to the productive – and reproductive – business of the kingdom (Edward, a nineteenth-century editor of the chronicles tells us, was "the first king after the Conquest who was not a man of business.")[7] His attachment causes him to disregard his father's commandment, to neglect his queen – "the

sister of the King of France," "sole sister of Valois" (1.4.187; 2.2.172) – and it threatens to open a gap in the orderly process of dynastic succession. Edward tells the peers:

> Make several kingdoms of this monarchy
> And share it equally amongst you all,
> So I may have some nook or corner left
> To frolic with my dearest Gaveston. (1.4.70–3)

The "nook or corner" that he claims as his own is imagined as a place apart, a site of insignificance: it is what is left over after the kingdom has been meaningfully divided, the socially and sexually unmarked locus of unproductive play.

This representation of Edward's relationship with Gaveston reflects conventional Renaissance definitions (if not conventional evaluations) of sodomy. As the work of Alan Bray and Jonathan Goldberg has demonstrated, "sodomite" was effectively a non-identity in the Renaissance.[8] Not only did it not designate a particular sexual identity, not only did sodomitical actions become visible only when connected with other subversive activities, "sodomy" was formally defined as the principle of sexual indefinition (or non-identity) itself: neither of God nor of the devil, outside the intelligible order of creation ("the universal and public manuscript" of nature),[9] it signified precisely "nothing" – non-meaning, chaos, and indeterminacy. For this reason, it was a particular focus for the fears of the antitheatrical writers, who were consumed by anxieties about destabilizing reality and unfixing gendered identity, anxieties that are perfectly caught in Phillip Stubbes's famous warning against the transvestite theater: at the end of a play, Stubbes asserts, "every mate sorts to his mate, every one brings another homeward of their way verye freendly, and in their secret conclaves (covertly), they play *the Sodomits*, or worse."[10] The terms of Stubbes's fears seem strikingly continuous with those of Edward's fantasies. Like Edward's anal "nook or corner," Stubbes's "secret conclaves" are invoked as the socially un(re)marked sites of indeterminacy; and the sexual "play" that occurs there, Stubbes suggests, is inseparable from other subversions of ordered reality, linguistic, political, and religious: "Playes and Enterluds," he continues, teach us "to play the Hipocrit, to cogge, lye, and falsifie; . . . to jest, laugh, and fleer, to grin, to nodd, and mow; . . . to playe the vice, to swear, teare, and blaspheme both Heaven and Earth."[11]

The implications, attractions, and threats of this "pointless play" are most fully developed in *Edward II* in two lyric, descriptive speeches – neither of which, significantly, is spoken by Edward himself. The first is

Gaveston's description of the king's sports, his delight in "music," "poetry," and "pleasing shows." This soliloquy begins as a dramatic response, as Gaveston acknowledges the parting words of the emblematic "three poor men" ("We will wait here about the court," 1.1.48). He then explains his need for a different sort of "discoursing" (1.1.31) than they can provide:

> These are not men for me;
> I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
> Musicians, that with touching of a string
> May draw the pliant King which way I please;
> Music and poetry is his delight,
> Therefore I'll have Italian masques by night . . . (1.1.49–54)

His explanation clearly and logically subordinates the power of play to his manipulative purpose. As he proceeds, however, his speech far exceeds its explanatory point. Metamorphic in both content and form, it momentarily dissolves linear time and detaches itself from the action of the drama, as it focuses on a series of transformations that repeatedly blur distinctions between play and reality, male and female, human and beast:

> Therefore I'll have Italian masques by night,
> Sweet speeches, comedies and pleasing shows;
> And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,
> Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad,
> My men like satyrs grazing on the lawns,
> Shall with their goat feet dance an antic hay;
> Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
> With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
> Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
> And in his sportful hands an olive-tree
> To hide those parts which men delight to see,
> Shall bathe him in a spring, and there, hard by
> One like Actaeon peeping through the grove,
> Shall by the angry goddess be transformed,
> And running in the likeness of an hart,
> By yelping hounds pulled down, and seem to die;
> Such things as these best please his majesty. (1.1.54–70)

At the center of the speech is the myth of Actaeon's vision of Diana. This is, among other things, a fable of sexual differentiation: the forbidden sight of female difference or "lack" causes fear of castration in the male. In a brilliant analysis of Petrarch's poetry, Nancy Vickers has argued that it is also the founding myth of Renaissance lyric: the suspended moment

between seeing and dismemberment is the space in which the lyric poet writes, asserting his mastery over the female by scattering her body in rhyme.[12] The vision in Gaveston's speech is similarly suspended: forward movement is halted for an indeterminate span ("sometime") while Diana is described. But here, the Actaeon myth is turned back on itself; the "castrated" – and castrating – female is male after all:

> Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
> With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
> Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,
> And in his sportful hands an olive-tree
> To hide those parts which men delight to see,
> Shall bathe him in a spring.

The primary effect of this transformation, however, is not to stabilize sexual identity but to dissolve it. By ambiguating male and female "parts," the real and the artificial, the hidden and the seen (note particularly the fetishistic olive-tree held in appropriately "sportful" hands), these lines manage to suggest that sexual difference itself is merely an artificial construct.[13] And they threaten to uncover (to make seen) the possibility that the Actaeon myth is constructed to hide – the possibility that there is never really any "point" to see at all.

This threat is gradually contained as the passage returns, in succession, to verbal action ("shall bathe"), to Actaeon ("hard by"), to Gaveston's purpose ("Such things as these best please his majesty"), and to the action of the play:

> My lord! Here comes the king and the nobles
> From the parliament; I'll stand aside. (1.1.71–2)

It resurfaces quite clearly, however, in Mortimer's condemnation of Edward and Gaveston. Mortimer's speech is prompted by his uncle's defense of male sexual relations, a defense which both gives them a lineage and portrays them as properly patrilineal – and as utterly unlike anything we ever see in the play:[14]

> The mightiest kings have had their minions,
> Great Alexander loved Hephaestion.
> The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept,
> And for Patroclus stern Achilles drooped;
> And not kings only, but the wisest men:
> The Roman Tully loved Octavius,
> Grave Socrates, wild Alcibiades. (1.4.391–6)

While Edward himself once applies the Hercules/Hylas comparison to his relationship to Gaveston (1.1.143), the clearly defined, hierarchical relation that it implies seems wholly inadequate to describe their bond. And the elder Mortimer implicitly acknowledges this disjunction in his next lines, when he characterizes Edward's attachments as "toys" from which "riper years will wean him" (1.4.400).

After listening to his uncle's defense, Mortimer dismisses Edward's "wanton humour" as beside the point. But its pointlessness returns in a series of other wanton transformations of the signs of stable hierarchy and order:

> Uncle, his wanton humour grieves not me,
> But this I scorn, that one so basely born
> Should by his sovereign's favor grow so pert
> And riot it with the treasure of the realm,
> While soldiers mutiny for want of pay;
> He wears a lord's revenue on his back,
> And Midas-like he jets it in the court,
> With base outlandish cullions at his heels,
> Whose proud fantastic liveries make such show,
> As if that Proteus, god of shapes, appeared;
> I have not seen a dapper jack so brisk.
> He wears a short Italian hooded cloak
> Larded with pearl, and in his Tuscan cap
> A jewel of more value than the crown. (1.4.401–14)

Here, Mortimer moves freely among, and implicitly equates, a number of affronts to and inversions of traditional values: the "base" is raised above the noble, the foreigner above the native-born, the frivolous above the serious and practical, the superficial above the substantive. And, as he focuses on the excessive "show" that Gaveston's clothing makes, his speech begins to participate in the disruptions it describes. Like Gaveston's earlier speech, which it parallels, this descriptive passage exceeds its putative point, painting a strangely compelling picture of Gaveston's metamorphoses before it issues (oddly but appropriately) in a complaint that Edward and Gaveston are not taking the barons (or the signs of their station) seriously, that they are watching the peers as if they were characters in a show:

> While others walk below, the King and he
> From out a window laugh at such as we
> And flout our train and jest at our attire.
> Uncle, 'tis this that makes me impatient. (1.4.415–18)

This complaint more or less accurately describes Gaveston's position after his earlier lyric speech: he stood "aside" and commented scornfully on the actions of "the king and the nobles." And the charge is repeated in a later description of Edward on the battlefield:

> When wert thou in the field with banner spread?
> But once, and then thy soldiers marched like players,
> With garish robes, not armour, and thyself,
> Bedaubed with gold, rode laughing at the rest,
> Nodding and shaking of thy spangled crest,
> Where women's favours hung like labels down. (2.2.181–7)

By "playing the sodomites" (playing, in effect, the players), Edward and Gaveston continually threaten to demystify the signs of hierarchy and order, to expose the serious, productive business of the realm as pointless, as necessarily an exercise in "playing the sophister."

The reading I have proposed so far would seem to support Edward's position – except, of course, for the fact that Edward is incompletely self-conscious about his own pointlessness (making him the perfect embodiment of the idea). While Mortimer and Gaveston attempt (with some regularity if with predictable lack of success) to manipulate and control indeterminacy, Edward veers back and forth between painfully inadequate attempts to seize control and equally inadequate attempts to cede it. Simon Shepherd has called him "inconsistently masculine";[15] it is but putting the same idea the other way around to note that he is consistently inconsistent. His self-contradictions reach a height in the speech in which he debates whether or not he is willing to resign his crown: he repeats the word "but" so frequently here that it assumes the force of a contradiction even when it means otherwise (e.g., "But what are kings when regiment is gone / But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?" 5.1.26–7; cf. 9, 11, 24, 36, 43, 56, 59, 69, 76, 82). Edward is not deliberately inverting conventional structures; neither is he attempting (like Tamburlaine) to be paradoxically "on top" of impotence and indeterminacy. He simply doesn't know which way is up. Nevertheless – in fact, as a result – he gets the point in the end.

Edward's incapacity suggests that it is impossible effectively to escape socially constructed, determinate meaning. And this idea is emphasized throughout the play. It seems appropriate that the only articulate defense – really the only clear articulation – of homoerotic relations we hear is both strikingly patrilineal and wholly inadequate to the play. Attempts to escape orthodox logic and hierarchy here invariably return on themselves. There's even a joke to this effect early on: Baldock says,

"I am none of these common pedants, I, / That cannot speak without *propterea quod* [i.e., 'because']"; and Spencer replies, "But one of those that saith *quandoquidem* [i.e., 'because']" (2.1.52–4). His jest echoes grimly through all the characters' various, contradictory attempts to find a "cause" for the confusion that surrounds them:

Here comes she that's cause of all these jars. (Edward on Isabella, 2.2.223)

Corrupter of thy King, cause of these broils. (Mortimer on Gaveston, 2.5.10)

Misgoverned kings are cause of all this wrack. (Isabella on Edward, 4.4.9)

Gaveston's and Mortimer's lyric flights (paltry when compared to Tamburlaine's) *are* finally contained – and they are unusual moments in the play. Evocations of pointlessness and non-meaning here are regularly presented in emblematic or aphoristic form;[16] while interrogating conventional moral structure, they insistently acknowledge their indebtedness to it. Attempts to enunciate death seem especially sententious and medieval. One thinks, for example, of the peers' standards for the tournament, all of which exceed their bearers' intentions, but all of which return to the same point – "*Undique Mors est*," "*Aeque tandem*" ("death is everywhere," "equal at last") (2.2.20, 28) – or of the "gloomy" Mower in the mead, who leaves requesting that the peers "remember [him]" (4.6.29, 115), or of the many heavy-handed references to the deadly "name of Mortimer" (e.g., 2.3.23; 4.6.38). The unpointed letter is, of course, itself such a carefully packaged piece of non-meaning. And while Mortimer (and the play) make much of its indeterminacy, no one, in fact, has any great difficulty construing it. Gurney (who's not too bright) does complain, "I know not how to conster it," but Matrevis easily explains its meaning: it was, he notes, "left unpointed for the nonce [i. e., on purpose, for a point]" (5.5.15–18). And Edward III treats it as completely transparent (5.6.44–8).[17]

Neither do we have any difficulty construing the end. Not only does Edward get the point here, we all do; we are unable finally to avoid it. Critics have appealed to "the complex, sympathetic human feeling[s] evoked by the play,"[18] but the only character who effectively articulates and enacts those feelings (Edward III) supports by his very existence an orthodox interpretation of the play – in fact he does so precisely because he does articulate and enact those feelings: "Traitor," he says to Mortimer, "in me my loving father speaks / And plainly saith 'twas thou that murderedst him" (5.6.41–2).[19] His assertions of pity for Edward slide inexorably into assertions of patriarchal and kingly rights – rights which

are affirmed by the spectacle ("to witness to the world") of Mortimer's head upon the dead king's hearse:

> My father's murdered through thy treachery,
> And thou shalt die and on his mournful hearse
> Thy hateful and accursed head shall lie,
> To witness to the world, that by thy means
> His kingly body was too soon interred. (5.6.28–32)

The decapitation of his enemy, of course, effectively "answers" both the manner and the fact of Edward's death, and it fulfills the (pointed) threats of decapitation made by the king's party throughout the play:

> Brother, revenge it, and let these their heads
> Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues. (1.1.116–17)
>
> Strike off their heads and let them preach on poles. (3.2.20)

And the new king makes a similar point when he promises his mother that "if [she] be guilty" and "unnatural," she will not "find [him] slack or pitiful" (5.6.76, 81–2). His painfully firm resolution is particularly striking in a play in which almost everyone has been presented as "slack" or "drooping."[20]

It seems fitting (and I use that word advisedly) that the image of Edward's death is an image of submission. The play as a whole, I would suggest, records a submission to history – to history as "the dominant ideology," and (what is the same thing) to history as "the literal truth."[21] That submission is reflected in the relatively linear action of the play – for which Marlowe has been much praised and which has often been seen as marking a positive development over his other works, which mount a more frontal assault on causality.[22] The play evidences a clear awareness of the ways in which, to invoke Laura Mulvey's reversible formulation, "sadism demands a story," and a story demands sadism.[23] And this story – which is history (and his story) – finds its origin and its end in the figure of Edward's death.[24] That figure claims to be literally true – and the force of this claim is brought out (unintentionally) by a comment in one critical essay: "The first point to note is that the 'punishment-fitting-the-crime' aspect of Edward's death is not an invention of Marlowe's to add thematic unity to the play, but the literal truth as recorded in the chronicles"[25] (that's the literal *English* truth, the only kind that really deserves the name of "history"). As this comment suggests, not only is the manner of Edward's murder literally true, it is, in its logical "'punishment-fitting-the-crime' aspect," a figure *for* the literal truth, for the intelligible, the determinate, the (patri)linear, the causal – the historical.

That figure also, one could add, gestures towards its own figurality, towards the ways in which the determinate is created out of indeterminacy. As numerous readers have noted, it fulfills the promise of the Actaeon image in Gaveston's early speech. But it does so by resolving the hidden/seen male/female parts of the vision of Diana into the indeterminate anus, which Drayton, in his version of this story, calls Edward's "secret part,"[26] and which, according to Holinshed (Marlowe's primary source), was chosen so that "no appearance of any wound or hurt outwardlie might be once perceived."[27] As its presence in chronicles, poems, and plays testifies, this indeterminate, imperceptible wound is, of course, seen by all; it stands (to borrow Edward III's phrase) "to witness [the truth] to the world."[28] No longer vaguely evoked as something extrinsic to meaningful order, it is situated here at the center of meaning itself. "Nothing to see" becomes the sign of something to see, as the invisible, indeterminate act of sodomy, punished and pinned down, becomes the visible guarantee of the existence of a point.

The play as a whole implicitly acknowledges the process of scapegoating that is occurring. It certainly suggests that the series of humiliations Edward is made to suffer in a "dungeon . . . / Wherein the filth of all the castle falls" (5.5.55–6) answers not simply to his own character and condition, but to the condition of a country overflowing with blood and gore, in which all enclosures are threatened and all boundaries seem in danger of being erased.[29] And it perhaps also implies, in its repeated focus on the word "gore," that the action of a point is inevitably implicated in the mire it opposes. Mortimer threatens:

> Upon my weapon's point here shouldst thou fall
> And welter in thy gore. (2.5.13–14)

Edward promises:

> If I be England's King, in lakes of gore
> Your headless trunks, your bodies will I trail,
> That you may drink your fill and quaff in blood. (3.2.135–7)

And Isabella laments:

> A heavy case
> When force to force is knit and sword and glaive
> In civil broils makes kin and countrymen
> Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides
> With their own weapons gored. But what's the help? (4.4.4–8)

Isabella's image of her countrymen "with their own weapons gored" completely erases the distinction between "my point" and "thy gore" that Mortimer had attempted to establish. But Isabella no sooner opens the possibility of indeterminacy than she tries to close it:

> Misgoverned kings are cause of all this wrack;
> And, Edward, thou art one among them all,
> Whose looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoil
> And made the channels overflow with blood.
> Of thine own people patron shouldst thou be,
> But thou . . . (4.4.9–14)

And her own "overflowing" mouth is itself shut by Mortimer's interruption: "Nay, madam, if you be a warrior / Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches" (4.4.15–16).

So, too, is *Edward II* finally closed down and shut up. The play repeatedly gestures toward – but cannot effectively counter – its own inadequacy. It does not finally allow us (as Edward wishes) to return as well as go (1.4.143), or (and this is Matrevis, not Macbeth) to render "undone" what has been "done" (5.6.1–2). It leaves us, instead, with an image of submission – of not entirely willing (Edward remains indecisive until the end), not entirely conscious submission (when he's finally murdered, he's half asleep) to something that is seen as brutal and violating, that is clearly perceived as fictional, and that is nevertheless represented as unavoidable. Or more precisely – and this drives the point home – it leaves us with Edward III.

CHAPTER 3

"True-loves blood": narrative and desire in Hero and Leander

If *Edward II* ultimately forces its audience to submit, painfully, to history, *Hero and Leander* provides us with a very different experience. Marlowe is able here more completely to suspend his relation to his society's dominant fiction – which depends, as ours does, on the equation of conventional masculinity and coherence, of the penis and the phallus[1] – partially because *Hero and Leander* is not a drama, but a less "pointed" form of play, and (what is the same thing in Marlowe's terms) because it is theoretically incomplete.[2] The aesthetic of pure pointlessness that underlies "The Passionate Shepherd" is developed more fully here,[3] enabling the poem radically to question the sexual and textual order upon which conventional sense depends.

The text is structured around a series of what Patricia Parker has termed "preposterous events" – "arsie-versie" inversions of "natural" sequence.[4] It begins, preposterously, with its foregone conclusion:

> On *Hellespont*, guilty of True-loves blood,
> In view and opposit two cities stood,
> Seaborders, disjoin'd by *Neptunes* might. (1–3)[5]

Marlowe's inverted opening implicitly equates end and origin, locating the ending of a traditional narrative as the point (the Hellespont) that, to quote Slavoj Žižek, "*retroactively* confers the consistency of an organic whole on preceding events."[6] Žižek contends that such temporal reversals unmask the illusion of inevitability, naturalness, and unity created by linear structure; they produce "a version of the fetishistic split – *je sais bien, mais quand même*: 'I know very well what will follow (because I know in advance the end of the story) but still, I don't quite believe it, which is why I am filled with anxiety. Will the unavoidable really happen?'" As a result, they "make us experience in an almost palpable way the utter contingency of the narrative sequence."[7] I would suggest that *Hero and Leander*, which operates on

the (il)logic of the fetish,[8] makes us recognize the contingency not only of narrative but of all that it implies.

The narrative no sooner begins than it stops. The poet tells us that Apollo offered Hero a "throne, / Where she should sit for men to gaze upon" (5–6) – and their gaze becomes the reader's, in a long, static blazon that halts the progress of the poem. To quote only the opening lines:

> The outside of her garments were of lawne,
> The lining, purple silke, with guilt stars drawne,
> Her wide sleeves greene, and bordered with a grove,
> Where *Venus* in her naked glory strove,
> To please the carelesse and disdainfull eies,
> Of proud *Adonis* that before her lies.
> Her kirtle blew, whereon was many a staine,
> Made with the blood of wretched Lovers slaine. (9–16)

As progressive narrative is transformed here into static spectacle, however, the terms of that narrative are not lost; rather, they are repeated in self-consciously artificialized, diminished forms, emptied out as far as possible of end-directed meaning. The "seaborders" of the beginning, for example, become the artificially natural "border[s]" of the grove on Hero's sleeve; within these borders, the movement from kinesis to spectacle is itself repeated – in the description of Venus and Adonis – and the poem moves to the present as Adonis' gaze is described.[9] In a similar fashion, the narrativized guilt of the Hellespont becomes the aestheticized "guilt" of the artificial stars that adorn Hero's garment, and "True-loves blood" becomes the "blood of wretched Lovers slain," that "staine[s]" her kirtle. These bloodstains have disturbed many commentators, and for good reason. On the one hand, they are clearly the diminished image of the real blood of death for which they are substituted; and as such they are metaphorical (the idea of dying for love has this force throughout the poem). Their purely rhetorical status is, moreover, both paralleled and reinforced by their purely decorative function. On the other hand, by being presented literally as an ornament, the lovers' blood seems, paradoxically, to become real – or more precisely the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical, the artificial and the real is completely confounded here (and this confusion is only intensified, not resolved, later in the poem when Hero is presented as sacrificing "turtles blood" [158] – the literal image of the metaphorical blood shed by true lovers, who are frequently imaged as turtles or turtle-doves.)[10]

The undecidability exemplified by the stains is characteristic of the entire description. Repeatedly, reality is conflated with rhetoric, the natural is

confounded with the artificial, and the image seems to displace the thing itself. In a minor example of this phenomenon, the inset image of Venus threatens momentarily to overstep its boundaries and intrude upon the picture of Hero; one is stopped from assigning the blue kirtle to Venus only by rhetorical parallelism and the knowledge that the goddess is naked (although her nakedness is presented as another ornament). But even as we assure ourselves that we have now left the image and are back to reality, we cannot help remarking that "reality" here is simply another story – that Venus is finally no more nor less fictional than Hero herself. And our experience is encapsulated and parodied later in the blazon, when Marlowe contrasts a wholly imaginary myth with an equally imaginary truth:

> Some say for her the fairest *Cupid* pyn'd,
> And looking on her face, was strooken blind,
> But this is true, so like was one the other,
> As he imagyn'd *Hero* was his mother. (36–9)

Similar effects are produced by the blazon as a whole. The artificialized spectacle of Hero can be read as the classically fetishized image of the female, which acts as a repository for male fears of castration; it simultaneously calls up and covers the spectacle of lack.[11] But as the metaphors within the passage threaten to displace reality, so the spectacle itself threatens to overwhelm the pointed master narrative to which it is theoretically subordinate; and in so doing, it calls the truth value of that narrative into question.

The suggestion that all truth is artifactual is, of course, reinforced by the blazon of Leander, which further confounds distinctions between male and female, anatomy and costume, impotence and potency. As Gregory Bredbeck notes, the physical description of Leander makes the artificial blazon of Hero's clothing seem "impotent," and unmasks the rhetoricity of both the blazon form and the desire that is constituted by it.[12] But that description is itself highly artificialized; in Robert Logan's felicitous phrase, it is rather "long on . . . comparison and short on [its] actual subject"[13] – a fact that the poet implicitly acknowledges when he turns away from Leander's rapidly approaching posterior and laments the inability of his "rude pen" and "slack muse" to "blazon forth the loves of men" (68, 71, 69). It should come as no surprise, then, that we are told that "some swore [Leander] was a maid in mans attire" (83), when the only "attire" we have seen is his body itself: that body has precisely the same claim to being the "naked truth" as Leander's sophistical arguments later in the poem (208). In the transition between the two blazons, furthermore,

Marlowe revels self-consciously in the ability of pointless artifice to confound the progress of linear time: he moves back and forth, with dazzling speed, between the time of the narrative and "succeeding times" (54), between his own time and that of Musaeus, between the fact of the lovers' death and their undeniable presence in his poem.

As the poem unfolds, Marlowe continues to remind us of Hero and Leander's impending death; and he repeatedly halts our progress toward that end with metaphors, similes, aphorisms, and static, artificialized spectacle – devices that insistently evoke the end they avoid. The characters' fixed gaze, which is explicitly opposed to "striving" and "the deed," and which is implicitly equated with our response to the poet's endless descriptions, is presented as suspending forward movement, as transforming temporal "reality" into static artifice – and as clearly figuring the death that is to come.[14] The narrative of the lovers' first meeting, for example, is interrupted by the appearance of Hero, who, we are told, "stole away th'inchaunted gazers mind" (104); the crowd's enchantment is then conflated with our own, as Marlowe confronts us with a series of extended similes (similes that progress from evocations of suspension to a picture of passionate movement), returning to his story only to describe how movement has been transformed into stasis: "So ran the people foorth to gaze on her" (117). The viewers' response is identified as the "death" of love, and this identification leads inevitably to a reminder of the lovers' eventual destruction:

> On this feast day, O cursed day and hower,
> Went *Hero* thorow *Sestos*, from her tower,
> To *Venus* temple, were unhappilye,
> As after chaunc'd, they did each other spye. (131–4)

Immediately, however, the slight motion in these lines is frozen into a lengthy description of the metamorphic carvings that adorn the temple, a description that contains within its borders all the pain, movement, and sexual devastation that have been averted in the narrative (135–56). Finally, ekphrasis slides into – and threatens to displace – narrative once more as the picture of "blood-quaffing *Mars*," of "*Love* kindling fire, to burne such townes as Troy," and of "*Sylvanus* weeping for the lovely boy / That now is turn'd into a *Cypres* tree" (151, 153, 154–5) concludes with these lines: "And in the midst a silver altar stood / There *Hero* sacrificing turtles blood" (157–8). The reader's understandable uncertainty as to whether Hero exists within or without the carved relief – whether she (as well as the blood) is real or Memorex – is compounded when the effect of

her glance causes Leander to metamorphose into another timeless, exemplary statue: "Stone still he stood, and evermore he gazed" (163).

The disruption of narrative sequence reaches an early climax when we are asked to "harken a while" (385) to the etiological story of Mercury and the "Adamantine Destinies" (444). This story contains many of the images and ideas of the "main narrative," not the least of which is the idea of a story that halts forward progress (418), and it playfully thematizes earlier suggestions that "fate" is contingent and reversible (during its course, the love-struck Destinies banish Jove to hell and restore him to power, bringing back and then ending the Age of Gold).[15] Unlike the main narrative, however, it operates according to a rigorous sequence of cause and effect. One thing leads to another in dizzying succession (as if we were witnessing some sort of Renaissance Rube Goldberg contraption) until the point of the story, its relation to the main narrative, and that narrative itself seem to be completely forgotten. If the earlier digressions had undermined causal sequence by disrupting it, this story threatens to explode it entirely by fulfilling it.[16] We are returned to the narrative by means of a startling transition: "By this, sad *Hero*, with love unacquainted, / Viewing *Leander's* face, fell down and fainted" (485–6). "By this" is a temporal marker that Marlowe uses throughout *Hero and Leander*; it means "by (or at) this time." But by this time, the only time that makes any sense at all is the time that it has taken Christopher Marlowe to get to this point in his poem.

The disruption of end-directed narrative is paralleled by, and indeed equivalent to, the disruption of end-directed sexuality. Throughout the poem Marlowe repeatedly teases us, not only with death, but also with that other foregone conclusion, heterosexual consummation. To a certain extent, his procedure here partakes of the conventional technique of heightening desire for a sexual and narrative end by delaying it (a technique that is repeatedly invoked within the narrative itself). But again, Marlowe's disruptions are so extreme that they seem to undermine the end they promise. This is most obviously true in Hero and Leander's second meeting, when, as several readers have noticed, we are presented with a series of apparent consummations that turn out not to be the thing itself.[17] Significantly, our confusion here often results from a confusion of the "proper" relation between simile and referent, metaphor and narrative. We are told, for example, that the meeting comes about when Hero answers Leander's love letter

> . . . in such sort
> As he had hope to scale the beauteous fort,

> Wherein the liberall graces lock'd their wealth,
> And therefore to her tower he got by stealth.
> Wide open stood the doore, hee need not clime,
> And she her selfe before the pointed time,
> Had spread the boord, with roses strowed the roome,
> And oft look't out, and mus'd he did not come. (499–506)

As one critic complains,[18] the fort metaphor here intrudes disconcertingly upon the narrative description of Hero's tower, door, and board (which would, in any case, be charged with sexual significance). Like Hero, we ready ourselves "before the pointed time" and "muse" that Leander "did not come." In the next line, however, we are assured that "at last he came" (507) – and the description of his arrival seems unequivocal: "He askt, she gave, and nothing was denied" (509). But this apparently straightforward statement is itself followed by a series of descriptions and similes (most notably the famous comparison of Leander to Aesop's cock)[19] that manage to suggest simultaneously that sexual intercourse has occurred and that Hero and Leander are simply indulging in pointless play. Finally, we are told that:

> *Leander*, rude in love and raw,
> Long dallying with *Hero*, nothing saw
> That might delight him more, yet he suspected
> Some amorous rites or other were neglected. (545–8)

The humor in these lines results at least in part from the fact that when the "nothing" that Leander can see finally takes form, it does so only as indefinite, pluralized rituals.[20] The disruptions and misrecognitions throughout this sequence do not simply delay our progress to the foregone conclusion; they once again call the primacy and the stability of that conclusion into question. We are repeatedly forced to ask, "Are we there yet?" – and as a result we are brought to suspect that perhaps "there is no there there." This suspicion seems to be confirmed in a dizzying passage describing the lovers' struggle at the end of the night:

> . . . in plaine terms (yet cunningly) he crav'd it,
> Love alwaies makes those eloquent that have it,
> Shee, with a kind of graunting, put him by it,
> And ever as he thought himselfe most nigh it,
> Like to the tree of *Tantalus* she fled,
> And seeming lavish, sav'de her maidenhead. (555–60)

Now you have it, now you don't. "Like to the tree of *Tantalus*," the object of desire here – "it" – seems repeatedly to be within our grasp,

about to take on form; repeatedly, however, it loses that form before attaining it, metamorphosing into a different object, equally free of explicit referent, until it is finally tied down to the nothing that is Hero's maidenhead.[21]

The stability of the desired end is further undermined in Leander's homoerotic encounter with Neptune. In his illuminating analysis of this sequence, Bredbeck has argued that while Leander treats homoeroticism as a non sequitur, Marlowe momentarily essentializes it, showing, through Neptune's invocation of classical pastoral, that it is intelligible in another discursive system.[22] I would suggest that Marlowe is interested here not so much in making an alternative kind of sense as in investigating the extent to which one can stop making sense. In *Edward II*, when the elder Mortimer presents a fully articulated picture of Greek homoeroticism (1.4.390–6), that picture is resolutely linear, hierarchical, and patriarchal: any fully realized, logical point, in Marlowe's terms, necessarily collapses into a version of the same old point. In *Hero and Leander*, by contrast, homoeroticism is invoked and celebrated precisely as non sequitur, as that which does not follow. It is important that both Neptune's sexual advances and his digressive, pastoral story remain incomplete. While his desires are clearly physicalized, they never entirely lose their status as "trope" (a status to which earlier readers sometimes appealed):[23] the physical presence of homoeroticism here results precisely from a substitution of the metaphoric for the "real." Similarly, while his story interrupts our progress to the foregone conclusion ("Love I come," 638), it never loses its status as disruptive digression: it is itself interrupted by Leander, who vocalizes the conventional reader's concern (saying, in effect, "Oh no, not *another* story") and points to the implacable progress of linear time (685–8).

The encounter with Neptune further directly attacks the narrative of sexual differentiation upon which logical sense depends. When Leander refuses Neptune's advances by declaring, "I am no woman I" (676), he appeals, in effect, to the logic of the castration narrative: his intact anatomy both guarantees his subjectivity and makes him an impossible object for Neptune's desires.[24] Neptune's interrupted story implicitly disputes Leander's logic, and his later actions threaten to undermine it entirely. When he throws his mace at Leander and then recalls it, he is marked by a "fresh bleeding wound" (697): he presents us with an image (but only an image) of a man who is both intact and lacking, who is both the active wielder of the phallic mace, and the bearer of the wound of castration; the binary division between male and female, aggressor and

victim, the speakable and the unspeakable, sense and non sequitur ceases momentarily to exist.

This is the image that is denied in the consummation, when the wound is transferred to Hero. Critics regularly comment on how earlier inversions are "righted" here. And so they are. In a number of ways, however, the description of the consummation counters the narrative "righting" that it enacts. Readings of this passage are riddled with references to "the moment of consummation," "the moment of sexual fulfilment," the moment when "Leander takes possession of Hero."[25] But in fact, no one really is sure when this "moment" occurs. Virtually all modern readings depend upon the adoption of C. F. Tucker Brooke's 1910 emendation, which rearranges the sequence of the text. The 1598 edition (quoted here in Richard Sylvester's slightly modernized version)[26] reads as follows:

> For though the rising yv'rie mount he scal'd
> Which is with azure circling lines empal'd,
> Much like a globe, (a globe may I tearme this,
> By which love sailes to regions full of blis)
> Yet there with *Sysiphus* he toyld in vaine,
> Till gentle parlie did the truce obtain.
> She trembling strove, this strife of hers (like that
> Which made the world) another world begat,
> Of unknowne joy. Treason was in her thought,
> And cunningly to yeeld her self she sought.
> Seeming not woon, yet woon she was at length,
> In such warres women use but halfe their strength.
> *Leander* now like Thebian *Hercules*,
> Entred the orchard of *Th'esperides*.
> Whose fruit none rightly can describe, but hee
> That puls or shakes it from the golden tree:
> Wherein *Leander* on her quivering brest,
> **Breathlesse spoke some thing, and sigh'd out the rest;**
> **Which so prevail'd, as he with small ado,**
> **Inclos'd her in his armes and kist her to.**
> **And everie kisse to her was as a charme,**
> **And to** *Leander* **as a fresh alarme.**
> **So that the truce was broke, and she alas,**
> **(Poore sillie maiden), at his mercie was.**
> **Love is not ful of pittie (as men say)**
> **But deaffe and cruell, where he meanes to pray.**
> **Even as a bird, which in our hands we wring,**
> **Foorth plungeth, and oft flutters with her wing.**
> And now she wisht this night were never done,
> And sigh'd to thinke upon th'approaching sunne,

> For much it greev'd her that the bright day-light,
> Should know the pleasure of this blessed night.
> (757–88; transposed passage in boldface)

Brooke moved lines 773–84 (beginning with "Wherein *Leander* on her quivering brest" and ending, "Foorth plungeth, and oft flutters with her wing") to a position following line 762 ("Till gentle parlie did the truce obtain"). As Louis Martz notes in his facsimile edition of the 1598 text, "This transposition is highly effective, and . . . makes excellent sense of the whole passage."[27] It creates an unbroken linear progress to consummation, which is represented by Leander's heroic entry into "the orchard of *Th'esperides*." As an essential part of this progress, it connects the bird simile at the end of the transposed passage (781–4) to the narrative description of Hero's strife (763–88), making it an explicit image of the creative subordination of the female. By contrast, the 1598 text confronts us once more with a frustrating series of false climaxes; we are once more led to ask, "Are we there yet?" – and when we do finally get "there," we are presented with an image rather than the thing itself. The consummation disappears into the bird simile, and, unlike its counterpart in Brooke's edition, that simile never finds an explicit narrative referent, never comes out on the other side; it simply ends, and the poem cuts abruptly to a picture of post-coital bliss.

Martz comments that "the original order of the whole passage can be construed as making sense":[28] with a little straining, it can be read as describing a gradual process of seduction. I am suggesting that "the original order" could more effectively be defended as making nonsense – the same kind of non-sense that is characteristic of the poem as a whole. I can see no compelling reason simply to accept Brooke's emendation: the 1598 sequence went unchallenged until Singer's less drastic alteration in 1821.[29] I would agree with Martz that the emendation is "brilliant"[30] – in large part because it makes us clearly aware of what is out of place in the earlier version. At the same time, Brooke's "straightening" of the text calls up the spectres of loss and displacement that it tries to dispel.[31] Brooke comments in a note: "Owing probably to the displacement of a leaf in Marlowe's lost MS these lines are given in the wrong sequence in all previous editions."[32] Brooke's note implicitly acknowledges the way in which narrative sequence reflects the logic of castration: he invokes the phantasm of a lost, perfectly formed original (the naked, literal truth) whose narrative form guarantees its truth, securing its claim to phallic authority – and that claim is made all the more secure here because it is clearly reproduced in the content of the restructured narrative. The text of 1598, however, presents us with

something that is more disconcerting: an always already displaced original, an original that is always already a copy. Not only is that text marked by lack and displacement, by non sequitur and pointlessness, but it is also itself an image of the text that Brooke will produce centuries later, of the perfectly sequenced, pointed narrative that it insistently calls up in the process of denying.

Similar effects are produced by the other famous attempts to straighten Marlowe's text – the sestiad divisions (the first of which covers over the abrupt shift from the Mercury story to Hero) and above all the continuation. For the idea of a consummation that does not consummate is carried forth to the end. Almost alone among critics, David Lee Miller notes that the "climax" of the poem occurs not at the consummation, but when Hero is exposed, naked, to Leander's gaze:[33]

> Thus neere the bed she blushing stood upright,
> And from her countenance behold ye might,
> A kind of twilight breake, which through the heare,
> As from an orient cloud, glymse here and there.
> And round about the chamber this false morne,
> Brought foorth the day before the day was borne.
> So *Heroes* ruddie cheeke, *Hero* betrayd,
> And her all naked to his sight displayd.
> Whence his admiring eyes more pleasure tooke,
> Than *Dis*, on heapes of gold fixing his looke. (801–11)

But Miller is so intent on showing that traditional sexual roles are reaffirmed here that he glosses over what is strange about the structure he describes. The subordination of Hero to Leander, which certainly occurs, is simultaneously countered by the subordination of narrative "striving" to static spectacle. Like the consummation, this spectacle has the effect of asserting sexual difference by locating lack in the female body; and Hero's shame here recalls one of the primary cultural images of that lack, the image of "chast *Diana*, when *Actaeon* spyede her" (744).[34] But once again, a narrative point is self-consciously displaced onto and contained by a suspended image. As a result, Leander's argument for consummation – "nor heaven, nor thou, were made to gaze upon" (223) – is turned back on itself, as similar impulses have cycled back on themselves throughout the poem.[35] Moreover, the suggestion that we are now at last viewing the "naked truth" (208) is countered by yet another movement away from the thing itself. We never "eie those parts, which no eie should behold" (408): Hero is, in Miller's phrase, "reclothe[d]" in simile, and her experience of shame

is displaced onto a static image of kinetic time – the picture of "ougly night":[36]

> By this *Apollos* golden harpe began,
> To sound foorth musicke to the *Ocean*,
> Which watchfull *Hesperus* no sooner heard,
> But he the day bright-bearing Car prepar'd.
> And ran before, as Harbenger of light,
> And with his flaring beames mockt ougly night,
> Till she o'recome with anguish, shame, and rage,
> Dang'd downe to hell her loathsome carriage. (811–18)

The final lines point to the inevitable conclusion to the story, the end of death and castration (now doubly determined by the consummation and the image of Hero as Diana). But the poem refuses the comforts of a conventional, mastering narrative. It leaves us not with "the promised end," but with "an image of that horror" – not with the blood of death, but with the blood of the (never-present) consummation and with the self-consciously artificialized "g(u)ilt" of the picture of night.[37] While it does obeisance to the dominant fiction, then, it simultaneously distances and denaturalizes that fiction: it acknowledges its own pointlessness, its own status as an incomplete artifact, acknowledges that (as the Latin tag appended to the end informs us) *Desunt nonnulla*, "some things are lacking."

CHAPTER 4

"Thus with a kiss": a Shakespearean interlude

Marlowe's works present us with one powerful model for interrogating conventional sexuality and traditional tragic form. But different sorts of questions are raised, of necessity, in more heteroerotically focused plays, which, in the later part of the Renaissance, begin to concentrate more fully on women. Questions about chastity and virginity (already present in Marlovian texts) come to the forefront here, as male–female relations are more carefully explored and the problem of female desire moves towards center stage. Many of the plays of this period seem haunted, in one way or another, by the image of the perfect union in orgasm/death in *Romeo and Juliet*.[1] It seems useful, therefore, briefly to rehearse this image and its vicissitudes in later Shakespearean texts before turning to plays by other writers.

At the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, when Romeo's "Thus with a kiss I die" is met by Juliet's "Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die" (5.3.129, 169–70), Shakespeare makes explicit the links between sexual and textual consummation that are repeatedly suggested by Marlowe, and he effectively thematizes the self-defining, self-defeating movement of conventional heroic tragedy.[2] Textual closure is further associated here, as it is in *Edward II*, with silence – and with silencing. Romeo's "thus" (completing his assertion, "O true apothecary! / Thy drugs are quick," 5.3.119–20), is the equivalent of Juliet's assurance of brevity: as in numerous other plays (particularly revenge tragedies, where it is the common cry of the revenger),[3] this word seems simultaneously to fulfill the promises of speech and to mark its boundaries; it is the ultimate expression of the impulse to "shut up" (silence, but also enclose, reify) that is experienced both by the audience and by a number of characters throughout the play.

As students reading *Romeo and Juliet* often note with dismay, our introduction to the iconic lovers is anything but "brief" and "quick." We must first endure the painfully extended puns of Sampson and Gregory, leading to a minor outbreak of the feud (bred of an "airy word" by the

patriarchs, and carried out in an uncomprehending fashion by their sons and servants, 1.1.89), the clichéd Petrarchisms Romeo utters when he finally appears, the Nurse's seemingly endless ramblings, and Mercutio's self-involved aria on self-projection. All of these speeches, of course, present ideas that are important to the play, but they are also all notable for their sheer wordiness, for the way they stall – and sometimes seem to halt – the forward movement of the drama. The older people, in particular, appear to resist that movement, as they repeatedly cast their minds backward to count the years since they were young and active: the Nurse's repetitive reminiscing, for example – "'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years / And she was weaned – I never shall forget it – / Of all the days of the year, upon that day; / . . . And since that time it is eleven years, / . . . and I should live a thousand years, / I never should forget it," 1.3.23–5, 35, 45–6) – is matched by the drawn-out disagreement between of the elder Capulets at the ball:

CAP.: You and I are past our dancing days.
How long is't now since last yourself and I
Were in a mask?
2. CAP.: By'r lady, thirty years.
CAP.: What man? 'tis not so much, 'tis not so much
'Tis since the nuptial of Lucentio,
Come Pentecost as quickly as it will,
Some five and twenty years, and then we mask'd.
2. CAP.: 'Tis more, 'tis more. His son is elder, sir;
His son is thirty.
CAP.: Will you tell me that?
His son was but a ward two years ago. (1.5.31–40)

Repeatedly, too, the audience's potential frustration is vocalized by other characters: both the Nurse and Mercutio are told to "hold [their] peace" (1.3.50; cf. 1.3.57; 1.5.95). And even before Mercutio speaks, Benvolio appropriately informs Romeo as they approach the Capulet ball, "The date is out of such prolixity" (1.4.10). Or to put it less prolixly: "No more of talk"[4] – "Oh, shut up!"

Romeo and Juliet is, of course, a highly formal, rhetorical drama that repeatedly criticizes empty rhetoric, self-enclosed lyric, and mere form. The desire to move out of words into action is most frequently voiced by Juliet, the quintessential expression of that desire occurring in her best-known, most frequently quoted (and misquoted) lines:

> O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
> Deny thy father and refuse thy name;

> Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
> And I'll no longer be a Capulet.
> . . .
> 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy
> Thou art thyself, though not a Montague,
> What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot,
> Nor arm nor face nor any other part
> Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
> What's in a name? That which we call a rose
> By any other word would smell as sweet;
> So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
> Retain that dear perfection which he owes
> Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
> And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
> Take all myself. (2.2.34–49)

As Harry Levin first observed, Juliet here "calls into question not merely Romeo's name, but – by implication – all names, forms, conventions, sophistications and arbitrary dictates of society."[5] Her speech posits a reality that exists outside of social forms and language, identifying that reality with the physical ("hand," "foot," "arm," "face"), and more pointedly, with the sexual – the "other part belonging to a man" that remains (in words Juliet later uses to imagine consummation) "untalked of and unseen" (3.2.7). The play is clearly aware of the paradoxes inherent in such a hypothesis,[6] and it calls them to our attention in the next line: Juliet's offer, "take all myself," is met by Romeo's promise, "I take thee at thy word" (2.2.49). And the implicit irony is repeated soon after in one of Juliet's speeches:

> Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
> What I have spoke, but farewell compliment!
> Dost thou love me? I know though wilt say, "Ay,"
> And I will take thy word. (2.2.88–91)

As the balcony scene draws to a close and the lovers are forced once again to reckon – and to reckon with – linear time, Juliet remains able to express her desire only through repeating the words that constrain her: she wishes she could tire Echo "with repetition of . . . Romeo's name" and promises, "I shall say good night till it be morrow" (2.2.163, 185).

Nevertheless, the play does enact a clear progression from the verbal to the physical; and, as in *Tamburlaine*, that progression is identified with a movement from the lyric to the dramatic. While those around them ramble on endlessly, the young lovers attempt to exit from words into action – into a consummation that can only be sealed by death. They

escape love by the Petrarchan book not by denying it, but by literalizing it, by actualizing its oxymoronic terms (e.g., "My only love sprung from my only hate! / . . . I must love a loathed enemy," 1.5.138, 141), so that these are no longer seen as merely formal. At the same time that Romeo's self-involved, literary love is realized in mutual consummation, other things that seemed simply conventional become deadly serious. Most notably, "a villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic" kills the wittiest character with a "scratch" that proves mortal (3.1.102, 101). The Nurse's teasing refusal to come to the point and relate Romeo's first message to Juliet (2.5) similarly becomes an actual inability to speak clearly when she is charged with delivering the news of Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment (3.2); Capulet's conventionally despotic but soft-hearted patriarch suddenly becomes an abusive, unfeeling tyrant; and the play as a whole, beginning with a sonnet, moves (by way of a dialogic sonnet and the hero's discovery of blank verse) into dramatic tragedy. As Gayle Whittier succinctly explains: "The inherited Petrarchan word becomes English flesh by declining from lyric freedom to tragic fact."[7]

The tragic conclusion of the play is implicit in the lovers' first physical contact. After their shared sonnet, Romeo both fulfills and momentarily ends the lovers' speech by kissing Juliet and declares: "Thus, from my lips, by thine, my sin is purg'd" (1.5.105–7).[8] His words presage – and indeed necessitate – his final line ("Thus with a kiss I die"). While Juliet teases him that he kisses "by th' book" here (1.5.110), that book becomes scripture at the end of the play. The lovers' death literalizes both the Petrarchan conceit of "dying for love" and the little death of orgasm; it also (not incidentally) saves them from a fate similar to that of the old people in the play, reminiscing endlessly about their lost youth – a fate briefly imagined by Romeo, when he predicts, "All these woes shall serve / For sweet discourses in our times to come" (3.5.52–3).[9] By simultaneously actualizing and closing down those "sweet discourses," Romeo and Juliet's death ultimately makes their love – not simply the words of Romeo's apothecary – seem "true" (5.3.119). And it is worth noting that the final image of that truth ("O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath"), though put in the mouth of a woman, is (like the image of "truth" at the end of *Edward II*) inescapably phallic in form.

Even in *Romeo and Juliet*, of course, the moment of "real," silent consummation/death is clearly problematized[10] – not the least by being followed by the repetitive, seemingly interminable speech of the Friar, which begins by echoing Juliet's promise of brevity ("I will be brief, for my short date of breath / Is not so long as is a tedious tale," 5.3.229–30) and continues by rehearsing the plot of the play in excruciating detail (complete

with unnecessary additions and parentheses). This speech seems calculated to arouse in the audience responses similar to Juliet's when the Nurse had teased her in 2.5 by refusing to come to the point: anyone subjected to the Friar's complete explanation (which is usually shortened or cut entirely in performance) might begin by asking, as Juliet did, "How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath / To say to me that thou art out of breath?" (2.5.31–2) and eventually be moved to exclaim with her in frustration: "But all this I did know before!" (2.5.46). And when the play does finally arrive at closure, it does so only by memorializing the lovers and promising us yet "more talk of these sad things" (5.3.308).

Despite the questions it raises, *Romeo and Juliet* generally conforms to and helps define the erotics of patriarchy and the form of romantic tragedy in the Renaissance. The assumptions that are crystallized in the couple's death scene are more seriously questioned in other plays. Shakespeare presents us with a highly critical revision of that scene in *Othello*, in which the desire for fixity, definition, and purity (and for a speech that ends speech) is presented as issuing in murder and suicide: Othello completes his description of the "turban'd Turk" by killing himself while declaring, "And [I] smote him – thus," to which Ludovico appropriately replies, "O bloody period" (5.2.354, 357). And this is followed by Othello's declaration to the dead Desdemona: "I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee. No way but this / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss" (5.2.358–9). Romeo's "Thus with a kiss I die" is recalled, as it were, with a vengeance.

Before the end of the play, moreover, we are presented with images of a different sort of eroticism – images (grounded, as we shall see, in contemporary medical theory) of the multiplicity and endlessness of feminine desire, which are opposed to the conventional phallic model, and which, by their very existence, help to define that model as both conventional and phallic. While listening to Othello's fixed narrative of his life, Desdemona repeatedly "come[s] again," and her "greedy ear" threatens in its very receptivity to "devour up" his tale (1.3.149–50).[11] In the trial scene, Othello responds to her declaration of violent desire by trying to distance himself from all sexual feeling (1.3.247–68). And after they arrive in Cyprus, his fantasy of an "absolute" consummation/death ("If it were now to die, / 'Twere now to be most happy," 2.1.189–91) is met by her characteristic desire for more:

> The heavens forbid
> But that our loves and comforts should increase
> Even as our days do grow! (2.1.193–95)

Desdemona's words are answered positively by her husband, but his reply clearly betrays his anxieties,[12] and presages the end of the play:

> Amen to that sweet powers!
> I cannot speak enough of this content,
> It stops me here; it is too much of joy.
> And this, and this, the greatest discords be
> [*They kiss*]
> That e'er our hearts shall make. (2.1.195–200)

Like Romeo's initial "thus" after the shared sonnet, Othello's "this and this" (similarly uttered at the first moment of physical contact that we see between the lovers) both anticipates and ultimately necessitates his final lines ("No way but this / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss").

Othello's fear of Desdemona's (and, ultimately, of his own) desires is one of the most potent weapons in Iago's arsenal. That fear is emblematized by the brawls that twice interrupt the consummation of the marriage. When Othello is first roused from his bed, our attention is called to the fact of interruption by the following exchange:

IAGO: He's married.
CASSIO: To who?
[*Enter Othello*]
IAGO: Marry, to – Come, Captain will you go? (1.2.52–3)

And when a fight threatens to erupt, he instructs the would-be combatants: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2.59); his words suggest that he keeps his phallic sword up (erect, masculine, and firm) by keeping it up (attempting not to use it), and thereby protecting it from the amorphous, feminine, "rusty" dew (cf. Juliet's "Oh happy dagger, / This is thy sheath; there rust, and let me die"). Iago further helpfully glosses the second, barbaric brawl as follows:

> Friends all, but now, even now;
> In quarter, and in terms like bride and groom
> Devesting them for bed; and then, but now
> (As if some planet had unwitted men),
> Swords out, and tilting one at other's breast,
> In opposition bloody. (2.3.179–83)[13]

Not only do these incidents simultaneously disrupt and stand in for the marital union, they also call the status of that union into question: if and when consummation occurs in this play has become the subject of an

ongoing critical debate. Michael Neill acutely notes that the play's insistent evocation of and persistent uncertainty about copulation help create in its critics and audience a "habit of obsessive speculation about concealed offstage action" similar to Othello's; we "become victims, like the hero himself, of the scopophile economy of this tragedy," moved by a voyeuristic urge to "supervise" and "grossly gape on" the sexual act (3.3.395).[14] I would add that our response here mimics Othello's longing for certainty and closure, for a climactic action that settles things once and forever ("To be once in doubt / Is once to be resolv'd," 3.3.179–80) – a longing that can only be satisfied by death.

At the end of *Othello*, Desdemona's disruptive energies are shut up and closed down (with some difficulty, as she repeatedly comes and speaks again). But female desire springs again to life in Shakespeare's later plays. Consider, for example, the highly self-conscious, tragicomic reimagining of *Romeo and Juliet* that occurs in *Antony and Cleopatra.* Here again, the first physical contact between the couple on stage foreshadows their end; Antony declares:

> Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
> Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space,
> Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life
> Is to do thus [*embracing*] – when such a mutual pair
> And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
> On pain of punishment, the world to weet
> We stand up peerless. (1.1.33–40).

While Romeo and Juliet's kiss was clearly their first, and the status of Othello's and Desdemona's embrace at Cyprus was characteristically uncertain, there is no question that these lovers have touched and spoken "thus" many times before, both together and with others. The cynical but playful self-awareness that comes with their experience (and that of the playwright) is reflected in Antony's speech: he does not merely assume the part of the heroic lover; he performs it, as Cleopatra suggests in her response, "Excellent falsehood!" (1.1.40).

The full weight of the "falsehood" here is driven home in the presentation of Antony's botched suicide, when orgasmic closure seems to come –

> I will be
> A bridegroom in my death, and run into't
> As to a lover's bed. Come then; and, Eros,

Thy master dies thy scholar: to do thus
[*Falling on his sword*]
I learnt of thee – (4.14.99–104)

and go – "How, not dead? not dead?"(4.14.104) – throughout two excruciating scenes in which the hero repeatedly heralds his own end ("I am dying, Egypt, dying," 4.15.18, 41). The pathos and the humor in these scenes derives both from the spectacle of older people in love and from the perspective of an older play on love. Nevertheless, in her final performance Cleopatra manages, to a certain extent, to make Antony's efforts good, declaring amidst claims of nobility: "Husband, I come!" (5.2.287). And while there is a distinct possibility that she is only faking it here (when, after all, has Cleopatra done anything other than fake it? She has "been a boggler ever," 3.13.110), that possibility reinforces as well as undermines the strength of her assertion: the self-conscious theatricality of this play and its heroine ultimately causes us to reconsider the ways in which an acknowledged "falsehood" can, in truth, be "excellent."

We might also briefly glance at the ambivalent accommodation that Shakespeare makes with female "falsehood," speech, and desire in *The Winter's Tale*.[15] His romance signals a greater acceptance of these both in its content and its form. Dramatic romances (or tragicomedies) were frequently scorned by contemporary critics; they were seen as more "feminine" than tragedies, as less pure, less linear, and less allied to nature and truth.[16] All of these qualities are readily apparent – and generally championed – in *The Winter's Tale*, the final scene of which could appropriately be subtitled, "Thus with a kiss I live." But at the same time, the play never entirely escapes the urge, embodied by Leontes, to "shut up" itself and others (cf. 4.1.19). And both of its contradictory impulses are registered in the conclusion, as the King turns to the play's most insistently loquacious woman and demands (or pleads): "O, peace, Paulina!" (5.3.135).

Shakespeare seems to be simultaneously fascinated and disturbed by the image of perfect unity, consummation, and death that forms the climax of *Romeo and Juliet*. His plays return to it obsessively – exploring, interrogating, and sometimes reinforcing its implications. As we shall see, however, this image and the tragic structure it both encapsulates and concludes are much more radically interrogated in plays by others, which repeatedly revisit *Romeo and Juliet* and its Shakespearean progeny and which regularly figure the iconic union as patriarchal in its underpinnings and as incestuous and violating in its results. One of the most devastating challenges occurs in *The Duchess of Malfi*, whose female protagonist is

clearly the descendant of Juliet, Desdemona, and Hermione. Before approaching Webster's drama, however, it will be useful to consider the criticisms of contemporary erotic politics and conventional tragedy presented in the anonymous *Revenger's Tragedy*, a text that explores issues similar to those in *The Duchess* from a very different perspective. While both brilliant and illuminating in its own right, *The Revenger's Tragedy* lacks (among other things) the serious investment in confronting dilemmas of female subjectivity and sexuality that is apparent in *The Duchess*. It can thus help to foreground the unusual nature of Webster's achievement there as well as set the stage for a further exploration of related issues and images in *The Changeling* and other late plays by Middleton, in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, and in the plays of Margaret Cavendish.

PART II

Desiring women in the seventeenth century

CHAPTER 5

"How strangely does himself work to undo him": (male) sexuality in The Revenger's Tragedy

If Marlowe's poems and dramas continually flirt with the idea of never consummating, *The Revenger's Tragedy* consummates continually. It plays with and parodies – but nevertheless participates in – the model of a self-defining, self-defeating phallic orgasm and death that is central to conventional tragedy. While the text effectively anatomizes and criticizes the structures of misogyny and the erotics of patriarchy, it simultaneously delights in them, never seriously attempting to imagine an alternative.

Images of swelling and detumescence pervade the play: revenge and rhetoric, as well as conventional sexuality (from which they seem inseparable), are conceived in these terms. The bastard Spurio, for example, exclaims at one point:

> When base male bawds kept sentinel at stair-head
> Was I stol'n softly – oh damnation met
> The sin of feasts, drunken adultery.
> I feel it swell me; my revenge is just,
> I was begot in impudent wine and lust. (1.2.186–90)[1]

In this speech, the action of "swelling" seems – to use another central term in the play – to "slide" between adultery and revenge (as it does in fact: Spurio's revenge is to sleep with his father's wife).[2] The "brain" of the play's hero, Vindice, similarly "swell[s] with strange invention" as he "works" himself up verbally – and then is cut off in mid-sentence (1.3.120–4). As J. L. Simmons and Peter Stallybrass have noted, tongues are repeatedly associated throughout the play with phallic assertiveness and deflation.[3] And Vindice comments incisively on the self-contradictory nature of his opponents' actions; he says of Lussurioso, "He may show violence to cross himself" (2.2.173), and he marvels later, "How strangely does himself work to undo him" (4.1.61).

The characteristic movement of the play pointedly recalls contemporary descriptions of the male orgasm. While contrasting male and female pleasure, Helikiah Crooke notes that "the pleasure of man is more intense, partly because his seed is more hot and spirituous, & partly also because it yssueth with greater violence and with a kinde of Almaine leape or subsultation."[4] One may remember here T. S. Eliot's well-known description of the play as animated by a "death-motive," marked by "narrowness" but also by "the intensity of the vision of its own ecstasies or horrors," "start[ing] off at top speed . . . and never slacken[ing] to the end."[5]

But *The Revenger's Tragedy* does not, of course, build to one grand climax. Indeed, its plot is notoriously non-linear, leading at least one critic to complain at length about its structure:

> Strangely, Act I concludes, not with Vindice's establishing his scheme for either immediate or eventual dispatch of the Duke, but with Hippolito's binding certain lords with oaths before heaven to revenge the ravishment and death of Antonio's virtuous wife. And Act II confuses the issue even further . . . [It] scatters the plot, setting in motion several additional layers of Vindice's intrigues but failing even to mention what the spectators in the first act saw as the dominant motif of the tragedy . . . [And] by the middle of Act III the basic intrigue of the drama is settled and the antagonist dead.[6]

Rather than following a clear trajectory, the play is marked by a series of inconsequential "minutes" of self-assertion and self-destruction, conceived in sexual terms.[7] We are confronted with a bewildering proliferation of self-canceling, pointless points, and all attempts to direct the action eventually come to naught.

Vindice repeatedly tries to separate himself from the mindless movement and lust around him, epitomized by the incestuous behavior of the ducal family. He stands apart, attempting to position himself as a godlike observer and commentator, and exclaims:

> O Dutch lust! Fulsome lust!
> Drunken procreation, which begets so may drunkards;
> Some father dreads not, gone to bed in wine,
> To *slide* from the mother and cling to the daughter-in-law;
> Some uncles are adulterous with their niece,
> Brothers with brothers' wives – Oh hour of incest!
> Any kin now next to the rim o' the sister
> Is man's meat in these days, and in the morning,
> When they are up and dressed and their mask on,
> Who can perceive this, save that eternal eye
> That sees through flesh and all? (1.3.59–69; my italics)

As Jonathan Dollimore notes, "the involuntary action" of human desire is here "reduced (casually yet startlingly) to the reflex action typical of an insensate being."[8] Throughout the play, words, plots, ideas, and actions, as well as characters, all similarly "slide" into one another, unable to keep any fixed identity. In contrast, the chastity that Vindice and his fellows are committed to defending theoretically represents a fixed, intact state removed from the surrounding frenzy. Two out of the three virgins in the play, Gloriana and Lady Antonio, are – in what seems (for a while, at least) to be the supreme expression of chastity – dead; and Lady Antonio is explicitly praised for being "as cold as lust as she is now in death" (1.4.36). Vindice's sister Castiza (the play's only living virgin) is characterized as "chaste still [with obvious double meaning] and immoveable" (1.3.148), and Vindice himself is told, "Be as a virgin, close" (1.3.139).

One of the play's central ironies, however, is that while Vindice criticizes the actions of his enemies, he is repeatedly caught in similar, self-contradictory paradoxes. As readers have frequently noticed, his initial praise of his dead beloved, Gloriana, turns insistently back on itself;[9] he addresses her skull:

> Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love,
> My study's ornament, thou shell of Death,
> Once the bright face of my betrothed lady,
> When life and beauty naturally filled out
> These ragged imperfections;
> When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set
> In those unsightly rings – then 'twas a face
> So far beyond the artificial shine
> Of any woman's bought complexion
> That the uprightest man – if such there be,
> That sin but seven times a day – broke custom
> And made up eight with looking after her.
> Oh she was able to ha' made a usurer's son
> Melt all his patrimony in a kiss. (1.1.14–27)

As his speech progresses, purity repeatedly becomes a form of artifice, and chastity is transformed into seduction. And the movement of the speech presages the metamorphosis, later in the play, of the dead, chaste Gloriana into a stage prop and temptress, who is made to accomplish revenge on the Duke by kissing him to death with poisoned lips as Vindice exclaims, "Then those that did eat are eaten" (3.5.160).[10]

All Vindice's plans for revenge are, of course (as dramatic revenges always are), inescapably self-defeating. He has two requirements for satisfaction: the first is that he receive credit, that he be able, in effect, to sign his name, declaring, as he does to the Duke, "'Tis I, 'tis Vindice, 'tis I!" (3.5.166). For this reason, he refuses to kill his enemy from behind, swearing:

> Sword thou wast never a back-biter yet.
> I'll pierce him to his face, he shall die looking upon me;
> Thy veins are swelled with lust, this shall unfill 'em. (2.2.90–2)

His revenge is imagined as an act of sexual dominance, of entering and undoing (unswelling, unfilling, and unmanning) the other.[11] His second requirement, that the punishment fit the crime, usually signals an affirmation of universal order: "appropriate" punishments traditionally function as figures for stable, literal truth.[12] Vindice's revenges are, however, self-consciously theatrical and self-referential, affirming only the cleverness of their creator; for him, the play is the thing, period, and justice is wholly poetic – a situation succinctly summarized in one of his best-known lines, "When thunder claps, heaven likes the tragedy" (5.3.48; cf. 4.2.197–8; 5.3.42).[13] Not surprisingly, his plots are repeatedly characterized with multivalent words – "quaint," "witty," "firm," and "fitting" – that pull together ideas of neatness, cleverness, sexuality, and self-assertion. He himself asks, "Have I not fitted the old surfeiter [i. e., the Duke] / With a quaint piece of beauty?" (3.5.52–3); his brother, Hippolito, soon applauds "the quaintness of [his] malice, above thought" (3.5.107–8) and exclaims, as the plots begin to take shape, "firmer and firmer" (4.3.221). After the Duke's death, Vindice pauses to lament Lussurioso's absence:

> Here was the sweetest occasion, the fittest hour to have made my revenge familiar with him – shown him the body of the duke his father, and how quaintly he died like a politician in hugger-mugger – made no man acquainted with it, in catastrophe slain him over his father's breast! And oh I'm mad to lose such sweet opportunity. (5.1.14–20)

And when the last revenge approaches, he declares: "We are firm yet / Strike one more strain and we crown our wit" (5.2.165–6). Finally, after the deed, he exults:

> We may be bold
> To speak it now: 'twas somewhat wittily carried
> Though we say it. 'Twas we two murdered him! (5.3.98–100)

Of course, this moment of self-assertion and consummation not only crowns the brothers' "wit" but also destroys it, leading inevitably to their death.[14]

The self-defeating sexualization of the actions of the defenders of chastity is not, as some critics have maintained, simply a sign of their gradual corruption,[15] it is inseparable from their goals and desires. This is made clear in an extraordinary scene between Vindice and his sister, Castiza. Having been penetrated ("entered," 1.3.88, 89) by Lussurioso, Vindice is instructed to repeat this action upon Castiza, whom the Duke's son desires:

> Go thou and with a smooth enchanting tongue
> Bewitch her ears and cozen her of all grace;
> Enter upon the portion of her soul,
> Her honour, which she calls her chastity. (1.3.113–16)

And he agrees to do so in extremely suggestive terms:

> My brain
> Shall swell with strange invention: I will move it
> Till I expire with speaking and drop down
> Without a word to save me; – but I'll work –. (1.3.121–4)

Ostensibly, of course, Vindice hopes to prove his sister chaste, but the self-contradictory nature of this impulse is laid bare in the scene between them. Against all odds, Castiza resists his blandishments; she asserts her purity by giving "*a box o' the ear to her brother*" (2.1.30 *s.d.*), and Vindice rejoices:

> It is the sweetest box that e'er my nose came nigh:
> The finest drawn-work cuff that e'er was worn:
> I'll love this blow forever, and this cheek
> Shall still henceforward take the wall of this.
> Oh I'm above my tongue! (2.1.40–4)

This speech as a whole, and its astonishingly filthy first line in particular, unmasks the desire for chastity *as* desire and makes evident that the ideal of inviolability is necessarily involved in – is ultimately identical to – forced entry and violation.[16] In the second line, the paradox of purity as artifice (which runs throughout the play) is presented as another version of the same problem. Significantly, Vindice repeatedly reconfigures Castiza's assertive action here as his passive receptacle – the container that he enters, the garment that he wears. And the one taboo he cites as remaining in his incestuous society (suggestive in its very exclusion) – "Any kin now next to the rim o' the sister / Is man's meat in these days" – effectively breached by Vindice himself.

Peter Stallybrass has commented incisively on how women become both the "sign of, and the cure for" infection in early modern culture, and

how *The Revenger's Tragedy*, in particular, "obsessively repeats both the virtuous enclosure of female chastity and the 'false forms' of deceptive women."[17] But the encounter between Vindice and his sister suggests that the two are even less separable than Stallybrass allows. "The virtuous enclosure of female chastity" is itself created by penetration and violation. Castiza's chastity functions both as a sign of her impenetrability (and therefore of Vindice's), and simultaneously – indeed, as a result – as a sign of her penetrability, absorbing her brother's anxieties about his own openness to "entry," which are amply demonstrated throughout the play. In his introduction to Lussurioso, Vindice had contrasted himself to a proverbially "open" woman:[18]

> I ne'er had that disease o' the mother,
> I praise my father! Why are men made close
> But to keep thoughts in best? I grant you this:
> Tell but some woman a secret over night,
> Your doctor may find it in the urinal i' the morning
> But my lord – (1.3.82–7)

This fantasy of male closure is disproved, of course, at the end of the play, by Vindice's final inability to keep his mouth shut, but it is also undermined immediately. Its falseness is suggested by our hero's failure to complete his speech here (he is interrupted by Lussurioso), and confirmed when he is metaphorically penetrated by the Duke's son, who tells him, "And thus I enter thee" (1.3.88). The penetrative non-penetration of Castiza – as well as the quite different seduction of his mother that follows – therefore enables him (outrageously but quite predictably) to declare: "That woman is all male whom none can enter" (2.1.111).

The paradoxes evident in this sequence are characteristic of the play as a whole. The discussion of the rape and suicide of Antonio's wife in the first act suggests in a simple way the appropriation involved in viewing female chastity as reflective of male honor.[19] Her rape is conceived as an assault on Antonio's masculinity ("a sight that strikes man out of [him]," 1.4.5), and he rejoices in her death because it proves his adequacy despite his age:

> That is my comfort gentleman, and I joy
> In this one happiness above the rest,
> Which will be called a miracle at last,
> That being an old man I'd a wife so chaste. (1.4.75–8)

Hippolito offers to "relieve [his] wrongs" because the brothers have suffered a similar offence; the rape of Gloriana has effectively castrated them ("We have grief too that yet walks without tongue," 1.4.22–3), and

their response, of course (most clearly fulfilled in the entrapment and murder of the Duke), is to reappropriate the phallic tongue.[20]

While the paradoxes and problems in *The Revenger's Tragedy* are clearly marked as male, the women in the play – even and perhaps especially the chastest woman – participate in them as well. Castiza is, indeed, presented as a diminished reflection of Vindice – his "Mini-Me" – inevitably involved in the same self-defeating desires. This is effectively suggested in the episode just before Vindice attempts to seduce her. Here, Castiza is confronted with a messenger who addresses her in speeches shot through with artifice and double entendre:

DONDOLO: Madonna, there is one as they say a thing of flesh and blood, a man I take him, by his beard, that would very desirously mouth to mouth with you.
CASTIZA: What's that?
DONDOLO: Show his teeth in your company. (2.1.10–14)

She attempts to tell him to speak plainly (and purely), but the language in which she does so is itself fraught with sexual suggestion:

CASTIZA: I understand thee not.
DONDOLO: Why, speak with you Madonna.
CASTIZA: Why, say so madman and cut off a great deal of dirty way. (2.1.15–17)

If the only wholly pure and trustworthy women in the play are dead ones (and, as Vindice demonstrates, even they may be problematic), the only safe man here is a *castrato*.[21] Castiza asserts her inviolable virginity in the same manner that her brother asserts his own impermeability – by creating others as open, penetrable, and lacking. And Vindice's ambiguous expression of the desire for purity is also matched by Castiza. She tells Dondolo to "direct [the visitor] hither," and, after his exit, muses:

> I hope some happy tidings from my brother
> That lately travelled, whom my soul affects.
> Here he comes. (2.1.23–6)

A stage direction immediately follows: *Enter* VINDICE *her brother disguised*. Although we have no reason to believe that Castiza is aware of Vindice's subterfuge (and every reason to believe that she is not), the pronoun in line 26 ("he") is insistently ambiguous. And in this context, "comes" takes on a double meaning as well, seeming to presage Vindice's orgasmic moment ("Oh, I'm above my tongue," 44), in which Castiza of course is not – but also unavoidably is – complicit.

One could object that I am overreading here, that the double meanings I have been exploring are clearly not intended by the characters. But that,

I would suggest, is exactly the point. As creatures of a language thoroughly penetrated by sexuality (and of a sexuality thoroughly penetrated by language), it is impossible for them ever to be truly "above [their] tongue[s]." Their difficulties are parodied in the travails of the Duchess's hapless offspring: the two older brothers, intending to save the third, inadvertently bring about his death; as he is about to be executed, the youngest brother points to an encouraging letter he has received from the others – which his jailor proceeds skillfully to reinterpret to suit his current circumstances. Equivocal letters are, of course, a staple of early modern drama,[22] and they always function as sign of duplicity of language; but that duplicity is usually controlled (to a certain extent at least) by a Machiavellian author. Here, meaning radically exceeds the letter-writers' purposes; intention is, indeed, a fallacy.

And Castiza, who like Vindice theoretically intends the good, is inextricably caught in the contradictions the play explores. Her predicament reaches a height in a scene in which – echoing both her brother's earlier attempt to seduce her and his current assignment to act as his own murderer – she plays the part of a prostitute to test her mother. Once again, it is impossible conclusively to establish her motives; we have no firm ground upon which to stand. When her seduction fails, she embraces her mother and exclaims in words that seem charged with incestuous desire:

> Oh mother let me twine about your neck
> And kiss you till my soul melt on your lips:
> I did this but to try you. (4.4.47–9)

And when her mother demands, "O speak truth!" Castiza gives her this dizzying, but appropriate, reply: "Indeed I did not; for no tongue has force / To alter me from honest" (4.4.150–1). The necessity of being "false" to be "true" is, of course, Vindice's central problem, one that is expressed in various ways throughout the play.[23] Castiza's ambiguous expression of incestuous desire here further parallels a similar exchange between her brothers and her mother earlier in the scene. After justifying her corruption by swearing to Vindice that "no tongue but yours could have bewitched me so" (4.4.34), Gratiana had repented, and her son had rejoiced:

> Nay I'll kiss you now; kiss her brother,
> Let's marry her to our souls, wherein's no lust,
> And honourably love her. (4.4.57–9)

And, despite Vindice's attempt to separate them, both exchanges insistently recall the incestuous relations of the ducal family.[24]

The similarity between Castiza's predicament and that of her brothers inevitably raises questions about whether the playwright is truly interested in the problems of women – whether, indeed, Castiza (or any of the women in the play) can be really said to exist *as a woman* at all.[25] To a certain extent, one could argue that these questions (when taken in conjunction with the play's criticism of conventional masculinity) make us aware of the theatricality of all gender. And so they do. But "all gender" here is, finally, exclusively male. Moreover, the difficulties attendant upon creating a "female" subjectivity are not explicitly considered as problems (as, I will argue, they are in Webster's plays); they are not, in fact, really considered here at all. The play seems, instead, to be focused on the self-defeating paradoxes inherent in contemporary understandings of masculinity; and its women seem to be expressly conceived as receptacles that the playwright, like Vindice, fills with his own – pointedly male – anxieties and desires.

That is, indeed, what is suggested by the most famous speech in the play: Vindice's meditation on death, the maiden, and the silkworm. Our hero considers the "*skull of his love*," now "*dressed up in tires*" (3.5.44 *s.d.*) as the Duke's seductress, and exclaims:

> And now methinks I could e'en chide myself
> For doting on her beauty, though her death
> Shall be revenged after no common action.
> Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
> For thee? For thee does she undo herself?
> Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships
> For the poor benefit of a bewitching minute?
> Why does yon fellow falsify highways
> And put his life between the judge's lips
> To refine such a thing, keeps horse and men
> To beat their valours for her?
> Surely we're all mad people and they,
> Whom we think are, are not: we mistake those.
> 'Tis we are mad in sense, they but in clothes. (3.5.68–81)[26]

One notes how both responsibility and fault here are ultimately deflected onto women, as they are repeatedly throughout the play. Most of the important parts in the speech are played by females: both artifice and its enemy, barren death, are simultaneously represented by the "bony lady" (3.5.119). And even Vindice's own mistaken emotions and labors, figured by the characteristic action of the play – a phallic "undoing" – are displaced onto a female worm.

It is instructive to compare this speech with some relevant passages from Thomas Moffett's georgic poem, *The Silkewormes and Their Flies* (1599). After recounting an etiological tale that connects the genesis of the silkworm to the deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe, Moffett comments on how the worms spin silken cocoons for their own "death" (i.e., their metamorphosis into flies):

> Againe, as these fine troupes themselves devoure,
> Spinning but silken hharses [*sic*] for their death:
> Which done, they dye therein, (by Natures power
> Transform'd to flies that scarce draw one months breath)
> So lovers sweet is mingled stil with sower,
> Such happe above proceeds or underneath,
> That still we make our love our winding sheete,
> Whilst more we love, or hotter then is meete.[27]

Later, he praises the "gallant" worms that die in their silky cocoons, and he makes it clear that the reason the silkflies live so briefly is that they die immediately after copulation.[28] The traditional idea of the silkworm's self-consumption is clearly present here (so much so that the editor of the facsimile notes the poem's "recognizable affinities with the funeral oration"),[29] and so, too, is the association of that self-consumption with the self-destructive nature of desire – but the gendering of the silkworm as female is not.[30] This addition in Vindice's speech thus marks itself as a displacement – a displacement that is made more evident by the phallic associations of "worm."

But behind the tires and curtains, the play insistently implies, the only sexuality – the only subjectivity – that really exists is male. The author is ultimately caught in the same self-canceling paradoxes as his characters. Like Vindice using the skeleton of Gloriana to enact revenge upon the Duke, the playwright appears to be self-consciously delighting in sticking his tongue into empty "female" shells, all the while asserting his phallic "I" ("'Tis I, 'tis Vindice, 'tis I"; cf. 4.2.31, "All this is I"). It is therefore one of history's "quainter" ironies – "fitting" as all get out – that, in the process of transmission, his own identity has been lost.

CHAPTER 6

"My body bestow upon my women": the space of the feminine in The Duchess of Malfi

> The issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the *subject* or the *object*, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal . . .
>
> What a feminine syntax might be is not simple nor easy to state, because in that "syntax" there would no longer be either subject or object, "oneness" would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names, "proper" attributes.
>
> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*[1]

In contrast to *The Revenger's Tragedy*, both of John Webster's most famous plays manifest a clear interest in the problems involved in constructing a female subject. *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* approach those problems, however, from very different perspectives. *The White Devil* presents us with two opposite, mirroring images of woman, Isabella and Vittoria – both of whom are explicitly portrayed as speaking the language of men. Isabella, who can express her unconscious rage only in the process of repeating her husband's words and sacrificing herself for him (2.1), effectively self-immolates; and although Vittoria claims to be "too true a woman" (5.6.220), her characteristic activity is "personat[ing] masculine virtue to the point" (3.2.135).[2]

In a series of insightful analyses, Jonathan Dollimore has termed the kind of imitation that Vittoria performs "transgressive reinscription" (and, in particular, "transgressive inversion") and has argued persuasively for its extreme radical force. He posits it as the only alternative to an outworn "humanist transgression," which assumes the existence of a self prior to or outside of society.[3] From the perspective of *The White Devil*, Webster (whom I take to be a thoroughgoing materialist himself), would seem to agree. Vittoria's appropriation of masculine discourse effectively unmasks gender as impersonation, and she provides us with a piercing indictment of the mystifications that structure her society. There is,

moreover, no other even temporarily viable option available; Vittoria speaks the only language she has.

Yet Webster also seems to be acutely conscious of the limitations of inversion; and, as a result, *The White Devil* is a profoundly pessimistic play. It successfully anatomizes but simultaneously cedes to a social and symbolic order that provides women with no place to stand, that offers no mode of existence other than being "for-men" or "like men,"[4] that (and this is, crucially, conceived as the same problem) provides no access to a subject position that does not implicate one in violence towards and violation of the other. "Personating masculine virtue" is, after all, a deeply ironic phrase here, since all forms of virtu(e) – the heroic *virtù* in which Vittoria intermittently believes, as well as the moral virtue that she disdains – are seen as attempts to obscure the mechanisms of aggression and power.[5] In the same place that Vittoria learned Latin, learned to speak forcefully against her oppressors, she learned to murder, manipulate, and (metaphorically) rape (see 3.2.274–5). Furthermore, as Dollimore notes, Vittoria's positioning as a woman makes it impossible for her to enact aggression as effectively as those she imitates.[6] Webster provides us with a brilliant emblem of her impotence when, in the only direct action she undertakes in the play, she attempts to shoot Flamineo: the gun she uses is given to her by a man – and it is loaded with blanks. From the point of view of those in power, she functions primarily as a pawn in a political struggle. Her concluding pretensions to tragic heroism and centrality (and those of her brother) are wickedly parodied in the minor character Lodovico, who sees himself as author of all that has transpired ("I do glory yet / That I can call this act mine own . . . here's my rest: / *I limb'd this night-piece and it was my best*," 5.6.290–1, 293–4). And she is finally more like her opposite, Isabella, than either would care to admit. Each woman, significantly, acts the part of the other; and if Isabella is more implicated than she can acknowledge in the role she assumes to save Brachiano – the role of the "fury" who wishes she were a man (2.1.241–4) – so Vittoria, who plays the helpless victim when it suits her, is more passive and more victimized than she knows.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster adopts a different strategy: he questions whether it is possible not only to invert and decenter the structures of patriarchal power but to deploy those structures themselves to imagine oneself (provisionally) out of them. He engages in a self-consciously contradictory effort to construct a subjectivity that is specifically female, to reimagine speech, sexuality, and space – most

particularly, the space of the female body – in "feminine" terms. *The Duchess of Malfi* is especially interesting to examine after Marlowe's plays, because Webster's challenge to the erotics of patriarchy and the structure of conventional tragedy – to the desire for a self-defining, self-defeating moment of phallic orgasm and death – is conceived here precisely in terms of reproductive sexuality; as we shall see, his play both draws upon and suggests a number of ways in which contemporary constructions of pregnancy could be extremely threatening to the dominant order.[7]

The disruptive form of the play itself – its refusal to hold, even minimally, to the classical unities – is explicitly associated with the Duchess's pregnancy. There is an extraordinary moment at the beginning of Act 3 when Antonio tells Delio, "Since you last saw [the Duchess] / She hath had two children more, a son and a daughter" (3.1.6–7), and Delio replies:

> Methinks 'twas yesterday. Let me but wink
> And not behold your face, which to mine eye
> Is somewhat leaner: verily I should dream
> It were within this half hour. (3.1.8–11)

The structure that is being mocked here – the "sweet violence" of the unified classical tragedy that is "represented in one moment"[8] is inscribed within the play as Ferdinand's fantasy: "Die then, quickly," he tells his sister (3.2.71). The ideal of perfect wholeness and unity that this fantasy implies is integral (at least theoretically) to classical heroic tragedy, and is explicitly thematized in tragedies of love, which regularly end with an image of orgasmic union that Ferdinand can only wish for. One might compare the exultant exits I have explored in Shakespeare's plays – "Thus with a kiss I die," "Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger, / This is thy sheath" (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.120, 168–9); "Husband, I come" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 5.2.287) – to Ferdinand's almost wistful comment after he has effected his sister's death: "She and I were twins; / And should I die this instant, I had liv'd / Her time to a minute" (4.2.261–3).

Webster's play leaves no doubt that both this image and the belief in the coherence and adequacy of the male subject that it subtends are phantasmal. Ferdinand asks early on, "When shall we leave this sportive action, and fall to action indeed?" (1.2.11–12), and the answer, from one perspective, seems to be "never." No one "die[s] quickly" here; most of the characters die very slowly indeed – one could say that they just sort of peter out. Many of the deaths – in fact many of the significant actions – occur

not once but twice (like most of the characters, they are relentlessly doubled);[9] and they are often presented in such a manner that it is impossible to tell "sport" from "reality," the imitation from the thing itself. Closure is repeatedly undermined, and the most significant "end" – the Duchess's death – notoriously takes place well before the play is over. It seems appropriate that, in the final act, we find Ferdinand falling murderously upon his own shadow and hallucinating that he is fighting on a heroic battlefield. These events themselves suggest, however, that if Ferdinand's beliefs are hallucinatory, they are also deadly. As much of Jacobean drama suggests, and *The Duchess of Malfi* makes painfully clear, the illusion of male purity, wholeness, and unity depends upon a violent appropriation of the female body, which functions simultaneously as the repository for man's abjected desires and as his necessary complement: "Damn her!" Ferdinand cries, "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" (4.1.119–21).

The self-contradictory dynamic that is at work here is quite similar to that which we have examined in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, but it is presented in an even more pitiless form. Nowhere can one find a more damning representation of the patriarchal desire for purity[10] than in Ferdinand's incestuous impulses, crystallized in his admonition to the Duchess:

> 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. (1.2.249–51)

The conflicting suggestions of "rusty" here – both "unused" and "red with the blood" – perfectly mirror Ferdinand's self-canceling desires, as well as echoing similar suggestions in *Romeo and Juliet* (after declaring "O happy dagger / This is thy sheath," Juliet continues, "there rust, and let me die," 5.3.169–170) and *Othello* ("Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them," 1.2.59). As Ferdinand's lines imply, this play evidences an especially acute consciousness of the coincidence of conventional desire and violence, and of the intersection of the structures of erotic, familial, and social dominance.[11]

But Webster also opposes to Ferdinand's familiar (if exaggerated) phallic fantasies the Duchess's attempt to construct and control her own body, to create a circular, "feminine" space that is free from invasion – the space that is evoked in 1.2 when she declares to Antonio: "All discord, without this circumference, / Is only to be pitied, and not fear'd" (384–5).

"This circumference" refers, of course, to her arms that surround Antonio and the ring that she places on his finger; but it also suggests the circular form of her sexuality and of her pregnancies – and the circle that is formed by the Duchess and her two confidantes, Antonio and Cariola. The bedroom scene (in 3.2) in which these three characters participate represents Webster's (and the Duchess's) most sustained effort at constructing "this circumference"; I would therefore like now to examine it in some detail.

Here, the three characters engage in a playful, erotic "chaf[ing]" (3.2.56), aimed not at the phallic orgasm/death that is constitutive of conventional tragedy, but at the feminine sexual excitement that was associated with – and frequently thought necessary to ensure – pregnancy.[12] Husbands of the time were repeatedly counseled to provide sufficient heat for their colder wives through teasing and talk, to intermix "wanton kisses with wanton words," because women are not "all that quick in getting to that point."[13] It is precisely this sort of teasing – a form of "sportive action" rather than "action indeed" that we now term foreplay – that the three characters are practicing, for the purpose of "serving" the Duchess:[14] Antonio declares, in a speech rife with double entendre, "I have divers times / Serv'd her the like, when she hath chaf'd extremely. / I love to see her angry" (55–7). It is, of course, important that there *are* three characters here, rather than the traditionally unified pair (Antonio fears several times that Cariola will betray their union, but the Duchess admonishes him, "This woman's of my counsel," 1.2.390). And, throughout this scene, the sexual innuendo circulates freely among them; this is particularly noticeable when Cariola complains of the Duchess's sleeping habits – "She'll much disquiet you . . . / For she's the sprawling'st bedfellow" (12–13) – and when she and Antonio "play" with the judgment of Paris (33–43).

It is not, however, until Antonio and Cariola slip out and "let [the Duchess] talk to herself" (55) that the scene's climax occurs; looking at her reflection in the mirror, she muses:

> Doth not the colour of my hair 'gin to change?
> When I wax grey, I shall have all the court
> Powder their hair with arras, to be like me:
> You have cause to love me, I ent'red you into my heart
> [*enter* FERDINAND, *unseen*][15]
> Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys.
> We shall one day have my brothers take you napping.

> Methinks his presence, being now in court,
> Should make you keep your own bed; but you'll say
> Love mix'd with fear is sweetest. I'll assure you
> You shall get no more children till my brothers
> Consent to be your gossips. Have you lost your tongue? (3.2.58–68)

At the center of this speech is the Duchess's assertion, "I ent'red you into my heart / before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys." The emphasis on female agency that is evident here and throughout the play has led Catherine Belsey to characterize *The Duchess of Malfi* as "a perfect fable of emergent liberalism," which "valorizes woman's equality."[16] I would suggest, however, that Webster's constructions are more radical than Belsey allows: the play is not simply asking that women be treated as equals; it is implicitly posing Irigaray's question – "equal to whom?"[17] The Duchess is, of course, implying here that her integrity as subject consists not in remaining impenetrable but in choosing who may "enter" her; and such a claim necessarily revises the notions of "integrity" (which both etymologically and logically depends precisely upon remaining single, intact, and whole) and "subjectivity" themselves.[18] It is important that her assertion contains the ghost sentence, "I entered you," which reverses the conventional positions of male and female, placing woman on top, as active subject: while inverting the normal power relations of patriarchy, this sentence still operates according to their logic (and, indeed, it is the power that the Duchess derives from conventional social hierarchies that enables her actions). As she continues, however, the Duchess significantly complicates this formulation: she effectively positions herself (and Antonio) both as subject and as object, both as penetrator and as penetrated. And in so doing, she unsettles the logic upon which conventional (male) subjectivity depends – which, as Ferdinand's entry at precisely this moment suggests, is the logic of uninvited penetration, the logic of rape. This sequence simultaneously crystallizes and calls into question the cultural equations that are apparent in Vindice's assertion in *The Revenger's Tragedy*: "That woman is all male whom none can enter" (2.1.111);[19] but unlike *The Revenger's Tragedy* – and many other self-consciously subversive early modern texts – it also attempts, provisionally, to rewrite them.

By removing woman from her position as "universal predicate,"[20] the Duchess revises – instead of merely reversing – the fundamental syntax of gender and power. And a similar revision is evident in her explicit presentation of the dynamics of speech. On the simplest level her claim to voice depends upon Antonio's silence, upon a seizing of the phallic

tongue ("Before you would vouchsafe to call for the keys"). And in fact, earlier in the bedroom scene, she had playfully "stopp[ed] his mouth" with kisses (as Brachiano had been counseled – less playfully – to silence Vittoria in *The White Devil* 4.2.188–9).[21] But again, the Duchess's presentation of the discourse of power complicates it. Her description of Antonio as silent simultaneously endows him with will and voice – both of which he exercises plentifully in this scene (giving as good as he gets); and her formulations during the proposal that she is recalling here function similarly: although Antonio complains, "These words should be mine," she asserts, "You speak in me in this," again invoking – and unsettling – the logistics of penetration (1.2.387, 410).

The above analysis suggests that by privileging female desire (even a comparatively "orthodox" form of that desire), one necessarily changes the terms in which desire is understood. Indeed, as Ferdinand's tragic fantasies (which present themselves as reality) are isomorphic with the form of the male body and the rhythms of male sexuality,[22] so the Duchess's self-presentation here seems to accord with – and perhaps to be constructed out of – contemporary understandings of female sexual pleasure. While opinion is by no means univocal on this subject, one of the most frequently repeated distinctions between male and female orgasm is that man's pleasure is "single," "undivided," and therefore more intense, whereas a woman's pleasure is "double" or "multiple": she takes pleasure both in emitting her own seed and receiving that of her partner; her pleasure occurs at multiple sites, consists of a succession of events, and takes place over a longer period of time.[23] Usually, of course, this distinction is made for the purpose of asserting the superiority of the male: thus, Gerard of Brolio declares, "The single mode of delectation which exists in the man is greater than the double which exists in the women."[24] But at least one woman writer made a more ambivalently balenced distinction that seems relevant here: Hildegard of Bingen declared that "a man's *delectatio* is like a fire which alternately flares up and dies down; a woman's is like the sun, gentle and productive of fruit."[25] And a similar understanding seems to underlie many of the Duchess's constructions in the rest of her speech.

The lines surrounding the Duchess's self-assertion spin out the implications of her central statement. She begins by pointing to her aging body and imagining herself growing old: "When I wax grey, I shall have all the court / Powder their hair with arras, to be like me." One should note, first of all, that this image presupposes an arena in which it is *possible* to grow old; it depends upon a different sense of time (and of

sexuality) than Ferdinand's. The Duchess's playful image is clearly indebted to more conventional constructions. It both recalls and revises the disgust for old women that Bosola voices in the play – a disgust that brings together the traditional associations of woman both with the body (and therefore ultimately with the grotesque body) and with the deceptively artificial; in an earlier scene, for example, his excoriations of the Old Lady's "painting" (her "scurvy face physic") and of her "closet" (2.1.23–48)[26] had seemed to lead naturally to a meditation on the corrupt "outward form of man" (48–9), ending with a *contemptus mundi*:

> And though continually we bear about us
> A rotten and dead body, we delight
> To hide it in rich tissue: all our fear,
> Nay all our terror, is lest our physician
> Should put us in ground, to be made sweet. (2.1.66–70)[27]

The Duchess's comic solution to the problem of her aging further recalls Ferdinand's attempt to have those he controls reflect (and complete) him – an attempt that already verges on the absurd in its original form:

> Methinks you that are courtiers should be my touchwood, take fire when I give fire: that is, laugh when I laugh, were the subject never so witty. (1.2.43–6)

In her own witty vision, the Duchess is, of course, playing with conventional notions of power (and of women) by putting her power to explicitly frivolous ends; but in so doing, she paradoxically confirms the validity of the image she creates. For as she sits, in classically "feminine" fashion, before her looking-glass, she is, in effect, stepping through that looking-glass to remake the world in her own image (by troping on the patriarchal constructions out of which that image is made), all the while self-consciously acknowledging (and this is part of her project) that she is engaging in "sportive action," rather than "action indeed."

This process is even more evident in the lines that end her speech. Here, the Duchess continues to envision her situation as remediable and comic. She begins by transforming her brothers' threat into the material of erotic teasing ("Methinks his presence, being now in court, / Should make you keep your own bed: but you'll say / Love mixed with fear is sweetest") – teasing that inevitably gestures toward the fear and violence of the phallic construction that it simultaneously depends upon and mocks ("You are my sister, / This was my father's poniard . . . / I'll'd be loath to see't look rusty, 'cause 'twas his"). She goes on to reimagine Antonio's sexuality specifically in terms of pregnancy, and, even more extraordinarily, to reimagine her brothers (in a playfully conceived

contrary-to-fact condition)[28] as his "gossips." Although this word is usually glossed simply as "godparents" (which was, indeed, its original meaning), it has resonances in this context that are difficult to ignore. As Adrian Wilson and others have noted, by the seventeenth century, the term "had acquired a wider meaning that referred specifically to women": a woman's gossips were her close female friends, and, especially, those friends who were invited to a pregnant woman's lying-in.[29] In his fascinating discussion, Wilson shows how the ceremony of childbirth, of which the gossips were an essential part, was associated with the creation of a collective female space, from which men were excluded; during the lying-in, conventional roles were reversed, female agency was privileged, and women were placed "on top."[30]

One sees this reversal occurring during the Duchess's first pregnancy, when (for reasons other than the usual) all the officers are locked in their rooms, and she is given their keys, reversing the traditional enclosure of the woman which Ferdinand eventually literalizes in this play. Wilson also points out that "the immersion of the mother in a female collectivity elegantly inverted the central feature of patriarchy, namely its basis in individual male property."[31] Finally, of course, one must note that "gossip" is associated with speech and with a particular kind of speech, both feared and disdained by men: a chattering, frivolous, "sportive" speech, rather than "speech indeed."[32] In early modern contexts, even more clearly than now, "to gossip" seems to imply "to speak as a woman"; loosely flowing like women's bodies, similarly lacking in control and closure, "gossiping" was the activity of all-female gatherings and was often connected with explicit hostility to males.[33] Most of the suggestions that I have been outlining here are brought together in the satirical defense of childbirth customs in a 1683 pamphlet, *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony*. This pamphlet, which was purportedly authored by a woman and which ends with a manifesto for government by women, was written in response to an earlier, explicitly misogynist piece that detailed the woes of marriage (*The XV Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage*); the author replies to the earlier writer's complaints about the gathering of a woman's friends during her pregnancy:

> Then for Gossips to meet, nay to meet at a lying in, and not to talk, you may as well dam up the arches of *London*-Bridge, as stop their mouths at such a time. 'Tis a time of freedom, when women, like Parliament-men, have a priviledge to talk Petty Treason.[34]

In the pamphlet, the lying-in is seen as a form of carnival, a "time of [allowed] freedom": the topsy-turvy misrule of the gossips is but licensed

sport, which is ultimately not threatening to the dominant order. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, however, the sportiveness of the Duchess's circle is inseparable from its subversiveness. When Ferdinand enters (with a visual pun on "enter"), holding up his phallic poniard to relocate the scene's climax, reassert the terms of patriarchy, and remind the Duchess whose image she "properly" is, he seems at first not only terrifying, but also ridiculous – as if he had wandered in from another, more melodramatic play. We have briefly glimpsed another possibility, which, if it cannot permanently displace the governing structures of social power and tragic form, does effectively question their positioning as "inevitable" and "true" – and perhaps further suggests that the notions of "inevitability" and "truth" are themselves contingent constructions.

The Duchess's counterfactual transformation of her brothers into gossips may be taken as emblematic of the scene as a whole. The mode of the scene is, after all, gossip as well as foreplay – or, more accurately, these are constructed as forms of the same thing. Throughout the scene, the Duchess and her companions take the language of patriarchy (the only language they have) and use it to create a playful, woman-centered chatter – a kind of Renaissance *parler-femme*. Thus, they play repeatedly with the language of class and power (e.g., Antonio's references to "labouring-men," and "service"), the terms of heroism (the inverted judgment of Paris), and, of course, the language of penetration and entry:[35] Ferdinand's efforts to "gain access to private lodgings" (1.2.202; cf. 4.2.2–4) are specifically reimagined in the opening lines of the scene, when the Duchess declares, "You'll get no lodging here to-night, my lord," and "I hope in time 'twill grow a custom / That noblemen shall come with cap and knee, / To purchase a night's lodging of their wives" (3.2.2, 4–6). The Duchess and her circle self-consciously acknowledge the inversions that are occurring ("You are a lord of mis-rule," 8), and their double-edged self-consciousness about the roles they play guarantees that they are not merely inversions. Indeed, the whole scene seems, from one perspective, to be a rethinking of the traditional feminine images with which it began – the "casket" and the "glass" (1) – out of which the Duchess "sportively" constructs her female space.[36] When Ferdinand enters that space, uninvited and "unseen," he forcibly reappropriates her body/room/stage and defines it as his container – the empty, passive receptacle that is the ground of his existence – and he revisualizes the reflection in the mirror as his own. At this point, understandably, the Duchess's speech undergoes a radical change. She attempts to defend against invasion by presenting herself as impenetrable, "personating

masculine virtue to the point"; she once more adopts a public, aristocratic persona and asserts her power in conventional heroic terms: "For know, whether I am doom'd to live, or die, / I can do both as a prince" (70–1).[37]

The transformations that the Duchess both constructs and undergoes in the bedroom scene are characteristic of the play. Several critics have pointed to her heroic resolution in earlier scenes. In 1.2, for example, she declares after her threatening brothers have left the stage:

> Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred
> Lay in my way unto this marriage:
> I'll'd make them my low foot-steps. And even now,
> Even in this hate, (as men in some great battles
> By apprehending danger, have achiev'd
> Almost impossible actions: I have heard soldiers say so),
> So I, through frights and threat'nings, will assay
> This dangerous venture. Let old wives report
> I wink'd, and chose a husband. (1.2.260–8)

Frank Whigham comments on this passage: "The apostrophe, the amplification of the hostile odds, the abjection of the enemy, the martial comparison, the imperative call for historical (if female) witness – all are heroic topoi, Tamburlaine's trumpet vigorously displacing the impoverished trope of the 'lustful widow.'"[38] While Whigham's description of the first part of the passage seems quite accurate, he glosses over the shift that occurs towards the end. The "female witness" that he notes only parenthetically is crucial here: the heroic materials of the soldiers' speech (the only means through which the Duchess has access to battle) are being transformed, not into chronicles of Amazonian feats, but into old wives' tales – which are precisely *not* the "historical" truths that Whigham invokes. The Duchess's phrase has resonances similar to those of "gossip": old wives are despised because of class, gender, age, and lack of education (all of which are conflated here), and their frivolous, fabulous tales are conventionally opposed to the knowledge of learned men[39] – in fact, the implication is that their speech is fabulous precisely *because* it is female. The Duchess's transformation of speech here further parallels the transformation within her speech; although Whigham does not note it, the effect of juxtaposing the heroic lines that build to a climax in the description of "this dangerous venture" with the blunt statement that follows ("Let old wives report / I wink'd, and chose a husband") seems inescapably comic. If, as Mary Beth Rose asserts, the Duchess's marriage project is imbued with the values of more conventional heroism,[40] it is

equally true that her appropriation of heroic values effectively mocks and changes them. The Duchess is, of course, in deadly danger, a fact of which she is clearly aware, but here and elsewhere, she "winks"[41] – and transforms that danger into something else.

Throughout this early scene, she shifts repeatedly from evaluating, in heroic terms, the threat that she faces, to constructing a space – identified with romances, with frivolous old fables, and with fantasies of the feminine – where the heroic stance is no longer necessary and one is protected from invasion.[42] Most obviously, in her proposal to Antonio, she moves from speaking like a "tyrant" who must "fearfully equivocate," to "put[ting] of all vain ceremony" and "only appear[ing]" as "a young widow / That claims [him] for her husband" (1.2.359–69, 372–3); and it is at this point that she reassures him about her brothers:

> Do not think of them:
> All discord without this circumference,
> Is only to be pitied and not fear'd.
> Yet should they know it, time will easily
> Scatter the tempest. (1.2.383–7)

The Duchess's professed confidence in the healing powers of time here seems to go hand in hand with her evocation of contemporary romances. Later in the scene, she similarly appeals to an "old tale" when she describes their marriage bed:[43]

> We'll only lie, and talk together, and plot
> T'appease my humorous kindred; and if you please,
> Like the old tale, in Alexander and Lodowick,
> Lay a naked sword between us, keep us chaste. (1.2.411–14)

Here, she reconfigures not only Ferdinand's central image of violently (and phallicly) enforced chastity,[44] but also his ideal of perfect twinship: according to the New Mermaids editor, "The friends Alexander and Lodowick were so alike that they could change places without anyone noticing."[45] In all of these speeches, the safe "feminine" space that the Duchess constructs is clearly marked as fictional; and it is created and defended only by deploying the materials of the masculine, the tragic, and the "real." Yet from the perspective of that fiction, "all discord without" seems pitiable indeed.

The Duchess's efforts are not, of course, completely successful, and one could argue that they founder (at least in part) on the self-contradictions in which Webster is necessarily involved. Nevertheless, the play does

effectively subvert orthodox constructions and suggest alternative ones, and it points, moreover, to its own inadequacies. If, for example, the Duchess's death ultimately allows her to be transformed into the artifact the men desire, into the "bearer" rather than the "maker of meaning,"[46] it also robs the play of meaning and signals the emptiness of that masculine construction; the fifth act seems but the disembodied, confused echo of the Duchess's death.

As she is about to die, the Duchess assumes all of the conflicting postures I have been outlining, and she gives us, typically, not one but a series of "dying lines." In the most famous of these – "I am the Duchess of Malfi still" (4.2.139) – she once more assumes her impenetrable public persona. This line is frequently quoted (quite appropriately, considering its stance); it is not usually noted, however, that it is uttered as a (characteristic) defense against Bosola's (characteristic) attempts to identify her once again with the despised – and necessarily grotesque – body (which must be cast off to free the soul, 4.2.123–32). In a speech that, significantly, reappropriates and redemonizes the terms of the bedroom scene, Bosola declares:

> Thou art some great woman sure; for riot begins to sit on thy forehead (clad in *grey hairs*) twenty years sooner than on a merry milkmaid's. Thou sleep'st worse than if a mouse should be forced to take up her *lodging* in a cat's ear. A little infant, that breeds his teeth, should it lie with thee, would cry out, as if though wert the more *unquiet bedfellow*. (4.2.133–8; my italics)[47]

And the Duchess responds as she always does to the rape that this appropriation entails. Later, she appears as a mother as well as a prince:

> I pray thee look thou giv'st my little boy,
> Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
> Say her prayers ere she sleep. (4.2.200–3)

While these lines have also been frequently discussed, they are, I believe, usually viewed as more conventional than they in fact are – or, more precisely, not enough attention is given to the disruptive force of their extraordinary ordinariness.[48] For it is surely remarkable for a "tragic heroine" to die neither attempting wholly to "personate masculine virtue," nor wholly focused on her male partner (declaring, in one form or another, "O happy dagger, this is thy sheath," "Husband, I come"), but concerned instead with the mundane comforts of her children; and it necessarily unsettles our notions of "tragedy" and of "heroism" when she does so. Finally, of course (the second time she "dies"), the Duchess does cry out "Antonio" (although he is, significantly, not present to die in an

"instant" with her)[49] and "Mercy" (4.2.344, 347). But perhaps most striking, from the perspective I have been exploring, are the lines she utters after she vows to "put off [her] last woman's fault / . . . [and] not be tedious with you" (4.2.223–4). She, in effect, answers Ferdinand's need (which is presented as the general male need) for "that body of hers" and points simultaneously to her own absence and to the disembodied emptiness at the end of the play by instructing her executioners, "Dispose my breath how please you, but my body / Bestow upon my women, will you" (4.2.227–8).[50]

Many of the problems that *The Duchess of Malfi* confronts and analyzes are, in their most general form, the longstanding legacy of Western culture. The logic of penetration and entry in the play, in particular, resonates not only with contemporary texts like *The Revenger's Tragedy*, but with important cultural documents from Plato to the present. Judith Butler writes, for example, of the foundational spatial dynamics of Plato's *Timaeus*:

> For he is the impenetrable penetrator, and she, the invariably penetrated. And "he" would not be differentiated from her were it not for this prohibition on resemblance which establishes their positions as mutually exclusive and yet complementary. In fact, if she were to penetrate in return or penetrate elsewhere, it is unclear whether she could remain a "she" and whether "he" could preserve his own differentially established identity.[51]

And Lee Edelman discusses in somewhat similar terms the "conceptual paradigm" of "active vs. passive, insertive vs. receptive, . . . man vs. woman"[52] that "is, regrettably, our enduring heritage"; he notes:

> In a phrase that registers the persistence not merely of a sexual but also of an erotic politics in the fantasmatics of subjectivity, [Leo] Bersani, commenting on the Athenian belief in a "legal and moral incompatibility between sexual passivity and civic authority," draws the inevitable conclusion: "To be penetrated is to abdicate power."[53]

I have been suggesting that *The Duchess of Malfi* attempts to unsettle early modern formulations of this paradigm by reconsidering the fundamental syntax of subjectivity itself, by positing a subject that is also an object and that therefore does not depend on the objectification of another. As we have seen, the play does not simply call our attention to the constructedness of gender definitions or try to reverse them: it attempts to open up a space of sexual difference, a space in which "woman" can exist – not as container, a box, a body for man, but for herself. This, as the

masculinist logic of penetration and entry suggests, is centrally a question of territory. It means reclaiming the female body for women (both socially and symbolically). And it means simultaneously interrogating the cultural association of "female" with the body *and* questioning the devaluation of the body (and of "analogous" terms) that this association implies. As Margaret Whitford notes, thinking sexual difference means "seeking to define . . . the topology of the female subject, of *her* reflection, . . . of *her* space-time, of *her* dwelling, of *her* espacement."[54] Of course, these definitions can only be formulated in a masculine language that already excludes them; and Webster's play is acutely aware of this fact: it constructs its notion of the "feminine" out of contemporary ideas of the conventionally masculine *and* (perhaps more surprisingly) out of ideas of the conventionally feminine, which its Duchess plays with and sportively mimes;[55] and it carefully marks the space that emerges from the interplay of the two as "sportive" and "fictional." In so doing, it simultaneously acknowledges its own embeddedness in the constructions of its society *and* (again, more surprisingly) suggests that "truth" and its privileged reflections are themselves constructed. In Butler's felicitous phrase, it "inhabits – indeed, penetrates, occupies, and redeploys – the paternal language itself."[56]

This is, of course, a risky strategy, one that takes the chance of simply reproducing conventional ideas of femininity or of being reassimilated to them;[57] and the play, in fact, shows us this reassimilation occurring (albeit incompletely) after the Duchess's death. To return to my initial discussion of *The White Devil*, it would seem that the risks run in that play – which consistently foregrounds the constructedness of gender but accedes to the structure of a universal (male) subject – are complementary to those taken here, in an effort to construct a space of sexual difference.[58] And it may be that the two plays together describe a kind of Heisenberg uncertainty principle of gender – both providing us with important perspectives that it is difficult (impossible?) to assume fully at the same time.[59]

As much of the above suggests, if the larger problems that Webster confronts are part of "our enduring cultural heritage," the particular forms in which he conceives those problems are often more historically specific. The play's constructions of female sexuality and pregnancy are clear examples of this – and it is perhaps worth re-emphasizing that (however disturbing Webster's conflation of the two may be) the association of pregnancy here with sexual pleasure and bodily excess on the one hand and with female sociality on the other make it potentially

threatening to a patriarchal order in ways that have been lost or muted in its current desexualized and medicalized form.[60]

A different sort of example – which I would like to mention briefly before I exit this chapter – is afforded by the play's presentation of the idea of "entry" itself. "To enter" quite obviously has here, and in other plays of the period, a specifically theatrical dimension that is absent from both classical and twentieth-century invocations of the term – a dimension that is forced upon us when Ferdinand intrudes upon his sister and the stage. This dimension (like so much else here) is two-edged: it once again alerts us to the artificiality of gender positions; but it also presses upon us the gender-inflected nature of theatrical space, positioning, and modes of acting. It points, perhaps, to the necessity of reconsidering (and interrogating) in gendered terms such useful concepts as *platea* and *locus*, *mimesis* and "sporte."[61] And, as I have suggested, it asks us to think further about the gendering of theatrical genres, not simply from the perspective of their major characters, but with an eye to dramatic form, space, and time. Early modern theories of genre such as Sidney's in the *Apology for Poetry* make us acutely aware how notions of decorum, naturalness, truth, and value are traditionally identified with what one might term a masculine morphology. The next play that I consider, *The Changeling*, will provide us with a particularly strong example of the persuasive power of those identifications. By making explicit the assumptions behind them, and by examining contemporary attempts to construct alternative perspectives, we can better understand – and perhaps reshape – the spaces we still inhabit.

CHAPTER 7

"I(t) could not choose but follow": erotic logic in The Changeling

One of most disturbing allusions in all Renaissance drama occurs at the end of Act 3 of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling*. In an earlier scene, the soon-to-be-married Beatrice Joanna had persuaded her hideously ugly servant and admirer, De Flores, to kill her betrothed so that she might wed Alsemero, her new beloved (2.2.57–155). Now, in an exchange that parallels this earlier "seduction" (inverting its power relations), De Flores makes evident his intention to claim his reward through rape.[1] Beatrice kneels and sues for deliverance, but he refuses, raises her, and as she shivers in mute fear, declares:

> 'Las how the turtle pants! Thou'lt love anon
> What thou so fear'st and faint'st to venture on. (3.4.169–70)

His words are clearly meant to recall the epithalamium from Ben Jonson's masque *Hymenaei*. In the first stanza of that poem, Jonson begins to focus on the wedding night, and asks that "no object stay . . . / The turtles from their blisses." Three lines later he begins the second stanza by counseling the bride, "Shrink not, soft virgin, you will love / Anon what you so fear to prove" (403–5, 408–9).[2]

The allusion is significant on a number of levels. *Hymenaei* was written, of course, to celebrate Frances Howard's 1606 marriage to the Earl of Essex – an occasion that proved to be extremely embarrassing for its author. As several critics have observed, Jonson's wedding poem focuses to an unusual degree on marital defloration, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the participants were considered too young to consummate their marriage (Howard was thirteen, Essex only fifteen), and, much to Jonson's irritation, most of his poem was discreetly cut in performance.[3] The events that followed are notorious. Seven years later, Howard sought an annulment, maintaining that the marriage was never consummated, and while this assertion and Howard's claim to be a virgin

were generally disbelieved (it was rumored that she used a substitute when forced to take a virginity test), the annulment was granted; Howard subsequently married Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, who was thought to have been her lover, and the couple were eventually accused (probably correctly) of the murder of Thomas Overbury.[4] Howard was viewed as the archetypal whorish, evil woman, and she functioned as a model for Beatrice Joanna in Middleton and Rowley's play.[5] In the popular imagination, then, young Frances Howard did, to an extraordinary degree, learn to love what she feared to venture on, and Middleton's allusion clearly operates both as a reminder of the local connection and as an irony at Jonson's expense. Middleton did, in fact, repeatedly lampoon *Hymenaei*,[6] and since he himself (as well as Jonson) wrote a masque for Howard's second wedding, he had reason to wish to distance himself from the whole affair. Yet, I would suggest, there is considerably more at stake here than "embarrassing Ben,"[7] and while *The Changeling* clearly asks for politicized local readings, the connection with Howard also serves – as the figure of Howard herself did – to localize contemporary fears and fantasies about women, sexuality, and marriage. For by repeating Jonson's invocation to marital consummation at the end of a rape scene, Middleton does something similar to what the line itself does – insist, that is, on the coincidence of fear and desire, of virgin and whore, of marriage and rape. And while Middleton makes the connection between these apparent opposites explicit, he seems to be merely spelling out paradoxes and problems that are already present in Jonson's poem and in the epithalamic tradition in general.

In this chapter, I will explore how *The Changeling* anatomizes, criticizes, and participates in the assumptions implicit in that tradition. Here and in his other late plays, Middleton succeeds, through a complex network of allusions, in foregrounding the frightening (if paradoxical) male fantasies at the heart of the tradition. At the same time, the play's powerful manipulation of dramatic structure enables it, in contrast to lyric and other nondramatic versions of those fantasies, to paper over the contradictions it uncovers, presenting its culture's nightmares in their most compelling form; it thus allow us to see with particular clarity the gendered force of the "merely formal." If *The Duchess of Malfi* manages, however tentatively, to imagine a space on the stage for feminine subjectivity and sexuality, *The Changeling* simultaneously gestures toward and denies the existence of that space, deriving a suffocating, erotic power from its own paradoxical movement.

In *Hymenaei* itself, Jonson characterizes the marriage he celebrates as a rape, and he cites classical authority for doing so. The third stanza of his epithalamium begins:

> Help, youth and virgins, help to sing
> The prize which Hymen here doth bring,
> And did so lately rap
> From forth the mother's lap
> To place her by that side
> Where she must long abide. (416–21)

And Jonson explains: "The bride was always feigned to be ravished *from her mother's bosom*, or if she were wanting, *from the nearest relation*, because that had succeeded well to Romulous, who by force gat wives for him and his from the Sabines."[8] (Of course, since Howard was only thirteen, little "feigning" was necessary in this case.)

If Jonson's marriage presents itself as a rape, Middleton's rape is repeatedly conflated with marriage. As Michael Neill and others have noted, De Flores uses marital imagery throughout this scene.[9] Moreover, after concluding with the reminiscence of *Hymenaei*, the scene is in fact followed by a dumbshow of Beatrice Joanna's marriage, after which she declares:

> This fellow has undone me endlessly:
> Never was bride so fearfully distressed. (4.1.1–2)

The extraordinarily resonant first line both recalls and revises the numerous references to "perfection" in the play – references that, like the strikingly similar ones that pervade Jonson's masque,[10] are used in a self-consciously contradictory manner to suggest both marital union and the unbroken circle of "perfect" virginity: to be "undone" is literally to be unperfected, deprived of closure, made forever "endless." At the same time, "endlessly" suggests the eternity of marriage, the "world-without-end bargain."[11] The second line is deeply ambiguous: it seems to imply simultaneously that Beatrice Joanna's frightening situation contrasts with that of a more conventional bride *and* that it is merely an intensification of the fears experienced by any bride.

The play as a whole, of course, repeatedly suggests the necessary coincidence of fear and desire, of "loving and loathing," and it repeatedly associates this paradox with the losing of virginity – the "unexpected passage o'er" that "makes a frightful pleasure" (3.3.261–2).[12] Indeed, the paradox is first formulated when Beatrice Joanna's expressed loathing for

De Flores leads to Alsemero's exposition of the "frailty in our nature," the "imperfection" we all share (1.1.115, 117); his chosen example unmistakably evokes sexual desire in general and the loss of virginity in particular:[13]

ALSEMERO: There's scarce a thing but is both loved and loathed.
Myself, I must confess, have the same frailty.
BEATRICE: And what may be your poison, sir? I am bold with you.
ALSEMERO: What might be your desire perhaps: a cherry. (1.1.124–7)

And this association is confirmed in the parallel discussion between the servants Diaphanta and Jasperino, which contains similarly suggestive punning on "poppy" (1.1.145–50) – although Diaphanta's lack of fear and loathing, here and later in the play, both underscores her lower status and renders her an unsuitable erotic object for the audience.[14]

These references seem to circle around and find their center in the rape scene, in De Flores's climactic lines, and especially in the image of the "panting turtle" that Middleton developed from *Hymenaei*. This image, which in context clearly expresses Beatrice Joanna's fear, also suggests the desire that De Flores assures her she will experience "anon" – and it does so effectively enough that at least one critic has taken it *simply* as an expression of lust. In the New Mermaids edition, Joost Daalder declares:

> This is not an emotion produced by bullying, leave alone something like rape, as is so often claimed. I do not mean of course that there is no bullying – only that it cannot by itself explain Beatrice's positive sexual response.[15]

Without endorsing what seems to me an astounding comment, I would suggest that Daalder is pointing here to something that is missed by critics who view Beatrice Joanna's desire for De Flores as developing after the fact. While this structure clearly exists and is necessary to the play's persuasiveness, Beatrice's loathing is also itself viewed as the guarantor of her desire – as ultimately contemporaneous with and indistinguishable from that desire. It is not so much, as Daalder claims, that the individual character is presented as experiencing unconscious sexual longings, as that the fears of sexuality (both real and pretended) that are necessary to the construction of her as a perfect virgin, the perfectly desirable erotic object (note that De Flores declares that he would not wish to ravish her if her "virginity" were not "perfect" in her [3.4.117]), that these very fears and faintings are themselves taken as the other side of unbridled desire. In her insightful essay on *The Changeling* and the politics of rape, Deborah Burks notes that in a culture in which women are blamed for arousing male desire "even the purest woman" is

viewed as possibly complicit in her own ravishment.[16] I would suggest that Middleton's cultural analysis goes further than this: in a society in which virginity is eroticized, in which desire is intertwined with and regularly issues in disgust, the purest woman – the most desirable woman – is especially suspect.

The image that Middleton developed from *Hymenaei* clearly fascinated him; he returns to it repeatedly, and its appearance in his other late plays may serve as a useful gloss on the nexus of ideas it suggested. In *Women Beware Women*, for example, as the Duke is about to rape Bianca, the young and innocent bride of another man, he instructs her:

> Prithee, tremble not,
> I feel thy breast shake like a turtle panting
> Under a loving hand that makes much on't.
> Why art thou so fearful? (2.2.320–3)[17]

Significantly, after this scene, to the consternation of many critics, the seemingly blameless Bianca comes – with little explanation or transition – to relish being the duke's whore.[18] And the blurring of fear and desire here, like that in *The Changeling*, frequently caused earlier readers to argue that what now seems a rape was merely a "seduction." Middleton's other use of the image – in *A Game at Chess* – is even more telling. Here, the White Queen's Pawn, who is determined to remain a virgin, is told she will see her future husband in a glass; as she is about to do so, she exclaims:

> A sudden fear *invades* me, a faint trembling
> Under this omen,
> As is oft felt the panting of a turtle
> Under a stroking hand.

And her deceiver, the Black Queen's Pawn, replies:

> That bodes good luck still,
> Sign you *change* state speedily, for that trembling
> Is always the first symptom of a bride. (3.3.4–9; my italics)[19]

Of course, the man whom the unfortunate virgin sees, and with whom she predictably falls in love, is the man who has previously tried to rape her – and who in fact attempts to do so again: she is saved only when the lustful Black Queen's Pawn substitutes herself in a bed-trick.

These passages insistently suggest that the "perfect" virgin is the twin, the double, or – in the language of *The Changeling* – the "fellow" of the

"undone" whore; and, as an inevitable corollary, they suggest that the ideal marriage is a brutal rape. As the Black Queen's Pawn remarks, fears, tremblings, loathing, and delays were in fact traditional "symptoms of a bride," her necessary accessory. They appear regularly in epithalamia, functioning both as a kind of virginity test – proof of the bride's iconic status – and as the displaced expression of societal fears and anxieties; and they are frequently evoked in conjunction with (or seen as identical to) the bride's (virginal) desire.[20] One of the most striking examples appears in the description of folk epithalamia in George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*. Puttenham notes that music and distractions were used on the wedding night to cover what he refers to (in terms quite similar to those in *The Changeling*) as "the noise of the laughing lamenting spouse."[21] And he goes on to describe the morning after in language that, once again, resonates with Middleton's play:

> In the morning when it was faire broad day, and that by liklyhood all tournes were sufficiently served, the last actes of the enterlude being ended, and that the bride must within few hours arise and apparrell her selfe, no more as a virgine, but as a wife, and about dinner time must by order come forth *Sicut sponsa de thalamo*, very demurely to be sene and acknowledged of her parents and kinsfolkes whether she were the same woman or a *changeling*, or dead or alive, or maimed by any accident nocturnall.[22]

Dale Randall, who has noted this last similarity, remarks that a hitherto unacknowledged meaning of the term "changeling" seems to be "a woman who has had sexual intercourse."[23] But although this meaning is clearly present, it is arrived at in a very circuitous fashion: the passage seems, first of all, to suggest the possibility of some sort of bed-trick or substitution (like those that occur in *The Changeling* and *A Game at Chess*), and, secondarily, to imply that sexual experience (precisely because it is associated with a movement away from closure and stasis) creates an extreme alteration in the bride, potentially destroying her or "substituting" for her ideal virginal self a radically discontinuous personality (which, nevertheless, inhabits a body that appears identical). It seems significant, in this context, that after Bianca is raped and changes abruptly in *Women Beware Women*, the aged Mother declares:

> She's no more like the gentlewoman at first
> Than I am like her that nev'r lay with man yet. (3.1.66–7)

And in *The Changeling*, Beatrice Joanna is not only replaced by Diaphanta in bed; she is also, in a suggestive but little noted passage, seen

herself as a replacement, substituting for her perfect dead "fellow" or twin – in short, as a changeling. Alsemero declares of her, "The fellow of this creature were partner / For a king's love"; and her father replies:

> I had her fellow once, sir,
> But heaven has married her to joys eternal.
> 'Twere sin to wish her in this vale again. (3.4.3–5)[24]

Beatrice's "fellow" is imaged here as perfect precisely because she is dead, static, "married" only to "joys eternal"; within the world of the play, her "fellow" or "twin" is De Flores (4.1.1; 5.3.142).

The rumor that Frances Howard used a substitute when she submitted, veiled, to an examination of her virginity quite clearly played a part in the bed-trick that occurs in *The Changeling*. But equally clearly, this particular allusion does not exhaust the full force of Middleton's creation. Rather, both the bed-trick and the rumor about Howard itself seem to be referencing a greater storehouse of cultural anxieties.[25] The fears and fantasies that Middleton is evoking here are worked out quite explicitly in John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606).[26] Although Marston's heroine is presented as ideally virtuous, the problems in the play appear to be precipitated by her desire: she actively chooses one suitor (Massinissa) over another (Syphax), refuses to express the traditional fears of consummation, and, during the marriage ceremony, casts aside "modest silence" to declare, "In open flame then passion break" (1.2.43–9). The war that then disrupts the ceremony plainly functions as a displacement of the consummation it prevents.[27] As the chorus shouts "*Io to Hymen*" and Sophonisba's husband prepares for bed, a messenger appears to announce the attack, and he is depicted both as about to penetrate and as frighteningly penetrated: "*Enter* CARTHALON*, his sword drawn, his body wounded, his shield struck full of darts;* MASSINISSA *being ready for bed*" (1.2.61 *s.d.*). The two nightmare visions of consummation that are suggested here are played out in succeeding scenes. Syphax first tries to rape Sophonisba (and is foiled only when she substitutes a drugged male slave in a bed-trick); the witch Erictho then effectively rapes Syphax: having promised to bring the virgin to his bed, she appears "*in the shape of* SOPHONISBA*, her face veiled*" (4.1.213 *s.d.*), sleeps with him, and reveals herself to her horrified bed-partner in the morning. We are presented, on the one hand, with the prospect of the forcible penetration of the frightened virgin-bride, and on the other, with the even more terrifying penetration of the male by a deceptive, sexually voracious hag: Erictho is a particularly fascinating embodiment of the

changeling. While enacting the fears associated with marriage, these mirroring violations simultaneously permit the married pair to remain pure and intact: Sophonisba is finally preserved the only way she can be – by being killed; she dies "with breast unstained, / Faith pure, a virgin wife / . . . most happy in [her] husband's arms" (5.4.102–3, 106).

The fears that are called up by all these texts are, as Heather Dubrow notes, repeatedly countered in epithalamia by visions of a return to Eden and by the perfection and closure that return implies.[28] This is, in fact, the image with which *The Changeling* begins – Alsemero's vision of a static, circular, lyric "perfection" where all beginnings touch their ends, a state of visual ideality and identity from which, it is hoped, nothing "follows":

> 'Twas in the temple where I first beheld her,
> And now again the same. What omen yet
> Follows of that? None but imaginary:
> Why should my hopes of fate be timorous?
> The place is holy, so is my intent:
> I love her beauties to the holy purpose,
> And that, methinks, admits comparison
> With man's first creation, the place blest,
> And is his right home back, if he achieve it.
> The church hath first begun our interview,
> And that's the place must join us into one;
> So there's beginning and perfection too. (1.1.1–12)[29]

From one perspective, *The Changeling* enacts a Fall from this state into linearity, into movement, change, and dramatic sequence that "could not choose but follow" (5.1.84; 5.3.108): the phrase echoes throughout, evoking both erotic compulsion and the logical "inevitability" of Beatrice's progression from murderess to whore.[30] And as that inevitable progression is played out, the perfect circle of the beginning metamorphoses into a vaginal "hell" that "circumscribes us all" (5.3.163–4). This final image is explicitly connected with inescapable sequence in Beatrice's description of the effects of the virginity test:[31]

> Just in all things, and in order
> As if 'twere circumscribed; one accident
> Gives way unto another. (4.2.109–11).

It also, of course, recalls one of Marlowe's best-known evocations of limitlessness: "Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed / In one self place" (*Faustus* 5.121–2).[32] If Marlowe, as I have suggested earlier, explores the

possibilities and problems of (sexual and textual) non sequitur, this play self-consciously answers Marlowe's famous line by chillingly declaring, "sequitur," and relentlessly working out the implications of "what follows."

The full force of dramatic sequence in *The Changeling* can be best appreciated by comparing the play to those rare nondramatic poems that actually complete its narrative arc. One of the most strikingly similar lyric performances occurs in Fulke Greville's sonnet, "*Caelica*, I overnight was finely used":

> *Caelica*, I overnight was finely used,
> Lodg'd in the midst of paradise, your Heart:
> Kind thoughts had charge I might not be refused,
> Of every fruit and flower I had part.
> But curious Knowledge, blowne with busie flame,
> The sweetest fruits had downe in shadowes hidden,
> And for it found mine eyes had seene the same,
> I from my paradise was straight forbidden,
> Where that Curre, Rumor, runnes in every place,
> Barking with Care, begotten out of feare;
> And glassy Honour, tender of Disgrace,
> Stands *Ceraphin* to see I come not there;
> While that fine soyle, which all those joyes did yeeld,
> By broken fence is prov'd a common field. (*Caelica* 37)[33]

Here again, we have a story of female betrayal cast as the primal narrative; and here again, as the text moves from desire to disgust, the object of desire metamorphoses from a paradisaic enclosure to a "common field" whose defenses have been "broken" (cf. Beatrice as the "broken rib of mankind," 5.3.145). But unlike *The Changeling*, the lyric does not situate its story securely in the external world. While the opening, with its outward-reaching address, positions the poem ambiguously between reality and fantasy, the following lines push it clearly in the direction of a dream. Not only is it in the tradition of lyric dream poems,[34] but after the first two lines the addressee disappears, and we are left only with "I" and a series of unlocated "thoughts." The poem's insistent interiority reaches a height in the second quatrain. At first glance, these lines appear to describe a forbidden attempt "to eie those [female] parts, which no eie should behold,"[35] followed by an expulsion from Edenic unity. But it is difficult to avoid noticing that we are presented with an allegory of the Fall in which all the parts belong to "curious Knowledge": it is the forbidder as well as the forbidden, the secreter of the fruit as well as the fruit itself, the transgressor and the avenger of transgression (the

traditional conflation of the carnal and conceptual senses of "knowledge" is, of course, important here).[36] It is still possible to arrive at an externalized reading of these lines (in which "curious Knowledge" suggests both "rumor" and "fear of rumor"), but it requires some strain to do so, and the self-reflection here seems overpowering. It is itself reflected, in a dizzying fashion, in the line, "And for it found mine eyes had seene the same," which inescapably calls up an image of eyes mirroring themselves – and if we pause for a moment to remark that the most logical referent of "the same" is "the fruits" (although "Knowledge" is also a distant possibility), we must further note that none of these corrections really matters, since all of these things are so clearly "the same." We are faced with the self-expelling nature of curious knowledge, with the self-disgust aroused by desire, with what Greville himself, in another dream poem (*Caelica* 100: "In Night when colours all to blacke are cast"),[37] called "selfe-offence" (7). Like the visions described in that poem, those in "*Caelica*, I overnight was finely used" are

> . . . images of self-confusednesse,
> Which hurt imaginations onely see,
> And from this nothing seene, tels newes of devils,
> Which but expressions be of inward evils. (*Caelica* 100.11–14)

But if the "devils" there are explicitly self-generated, here they are given a local habitation and a name – and that name is "Caelica." Lack, "hurt," the fundamental emptiness of "nothing seene" is assigned to a woman, and the castrating fear aroused by that vision is partially contained by assigning her blame as well. As his own desire expels the speaker from his "paradise," the poem concludes with an externalizing movement: we are confronted first with allegorized (and thus distanced and depersonalized) emotions, and finally with an attribution of guilt: "While that fine soyle, which all those joyes did yeeld, / By broken fence is prov'd a common field." Proved. QED. Since the only "breaking" here (even if one were to accept all of the poem's assertions at face value) was occasioned by the speaker, there seems, at first glance, to be something missing. One can, of course, fill in the gaps (and other sonnets in the sequence do, to a certain extent), but the point is that one must do so – and those gaps call attention to themselves. As it stands, the poem seems to describe the progression, "I desire you, therefore you're a whore" or even (more radically but more accurately) "I desire, therefore you're a whore."And while from one perspective this is utterly ludicrous, it is also utterly predictable.

This progression is analyzed and criticized in one of the best-known dream sequences in early modern literature: the wet-dream in Book 1, canto 1 of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's nondramatic allegory fills in some of the elisions in the movement traced by Greville's sonnet; as a result it forms a useful bridge between the lyric and the dramatic structure of *The Changeling*. The dream that Redcrosse experiences, which presents itself as an unmanning ("that nigh his manly hart did melt away," 1.1.47), moves from desire (aroused by the thought of Una's beauty and chastity) to disgust (aroused by her association with lust), and then back to desire – imaged, significantly, in the form of a series of circles linked both to virginity and to the marriage ceremony.[38] He awakens in a state of intermixed fear and passion, unsure whether he should "mistrust" an internal or an external enemy ("some secret ill, or hidden foe of his"), and he is confronted by a simulacrum of Una, which Archimago has substituted for his virgin beloved:

> In this greate passion of vnwonted lust,
> Or wonted feare of doing ought amis,
> He started vp, as seeming to mistrust,
> Some secret ill, or hidden foe of his:
> Lo there before his face his Lady is,
> Vnder blake stole hyding her bayted hooke,
> And as halfe blushing offred him to kis,
> With gentle blandishment and louely looke,
> Most like that virgin true, which for her knight him took. (1.1.49)

Like much of *The Faerie Queene*, the lines in the second half of this stanza clearly function on two levels: they are simultaneously a literal description of the fiction and an analysis of the workings of the hero's mind.[39] From the second perspective (made insistent by the immediacy of line 5), they very clearly enact a gradual process of externalization and displacement. Redcrosse believes that he sees his Lady before him – but he also believes that she conceals a deadly temptation ("Vnder blake stole hyding her bayted hooke"). And bit by bit that temptation seems to materialize – although the following descriptions are in fact carefully poised between active and passive ("offred"), reality and appearance. The final line centers, predictably, around the question of virginity, and it is interestingly two-edged: on the level of the fiction, Redcrosse sees the false Una; in his imagination, however, he sees Una who is false – who has "taken" him in by appearing like the true virgin she is not. A kind of allegorical bed-trick has occurred.[40]

It is this vision, termed an "vncouth sight," that almost moves the knight to kill Una, although upon consideration, he resolves "to proue his sense and tempt her faigned truth" (1.1.50). Of course, from the moment that he awakes in that confused state of desire and fear of desire, the rest of this sequence proceeds like clockwork. Redcrosse sees what he knows he's going to see (he won't really see Una again until he gets this out of his system) and hears what he knows he's going to hear. Finally, having moved from "I desire her" to "she desires me," he takes the next "logical" step in this progression: "If she'd sleep with me, she'll sleep with anyone." This is the substance of the next vision he sees: Archimago shows him Una in bed with an unnamed squire (1.2.3–5). And at that point (having been restrained from murder), he runs away "still flying from his thoughts and gealous feare" (1.2.12).

The allegorical narrative in *The Faerie Queene* appears to follow a more logical trajectory than Greville's lyric. In a much less ambiguous fashion, Spenser presents us first with a dream – and then with a waking dream. As Paul Alpers has shown, however, the structure of *The Faerie Queene* is fundamentally "nondramatic": its basic unit is the stanza; it does not derive its force from – or even ultimately provide us with – coherent plot development.[41] And it shares this last characteristic, to a certain extent, with most early modern fictions and romances. The linear, "logical" plot and the consequent feeling of inevitability we have come to identify with narrative are much more evident in (or at least expected of) the drama in this period: contemporary theorists repeatedly demand unity in drama that they are willing to forgo in prose and poetic romances.[42]

Moreover, Spenser's allegory locates the events it describes in Redcrosse's mind and makes it clear that a process of externalization is taking place, at the same time that it depends on putatively external agents (Archimago and later Duessa), who serve to deflect some of the blame from Redcrosse. In *The Changeling*, by contrast, the process of externalization is performed by the dramatic structure itself, which closes the gaps in Greville's fantasy, although vestiges of the internal nightmare remain.[43] As the play progresses from its opening lyric speech (expressing fear and desire at the sight of a woman) to dramatic movement, it enacts the Fall more fully than the nondramatic examples we have been considering; simultaneously, that progression externalizes the contradictory emotions present in the speech, as it calls into being a dramatic heroine who has been variously characterized as a "spoilt child," a "beautiful witch," and "a piece of human refuse,"[44] who finally is unveiled as an uncouth sight (Alsemero tells her, "O, thou art all deformed," 5.3.77),[45]

and who is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, "prov'd a common field." It could not choose but follow.

The Changeling is clearly aware of the "imperfection" we all share (1.1.117), but it simultaneously locates that imperfection in Beatrice, imagining her both as the object and the origin of desire, both as castrated (the "deformed," uncouth sight) and as the source of castration (Beatrice's first beloved, Alonzo, is killed and his finger cut off in the citadel, which is associated with her – and, more specifically, with her genitals – throughout the play). In her classic essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey outlines two means of dealing with the castration anxiety aroused by the sight of a woman: the investigation of female guilt and her subsequent punishment, and the fetishistic worship of the female. She notes that the former method seems particularly at home in narrative: "This sadistic side fits in well with narrative. Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in linear time with a beginning and an end."[46] As *The Changeling* moves from lyric worship to dramatic punishment, linear structure is presented as a problem – but it also becomes the solution: not only does it facilitate externalization and displacement, its very form seems to provide us with a logical coherence that smoothes out contradictions and recuperates the closure whose loss it describes.[47] And that closure is effectively embodied by the circle of men who are left at the end, Beatrice's father having gained a new "son" in Alsemero to replace his damaged daughter (5.3.216).

In his fascinating analysis of the scandals surrounding Frances Howard, David Lindley has suggested how the conventional version of her life has similarly been constructed to fit accepted narrative patterns. He shows that readings of Howard's early years have been colored, both in her time and our own, by her later involvement in the Overbury murder: "The later-known crime is imported back into the reading of the divorce, which then becomes a sign of Frances Howard's essential moral turpitude." He explains:

> For the modern reader the sense of a necessary connection between divorce and murder is reinforced by historians' effort to produce a chronological narrative of the events of 1613 . . . It becomes easy to follow seventeenth-century commentators in assuming a kind of moral domino effect by which the lesser crime of adultery leads to the greater sin of murder in neat and necessary narrative succession. The final temptation is to reinforce the potency of this narrative

sequence by deriving from its completed shape a construction of Frances Howard's character which will endorse that moral scenario. Accordingly she becomes a quasi-tragic figure who demonstrates a deepening slide into moral depravity.[48]

Lindley characterizes *The Changeling* as "articulat[ing] just such a moral sequence," and he points to the fact that the traditional view of Beatrice's character, classically voiced by T. S. Eliot ("the unmoral nature, suddenly trapped in the inexorable toil of morality") "strikingly parallels the personality historians have constructed for Frances Howard."[49]

The play clearly articulates and participates in the sequence he describes, while it simultaneously presents that sequence self-consciously and analyzes its creation. Interestingly, *The Changeling* "straightens out" the order of events in Frances Howard's life, making it clear that adultery is the inevitable conclusion of her participation in murder – that it is not, in our culture, the "lesser" crime for a woman, but the culminating expression of her inward evil.[50] Indeed, any movement on her part leads inexorably to whoredom. After watching a meeting between Beatrice Joanna and Alsemero, De Flores declares:

> If a woman
> Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,
> She spreads and mounts then, like arithmetic,
> One, ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand –
> Proves in time sutler to an army royal. (2.2.60–4)[51]

"Point" here, of course, suggests penis. But it also implies a static, fixed existence, such as that which Alsemero imagines in his opening lyric speech. In this context, any motion, any will, any life at all leads to the same inevitable conclusion. Significantly, later in the play, Beatrice tells Diaphanta (with obvious multiple meanings), "Y'are too quick, I fear, to be a maid" (4.1.91).

As De Flores's lines indicate, *The Changeling* further suggests that Beatrice Joanna's story – and Frances Howard's – are not simply made to fit a traditional narrative; rather, what Lindley felicitously terms the "potency of the narrative sequence" finds its most perfect thematic expression in a version of this story – with its displacement of imperfection, lack, and guilt onto a woman. From one perspective, *The Changeling* emphasizes its own embeddedness in the processes of causality. The progression from murderess to whore that Alsemero declares "could not choose but follow" is presented not merely as *an* example of logic, of making sense in our culture, but as *the* example – just as the

erotic compulsion that is connected to it by being signaled by a version of the same line is presented as *the* example of eroticism. And, as the responses of numerous readers have shown, the play goes a long way to making these claims stick. Discussing the rape scene, for example, Una Ellis-Fermor comments:

> From this point [3.4.74] onward every line of De Flores is an immovable logical statement, each statement revealing a merciless fact in that world of reality she [Beatrice] has wandered into, sleep-walking. Every line in her part is now the simple utterance of reality; the plain speech that is all a swiftly traveling mind can spare for recording the landmarks in its new and changing observation. The lines themselves harden and grow metallic as the strokes of logic harden her mind.[52]

In Ellis-Fermor's comment, as in the play, logic and eroticism share the same form – and that form is clearly phallic, firmly reasserting the threatened "point."

But at the same time, as this analysis has shown, *The Changeling* insistently calls our attention to the constructedness of its own logic. In ways that Alsemero never consciously imagines, the beginning of the play does, indeed, touch its end: its concluding images are implicit in its opening, and the sequence it describes is always already complete. Beatrice is already fallen, already a whore, already hideously deformed. Beauty not only loves the Beast here: Beauty is the Beast.[53] And, of course, we knew it all along, so it could not choose but follow.

Freud's commentary on compulsive neuroses, although formulated in a quite different context, may shed some final light on the play and on the assumptions it analyzes and enacts. Freud is explaining how his patient, the "Rat Man," repeatedly removes and replaces a stone from the road that "his lady" travels:

> A battle between love and hate was raging in the lover's breast, and the object of both these feelings was one and the same person. The battle was represented in a plastic form by his compulsive and symbolic act of removing the stone from the road along which she was to drive, and then of undoing this deed of love by replacing the stone where it had lain, so that her carriage might come to grief against it and she herself be hurt . . . Compulsive acts like this, in two successive stages, of which the second neutralizes the first, are a typical occurrence in obsessional neuroses. The patient's consciousness naturally misunderstands them – *rationalizes* them, in short. But their true significance lies in their being a representation of a conflict between two opposing impulses of approximately equal strength: and hitherto I have invariably found that this opposition has been one between love and hate . . . *What regularly occurs in hysteria is that a*

compromise is arrived at which enables both the opposing tendencies to find expression simultaneously – which kills two birds with one stone; whereas here each of the two opposing tendencies finds satisfaction singly, first one and then the other, though naturally an attempt is made to establish some sort of logical connection (often in defiance of all logic) between the antagonists.[54]

The Changeling seems to suggest, among other things, that conventional Renaissance lyrics and tragedies of love are structured respectively like the symptoms Freud attributes here to "hysteria" and "compulsion."

As we have seen, pairings similar to those that Freud describes pervade the play. And the word "fellow" (like "follow," which is its fellow) echoes throughout.[55] All the characters are doubled, and therefore "imperfect," "undone"; but as Beatrice becomes the locus for a sexuality that is both "loved and loathed," so too is she seen as the origin of all doubling.[56] Doubling is not, however, merely a sign of incompleteness here; it allows, ultimately, for a perfect pairing to take place. The ideal union that Alsemero had envisioned is both undermined and fulfilled by the orgasmic union of Beatrice Joanna and De Flores in death, which wickedly parodies the end of *Romeo and Juliet*.[57] Words, scenes, actions, and images are similarly matched: one glove is dropped, one sigh is sighed, and we wait for the other (explicitly termed its "fellow") to follow (2.2.102; cf. 1.1.223–8). And the result is the self-conscious creation of that structure of "inevitability" that has been intuited by so many readers, a structure that functions as both the mark of lost perfection and its redemption, that acknowledges universal lack and reassigns it, that manages, among its other achievements, simultaneously to display and to hide its own origin as it works out – and derives considerable erotic power from – a phantasmal but familiar cultural logic that we, like its heroine, "[can]not choose but follow."

CHAPTER 8

"Old men's tales": legacies of the father in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore

John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, written after tragedy had ceased to occupy the central position on the Renaissance stage, has often been considered in relation to its predecessors. Readings of this relationship, however, have varied widely. On the one hand, Ford's play has been viewed as "the last, belated Jacobean tragedy,"[1] the final gasp of serious tragic form in a world of fantastic, "feminine" tragicomedy.[2] On the other hand, it has been seen as a falling off from earlier accomplishments, considered as "decadent" and thus effectively feminized itself.[3] And, on the third hand (because these things are never simple), it has been credited with self-consciously criticizing and playing with the forms that it has inherited.[4] I would suggest that all these conceptualizations contain some truth. Even more fully than its Jacobean precursors, *'Tis Pity* inhabits a masculinized tragic space that it simultaneously criticizes from within, unsettling the categories of masculinity and tragedy, unmasking them (and itself) as inescapably transgressive and fundamentally fantasmatic. Both on the level of its fiction and on the level of its form, it forcefully enacts patriarchal imperatives while exposing their contradictions – precisely by pushing them so forcefully to their logical (and absurd) conclusions.

I would like to begin demonstrating this by briefly reconsidering Ford's relation to two of his best-known predecessors. It is generally recognized that his play has a clear connection to *Romeo and Juliet* – although in recent years this connection has been more often acknowledged than examined – and it has also been noted (somewhat less frequently) that it recalls *The Duchess of Malfi*.[5] The interconnections among these texts, however, have never to my knowledge been explored. I will argue that Ford's play self-consciously turns *The Duchess*'s criticism of *Romeo and Juliet* – of a patriarchal erotics of "unity" in consummation and death – back upon itself, placing Ferdinand's fantasy once again in the center of the play, and once more subsuming (Bosola-like) the Duchess's imagined female space of pregnancy within the patriarchal sphere.

Most obviously, Giovanni attempts (not entirely successfully) to enact the fantasy of absolute union in consummation and death, viewing himself and his sister "each to the other bound / . . . to be ever one, / One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all" (1.1.30, 33–4).[6] His evocation of the terms of idealized romantic love is so effective that some readers have maintained that incest is only incidental to the play: "In a sense, the play is not about incest: it is about passionate love which demands a unity more complete, more self-sufficient, than human life permits."[7] But as *The Duchess of Malfi* had already suggested – and as this play confirms – incest is only the most extreme expression of the fantasy of union with another who is a perfect reflection of oneself.[8] And like other evocations of this sort of passionate union in our culture, the coupling here is not, of course, entirely equal. Giovanni conventionally positions himself and Annabella as, respectively, subject and object, soul and body, prince and state; he exclaims, for example:

> [I] hold myself, in being king of thee,
> More great that were I king of all the world. (2.1.19–20)

His lines seem reminiscent of "The Sun Rising" in the concurrently published *Songs and Sonnets* of John Donne ("She is all states, and all princes, I, / Nothing else is," 21–2).[9] As readers have often noted, Ford appears to have known at least some of the poems in that great cultural touchstone of romantic "unity" and "mutuality."[10] "The Good Morrow," for example, is explicitly recalled in another passage:

> O the glory
> Of two united hearts like hers and mine!
> Let poring book-men dream of other worlds;
> My world, and all of happiness, is here. (5.3.11–14)[11]

And the play as a whole (whether coincidently or not) seems to enact a trajectory similar to that of "The Canonization"; it presents us with a corrupt, superficial, money-driven world to which Giovanni says, in essence, "For God's sake, hold your tongue and let me love," imagining an apotheosis of mutual consummation in which he and his perfectly matched beloved, dying and rising the same, become, in effect, the saints of love. But despite (or more precisely because of) the pretense of absolute union, it is perfectly clear even in Donne's poem whose "I" is behind the "we," whose orgasm is really at stake. And, of course, the violent conclusion to the play (which Giovanni terms "a rape of life and beauty," 5.6.21) makes this even more evident.

In a bizarre parody of the conclusions of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* (in the latter of which the consummation/death has already become murder/suicide), Giovanni and Soranzo jockey for the privilege of murdering their beloved.[12] Soranzo imagines himself playing Othello's part, and thinks, with a little help from his friends, to outwit his "brother-rival" (5.2.20); he tells his servant, Vasques:

> In mean time I'll cause our lady
> To deck herself in all her bridal robes,
> Kiss her, and fold her gently my arms.
> Begone – yet, hear you, are the banditti ready
> To wait in ambush? (5.2.10–14)

Giovanni, however, anticipates and pre-empts his action, glorying that he alone gets to kill Annabella on her "sad marriage-bed" (5.6.97). When his sister, as the end approaches, asks him "What means this?" (5.5.83), he replies:

> To save thy fame, and kill thee in a kiss.
> Thus die, and die by me, and by my hand
> Revenge is mine; honor doth love command. (5.5.84–6)

His (literally self-centered) farewell ironically reprises Romeo's dying words ("Thus with a kiss I die," *Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.120) as well as Othello's ("I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee. No way but this / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss," *Othello* 5.2.358–9). After his sister's death, moreover, he turns and addresses her absent husband:

> Soranzo, thou has missed thy aim in this;
> I have prevented now thy reaching plots,
> And killed a love, for whose each drop of blood
> I would have pawned my heart. (5.5.99–102)

For all the emphasis on the isolated unity of the doomed couple, their consummation/death is clearly something that occurs largely "between men." It therefore seems entirely appropriate that, after the murder, Giovanni prepares "boldly [to] act [his] last and greatest part" (5.5.106) before his fellows, who have been his intended audience all along – and that he literally "exchange[s]" hearts with Soranzo in the final scene:

> Soranzo, see this heart, which was thy wife's;
> Thus I exchange it royally for thine,
> And thus and thus. Now brave revenge is mine. (5.6.74–6)

His words again recall those of Shakespeare's heroes: the phrase "thus and thus," which effectively transforms speech into action, is the traditional cry of the revenger, but it inevitably reminds us once more of the suicides of both Romeo and Othello – and it forces us to reconsider the "love" that motivates those actions.[13]

Michael Neill has further emphasized the connection between Giovanni and that other murderous, incest-obsessed brother, Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*. He compares the dagger upon which Ford's hero impales his sister's heart with the poniard with which Ferdinand had threatened the Duchess:

> 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. (1.2.249–51)[14]

Neill comments that

> Ferdinand's dagger is both a sign of his phallic aggression, and of the lethal hostility that issues from the subliminal recognition of such unspeakable desire . . . Like the blood he seeks, the murderous paternal heirloom is at once a symbol of Ferdinand's bond with his sister, and a reminder of the fearful prohibition that keeps them apart; it is both a sign of the phallic power he claims from their father, and a token of the patriarchal authority that stands between him and the satisfaction of his desires.[15]

While he is acutely alive to the contradictions embodied by Ferdinand, however, he sees Giovanni's position as much simpler: "Far from being a potentially castrating symbol of paternal authority, Giovanni's knife is made into an instrument and sign of his impious assault on the very foundations of patriarchal order and power: 'Monster of children, see what thou hast done, / Broke thy old father's heart!' (5.6.62–3)."[16]

But this is to tell only half the story. Giovanni repeatedly insists that his actions fulfill his father's desires; at the end of the play, for example, he reveals his incestuous relationship to Annabella by declaring:

> List father, to your years I will yield up
> How much I have deserved to be your son. (5.6.39–40)

And, I would suggest, the play supports his claim. It repeatedly implies that incest, while transgressing the Law of the Father, simultaneously (and paradoxically) enacts patriarchal directives to the letter. And it thus effectively points to the contradictions underlying "patriarchal order and power."[17]

Patrilineal inheritance is a central concern in the play. Annabella's father, Florio, makes this clear in a passage that aligns his daughter with Capulet's "hopeful lady of my earth," Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.2.5):

> You see I have but two, a son and her;
> And he is so devoted to his book
> As I must tell you true, I doubt his health
> Should he miscarry, all my hopes rely
> Upon my girl. (1.3.4–8)

Whereas Capulet had a single child, of course, Florio has a pair; but Giovanni's "devotion to his book" (to which we shall return) seems to disqualify him from producing – and therefore from being – a suitable heir: as Terri Clerico notes, the submerged pun on "miscarry" calls our attention to the importance of offspring here.[18]

The insistence on the patrilineal inheritance exists side by side in *'Tis Pity* (as in the larger culture) with a deep anxiety about fatherhood; it is, after all, impossible to know for certain who the father of any given child is.[19] This anxiety is embodied in the play by Annabella's husband, Soranzo, who, his wife exclaims, will be forced to "father" another "father['s]" child (4.3.45). Soranzo, in effect, plays half of Ferdinand's part[20] – that of the ever-jealous male attempting to spy out women's secrets; and it seems significant that his jealousy centers on Annabella's pregnancy – and on his inability to ascertain the father – rather than on the fact of her infidelity itself.

But another strain in the play transmutes this persistent anxiety into an insistence on paternal parthenogenesis – into a fantasy of the father as sole creator, effectively eliding the troublesome woman. And this fantasy is, predictably, voiced most often by Giovanni. At the beginning of the play, for example, when he considers his relationship to Annabella, he muses, "Say that we had one father, say one womb / . . . gave both us life and birth" (1.1.28–9). Humanity and agency are clearly assigned only to the father here; the mother is reduced to a birthing-place for his issue. And, indeed, the play as a whole seems obsessed with fathers, providing Annabella and Giovanni with an excess of them: the physical father, Florio, is matched (and repeatedly conflated with) the spiritual parent, Friar Bonaventura, whom the siblings regularly address as "father," while he calls them "son" and "daughter."[21] The couple's mother is, on the other hand, mentioned only twice (and never by name); the first time, they swear to be faithful on her "dust" (Annabella, as has often been noted, referring to

"our mother's dust," while Giovanni characteristically replaces "our" with "my"[22]):

ANN.: On my knees,
[*She kneels*]
Brother, even by our mother's dust, I charge you
Do not betray me to your mirth or hate,
Love me, or kill me, brother.
GIOV.: On my knees,
[*He kneels*]
Sister, even by my mother's dust, I charge you,
Do not betray me to your mirth or hate,
Love me, or kill me, sister. (1.2.259–65)

Here, having been securely positioned as dead and bodiless, the mother can be located as the repository of truth and fidelity.[23] Later, in a similarly charged speech, she is credited with "bequeath[ing]" her "ring" to Annabella, posthumously instructing her daughter "not to give't / To any but [Annabella's] husband" (a ring, we learn, that is now safely in Giovanni's possession, 2.6.36–43). More often, however, even Annabella is seen, like Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as belonging wholly to her father. In Shakespeare's play, Theseus tells Hermia:

> To you your father should be as a god;
> One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax,
> By him imprinted and within his power,
> To leave the figure, or disfigure it. (1.1.47–51)

And Florio – who, despite his pretenses to the contrary, clearly considers it his prerogative to dispose of his daughter as he pleases – refers to Annabella in similar terms; he comments:

> I have a father's dear impression,
> And wish, before I fall into my grave,
> That I might see her married, as 'tis fit. (3.4.35–7)

His ambiguous first line has troubled most editors of the play. Some maintain that "impression" here merely means "idea." In the Revels edition, however, Derek Roper comments:

> The meaning may be "imprinted likeness" *(O.E.D.*, 2); thus Thomas Heywood refers to a bastard who "had . . . an impression of the fathers face, by which the adulterer might easily bee knowne" (*Gunaikeion*, 1624, p.168). Florio's speech might then be paraphrased: "I bear the imprinted likeness of my own dear father,

and before I die I should wish to see my own child married (and ready to transmit the likeness to another generation)."[24]

Marion Lomax further notes that the "dear impression" may refer directly to Annabella herself.[25] And the convergence of all three of these senses, I would suggest, reduplicates and reinforces the image of a (purely mental) paternal creation (recalling the paradigmatic birth of Athena from Zeus' brain).[26]

It has been argued that a primary reason for the incest taboo is that it prevents the problem of fatherhood from becoming even more complicated and uncertain.[27] From one perspective, however, incest clearly works to help to maintain the fiction of paternal parthenogenesis. By coupling with a product of the same father, a son ensures the continuance of his line: all "impressions" become one (a situation that is parodied in Putana's libertine philosophy – "let her take anybody, father or brother, all is one," 2.1.45–6). And the woman in question becomes simply (in Ferdinand's terms) the "body" in which paternal "blood" can run pure.[28] Thus, throughout Annabella's pregnancy, the presence of the father in his child is emphasized as she, like her mother before her, is reduced to her physical parts – and, particularly, to her womb. Annabella herself – insistent that her child will be a "son" (4.3.33) – tells Soranzo that he "shall have the glory / To father what so brave a father got" (4.3.44–5). And her husband focuses on her "corrupted bastard-bearing womb," as well as on "this piece of flesh, this faithless face of hers" (4.3.14, 110–11). Giovanni, entering with Annabella's heart upon his dagger, similarly refers repeatedly to her "fruitful womb" (5.6.24, 50) and to the "nine months space" of his relationship (5.6.45). And he emphasizes his filial relation through the scene, telling his father:

> Nine moons have had their changes
> Since I first throughly viewed and truly loved
> Your daughter and my sister. (5.6.41–3)

He thus claims that he deserves wholly to be Florio's son, because he has, in effect, produced a son that is wholly his father's. And eventually, of course, he locates all possible familial positions solely in himself:

> Oh, my father,
> How well his death becomes him in his griefs.
> Why, this was done with courage; now survives
> None of our house but I, gilt in the blood
> Of a fair sister and a hapless father. (5.6.66–70)

One might recall here Bergetto's death cry – "Is all this mine own blood?" (3.7.31) – which, as Clerico acutely comments, resounds throughout the play.[29] And it further seems significant that Soranzo, while decrying Giovanni's incestuous relationship, had attempted when plotting his own revenge to position himself similarly (moving closer into the family as the moment approached). He began to refer to Giovanni as his brother (5.2.20, "brother-rival"; 5.4.37, "much loved brother"; 5.4.5, "Good brother") and finally called Florio "my father" (5.4.39; as late as 5.2 he was still designated as Giovanni's father). These are, of course, conventional titles for in-laws at the time, but their usage here serves to keep Soranzo's planned consummation/death scene (and Annabella's sexual relations) all in the family. Finally, at the end of the play, the identity of father and son is reinforced by the brief episode in which Vasques explains his loyalty to Soranzo as the logical extension of his relationship with his master's father: "I have paid the duty to the son which I have vowed to the father" (5.6.116–17); "I have been honest to the son as I was to the father" (5.6.143–4).

Richard Marienstras has commented that, by ending Florio's line, Giovanni's incest is "a means of killing the father."[30] But as we have seen, the play's conclusion insists both on the breaking of paternal law – embodied in the breaking of Florio's heart – and its fulfillment. And the double-edged force of incest here helps to explain some of Giovanni's more puzzling statements. Most often discussed is his early assertion to Annabella that the church has sanctioned their love; as Bruce Boehrer and Molly Smith point out in somewhat different contexts, one can view Giovanni both as lying here and as pointing to an implied truth.[31] Later he makes another striking remark; when Friar Bonaventura tells him he will be condemned to hell for his relationship with Annabella, he replies:

> Father, in this you are uncharitable;
> What I have done I'll prove both fit and good.
> It is a principle, which you have taught
> When I was yet your scholar . . . (2.5.12–15)

In these lines, Giovanni appears momentarily to be claiming that incest itself is a legacy of the "father," a "principle" that he has transmitted to his student. The speech goes on, of course, to locate the father's teaching in Neoplatonic doctrine concerning the unity of the soul and the body, of beauty and virtue:

> . . . that the frame
> And composition of the mind doth follow

> The frame of composition of the body;
> So where the body's furniture is beauty,
> The mind's must need be virtue; which allowed,
> Virtue itself is reason but refined,
> And love the quintessence of that. This proves
> My sister's beauty being rarely fair
> Is rarely virtuous; chiefly in her love,
> And chiefly in that love, her love to me.
> If hers to me, then so is mine to her;
> Since in like causes are effects alike. (2.5.15–26)

As we have seen, however, these ideals are themselves regularly used in patriarchal societies to validate conventional gender hierarchies and, ultimately, to underwrite the sort of "union" that Giovanni imagines.

Giovanni's arguments are usually dismissed as sophistry.[32] But if they are sophistic – and they are – *'Tis Pity* makes clear that this sophistry is his rightful inheritance. His "wit" (1.1.4–5, 46) and his prowess as a student are stressed throughout the play;[33] we will recall Florio's description of his two children:

> You see I have but two, a son and her;
> And he is so devoted to his book
> As I must tell you true, I doubt his health.
> Should he miscarry, all my hopes rely
> Upon my girl. (1.3.4–8)

As Annabella is aligned with Juliet here, so Giovanni is associated with Romeo – another literary-minded young man who makes love "by th' book" (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.5.110). And like *Romeo and Juliet*, this is a play that foregrounds on the falsity of "mere" words, names, and forms.[34] At the beginning, Giovanni derides the incest taboo as "a peevish sound, / A customary form" (1.1.24–5). And throughout the play, the young lovers are surrounded by empty rhetoric and meaningless chatter from which they hope to escape into a consummation that will be more real, immediate, and true. With the exception of the unselfconscious ramblings of Putana, these "airy word[s]" (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.1.89) are here identified as the property of the men in power, who manipulate them with extreme cynicism. Thus, when Florio discovers Vasques (taking Soranzo's part) and Grimaldi fighting over Annabella, he declares:

> My lord Soranzo, this is strange to me;
> Why you should storm, having my word engaged?

> Owning her heart, what need you doubt her ear?
> Losers may talk by law of any game. (1.2.55–8)

His dismissal of "talk" as inconsequential sits somewhat strangely with his insistence on the worth of his "word"; and the implicit undermining of his vow here is reinforced by Vasques's immediate (and initially ambiguous) comment on "the villainy of words" (1.2.59). Florio does seem to have at least provisionally settled on Soranzo, presumably because of his status (he later tells Giovanni, "Soranzo is the man I only like," 2.6.132), but he continues to encourage the other suitors, and he informs Bergetto's wealthy uncle, Donado, that the choice is really his daughter's: "My care is how to match her to her liking. / I would not have her marry wealth, but love" (1.3.10–11). Donado, for his part, seems to understand the game quite well; he comments that Florio speaks "like a true father," and immediately promises that his nephew shall have "three thousand florins yearly during life, / And, after [he himself is] dead, [his] whole estate" (1.3.15, 17–18). The chosen suitor, Soranzo, is, of course, himself a "perjured man" (2.1.84): he had vowed to marry Hippolita, and is presently attempting "with supple words to smooth" her outrage at his betrayal (2.1.46). And his actions are repeated by Vasques, who persuades Hippolita "take [his] word" and then destroys her (2.1.164). Not surprisingly, many of the characters – and the young lovers in particular – repeatedly question the truth of each other's words, asking if they are spoken in "earnest" or merely in "jest": these terms echo throughout the play (1.1.4; 1.2.218, 227, 267; 2.1.24–5; 2.4.39; 2.6.69; 5.5.5);[35] and even when they are not specifically used, the anxieties they imply are often present (see, e.g., the lovers' repeated plea in their vows, "Do not betray me to your mirth or hate," 1.2.261, 265, and Soranzo's response to Annabella's linguistic games, "Do you mock my love? . . . / 'Tis plain, she laughs at me," 3.2.37–8.)

The younger characters further openly mistrust the literary legacy of their forefathers. Soranzo, perusing a volume of poetry declares, "Sannazar, thou liest" (2.2.5); Giovanni also says that "poets feign" and dismisses the searches of "poring book men" as inadequate to his own experience (1.2.196; 5.3.13). And the doltish Bergetto shows a characteristic fool's wisdom when he writes in a letter to Annabella:

> Most dainty and honey-sweet mistress, I could call you fair, and lie as fast as any that loves you, but my uncle being the elder man, I leave it to him, as more fit for his age and the color of his beard. (2.4.215)

Giovanni provides us a more serious version of this sentiment when he characterizes the counsels of religion as "dreams and old men's tales / To fright unsteady youth" (1.2.161–2). His locution is particularly interesting,

since Marlowe's Faustus (himself one of Giovanni's forebears) had dismissed stories of Hell as "trifles and mere old wives' tales" (5.135).[36] His phrase had implicitly opposed the fantasies of ignorant old women to the "truths" of learned men like himself; for Giovanni, however, men in power are the principal promulgators of fantasy.

Throughout *'Tis Pity*, the lovers' insistence on "earnest" language seems an effort to reconnect signs to their referents, to resecure the truth of empty, "jest[ing]" forms. Again, their perspective recalls that of Romeo and Juliet, who had tried to escape love "by th' book" (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.5.110) not so much by jettisoning Petrarchan forms as by revivifying them – by actualizing oxymoronic clichés and realizing the central conceit of "dying for love" (in both consummation and death). Similarly, while Giovanni decries the meaninglessness of the incest taboo, he simultaneously attempts, like the good student he is, to realize fully the lessons he has learned, to act them out to the letter. And if he "miscarries" – and of course he does – it is precisely because he is so "devoted to his book." Several critics have commented incisively on his efforts to enact the metaphoric, which reach a shocking conclusion in the final scene.[37] His entrance with Annabella's heart on his dagger is, in Michael Neill's words, "a violent literalization of metaphor"[38] – one that takes the actualization of Petrarchan conceits in *Romeo and Juliet* to its logical conclusion. And this literalization, I would suggest, is paralleled by – is, in fact, identified with – the literal enactment of the idea of "pure" paternal creation that is implicit in incest. Both processes involve an insistence on absolute purity and truth (when Florio comments toward the end that his son's "rage belies him," Giovanni replies, "It does not, 'tis the oracle of truth; / I vow it so," 5.6.53–5). And both processes effectively destroy what they seek to preserve – untroubled meaning and uninterrupted patrilineal inheritance.

And, in the bargain, something else is destroyed as well. Giovanni's quest, as we have noted, has the effect of transforming his sister into a mere receptacle for his child, and (what is the same thing) into mere vehicle for his metaphor – into, in effect, the "whore" of the title.[39] In her quarrel with Soranzo, Annabella performs, significantly, a somewhat different kind of literalization from Giovanni's. She insists, repeatedly, on the physical reality of her husband's metaphors:

SOR.: Did you but see my heart, then would you swear –
ANN.: That you were dead. (3.2.23–4)

SOR.: See you these true love's tears?
ANN.: No.
. . .

SOR.: They plead to you for grace.
ANN.: Yet nothing speak. (3.2.26–8)

SOR.: I'm sick, and sick to th'heart.
ANN. Help, aqua vitae.
SOR. What mean you?
ANN. Why, I thought you had been sick. (3.2.35–6)

Her witty replies seem both appropriate and poignant, since she herself is identified with the physical body, which is in turn transformed into the material for masculine metaphor – and thus destroyed. When Giovanni enters at the end with her heart on a knife, one could answer the question that surrounds his act – "What means this?" – as Annabella herself does here: when you can "see [her] heart," you can confidently "swear – / That [she is] dead."

Annabella's reduction to a receptacle for male desires gives added meaning to her own characterization of the events of the play;[40] as she approaches death, she pleads:

> Thou, precious Time, that swiftly rid'st in post
> Over the world, to finish up the race
> Of my last fate, here stay thy restless course,
> And bear to ages that are yet unborn
> A wretched, woeful woman's tragedy. (5.1.4–8)

Her last line reworks the concluding couplet of *Romeo and Juliet*: "For never was a story of more woe, / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.309–10). Ford's line unequivocally locates woe as the woman's part, and it reinforces that idea by playing on the folk etymology that derived "woman" from "woe-man" – an etymology that is emphasized in the Folio by the spelling "woeman" in this passage and throughout most of the text.[41] As the quotations in the *OED* make clear, this etymology is usually taken to indicate that women bring woe to men – but at least one other contemporary author uses it to suggest that women derive their woe *from* men; in a dialogue between a Nymph and a Shepherd by Richard Flecknoe (1653), after the Shepherd asserts, "Woe has end, when 'tis alone: But in woman never none," the Nymph replies: "Say of Woman worst ye can, What prolongs their woe, but man?" (*OED*, I.1.k). And this suggestion is underscored in Annabella's speech by the presence of yet another pun – on "womb-man" – a pun that is activated by the pregnancy images in the preceding line ("bear . . . unborn"). Ford thus seems to imply that woman, by being reduced to "womb-man" – a womb for and of men – inevitably becomes woe-man.

And this implication is, of course, fulfilled at the end. Rather than being set against a self-defining, tragic moment of phallic consummation and death, as the Duchess of Malfi's pregnancies were, Annabella's "birth" – which is also a death – is subordinated to it; after kissing and killing his sister, Giovanni declares: "the hapless fruit / That in her womb received its life from me, / Hath had from me a cradle and a grave" (5.5.92–4). And as Neill notes, he "presents her heart almost as though it were the newly delivered offspring of their passion":[42]

> 'Tis Annabella's heart, 'tis; why d'ee startle?
> I vow 'tis hers; this dagger's point plowed up
> Her fruitful womb. (5.6.32–4)

In Webster's play, pregnancy was clearly associated with female sexuality; here, however, female sexuality is obliterated: except for Philotis, who becomes a nun, all the female characters, in one way or another, have their troubling interiors excised: Annabella's heart is removed, Hippolita is forced to drink poison, and Putana's eyes are put out, her nose is threatened to be "slit" (4.3.248), and her body is eventually burned.[43] Moreover, while Webster's Duchess had playfully imagined her murderous brothers as the "gossips" attending a lying-in (*Duchess of Malfi* 3.2.67–8), the women who traditionally surround the laboring mother have here become a group of murderous men.

The entire play is, in the end, an "old men's tale." Giovanni is not, after all, the only excellent student here. Ford has carefully pieced his text together from the words and lessons of his fathers, from earlier plays and poems. His phrase itself may recall not only the evocation of "old wives' tales" in *Dr Faustus*, but the quite different one in *The Duchess of Malfi*. There, the Duchess had constructed a "feminine" perspective out of the materials of patriarchy and tragedy that surrounded her, and she had identified this point of view with the stories of "old wives," with romances and "old tale[s]," implicitly conceding its devalued female, fictive (or, to use the play's term, "sportive") nature (*Duchess of Malfi* 1.2.268, 413, 9). Ford's play is itself surrounded by feminized romances, which have been criticized, both then and now, for evading the serious problems of their age. He returns us here to a tragic, "male" perspective; as he does so, however, he self-consciously marks that perspective as an "old men's tale" – as fictive, as contradictory, and as well past its prime.

The double-edged irony of the play is, finally, reinforced by its structure. As Kathleen McLuskie has noted, *'Tis Pity* is open-ended for most of its duration, arriving at decisive meaning and closure only

through consummation, pregnancy, and death.[44] Numerous readers have viewed this as evidence of the play's flawed, decadent nature, observing that "it is the beginning and the end of this love-affair that seem most strongly to have possessed Ford's imagination,"[45] and criticizing the intervening comic sections as meaningless and jejune. Yet this structure seems very much at home in *'Tis Pity*; like so much else about the play, it simultaneously fulfills and criticizes the tragic tradition that Ford inherited. Interestingly, complaints about the play's form seem strikingly similar to those that used to be regularly directed at Marlowe's texts. They seem, perhaps, most reminiscent of traditional criticisms of *Dr Faustus*[46] – another play that can neither wholly believe in nor wholly escape an orthodox framework and that therefore exposes the meaninglessness of this framework (of everything, in fact) before inevitably returning to it. And, indeed, *Faustus*, which is also about (and by) an excellent student, is repeatedly invoked in Ford's play.[47] While approaching the Renaissance tragic tradition – and numerous other issues – from opposite ends, these two texts (and their playwrights) seem strangely to mirror each other. From one perspective, the relation of *'Tis Pity* to Marlowe's tragedy duplicates the complex interrelation between sophisticated blasphemy and resigned belief, between distance and identity, that occurs in each one. And it therefore seems fitting that the image with which Ford's play achieves closure – the heart on the dagger – evokes, from afar, the central image of yet another Marlovian text, *Edward II.* Like the image of Edward's impalement on a red-hot spit, Giovanni's enactment of "the literal truth" identifies closure with meaning, with violence, and with the dominant patriarchal ideology – and like Marlowe's image, it manages to call all these (and itself) into question, even as it persuades the audience that it could end no other way.[48]

CHAPTER 9

The passionate shepherdess: the case of Margaret Cavendish

Examining so many images of female desire (and expressions of anxiety about that desire) inevitably raises questions about how a woman writer might approach the problems they pose.[1] The plays of Margaret Cavendish, written somewhat later than the other texts in this study, provide us with an excellent vantage point for contemplating those problems. For although her preferred genre was typically not tragedy, but comedy – a more suitable genre for a woman[2] – Cavendish repeatedly engages with and challenges the formal and ideational perspectives of her tragic forebears.

Cavendish's plays are well known for their disregard for conventional dramatic structure and they have occasioned a fair amount of critical controversy as a result. The traditional way of approaching this disregard has been to dismiss the texts and their author completely. Critical comments have ranged from Virginia Woolf's famous evaluation of these "higgledy-piggledy" writings – "What a vision of loneliness and riot . . . as if some giant cucumber had spread itself over all the roses and carnations in the garden and choked them to death"[3] – to later twentieth-century exclamations of frustration and despair: the plays, we are told, are "utterly undramatic," merely "a collection of disconnected scenes."[4] In recent years, however, a number of critics have argued that they are, in fact, more producible and "dramatic" than had hitherto been allowed, sometimes going quite far in their praise of Cavendish's theatrical know-how; and Gweno Williams has provided us with an illuminating account of a successful staging of *The Convent of Pleasure*.[5] Yet others have maintained (without denying that some of the plays are eminently stageable) that Cavendish does, indeed, unsettle conventional dramatic structure, but that she does so quite self-consciously and purposefully.[6]

Some of the disagreement about the dramatic potential of Cavendish's plays arises from different (though equally defensible) ideas of the "dramatic" – ideas that are in tension throughout her writing. Her critical

detractors believe that drama, properly conceived, necessitates a cohesive structure and some adherence to the traditional unities (and, as we have seen, this was the prevailing critical view in the Renaissance), while her champions tend to associate the dramatic with the performative, the self-consciously theatrical.[7] The tension between these two ideas of dramatic form has, of course, been evident in all the texts examined in this study, but Cavendish's plays, more than any other (except, perhaps, for Marlowe's), bring it to the surface, making its implications for constructions of gender and desire particularly clear. Like Marlowe, Cavendish views traditional, unified dramatic structure (which is productive of conventional meaning) as expressive of reproductive sexuality. And, in a manner perhaps peculiar to herself, she sees it as reproducing a patrilineal tradition that not only champions unity and conventional logic, but is, in effect, constituted by them. Her formal disruptions are quite clearly tied to disruptions of conventional gender and erotic relations, at times even threatening to subvert the concept of "relation" itself. Cavendish does not entirely escape the tradition she criticizes – nor does she entirely desire to do so; but she repeatedly opposes it with evocations of the performative, the static, the singular, the unrelated. Accepting her plays into the canon (a *fait accompli* by this point) therefore entails not only changing the canon, but changing the standards by which canonical works are judged, and, ultimately, calling the very notion of canonicity into question.[8]

I would like to begin considering Cavendish's strategies by examining the prefaces to her plays and discussing how the principles set forth there are implemented in her drama. Then, in the second half of this chapter, I will focus on a resonant image for her *oeuvre* – "young virgins' tales" – that is suggested by one of these plays, teasing out its implications both for her own writing and for her relation to the literary tradition.

"NO PLOTS, NOR DESIGNS, NOR SUBTIL CONTRIVANCES"

Sylvia Bowerbank has commented that "anyone who has ventured to read ten pages of Cavendish's work knows that her method, or rather her defiance of method, is deliberate."[9] Certainly, anyone who has read even one page of her many prefaces should recognize this fact. Dale Randall has complained that "her insistence on noting what she does not know calls attention not only to gaps in her knowledge but also to her writerly willfulness regarding them."[10] But one man's willfulness is another woman's self-consciousness, and another critic has noted that one effect

of Cavendish's repeated professions of ignorance about conventional rules and structures is surely to call our attention to her actual awareness of them.[11] She is clearly aware of readers' potential objections as well: "'Tis likely," she notes, "They will say that there are no plots, nor designs, nor subtil Contrivances" (Prefaces, 261). In addressing these objections, she repeatedly rebels against all notions of unity, and champions variety and "intermix[ing]" as both more natural and more delightful (257); she declares:

> I expect my Playes will be found fault with, by reason I have not drawn the several persons presented in a Circular line, or to a Triangular point, making all the Actors to meet at the latter end upon the Stage in a flock together; likewise, that I have not made my Comedies of one dayes actions or passages . . . But to plead in my Playes behalf, first, I do not perceive any reason why the several persons presented should all be of an acquaintance, or that there is a necessity to have them of one Fraternity, or to have a relation to each other, or linck'd in alliance as one Family, when as Playes are to present the general Follies, Vanities, Vices, Humours, Dispositions, Passions, Affections, Fashions, Customs, Manners, and practices of the whole World of Mankind, . . . and all these Varieties to be drawn at the latter end into one piece, as into one Company . . . in my opinion shews neither Usual, Probable, nor Natural . . . Besides, I would have my playes to be like the Natural course of all things in the World, as some dye sooner, some live longer, and some are newly born, when some are newly dead, . . . and not all to continue to the last day of Judgment; so my Scenes, some last longer than othersome, and some are ended when others are begun; likewise some of my Scenes have no acquaintance or relation to the rest of the Scenes, although in one and the same Play, which is the reason many of my Playes will not end as other Playes do. (Prefaces, 255–6)

It seems clear, moreover, that Cavendish connects her lack of adherence to conventional rules (and her commitment to intermixing) to questions of gender. She begins one letter to her readers:

> I know that there are many Scholastic and Pedantical persons that will condemn my writings because I do not keep strictly to the Masculine and Feminine Genders, as they call them; as for example, a Lock and a Key, the one is the Masculine Gender, the other the Feminine Gender, so Love is the Masculine Gender, Hate the Feminine Gender, and the Furies are shees, and the Graces are shees, the Virtues are shees, and the seven Deadly Sins are shees, which I am sorry for; but I know no reason but that I may well make them Hees for my use, as others did Shees, or Shees as others did Hees. But some will say, if I did so, there would be no forms of Speech to be understood by. (Prefaces, 259)

This passage is worth examining in some detail, because, as Anne Shaver has noted in her edition, its treatment of gender initially seems quite

puzzling.[12] Indeed, Cavendish appears to be making her points indirectly here. Jeffrey Masten has remarked that the image of the "Lock and Key" is a fraught one for the "heavily policed" women of the time;[13] I would add that the conventional genders of these objects are reversed – "Lock" being paired with male and "Key" with female – giving us an erotically charged example of the gender-bending Cavendish is advocating. Her next example ("Love" and "Hate") effectively suggests how positive qualities are generally identified as "masculine," while negative ones are seen as "feminine." The list of female personifications that follows further suggests the ways in which women have been objectified and "used" by men – a "use" that Cavendish intends to reverse. She understands that her disregard for the traditional associations of gender threatens to undermine (at least in many minds) the very comprehensibility of our language; and she concludes her letter by explicitly associating this disregard with a dismissal of all conventional form:

> As for the nicities of Rules, Forms, and Terms, I renounce, and profess, that if I did understand and know them strictly, as I do not, I would not follow them, and if any dislike my writings for want of those Rules, Forms, Terms, let them not read them, for I had rather my writing should be unread than be read by such Pedantical Scholastical persons. (Prefaces, 259)

Cavendish is, of course, reacting here against a masculine literary tradition that was, in part, bolstered by an education to which she had no access. She begins her verse "General Prologue to all my Playes" by declaring that she will not be able to produce "Master-pieces" like Jonson's plays because she lacks his vast learning (264); and throughout her prefaces, Jonson functions both as her masculine antitype (the upholder – though not the fulfiller – of the principles of unity) and as the rival author she seeks to surpass.[14] Cavendish's lack of formal education is not, however, the only issue here. She also seems, at times, to be criticizing what she sees as "masculine" logic, form, and desire, and attempting to replace these with something new.[15] After admirably detailing the frequent association of contradiction, fancy, and vanity with the feminine in her works, Sylvia Bowerbank warns us against acceding to this picture and creating "a literary ghetto called the 'female imagination,' and claiming as its characteristic style of expression, anarchic formlessness."[16] But Cavendish's invocation of the "feminine" is more complex than Bowerbank allows. For while she sometimes argues, as we have seen, against a strict division of gender roles, and at other times imagines herself as an exceptional woman free from the foibles of her sex,

she also, like the fictional Duchess of Malfi, often mimes (or to use one of her favorite words, "mimicks") stereotypical female qualities and deploys them to her advantage.[17] In one of her letters to her readers, for example, she acknowledges women's talkativeness at great length, effectively assuming the character of the female blab, and then notes in passing that men have the same fault without being aware of it: "But we have this advantage of men, which is, that we know this imperfection in our selves, although we do not indeavor to mend it; but men are so Partial to themselves, as not to perceive this imperfection in themselves, and so they cannot mend it" (Prefaces, 261). And while she repeatedly complains about women's propensity to gossip in her *Sociable Letters*, she also, as several critics have noted, presents gossip as a positive feminine tool in many of her plays, and uses it as the predominant mode of some.[18]

Nowhere is Cavendish's association of conventional dramaturgy with the erotics of patriarchy more apparent than in her most frequently discussed play, *The Convent of Pleasure*. Here, non-narrative structure is clearly linked to a withdrawal from men. Lady Happy and her women retreat to a pastoral "cloister" (a word that, at least as late as the sixteenth century, could "be applied to the womb"),[19] in which penetrative sexuality is banished – the walls are "Yard-thick" so that men may not "peak" in (2.4; p. 227) – and replaced by a sensuous appreciation of aesthetically pleasing, ornamental surfaces. Although Lady Happy repeatedly declares that all is done according to "Nature," her descriptions of the Convent effectively intermix nature and artifice in a manner somewhat reminiscent of Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd":

> Now give me leave to inform you, how I have order'd this our *Convent of Pleasure*; first, I have such things as are for our Ease and Conveniency; next for Pleasure and Delight; as I have change of Furniture, for my house; according to the four Seasons, of the year, especially our Chambers: As in the Spring, our Chambers are hung with Silk-Damask, and all other things suitable to it; and a great Looking-Glass in each Chamber, that we may view our selves and take pleasure in our own Beauties, whilst they are fresh and young . . . In the Summer I have all our chambers hung with Taffety, and all other things suitable to it, and a Cupboard of Purseline, and of Plate . . . Change of Garments are also provided, of the newest fashions for every Season, and rich Trimming; so as we may be accoustered properly, and according to our several pastimes: and our Shifts shall be of the *finest and purest Linnen* that can be brought or spun. (2.2; pp. 224–5; final emphasis mine)[20]

Conventional plot development is simultaneously replaced by a series of performative pieces and lyric arias, which repeatedly stop the action and

blur the distinction between reality and fiction. And gender is similarly blended as women play men's parts, and Lady Happy's heart is won by the androgynous Princess. The play's conclusion, notoriously, puts an end to all this, as the Princess is revealed as a man. This revelation inevitably brings with it the prospect of both conventional marriage and sexual conquest through force – although it is not entirely clear towards whom this force is directed; the Prince/ss declares: "But since I am discover'd, go from me to the Councellors of this State, and inform them of my being here, as also the reason, and that I ask their leave I may marry this Lady; otherwise, tell them I will have her by force of Arms" (5.1; pp. 243–4).[21] Readers have offered various interpretations of the conclusion, frequently puzzling over the attitude expressed by this portion of the play. But from the perspective I have been exploring, perhaps most significant is simply its clear association of dramatic closure with heterosexual coupling,[22] with the inevitable silencing of the female (Lady Happy speaks only a few lines in the final scenes, and she never assents to the marriage), and even (ambiguously) with male authorship: Cavendish famously appended "written by My Lord Duke" to part of Act 4 and the concluding scenes in Act 5 and never indicated (as was her usual practice) where – or if – his writing stopped.[23]

This last is not, of course, the only ambiguity here. For the finality of the conclusion is moderated by many details in the play. I would not go quite as far as one critic who provocatively suggests that "the princess' revelation is not that she is really a man, but that she is always performing gender itself."[24] But clearly a notion of gender inhering in "clothes" (similar to that created in "The Passionate Shepherd") floats around the play – and, while it is most prominent in the earlier, non-narrative portions, it remains present throughout the "revelation" itself. Madam Mediator's oft-cited exclamation, "O Ladies, Ladies! you're all betrayed, undone, undone, for there is a man disguised in the *Convent*, search and you shall find it" (5.1; p. 243), calls our attention to the presence of a phallic "it," at the same time "register[ing]," as Sophie Tomlinson has noted, "a moment of aporia" in its indefinite reference;[25] Cavendish thus not only temporarily ambiguates the gender of the Prince/ss, but opens up the possibility that there is no clear phallic point here at all. The Prince/ss's wonderful defense – "You will quit me, I am sure . . . the Man is disguised like a Woman, and I am accoustred like a Man" – in its insistence on the primacy of clothes and (perhaps even more) in its triumphant disregard for conventional logic, further undermines the security of a phallic referent. And Meditator's reply, "Fidle, fadle, that is

nothing to the point," both underscores the Prince/ss's pointlessness and reproduces it: her favorite expression, "fidle, fadle," undermines sexual and logical stability both in its meaning ("nonsense") and its reversible form (5.1; p. 243).

This undermining, moreover, continues throughout the final scenes of the play. The marriage between the Prince and Lady Happy is presented in a manner that is not clearly distinguished from their earlier performances. They enter "*as Bridegroom*" and "*as Bride*" (5.3; p. 245), as they had earlier appeared "*as a Shepherdess*" and "*as a Shepherd*" (4.1; pp. 134–5), or "*as the Sea-God* NEPTUNE" and "*as a Sea-Goddess*" (4.1; pp. 134–5; 240).[26] One could argue here that conventional gender divisions infect even their earlier performances; but one could equally well maintain that the notion of gender as performance continues through to the end.[27] And this reading seems reinforced by the central role played in the concluding episodes by Mimick – a figure of pure performance – who reduces all linguistic distinction to "nothing" at the end of the last scene (5.3; pp. 246), and then, taking the role of the actor (which is, of course, always his role), speaks the Epilogue.

Cavendish's other plays similarly both present and interrogate conventional closure. Perhaps the most interesting thing about *The Female Academy*, another dramatic description of an attempt to found a separatist female institution, is that in a play with very little plot (it consists largely of static orations by the female academicians),[28] Cavendish seems to feel compelled to produce out of nowhere – and in contradiction to all the play has previously suggested – the promise of marriage to arrive at an end.[29] The Matron assures the men opposing the Academy that it exists only to make the women better wives:

> Gentlemen pray give me leave to inform you, for I perceive you are in great Error of mistake, for these Ladies have not vowed Virginity, or are they incloystred; for an Academy is not a Cloyster, but a School, wherin are taught how to be good Wives when they are married. (Act 5, "Scene the last"; p. 679)

I read this abrupt conclusion neither as a straightforward surrender to patriarchal conventions (if it is, it's a singularly ineffective one), nor as a simple criticism of them, but as both at once. And I would argue that what is at stake here and in similar plays is not only Cavendish's ambivalence about marriage and the status of women (although it is probably that as well),[30] but her simultaneous need for and resistance to conventional closure; she thus calls attention both to the arbitrariness of her ending and to her inability to avoid it. Her impulses here, in other

words, are of a piece with those that led her to write so many ten-act, two-part plays, or to excise a number of scenes from *The Presence*, "by reason I found they would make that Play too long" (p. 93) – and then to add them again at the end of the play (after a final scene that consists entirely of stage-directions for the performance of marriages).[31]

Her approach is somewhat different in *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet*. Here, the heroine, Lady Sanspareille, having become famous through her eloquent public speeches against marriage, dies abruptly and inexplicably. Laura Rosenthal has argued persuasively against those who see this simply as disturbing evidence of Cavendish's ambivalences, maintaining that it is way of escaping marriage, of preserving Sanspareille's virginity, and of "reconfiguring desire"; Sanspareille declares in her last recorded public speech: "Wherefore since *I* cannot be every mans wife, *I* will dye every mans Maid" (2.5; p. 161).[32] But to say, with Rosenthal, that "death closes in on Sanspareille at the moment that the plot demands marriage" is also to mark the similarities between the two and the ways in which Cavendish has – and has not – created something new.[33] The play calls these to our attention by having Sanspareille deliver her oration "*all in white Satin, like as a Bride*" (2.5; p. 158). Her death seems simultaneously to recall and to rethink the death-as-consummation conclusion of a conventional tragedy. And both the parallels and the differences are brought home by the subplot, which ends with another variation on this conclusion: the wronged, virginal Lady Innocence commits suicide, having arrayed herself "to make Death Amorous of me, now his Bride" (4.20; p. 173),[34] and the man whom she loved and who caused her death, Lord de l'Amour, eventually kills himself at her tomb.

Conventional tragic unity and closure are even more directly confronted in *The Unnatural Tragedy*.[35] This play quite obviously rewrites *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (and therefore, at several removes, both *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Duchess of Malfi*), once more positioning the incestuous romance as a male fantasy; it is desired simply by the brother, who both rapes and murders his sister, and then kills himself in order to achieve a perfect union in death:

> *Frere*: Now she is dead, my Mind is at rest, since I know none can enjoy her after me; but I will follow thee, thee: I come, my Mistres, Wife, and Sister all in one.
>
> [*Monsieur Frere falls upon the point of his sword, then falls close by Madam Soeur, and lays his Arm over her, then speaks.*]
>
> You Gods of Love, if any Gods there be, O hear my prayer! And as we came both from one Womb, so joyn our Souls in the *Elizium*, our Bodies in one Tomb.
>
> Oh, oh oh, [*dies*]. (5.45; p. 362)

This ending is, moreover, mirrored in the immediately following death of Monsieur Malateste, who, having effectively killed his first wife through his cruelty, begs as he dies: "Let me be buried in the same tomb wherein my Wife is laid: for it is a joy to me to think my dust shall be mixt with her pure ashes" (5.46; p. 363). And it is taken to an almost laughable extreme in the sudden, superfluous death of Frere's rejected beloved, Amor; upon hearing of Frere's suicide, she declares, "Although I cannot usher him to the Grave, I'll follow him," and then instantly "*falls down dead*" to be mourned, Juliet-fashion, by her father: "O my Child is dead! O she is dead, she is dead! Carry her to her Bed" (5.48; p. 365).[36]

YOUNG VIRGINS' TALES

The Unnatural Tragedy revises and criticizes *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* not only in its main plot but also in particular, significant locutions[37] – and in the process, it provides us with a concise and striking emblem for both Cavendish's writing and her relation to her predecessors. Repeatedly, we hear echoes of Giovanni's assertion in *'Tis Pity* that the counsels of religion are simply "old men's tales / To fright unsteady youth" (1.2.161):[38] when Soeur affirms that laws against incest "were made by the Gods," Frere asks, "What Gods Sister, old men with long beards?" (2.12; p. 334); later, he tells his sister, "Follow not those foolish binding Laws which frozen men have made" (4.26; p. 349), and admonishes her, "Be not deceiv'd with empty words and vainer tales, made only at the first to keep the ignorant vulgar sort in awe" (4.26; p. 350). It seems significant, in this context, that the main incest plot is juxtaposed with a number of scenes concerning the Sociable Virgins, "a company of young Ladies that meet every day to discourse and talk, to examine, censure, and judge of every body, and of every thing" (1.3; p. 328), who begin at one point to "tell some Tales" (3.18; p. 343). This juxtaposition suggests that Cavendish wished to counter "old men's tales" with the stories told by women, taking us back once more to *The Duchess of Malfi* – but with a difference. Rather than returning through gossip to "old wives' tales" as Webster did,[39] she counters the narratives of patriarchy with the stories told by young virgins, which suggest different possibilities for the future.

These "young virgins' tales" are emblematic of Cavendish's project in several ways. First of all, the novelty and youth they suggest in contrast to "old men's tales" is clearly significant. Throughout her writings, Cavendish attempts to turn her lack of a tradition (and of traditional

knowledge) into a virtue, suggesting that she is truly original, while male writers endlessly repeat the same old stories;[40] in "A General Prologue to all my Playes," she declares:

> But Noble Readers, do not think my Playes,
> Are such as have been writ in former daies;
> As Johnson, Shakespear, Beamont, Fletcher writ;
> Mine want their Learning, Reading, Language, Wit:
> The Latin phrases I could never tell,
> But *Johnson* could, which made him write so well.
> Greek, Latin Poets, I could never read,
> Nor their Historians, but our English *Speed*;
> I could not steal their Wit, nor Plots out take;
> All my Playes Plots, my own poor brain did make:
> From *Plutarchs* story I ne'r took a Plot,
> Nor from Romances, nor from *Don Quixot*,
> As others have, for to assist their Wit,
> But I upon my own Foundation writ;
> . . .
> All the materials in my head did grow,
> All is my own, and nothing do I owe:
> But all that I desire when as I dye.
> My memory in my own Works may lye. (Prefaces, 266–7)

And in the *Sociable Letters*, rather than opposing masculine chronicle history with old wives' tales (as *The Duchess of Malfi* did), she conflates the two – referring to the story of Lucrece as "an old Wife's Tale, which is an old History" – and dismisses them both, counseling the women she addresses to focus instead on the present: "Leave Lucretia to live and dye in History, and be you two Friends in present Life" (Letter 54, p. 65; cf. her well-known reference to "Plutarch's Lives, or as some call them, Plutarch's Lies," Letter 30, p. 42).

The virginity of the tale-tellers in *The Unnatural Tragedy* is also, of course, significant in and of itself. Several critics have argued eloquently for the centrality of virginity in Cavendish's work, generally emphasizing its connection to ideas of self-sufficiency and independence[41] – ideas that are mirrored in her conception of herself as a self-sufficient, "singular" author. I would like to emphasize that the non-reproductive aspect of virginity was as least as important to her.[42] For unlike Webster's fictional Duchess, the Duchess of Newcastle seems to have seen her intellectual creativity and perhaps her very status as speaking subject as dependent upon her lack of children. Though she repeatedly attempted to give birth

and stopped trying only when reproduction seemed impossible, she comments in the *Sociable Letters*:

> I Know no Reason why [a childless woman] should be troubled for having no Children, for though it be the part of every Good Wife to desire Children to Keep alive the Memory of their Husbands Name and Family by Posterity, yet a Women hath no such Reason to desire Children for her Own Sake, for first her Name is Lost as to her Particular, in her Marrying, for she quits her Own, and is Named as her Husband; also her Family, for neither Name nor Estate goes to her Family according to the Laws and Customes of this Countrey. (Letter 93, p. 101)

A women's exclusion from the system of patrilineal inheritance means, in some sense, that her children are never her own. Cavendish's poignant sense of the ways in which women are cut off from "Memory" seems, moreover, to reach beyond her literal complaint, resonating in both her feeling of disconnection from the male literary tradition and her disdain for its principles of connected narrative.

In the *Sociable Letters*, Cavendish goes on to detail the dangers and difficulties of childbirth and child rearing. And in her plays, she unequivocally opposes childbirth to intellectual creativity and sharply criticizes the male desire for posterity that she ambiguously upholds in the letters. The inset plays in *The Convent of Pleasure* repeatedly stress the troubles birth and children bring to women, and they contrast with the pleasures of the free women in the Convent (their leader, Lady Happy, of course, loses her own "Name" and all that it implies "in her Marrying" at the end).[43] In *The Bridals*, Longlife says explicitly:

> Great Wits for the most part have few Children, but what their brain produces, which are Ideas, Inventions, and Opinions; Ideas are Daughters, Inventions are Sons, and Opinions Hermaphrodites; and the production of these Incorporeal Children, hinders the production of Corporeal Children. (2.3; p.189)

In *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet*, as Rosenthal points out, Lady Sanspareille's accomplishments are made possible by a father who is willing to accept them in lieu of children to continue his line, who "would rather live in [her] fame, than live or dye in an infamous and foolish succession" (2.5; p. 131); his position is contrasted with the insistence on progeny voiced by the foolish Lord de l'Amour, who ends by destroying all the women who love him.[44] And in *The Unnatural Tragedy*, some of the most striking allusions to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* concern the father's obsession with posterity: early in the play, Frere declares, "My Father says he desires to see me setled in the World before

he dies, having but us two, my Sister and I" (1.1; p. 325); a bit later, his father tells him, "Well Son, I must have you make hasste [*sic*] and marry, that you may give me some Grand-children to uphold my Posterity, for I have but you two, and your sister, I hope, will bring me a Grand-son soon" (1.5; p. 328; cf. *'Tis Pity*: "You see I have but two, a son and her," 1.3.4). These allusions, moreover, bring with them the suggestion that for Cavendish, as for Ford and Webster, incestuous desires are intimately connected to the fantasy of pure patrilineal reproduction.

This suggestion is confirmed in another play, *Loves Adventures*, which provides us with one of Cavendish's most striking indictments of the ideology of patriarchy. The main plot of this play follows the fortunes of a young woman (Lady Orphant) who dresses as a page (Affectionata), to accompany the man she loves, Lord Singularity, into war. Critics have seen this as a characteristic attempt to "act out Cavendish's anti-autobiographical fantasy of overcoming her 'effeminate' defects and of 'entering the male world of heroic action and honour.'"[45] Certainly, there is much truth in this reading, and it is bolstered by Mihoko Suzuki's illuminating comparison between *Loves Adventures* and *Twelfth Night*.[46] But there is, I believe, even more at stake here, and Cavendish's clear familiarity with and interest in *'Tis Pity* can help shed additional light on the play. From its beginning, Lord Singularity expresses the fear of being cuckolded and fathering the child of another. In the first lines, he asks his father to refrain from betrothing him to the young Lady Orphant:

> Pray, sir, do not force me to marry a childe, before you know whether she will prove vertuous, or discreet; when for the want of that knowledge, you may indanger the honour of your Line and Posterity with Cuckoldry and Bastardy. (1.1; p. 22)

And in the rest of the scene, he broadens his argument to include all women, begging his father to let him live "a single life" (p. 23). When his father objects, "How Son, would you have me consent to extinguish the light of my Name, and to pull out the root of my posterity," he replies: "Why Sir, it were better to lye in dark oblivion, that to have a false light to devulge your disgrace; and you had better pull out the root, that to have a branch of dishonour ingrafted therein" (p. 23). And he later points out repeatedly that "no man can be resolved, whether a woman can be chaste or not" (5.27, 59). He does, of course, eventually marry Affectionata/Orphant – not, however, before he has adopted the disguised page as his son, his heir, and the bearer of his name.[47] In *'Tis Pity*, incest was seen as a means of answering male fears about the paternity of their

children by keeping procreation "all in the family." Here, Cavendish seems quite deliberately to take this idea one step further: the father's line is kept pure not by the son's marrying his own sister, but by the father's first choosing his own son and then marrying him – effectively cutting out the troublesome woman altogether. This connection is cemented when other men in the play begin to vie for the privilege of adopting Affectionata, threatening, significantly, to do so by force if refused.[48] Several of Lord Singularity's commanders comment on this situation:

1. COMMANDER: I heart [*sic*] that the Duke of *Venice* is so taken with our Generals adopted Son, as he will adopt him his Son.
2. COMMANDER: Hay-day! I have heard that a Father hath many Sons, but never that one Son hath had so many Fathers; but contrary, many Sons wants fathering.
3. COMMANDER: 'Tis true, some Sons hath the misfortune not to be owned, but let me tell you Lieutenant, there be few children that hath not many such Fathers; as one begets a childe, a second owns the childe, a third keeps the child, which inherits as the right Heir, and if a fourth will adopt the childe, a fift, or more many do the like, if they please.
1. COMMANDER: So amongst all his Fathers, the right Father is lost.
3. COMMANDER: Faith, the right Father of any childe is seldome known, by reason that women take as much delight in deceiving the world, and dissembling with particularly men, as in the cuckolding their Husbands.
2. COMMANDER: The truth is, every several Lover cuckolds one another.
1. COMMANDER: Perchance that is the reason that women strives [*sic*] to have so many Lovers; for women takes pleasure to make Cuckolds.
3. COMMANDER: And Cuckolds to own children.

(The Second Part of *Loves Adventures* 3.16, pp. 83–4)

In Lord Singularity's fantasy relationship, a closed circuit of male reproduction is created, completely erasing the woman and the problem of uncertainty she represents and ensuring perfect transmission from one generation to the next. One might see a parallel here to the idealized masculine literary tradition that Cavendish opposed, in which writers hoped to recapture flawlessly the spirit of their forefathers,[49] and some men (Ben Jonson in particular) even had the privilege of choosing their own "Sons."[50]

In *Loves Adventures*, Lord Singularity's incestuous fantasy is further mirrored – and perhaps also countered – by the arrangement he makes for Affectionata: s/he is initially betrothed to herself (as Lady Orphant), a situation Cavendish would, presumably, find not altogether unpleasant. Indeed, the similarity here to her own fantasies, in *The Blazing World* and elsewhere, and the echo of her insistence on her own "singularity"[51] in the

name she gives her inveterate bachelor perhaps also suggest that while criticizing patriarchal ideology that keeps reproduction all in the family, Cavendish both reproduces and answers it by keeping (pro)creation all in her own brain – imagining, in effect, a kind of virgin birth.

This book began with one writer whose works asked us, both in their content and their form, to consider the possibility of (and the possibilities inherent in) non-reproductive sexuality. It seems appropriate to end with another who attempts, from a very different perspective, to do something similar. For the structures of Cavendish's plays do seem to function, like Marlowe's, as the formal equivalent of the non-procreative sexuality the plays' content so often attempts to describe. Jeffrey Masten has noted Cavendish's reluctance, in her prefaces, to "use the discourses of patriarchal reproduction . . . except in describing the discourses of her male playwright precursors."[52] Indeed, her language here might be characterized as "anti-reproductive," in its repeated focus on the lack of "relation" between the different plots, scenes, and characters in her plays, its insistence that the various characters should not necessarily be "of one Fraternity, . . . or link'd in alliance in one Family" (255), and its refusal to have them "unnecessarily be forced into one Company" at the end (256) – a circumstance that would echo the "force" with which the men who claim to love her heroines often threaten to use to assure their unions. The structures that result from these principles do still sometimes seem strange to many of us (myself included), and the marriage-or-death conclusions to most of her plays suggest how ambivalent about them the author herself was; but they simultaneously stand as a challenge to the ongoing drama of patriarchy, and they invite us to imagine, with the young virgins, "the creation of a *new poetics*"[53] and the possibility of telling new tales.

Afterword: for(e)play

> I expect my Playes will be found fault with, by reason I have not drawn the several persons presented in a Circular line, or to a Triangular point, making all the Actors to meet at the latter end upon the Stage in a flock together . . . But to plead in my Playes behalf, first, I do not perceive any reason why the several persons presented should all be of an acquaintance, or that there is a necessity to have them of one Fraternity, or to have a relation to each other, or linck'd in alliance as one Family, when as Playes are to present the general Follies, Vanities, Vices, Humours, Dispositions, Passions, Affections, Fashions, Customs, Manners, and practices of the whole World of Mankind, . . . and all these Varieties to be drawn at the latter end into one piece, as into one Company . . . shews neither Usual, Probable, nor Natural . . . I love ease so well, as I hate constraint even in my works; for I had rather have a dull easy life, than be forced to active gayeties, so I had rather my Playes should end dully than unnecessarily be forced into one Company, but some of my Playes are gathered into one sheaf or bundel in the latter end.
>
> Margaret Cavendish, "To the Readers," *Playes*, 1662[1]

Conclusions are difficult, especially in a book that has spent much of its time questioning narrative closure. I was once asked at a conference whether foreplay was "[my] thing," and, academically at least, that does seem to be the case. But even though I have invoked Luce Irigaray's call for "a *new poetics*,"[2] this has not yet been fully realized, and (academically, at least) conventional consummations are still *de rigueur*. Most of the texts I examine labor under similar constraints. Although *Hero and Leander* remains famously unfinished, the dramatic texts I explore all arrive at a more decisive closure, ideationally as well as formally. Yet by calling our attention to the intersection between dramatic structure – especially as it theoretically appears in tragedy – and the dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality, they make us question those ideologies even while submitting to them. And many of the texts here go much

further, self-consciously engaging in various forms of what I have termed "pointless play": the non-teleological performance that is associated with the feminine and sodomitical, with the failure to possess the phallus and all that it implies. Both this sort of performance and the subject positions conventionally connected to it are regularly denigrated in our culture, dismissed as frivolous, superficial, insignificant. Yet I have been suggesting that the very willingness to dally with insignificance becomes in these texts (especially those by Marlowe, Webster, and Cavendish) a means of resistance, a way of paradoxically giving voice to silenced subjects without simply recreating them in the image (and the words) of the "dominant fiction,"[3] and of even more thoroughly questioning the significance, truth, and reality to which that fiction lays claim. More broadly, I am suggesting that all self-conscious imaginative creation has this potential; and more narrowly, I am attempting to claim something similar for my own, predominantly formalist, approach.

There are many reasons why "formalism" and "the aesthetic" became dirty words in the academe,[4] and a widespread, unexamined support of the status quo was certainly one of them. Yet a fear of frivolity – of the unserious, the unpointed, the unmasculine – has clearly played its part as well, gaining added force from the anxieties endemic to a profession that is often viewed in precisely those terms by those outside it, both in "the real world" and in other, "harder" academic disciplines. In attempting to counter this perspective, I have run the risk of demonizing the New Historicism (a pastime that is becoming more and more frequent as I write). Yet I am indebted to its practitioners, both in obvious ways (for their insistence on self-consciousness about one's own position and their pioneering work in the archive, particularly in the field of early modern sexuality), and in less obvious ones as well. As I have noted, my notion of "pointless play" resonates not only with the earlier work of Patricia Parker, but also with that of Stephen Greenblatt. My sense of Marlowe was first formed and is still influenced by his seminal chapter in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play."[5] As the chapter's title suggests, Greenblatt manifests here (and in much of his work) an abiding interest in the aesthetic that is often forgotten by his followers. Yet the same title also points to significant differences from my conception of "pointless play": in its echo of the "will to power," it effectively conveys Greenblatt's investment here in a kind of power-play – an existential brinksmanship creating "lines that echo in the void, that echo more powerfully because there is nothing but a void," a heroic if doomed attempt at self-fashioning at "the brink of an abyss – *absolute* play."[6] It would be foolish to deny the existence of this strain in

Marlowe's work; but Greenblatt's emphasis reflects, among other things, the unquestioned assumption (and celebration) of a conventionally masculine perspective that has often been remarked in his early criticism. I am interested, by contrast, in foregrounding the presence in Marlowe's writings of an equally strong "will to powerlessness," with all the contradictions that implies, and in considering the connections between these contradictions and his evocations of a sexual subjectivity that is traditionally defined in terms of indefinition.

Comparable splits and contradictions exist in the later plays I have examined. One can see in Webster's Duchess, as Frank Whigham does, a female version of the aristocratic willfulness that characterizes her brother Ferdinand;[7] but I have argued that it is important to emphasize her (and the play's) involvement in the "sportive action" that Ferdinand despises (1.2.12) – in a self-consciously frivolous gossip or foreplay that takes the terms of masculine, aristocratic power and uses them to create something different. Similarly, Catherine Gallagher has accurately pointed to Margaret Cavendish's commitment to absolutism, both in her self-conception and in her political views;[8] but I have demonstrated that this exists in tension throughout her plays with her commitment to a poetics of the surface and her resistance to conventional structure and closure. Each of these texts' participation in the forms of power noted by New Historicist critics is, I have suggested, necessary on the most fundamental level: it is crucial to the plays' ability to make sense to their audiences and readers. But their deviance from these forms is also central to their enterprise, and it has therefore been regularly called to our attention by critics taking them to task for their perceived failures (although in Marlowe's case, these are frequently explained by ascribing them to different hands).

In other plays, like *The Changeling* and *'Tis Pity*, the investment in conventional structure, sexuality, and power seems more dominant; yet it is simultaneously shadowed by a self-questioning – sometimes even self-mocking – awareness that prevents us from simply assenting to it. And all of these texts make clear that what we understand about ourselves as desiring subjects is inseparable from the ways in which we understand it, that the former cannot change unless the latter does. If this sounds like a utopian project, I would say, on the one hand, that (like the Duchess's rhetorical creations in Webster's play), its "sportiveness" is part of its subversiveness. But I think it is also important to note that the unconventional form of many of these texts has become much more widely accepted (and even praised) in the past few decades; and I would suggest that this change already reflects and has helped to effect our culture's increasing acceptance of previously marginalized forms of desire.

Notes

INTRODUCTION: CONSUMMATE PLAY

1 For several good summaries and analyses of this episode in critical history, see the essays in Mark David Rasmussen, ed., *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), esp. Stephen Cohen, "Between Form and Culture: New Historicism and the Promise of a Historical Formalism,"17–41; Heather Dubrow, "The Politics of Aesthetics: Recuperating Formalism and the County House Poem," 67–88; Richard Strier, "Afterword: How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can't Do Without It," 207–15. See also the insightful questioning of these New Historicist assumptions in Lynn Enterline, *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), and *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Graham L. Hammill, *Sexuality and Form: Caravaggio, Marlowe, Bacon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

2 This was, in fact, suggested in Stephen Greenblatt's chapter on Marlowe, "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play," in his seminal New Historicist book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 193–221.

3 In this respect, it mirrors the "useless *jouissance*" that, as Graham Hammill notes in his trenchant analysis of Guy Hocquenghem and Leo Bersani, society fearfully associates with the anus and with homosexual desire; Hammill comments:

> Bersani names this obscene dread, this useless *jouissance* "homo-ness" and . . . he argues that homo-ness is the somewhat paradoxical foundation for homosexual identity. Historically preceding the invention of "the homosexual," this homo-ness is a "self-shattering" *jouissance* intrinsic to homosexuality, an "anti-identitarian identity," that defines homosexual sociality through the confrontation of that identity with anti-relationality. (*Sexuality and Form*, 83)

See Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 64, 101; Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

4 John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, 3rd edn., ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan, New Mermaids (New York: Norton, 1993), 1.2.11–12.
5 Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 3 and passim.
6 Other recent critical works that have called for and attempted to participate in this project of reconceptualization include Hammill, *Sexuality and Form*; Carla Frecerro, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in Renaissance Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, "Queering History," *PMLA* 120 (2005), 1608–17. Marshall Grossman engages in this project from a different perspective in *The Story of All Things: Writing the Self in Narrative Poetry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).
7 Dubrow, "The Politics of Aesthetics," 72. See also Naomi Schor's acute analysis of the gendering of the detail in *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1989).
8 Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London: N. Trubner, 1877–9), 144–5 (sig. L8v).
9 Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, 145 (sig. L8v).
10 Anthony Munday, *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and theaters* by Salvian of Marseilles and "Anglo-phile Eutheo" (London, 1580), 3–4; see also Marshall's analysis of this passage in *The Shattering of the Self*, 18.
11 See Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Antitheatricality and Effeminization 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22; Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 120–2.
12 Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 121–2.
13 Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. W. Moelwyn Merchant, New Mermaids (New York: Norton, 1987), 1.4.255.
14 Murray Krieger, "My Travels with the Aesthetic," in *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*, ed. Michael P. Clark (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 225–6; see also Michael Clark's extremely useful introduction to this volume, 1–24.
15 Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Silverman argues that our dominant fiction depends upon a belief in "the commensurability of the penis and the phallus," which creates the illusion of "the adequacy of the male subject," 15, 16.
16 Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 78. See also the contempt for those who "make Nature afraid in [their] plays, . . . [who] beget Tales, Tempests and such like drolleries," that is expressed in the Induction to Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (ed. G. R. Hibbard [New York: Norton, 1977], 124–6). For a brilliant discussion of the romance as a genre marked by deferral, which "simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object," see Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*

(Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1979), 4, and passim. See also David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); in a fascinating analysis, Quint identifies epic narrative with history's winners, and the collapse of narrative that characterizes romance with its losers (the only English text discussed is *Paradise Lost*). The tensions that Parker and Quint identify are, I believe, less extreme versions of those between static, pointless lyric and teleological tragedy that I consider here.

Naomi Schor further differentiates between epic, whose "slow and regular tempo" allows it to pause for the homely detail, and "dramatic poetry which is entirely oriented by a telos, a crisis to resolve" (*Reading in Detail*, 32); and Michael Neill, in *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), similarly describes tragedy in particular as "a profoundly teleological form whose full meaning will be uncovered in the revelation of its end" (45). Philippa Berry has brilliantly complicated this last formulation by attending to disruptive details in Shakespearean tragedy, but the disruptions she describes, as she herself acknowledges, clearly play off a consciousness of "the formal structure, or the narrative design of tragedy" that accords with Neill's description (*Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* [New York: Routledge, 1999], 30).

17 Sidney, *Apology*, 75. He continues: "For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and many places inartifically imagined . . . If it be so in *Gorboduc*, how much more in all the rest?"(75). He proceeds to give a number of laughable examples of the disregard of these principles, and then lambastes those plays that are "neither right tragedies, nor comedies, mingling clowns and kings" without reason (77).

As Forrest Robinson points out in his edition of the *Apology*, "the unities of place and time," though emphasized by Sidney,

> have a much slighter classical precedent than the unity of action or plot. Aristotle (*Poetics*, VIII) stresses the importance of the causal relations between the parts of a plot. Unity of time – the notion that a tragedy should confine itself to a single revolution of the sun – is also Aristotelian (*Poetics*, V), though Renaissance critics adhered to the precept more dogmatically than was intended. The unity of place has no source in antiquity, but was first formulated by Lodovico Castelvetro in 1571. (75, n. 400)

18 In her criticism of the unities, however, Margaret Cavendish asserts that even Jonson did not follow his own rules: "For though *Ben Johnson* as I have heard, was of that opinion, that a Comedy cannot be good, nor is a natural or true Comedy, if it should present more than one dayes action, yet his Comedies that he hath published, could never be the actions of one day" (Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. Anne Shaver [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999], 256).

19 Judith Roof, *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xxii.

20 Roof explains that she "locate[s] the beginnings of this particular manifestation of narrative and sexuality's interrelation in accord with Michel Foucault's understanding of the emergence of the category of sexuality in the nineteenth century." She immediately concedes, however, that if one is to be "suspicious of narrative, history is one narrative to be wary of, especially as it appears to offer a means to an origin that provides both answer and explanation" (*Come As You Are*, xxviii). I would suggest that her suspicions here are fully justified.

Most studies exploring the interrelation of sexuality and narrative (or dramatic) structure are similarly focused on the nineteenth or twentieth century. A major exception has been the work of Patricia Parker; see especially *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), and *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also Richard Burt's studies of film and other media versions of early texts, *Unspeakable ShaXXXspeares: Queer Theory and American Kiddie Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1998), and *Medieval and Early Modern Film and Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

21 Sigmund Freud, "The Sexual Aberrations," in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey, vol. VII (London: Hogarth, 1953), 150. Emily Apter comments: "Freud introduces an interesting notion here of normative temporality within sexual conduct. How long does it take, we are tempted to ask, before foreplay deteriorates into perverse 'lingering'?" (*Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991], 17, n. 5).

22 Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 32. See also Paul Morrison's excellent analysis in "End Pleasure," *GLQ* 1 (1993): 55–8, as well as Roof's discussion of Freud, *Come As You Are*, xviii–xxii.

23 See Marlowe, *Edward II* 1.4.68, 73; 2.2.62.

24 Grossman, *The Story of All Things*, passim.

25 In speaking of Margaret Cavendish's unusual foray into tragedy in *The Unnatural Tragedy*, the Duke of Newcastle identifies the genre as normally masculine, saying that his wife "'gainst her Sex the Tragick Buskins wears" ("Prologue," *The Unnatural Tragedy*, in Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *Playes* [London, 1662], 324). I explore the reasons for this identification more fully in the following pages. For a classic discussion of gender and genre in the Renaissance drama, see Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

26 For a useful analysis of this bias, see Paul Alpers, "Learning from the New Criticism: The Example of Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Rasmussen, 116–38.

27 See also Frecerro, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 32–41. Those cautioning against such identifications are, of course, often trying to avoid rigid, heteronormalizing assumptions; see, e.g., Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992); 64–70; 91–116. I by no means wish to limit the variety of desiring positions that women may assume.

28 I would agree with Gary Taylor that moving away from Shakespeare toward other early modern dramatists results in a very different – and often more radical – picture of sexuality and gender in the period; see Taylor, *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 27–32. For a strong argument for the value of considering Marlowe and Shakespeare together, see Thomas Cartelli, *Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

29 Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. Joost Daalder, New Mermaids (New York: Norton, 1990), 5.1.83; 5.3.108.

30 John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* 1.2.161, in Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin, eds., *Drama of the English Renaissance*, vol. II, *The Stuart Period* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

31 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5, 7. Cf. Hammill, *Sexuality and Form*, 169–77.

GENRE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN "THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD" AND *TAMBURLAINE*

1 Diana E. Henderson, *Passion Made Public: Elizabethan Lyric, Gender and Performance* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 126. See also Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Cheney comments that "the dominant critical lens through which we have viewed Marlowe since the seventeenth century" has been "the Shakespearean paradigm, with its privileging of drama over poetry and its neglect of scholarly translation" (27).

2 Douglas Bruster, "'Come to the Tent Again': 'The Passionate Shepherd,' Dramatic Rape and Lyric Time," *Criticism* 33 (1991): 49–72. All quotation from "The Passionate Shepherd" and "The Nymph's Reply" (attributed to Sir Walter Ralegh) follows the text of Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

3 R. S. Forsythe, "The Passionate Shepherd; and English Poetry," *PMLA* 40 (1925): 692–742, esp. 695.

4 See Lord Byron's witty comment in *Don Juan*: "But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one / Beginning with 'Formosum Pastor Corydon'" (*Don Juan*, ed. T. G. Steffan, E. Steffan, and W. W. Pratt [London: Penguin, 2004], 1.42). For criticism of *Eclogue* 2 on the grounds of its "solipsis[tic]" aestheticism, see Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1987), 5; see also my critique of this approach in *Pastoral and the Poetics of Self-Contradiction: Theocritus to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4–6. Other early versions of this story include Theocritus' Idyll 11 (Virgil's source) and Ovid's account in the *Metamorphoses*; both of these (to which Marlowe's poem has been compared) concern the love of the cyclops Polyphemus for the sea-nymph Galatea.

5 Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 92; despite the difference in my perspective, I am indebted to Smith's readings and suggestions. See Gregory Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Milton to Marlowe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 149, for a brief argument for sexual indeterminacy here; Bredbeck also provides an interesting discussion of the strikingly self-defeating attempts of later translators to suppress homoerotic elements in Theocritus and Virgil (197–213). Other critics who insist on the importance of *Eclogue* 2 to Marlowe's poem (viewing this relation from quite different perspectives), include Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 223–7, and Patrick Cheney, "Career Rivalry and the Writing of Counter-Nationhood: Ovid, Spenser, and Philomela in Marlowe's 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,'" *ELH* 65 (1998): 523–55; here, and in *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession* (of which this article forms the third chapter), Cheney views Marlowe's connection to Ovid (and his rivalry with Spenser) as even more important.

6 As Smith notes, the *OED* confirms that the original meaning of kirtle, "a man's tunic" had passed out of usage after 1500," but survives in the sixteenth century "as a term for a robe of state" (*Homosexual Desire*, 92). It does not, however, really designate this as the primary meaning in the period, as Smith suggests; it simply notes (through its numbering) that it is an earlier meaning than sense 2, "a woman's gown," or 2b "a skirt or petticoat" (a sense that seems insistently present at the time). Cf. Hero's "kirtle" in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (15).

7 The phrase is usually translated "come here" or "come hither." See also Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* 224.

8 *Dido* is cited from *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Irving Ribner (Indianapolis: Odyssey, 1963).

9 In addition to the numerous versions of "The Passionate Shepherd" in Marlowe's other texts that are catalogued by Forsythe ("The Passionate Shepherd") and others, see the discussion below of *Tamburlaine* I.1.2.133–7, and the frequent suggestions in *Hero and Leander* that Leander has (or is about to) "come" and that heterosexual consummation has occurred, and the subsequent dissolution of these suggestions into undirected play.

10 The first version of this phrase, of course, presents "pleasures" as moving "thee" (19), but the penultimate line seems to confirm that the both the addressee and the movement (like everything else here) are primarily affairs of the mind; in this they are similar to Corydon's flower offering in *Eclogue* 2, the imaginary nature of which was imitated by Shakespeare (in *The Winter's Tale*) and Milton (in "Lycidas") among others.

11 Compare Ralegh, "The Nymph's Reply":

> The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
> To wayward winter reckoning yields;
> A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
> Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall. (9–12)

12 David Riggs notes: "The most popular lyric of the age went unnamed until the editor of the anthology *The Passionate Pilgrim* called it 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' in 1599"; see *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004), 109.

13 See also the excellent analyses in Henderson, *Passion Made Public*, 123–5.

14 The concept is of course Derrida's (following Heidegger), and denotes an idea that is simultaneously inaccurate and necessary, both written and crossed out. See Gayatri Spivak's discussion in the introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xiv. This technique is made explicit here in those words which simultaneously call up conventional meanings and deny them (e.g., "beds," "falls") but it is implicitly at work throughout the entire poem.

15 The blazons in *Hero and Leander* are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

16 See, e.g., Forsythe, "The Passionate Shepherd," 697–9; there is clearly more dependence on Ovid and Theocritus here. Forsythe assumes that the play precedes – and gives "advance hints" of – the poem (699); Riggs makes a persuasive case for the reverse chronology in *The World of Christopher Marlowe*, 108. It is, of course, especially difficult in the case of this poet to be certain that his development strictly follows any given narrative pattern. My argument does not depend on chronology, but for the sake of convenience, I will speak of the poem as if it had been written first.

17 See also Mark Thornton Burnett's related but somewhat differently inflected reading in "Tamburlaine and the Body," *Criticism* 33 (1991): 31–47. Quotations from *Tamburlaine* are from the New Mermaids edition, ed., Anthony B. Dawson, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 1997).

18 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 213.

19 As Cheney notes, the line "Jove sometimes maskèd in a shepherd's weed" seems most directly to echo Spenser's proem to Book I of the *Faerie Queene* (*Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession*, 123–6).

20 See also David Thurn, "Sights of Power in *Tamburlaine*," *English Literary Renaissance* 19 (1989): 9. For "vaunt," see *OED*, noun 1 and verb 1, which together trace the word back to vulgar Latin *vanitare* (itself related to *vanus*).

21 Cf. the peers' accusation in *Edward II* that Mortimer "play [s] the sophister" (Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. W. Moelwyn Merchant, New Mermaids [New York: Norton, 1987], 1.4.255). See also Alan Shepard's different reading of the lines from *Tamburlaine* in *Marlowe's Soldiers: Rhetorics of Masculinity in the Age of the Armada* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 36.

22 When Argydas comments that her "offensive rape by Tamburlaine, /. . . / Hath seemed to be digested long ago," Zenocrate replies, "Although it be digested long ago, /. . . / Yet, since, a farther passion feeds my thoughts" (3.2.6–13). Compare the progress of the images and food and digestion in Tamburlaine's later meditation on Zenocrate's "Beauty" (5.2.97–120). For interesting discussions of distinctions (and confusions) between *raptus* and *stuprum* in the Renaissance, see Karen Robertson, "Rape and the Appropriation of Progne's Revenge in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, or 'Who Cooks the Thyestean Banquet?'" in *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 213–37; Barbara J. Baines, "Effacing Rape in Early Modern Representation," *ELH* 65 (1998): 69–98.

23 This is literally as well as figuratively true in the powerful first scenes of Part One, in which words are substituted for swords, rhetorical play for the business of war. As the play progresses, of course, we understand that Tamburlaine must physically fight (as this occurs and the ideas in the play are realized in action, readers often see him – not coincidentally – as both less potent and less appealing). We are never, however, presented with representations of battle as we will be in Shakespeare's plays. Indeed, the verbal battle between Zenocrate and Zabina in 3.3 plays ironically upon this fact: theoretically, the women fight with words while the men wage war (offstage) with swords; on another level, though, the men's war is self-consciously presented as wholly rhetorical (on a third level, of which this play is aware, that is of course also true of a play like *Henry V*). It is not until *Tamburlaine*, Part Two that the physicality (and the attendant grotesquerie) of the hero's actions is consistently foregrounded, and even there it is worth noting that, after the play has built throughout its entirety to a climactic battle with Callepine, the deathly ill Tamburlaine causes his enemies to flee "like summer's vapours, vanished by the sun" by merely "show[ing] his face" (5.3.114–16).

24 In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare seems similarly to be pursuing the idea to its logical conclusion. Jonathan Goldberg relies on a less extreme form of this construction when he attempts to distance Edward II from accusations of effeminacy in *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992) 108–15. I believe, however, that the idea is more appropriate to *Tamburlaine* than it is to Marlowe's later play, whose emphases are quite different.

25 For Renaissance puns on "wit," see Stephen Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 177; Frankie Rubinstein, *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sexual Puns and Their Significance*, 2nd edn. (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), 309. The opening lines of the play, as many critics have noted, pit *Tamburlaine* against earlier rhyming popular drama; Cheney sees them as also "imitating Spenser's projected Virgilian turn from pastoral to epic in the October eclogue" (*Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession*, 119), which would intensify the contrast – and the ultimate irony – that I am presenting here.

26 The lameness of the historical Tamburlaine (Timur the Lame) seems to be displaced here onto Mycetes.

27 Mycetes' frequent association with the anal (he is told to kiss his "royal seat," 1.1.97–8; he hides his crown "close" in a hole, 2.4.11, 15) also contrasts, on the first level, with Tamburlaine's identification with the phallic.

28 As several critics have noted, Tamburlaine's line, like many other words and ideas associated with him, is not wholly his own; this frequently quoted passage is itself a quotation – from *Menaphon* (2.5.49). See, e.g., Emily Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 67; Bartels argues persuasively that "not only does Tamburlaine apply himself to fit others' terms, his image is significantly shaped by others' articulations of these terms" (66–7). I would add that insofar as Tamburlaine succeeds in making these terms his own – through appropriation and repetition – they invariably approach meaninglessness.

29 T. S. Eliot, "Christopher Marlowe," *Selected Essays*, 3rd edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 119. In *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll's Duchess actually advised, "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves"; her line plays on the British proverb, "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves" (*The Annotated Alice*, with an Introduction and Notes by Martin Gardner [New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1960], 121). See also Marjorie Garber, "'Here's Nothing Writ' Scribe, Script, and Circumscription in Marlowe's Plays," in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Richard Wilson (London: Longman, 1999), 31. The repetition of the sonorous, exotic names (chosen, it appears, at least in part because they sound so great and scan so well) also reflects back on – and empties out – the exotic place names in the persuasions of Zenocrate and Theridamas, through which Tamburlaine (and Marlowe) had created the world with words; this reduction of the evocative names in the play to pure sound is taken even further in Part Two, where they are piled upon one another until they approach gibberish. Marlowe's self-consciousness about this procedure is made abundantly clear in the following passage from Part Two, in which a number of kings pledge fealty to Callepine:

> ORCANES: Callapinus Cyricelibes, otherwise Cybelius, son and successive heir to the late mighty emperor Bajazeth, by the aid of God and his friend Mahomet, Emperor of Natolia, Jerusalem, Trebixon, Soria, Amasia, Thracia, Illyria, Carmania, and all the hundred and thirty kingdoms late contributory to his mighty father. Long live Callapinus, Emperor of Turkey!
>
> CALLEPINE: Thrice worthy kings of Natolia, and the rest, . . . (3.1.1–8)

30 See also Tamburlaine's later comment: "Doth not the Turk and his wife make a goodly show at a banquet?" (4.4.57–8).

31 Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 14.

32 Perhaps particularly relevant is Thomas Preston's frequently mocked play, *Cambyses* (*A Lamentable Tragedy, Mixed Full of Pleasant Mirth, Containing the Life of Cambyses*, King of Persia, *c.* 1569).

33 Cf. C. L. Barber, *Creating Elizabethan Tragedy: The Theater of Marlowe and Kyd*, ed. Richard P. Wheeler. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 45–86.
34 She ends her last, disordered speech by screaming, "I come, I come, I come," and then braining herself against the cage (5.2.255–6).
35 Peter S. Donaldson has noted how the repetition of the word "honour" brings these ideas together. Tamburlaine declares to Zenocrate's father that his "honour . . . consists in shedding blood" (5.2.415); when the Soldan then inquires if he has "with honour used Zenocrate," Tamburlaine asserts that she is free of "all blot of foul inchastity" (5.2.422); see "Conflict and Coherence: Narcissism and Tragic Structure in Marlowe," in *Narcissism and the Text: Studies in Literature and the Psychology of Self*, ed. Lynne Layton and Barbara Ann Schapiro (New York: NYU Press, 1986), 45–6. Donaldson comments here that Tamburlaine clearly sees Zenocrate's honor as reflecting on his own; I would suggest that the connection between the two ideas is both more intimate and more complex than he allows: Tamburlaine is presenting himself, in effect, as rapt rapist, a substantial vaunt.
36 For different perspectives on Tamburlaine's self-wounding, see Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 210–11; Burnett, "Tamburlaine and the Body," 38–9; Matthew Greenfield "Christopher Marlowe's Wound Knowledge," *PMLA* 119 (2004): 239–40.
37 See also Thurn, "Sights of Power," 19; Burnett, "Tamburlaine and the Body," 34.
38 See also Shepard's acute analysis of the (homo)erotic force of the killings in these plays (*Marlowe's Soldiers*, 29–30). Sara Deats argues from a somewhat different perspective that "by the end of Part II Tamburlaine and Zenocrate can be seen as the caricatures of the gender polarities frequently celebrated by the early modern culture . . . a deadly juggernaut [and] . . . an immobile corpse"; see Sara Munson Deats, *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 150.
39 Cf. Burnett, "Tamburlaine and the Body," 41–2.

SUBMITTING TO HISTORY: *EDWARD II*

1 All references to *Edward II* are taken from the New Mermaids edition, ed. W. Moelwyn Merchant (New York: Norton, 1987).
2 It is an example of the rhetorical form that Steven Mullaney, following Puttenham, terms "amphibology," "the figure of the traitor"; see Steven Mullaney, "Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England," *ELH* 47 (1980): 32–42. Patricia Parker also comments suggestively on amphibology in *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), 97–125; see also her discussion of narrative and dramatic "points" (in *Literary Fat Ladies* and *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996]).

3 Marjorie Garber, "'Infinite Riches in a Little Room': Closure and Enclosure in Marlowe," in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers: Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson*, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 16. For later reformulations of this position see, e.g., Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105 (1990): 216; Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 221; Emily Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 143–72. See also Garber's comments on the letter in "'Here's Nothing Writ' Scribe, Script, and Circumscription in Marlowe's Plays," in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Richard Wilson (London: Longman, 1999), 49–51.

4 David H. Thurn analyzes these shifts (and touches upon some of the points I make in this chapter) in "Sovereignty, Disorder, and Fetishism in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 115–42.

5 Sara Deats argues that "Lancaster's maxim provides an ironic motto for Marlowe's study in contrarieties"; see Sara Munson Deats, *Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 162.

6 For extended analyses of this pattern (and of the other antitheses in the play) from significantly different perspectives, see Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Hammer and Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 175–211; and Debra Belt, "Anti-Theatricalism and Rhetoric in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *English Literary Renaissance* 21 (1991): 134–60.

7 William Stubbs, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II* (1883), cited in *Edward II*, ed. H. B. Charlton and R. D. Waller (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), 37.

8 This is especially emphasized in their groundbreaking studies: Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); Goldberg, "Sodomy and Society: The Case of Christopher Marlowe," *Southwest Review* 69 (1984): 371–8. In subsequent writings, both critics have explored the extent to which sodomy is embedded in the order to which it is opposed: see Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop* 29 (1990): 1–19; Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). These later texts both contain readings of *Edward II* that differ in significant respects from my own; Goldberg, in particular, goes to great lengths to distance Edward from charges of effeminacy and impotence. While I would agree that these are not necessary corollaries of homoeroticism, that, in fact, "effeminacy was more easily associated in this period with . . . men who displayed excessive attention to women" (*Sodometries*, 111) – as we can see in *Tamburlaine* – I also would argue that they do form part of this play's representation of Edward, and that his implied sexual ambiguity and "pointlessness" are crucial to its conception of sodomy. For other important

perspectives, see Gregory W. Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. chapter 2; Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness*, 143–72; Smith, *Homosexual Desire*, esp. chapter 6; Mario DiGangi, "Marlowe, Queer Studies, and Renaissance Homoeroticism," in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 195–212, and DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9 Thomas Browne, cited in Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, p. 23; see also Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation*, 91.

10 Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London: N. Trubner, 1877–9), 144–5 (sig. L8v). Laura Levine provides an extremely perceptive and helpful analysis of the antitheatrical tracts in *Men in Women's Clothing: Antitheatricality and Effeminization 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10–25. She contends that sodomy is "a metaphor or a scapegoat or an attempt to give an account for the more disturbing idea at the center of these tracts, that under the costume there is really nothing there, or alternatively, that what is there is something foreign, something terrifying and essentially 'other'" (23). I am indebted to Levine's formulation, although I am suggesting that the connection of sodomy with "the more disturbing idea at the center of these tracts" (and with the condition of being "a metaphor or a scapegoat") is less arbitrary than she allows. For interesting developments of Levine's ideas, see Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?" in *Displacing Homophobia*, ed. Ronald R. Butters, John M. Clum, and Michael Moon (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 7–29; and Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, 239, 252.

11 Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, 145 (sig. L8v).

12 Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Women and Scattered Rhyme," in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 95–110. See also Vickers, "The Mistress in the Masterpiece," in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 19–41; and Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*, 62–6. For an analysis of the various uses to which the Actaeon myth was put in Renaissance literature, see Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 317–59. For some different applications of the myth to Marlowe's works, see Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 164–65; James Knowles, "'Infinite Riches in a Little Room': Marlowe and the Aesthetics of the Closet," in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices/Bodies/Spaces, 1580–1690*, ed. Gordon McMullan (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), 17–18, 21–2; Christopher Wessman, "'I'll Play Diana': Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the 'Actaeon Complex,'" *English Studies* 82 (2001): 401–19; Garrett Sullivan,

Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 85.

13 Cf. Thurn, "Sovereignty, Disorder, and Fetishism," 120–1. See also Marjorie Garber's discussion of the fetish in *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 118–27. Goldberg asserts, to the contrary, that Gaveston's speech "define[s] in advance precisely the kind of theatricalization *Edward II* will not offer, the sexual sphere in which the play does not operate." But there is nothing in the text that really conveys this; such a conclusion is arrived at only by taking the passage very literally ("neither Gaveston nor Edward wears dresses. The familiar linking of boy and woman is disarmed," *Sodometries*, 115), and disregarding its insistence on indeterminacy, which Goldberg himself sees a central concern of the play.

14 Cf. John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993): "Old Mortimer apologizes for Edward's relationship with Gaveston through classical examples that justify the homoerotics of power and knowledge . . . More examples follow, yet all this is seemingly beside the point" (81).

15 Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), 204.

16 For a detailed discussion of Marlowe's emblematic method in the play, see David Bevington and James Shapiro, "'What are kings, when regiment is gone?': The Decay of Ceremony in *Edward II*," in *"A Poet and a filthy Playmaker": New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance B. Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 263–78.

17 Cf. Garber, "'Here's Nothing Writ,'" 50–1.

18 Stephen Greenblatt, "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play," in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 203.

19 Cf. Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence*, 86.

20 The primary exception is, of course, the murderous Lightborn, who is portrayed as unshakably "resolute" (5.4.22–3); cf. Spencer's advice to Baldock: "You must be proud, bold, pleasant, resolute, / And now and then stab as occasion serves" (2.1.42–3).

21 Phyllis Rackin points out in *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) that, at the end of the sixteenth century, "history" was in the process of becoming "an autonomous discipline with its own purposes and methods, clearly distinct from myth and literature, and accountable to different formal requirements and different truth criteria. Rhyme gave way to reason, verse to prose . . . Even the arrangement of incidents was strictly regulated" (19). Rackin also notes that "the exclusive protocols of historical writing reproduced the divisions of the traditional social hierarchy" (23). On the genre of *Edward II* as a "history play" (and the various arguments about that assignment), see Clare Hattaway, *Re-Citing Marlowe: Approaches to the Drama* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 55–6. Interestingly, Hattaway cites an editor of the play, W. D. Briggs, who

"distinguishes chronicle drama from historical drama according to whether events are connected casually or causally" (56); she herself sees the plays as meditating on history, although in a quite different manner than I do here.

22 See, e.g., Russell A. Fraser's introduction to the play in Fraser and Norman Rabkin, eds., *Drama of the English Renaissance* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), vol. I, 323. As Deats observes, the play's admirers have traditionally praised its dramatic structure, while its detractors have complained about its lack of poetic power; see Sara Munson Deats, "Myth and Metamorphosis in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22 (1980): 305, and "Marlowe's Fearful Symmetry in *Edward II*," in "*A Poet and a filthy Play-maker*," ed. Friedenreich, Gill, and Kuriyama, 241–62.

23 Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 22; see also Teresa de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative," in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 103–57.

24 Stephen Orgel, in *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), maintains that Marlowe did not intend the impalement to take place (47–8); but while the text is ambiguous on this score (deliberately playing, like much of *Edward II*, with what one can and cannot see), it certainly calls up that image in our minds.

25 J. R. Mulryne and Stephen Fender, "Marlowe and the 'Comic Distance,'" in *Christopher Marlowe: Mermaid Critical Commentaries*, ed. Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), 60–1. For an argument that "rather than fitting the crime, the punishment fits Mortimer's need for a murder and a murderer that finally cannot be detected, like the 'unpointed message,'" see Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness*, 159; Bartels contends that what Marlowe makes us see "here as throughout is not, as Mortimer would have it, Edward's crime or even Lightborn's, but Mortimer and the peers' relentless efforts to use the unseeable and unspeakable offense to undo the king and make room for their own domination" (159). I would suggest that the alternatives Bartels proposes, while seemingly contradictory, are not mutually exclusive here.

26 Michael Drayton, *Mortimeriados*, 2053, in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. J. William Hebel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1931), 1.

27 Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London: J. Johnson *et al.*, 1807), 2, 587.

28 See also Bartels' description of the account of Edward's death in Holinshed: "On display here is, paradoxically, a vivid symbolic recreation of a crime that was not to be seen, a punishment that leaves no trace of itself or what it represents" (*Spectacles of Strangeness*, 143).

29 Cf. Julia Kristeva's formulation: "It is . . . not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the

composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience . . . " (Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez [New York: Columbia University Press, 1982], 4).

"TRUE-LOVES BLOOD": NARRATIVE AND DESIRE IN *HERO AND LEANDER*

1 I borrow the term "dominant fiction" from Kaja Silverman (*Male Subjectivity at the Margins* [New York: Routledge, 1992]), who uses it to designate the representational system which forms the core of a society's ideological "reality" and mediates between the mode of production and the symbolic order. Silverman argues that central to our present dominant fiction is the belief in "the adequacy of the male subject," "the commensurability of the penis and the phallus" (16, 15). She adds:

> "The dominant fiction is . . . informed by what Ernesto Leclau calls a 'will to totality'; it is the mechanism by which a society 'tries to institute itself as such on the basis of closure, of the fixation of meaning . . .' The dominant fiction neutralizes the contradictions which organize the social formation by fostering collective identifications and desires, identifications and desires which have a range of effects, but which are first and foremost constitutive of sexual difference" (54).

In using Silverman's formulations, I am in no way attempting to argue for a fixed, transhistorical view of sexuality (indeed, her work militates against such a view), but rather simply noting the persistence of certain central (yet contestable) elements in the stories we tell ourselves.

2 In an influential article, Marion Campbell has argued that Marlowe's poem should be viewed as "complete" as it stands; see "'*Desunt Nonnulla*': The Construction of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as an Unfinished Poem," *ELH* 51 (1984): 241–68. Campbell's assumptions are generally compatible with my own, although her emphasis is significantly different; while she makes a strong case that "only by extricating *Hero and Leander* from Chapman's construction of it can we hope to do justice to the poem Marlowe wrote" (267), she paradoxically spends the greater part of her essay analyzing Chapman's continuation. See also W. L. Godshalk, "*Hero and Leander*: The Sense of an Ending," in *"A Poet and a filthy Play-maker": New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance B. Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 293–314.

3 And, as a necessary corollary, it is less fully realized. Georgia Brown sees *Hero and Leander* as a characteristic product of the 1590s – in the poem's own marginal form (the epyllion), in its focus on the marginal and the trivial throughout, and in its celebration of non-didactic poetry, of the shamefully "merely literary"; see Georgia E. Brown, "Breaking the Canon: Marlowe's Challenge to the Literary Status Quo in Hero and Leander," in *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 59–76, and "Gender and Voice in *Hero and Leander*," in *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, ed. J. A. Downie and

J. T. Parnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 148–63. Brown develops these ideas in her illuminating study of the 1590s, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

4 Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Events," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43 (1992): 186–213, revised in *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). See also Lee Edelman, "Seeing Things: Representation, the Scene of Surveillance, and the Spectacle of Gay Male Sex," in *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 173–91.

5 All quotation of *Hero and Leander* is from Richard S. Sylvester, ed., *English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology* (New York: Norton, 1984); Sylvester uses the text of "the first 1598 edition, from the unique copy in the Folger Shakespeare Library" (605).

6 Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 69.

7 Žižek, *Looking Awry*, 70.

8 Freud's essay on "Fetishism" (in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey [London: Hogarth Press, 1966], vol. XIX, 248–58) itself points to the undecidability of the fetish (the fetishist both believes in and denies the "reality" of castration) and this quality is given particular emphasis in many recent revisionist readings. See especially Silverman, who argues cogently that although Freud "explicitly posits [the denial of castration] as a male defense against *female* lack, 'Fetishism' implicitly shows it to be a defense against what is in the final analysis *male* lack . . . Woman's anatomical 'wound' is the product of an externalizing displacement of masculine insufficiency, which is then biologically naturalized" (*Male Subjectivity*, 46; cf. Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983], 13–22). Cf. Marjorie Garber's argument in "Fetish Envy" (in *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* [New York: Routledge, 1992], 118–27), that "the fetish *is* the phallus, the phallus *is* the fetish" (121). See also Emily Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

9 Cf. David Lee Miller, "The Death of the Modern: Gender and Desire in Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander,'" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 757–86.

10 For an argument that the later passage solves the problems here, see William Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Their Contemporaries* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1977), 97; see also J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 307, and L. C. Martin, ed., *Marlowe's Poems* (New York: Gordian, 1966), 28.

11 Cf. Miller "The Death of the Modern"; Jonathan Goldberg provides an acute critique of Miller's approach in *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern*

Sexualities (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 127–8. For influential discussions of spectacle and narrative, see Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), and *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990); Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, and *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). For studies that focus on Renaissance texts (and on blazon in particular), see Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), esp. 54–66, 126–54; Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Women and Scattered Rhyme," in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 95–110, "'The blazon of sweet beauty's best': Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 95–115, and "The Mistress in the Masterpiece," in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 19–41.

12 Gregory W. Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 111–12.

13 Robert Logan, "Perspective in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*: Engaging Our Detachment," in "*A Poet and a filthy Playmaker*," ed. Friedenreich, Gill, and Kuriyama, 285. In their self-consciously static artificiality (as well as the relative privileging of a homoerotic desire, which is not, itself, completely realized physically), these two blazons recall the paired persuasions of Zenocrate and Theridamas in *Tamburlaine*, Part One (and thus, at a distance, the descriptions in "The Passionate Shepherd").

14 The myth of Medusa is clearly relevant here; cf. Miller "The Death of the Modern," 765–6.

15 For an interesting reading that views this episode as "an epitome of Marlowe's project" throughout his works, see David Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004), 302.

16 Cf. Stephen Greenblatt's comments on the end of *Tamburlaine*, Part Two in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 202.

17 See Pamela L. Royston, "*Hero and Leander* and the Eavesdropping Reader," *John Donne Journal* 2 (1983): 37–40, and Paul M. Cubeta, "Marlowe's Poet in *Hero and Leander*," *College English* 26 (1965): 503–4.

18 Cubeta, "Marlowe's Poet," 503.

19
> Like *Æsops* cocke, this jewell he enjoyed,
> And as a brother with his sister toyed,
> Supposing nothing else was to be done,
> Now he her favour and good will had wone. (535–8)

The cock in Aesop's fable threw away a precious jewel because it wasn't a barleycorn; as numerous readers have noted, "this simile is ambiguous in its context" (Sylvester, *English Sixteenth-Century Verse*, 516).

20 Cf. Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation*, 130–1.

21 Even the temporary stability achieved in this line is effectively compromised by the network of earlier references associating the maidenhead with "nothing": see, e.g., ll. 255, 270–6, 508–9, 546–9, and cf. l. 408. On the frustration of our (and Leander's) desire here, see also Fred B. Tromly, *Playing with Desire: Christopher Marlowe and the Art of Tantalization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 165. As his title suggests, Tromly reads this poem – and indeed Marlowe's whole corpus –in terms of the Tantalus myth.

22 Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation*, 132.

23 The most famous example of this type of reading is Rosamund Tuve's in *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 157; see also the commentary on Tuve's reading by Steane, *Marlowe*, 327, and Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation*, 131–2.

24 For relevant discussions of the castration narrative and the logic of sexual differentiation, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*; Edelman, *Homographesis*, 173–91; Jacques Derrida, "Le facteur de la vérité," in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 411–96.

25 See, e.g., the following comments: "In the moment of sexual fulfilment, the poem finds its single point of repose" (Steane, *Marlowe*, 332); "At the moment of consummation, the narrator presents Leander as the conquering sexual hero" (Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives*, 112); "When the moment of consummation arrives for Hero and Leander, it is described through a mythological allusion that invokes a subtext of plundering and territoriality" (Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation*, 127). Miller reads the bird simile in a similar fashion: "As Leander takes possession of Hero, Marlowe expresses the discursive aspect of this triumph in an astonishing simile" ("The Death of the Modern," 774). He also speaks generally of "the moment" when passion ravishes female integrity (773), and suggests that *Hero and Leander* provides a particular example of that moment.

26 Sylvester's *English Sixteenth-Century Verse* is, in fact, the only readily available modern edition that follows 1598 rather than Brooke; critical essays often accept the emended text without question or comment (exceptions include Campbell, "'*Desunt Nonnulla*,'" Godshalk, "*Hero and Leander*," and Brown's various pieces, which use the text of 1598 but do not examine this passage).

27 Louis L. Martz, Textual Commentary, *Hero and Leander: A Facsimile of the First Edition, London 1598* (London: Johnson Reprint, 1972), 16.

28 Martz, *Hero and Leander*, 16.

29 Singer attempted to "make sense" of the bird simile by placing lines 783–4 ("Even as a bird . . . ") before line 763 ("She trembling strove . . . "). See S. W. Singer, ed., *Select Early English Poets*, No. 8 (London, 1821), 39, and Martz, *Hero and Leander*, 16.

30 Martz, *Hero and Leander*, 15.

31 On the "straightening" of texts, see Parker, "Preposterous Events," 212; Stephen Orgel, "The Poetics of Incomprehensibility," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991): 431–7, and "Authentic Shakespeare," *Representations* 21 (1988): 1–25.

32 C. F. Tucker Brooke, ed., *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 511. Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), points out that "the block of ten lines" (763–72) that "wrongly intervenes" between lines 762 and 773 "is too short to suppose that it comprised a foul page of manuscript." He offers instead the suggestion that lines 773–84 "were in fact written on a separate slip as an addition to the manuscript," to be inserted after line 762; the compositor misunderstood the markings and misplaced the passage (427).

33 Miller, "The Death of the Modern," 763, 781; cf. Steane, *Marlowe*, 333.

34 On Actaeon, see Vickers, "Diana Described" and "Mistress," and Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 317–59.

35 In addition to the examples cited throughout this essay, one should note the description of Mercury's seduction of the country maid whom he "spied" (388):

> And then he woo'd with kisses, and at last,
> As sheap-heards do, her on the ground hee layd,
> And tumbling in the grasse, he often strayd,
> Beyond the bounds of shame, in being bold
> To eie those parts, which no eie should behold. (404–8)

W. L. Godshalk remarks: "When Mercury tumbles his country maid . . . the reader surmises the worst. But not so. Mercury is only looking" (299). In this context, Marlowe's famous aphorism, "Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight?" ("*Hero and Leander*," 176) takes on particular significance.

36 Miller, "The Death of the Modern," 780.

37 On guilt and narrative, see Silverman, *Male Subjectivity* and *The Subject of Semiotics*, and Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Marlowe's aestheticizing pun (cf. 1, 10) is turned back on itself in Chapman's continuation:

> And as amidst th' enamoured waves [Leander] swims,
> The god of gold of purpose gilt his limbs,
> That this word gilt including double sense,
> The double guilt of his incontinence
> Might be expressed.

(George Chapman, *Continuation of "Hero and Leander*," 3.23–7, in Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations*, ed. Stephen Orgel [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971]).

Campbell comments incisively on these lines without noting the specific recollection of Marlowe ("'*Desunt Nonnulla*,'" 255).

"THUS WITH A KISS": A SHAKESPEAREAN INTERLUDE

1 Shakespeare's image has come to represent ideal love to many in our present culture, as well as in early modern Europe. Recent criticism, has, however, questioned the "idealism" of the play from various perspectives. See, for example, Dympna C. Callaghan, "The Ideology of Romantic Love: The Case of *Romeo and Juliet*," in *The Weyward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics*, ed. Dympna Callaghan, Lorraine Helms, and Jyotsna Singh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 59–101; Jonathan Goldberg, "*Romeo and Juliet*'s Open Rs," in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 218–35.

2 This image is not, of course, confined to tragedy, which simply presents it in one of its most powerful forms. A similar moment occurs, for example, in "The Canonization" (though significantly in the center rather than at the end of the lyric):

> The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
> By us: we two being one, are it.
> So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.
> We die and rise the same. (23–6)

(John Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith [London: Penguin, 1971]). See my discussion of Donne's presence in Ford's plays in Chapter 8.

3 See, e.g., *The Spanish Tragedy*, 2.4.55; 3.13.122; 4.2.5; 4.4.52, 67; cf. 5.4.68, 167 (Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, 2nd edn., New Mermaids [New York: Norton, 1989]).

4 In context, of course, this abrupt evocation of the end of leisurely conversation in *Paradise Lost* is regretful, rather than summoning up a consummation devoutly to be wished; see John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), 9.1.

5 Harry Levin, "Form and Formality in *Romeo and Juliet*," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Romeo and Juliet, ed. Douglas Cole (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970), 86.

6 See also Catherine Belsey, "The Name of the Rose in *Romeo and Juliet*," in Romeo and Juliet: *Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. R. S. White (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 47–77; Alexander Leggat, *Shakespeare's Tragedies, Violation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29–54.

7 Gayle Whittier, "The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in 'Romeo and Juliet,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989): 27; see also Rosalie Colie's earlier comments on "unmetaphoring" in the play in *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 145. As critics have frequently pointed out, the movement in the play is simultaneously a shift from comedy to tragedy: see especially Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1968), 80–106; and Whittier, who discusses the play's

"oxymoronic halves of the comic dream of a freely creative word and the tragic fact of *things*" ("The Sonnet's Body," 32).

8 See also Whittier, "The Sonnet's Body," 36.

9 While this line is meant to comfort Juliet, Romeo's projected future would actually be quite uncomfortable for the audience in the context of this play – if it were not also so completely unimaginable. For a more positive (and more fully imagined) version of a domestic future, see the bedroom scene in *The Duchess of Malfi*, discussed in Chapter 6, below.

10 For different kinds of complications than I am highlighting here, see Philippa Berry's extremely suggestive analysis in *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 21–43. Berry focuses here on the way Shakespeare's puns and tropes undermine the sense of an ending; she sees the association of death with sexuality as ultimately opening up the play, whereas I think it works to help create closure (albeit one that is self-consciously imagined as incomplete). More generally, she points out that Shakespearean women tend, in one form or another, to undergo a double death; it seems possible that this doubling gestures toward the cultural association of multiplicity with the female orgasm and female sexuality in general that I discuss in detail in Chapter 6.

11 Cf. Karen Newman's excellent discussion of the interconnection between female and racial monstrosity in *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 71–94.

12 Cf. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 240–43; Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings*, 99. See also the discussion of those anxieties in Edward A. Snow, "Sexual Anxiety and the Male Order of Things in *Othello*," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 384–412.

13 Further glosses may be provided by similar incidents in contemporary texts. In one of the most comparable, the heroine of John Marston's *The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606) is presented, like Desdemona, as virtuous but actively desiring. During her wedding ceremony, she casts aside "modest silence" to declare, "In open flame then passion break" (1.2.43–9). Her union is then immediately disrupted by a the outbreak of war, which clearly stands in for the action it prevents; it is announced by messenger who is described as both about to penetrate and frighteningly penetrated: "*Enter* CARTHALON, *his sword drawn, his body wounded, his shield struck full of darts,* MASSINISSA [the groom] *being ready for bed*" (1.2.61 *s.d.*). In *Sophonisba*, the heroine's marriage is clearly never consummated (although we are presented with numerous nightmarish images of that event), allowing her to die as Othello might wish, "With breast unstained, / Faith pure, a virgin wife / . . . most happy in [her] husband's arms" (5.4.102–3, 106). All quotation of *Sophonisba* follows the text of John Marston, *Selected Plays*, ed. Macdonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

14 Michael Neill, *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000),

249–50; see also Leggat, who provides an excellent summary of the various critical positions on the consummation in *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, 128.

15 For excellent readings that focus from different perspectives on pregnancy and female speech in this play, see Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 158–83; Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 198–226; Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York: Routledge, 1992), 221–38.

16 See Wilson, *Will Power*, 158–83. On the nondramatic romance, see Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). See also Ben Jonson's stated refusal to "make Nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries, to mix his head with other men's heels" (Induction, in *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. G.R. Hibbard [New York: Norton, 1977]), 124–6.

"HOW STRANGELY DOES HIMSELF WORK TO UNDO HIM": (MALE) SEXUALITY IN *THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY*

1 My text for *The Revenger's Tragedy* is the New Mermaids, 2nd edn., ed. Brian Gibbons (New York: Norton, 1991). I prefer not to make a judgment on the vexed question of the play's authorship, although I have no quarrel with the currently popular theory that it is probably by Middleton.

2 For an incisive discussion of the importance of illegitimacy in the play, see Michael Neill, "Bastardy, Counterfeiting, and Misogyny in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36 (1996): 397–416.

3 See J. L. Simmons, "The Tongue and Its Office in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *PMLA* 92 (1977): 56–68; Peter Stallybrass, "Reading the Body: *The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Jacobean Theater of Consumption," *Renaissance Drama* 18 (1987): 121–48. For more general comments on early modern understandings of the tongue, see Patricia Parker, "'On the Tongue': Cross-Gendering, Effeminacy, and the Art of Words," *Style* 23 (1989): 445–65; Carla Mazzio, "Sins of the Tongue," in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), 53–79.

4 Helikiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man*, (London, 1615), 288. See also Mark Breitenberg's discussion of the paradoxes involved in early modern conceptions of the male orgasm in *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49–51; Breitenberg notes that orgasm is simultaneously "the

most quintessentially masculine moment" and "finally just a moment" – one that "represents the supreme moment of masculine disempowerment *and* vulnerability – a literal and figurative emptying out of the masculine principle" (50).

5 T. S. Eliot, "Cyril Tourneur," in *Selected Essays*, 3rd edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951) 190, 189, 185. See also Scott McMillin's comments on this description in "Acting and Violence: *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Its Departures from *Hamlet*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 24 (1984): 280.

6 Larry Champion, "Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Jacobean Tragic Perspective," *Studies in Philology* 72 (1975): 311–12, cited in Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett, *The Revenger's Madness: A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 224.

7 See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, 2nd edn. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 146–7, who cites 1.2.166; 1.3.26; 1.4.49; 3.5.74; see also 1.1.40; 2.2.35, 160; 3.1.13; 3.3.17; 3.4.35; 3.5.121. My own reading has been influenced by Dollimore's seminal analysis.

8 Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 146.

9 See, e.g., Steven Mullaney, "Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600–1607," in *Centuries' Ends, Narrative Means*, ed. Robert Newman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 256–7; Laurie A. Finke, "Painting Women: Images of Femininity in Jacobean Tragedy," *Theatre Journal* 36 (1984): 357–8.

10 See also Stallybrass, "Reading the Body," 134; Mullaney, "Mourning and Misogyny," 258–9; Karen Bamford, *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 85.

11 Consider, in this context, Vindice's first words to Lussurioso. After the Duke's son has said, "We must be better acquainted. Push, be bold / With us, thy hand," Vindice replies: "With all my heart i' faith / How dost sweet musk-cat? When shall we lie together?" (1.2.32–4).

12 See also Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105 (1990), 209–22.

13 The fact that the revenger's delay here is largely a result of his desire to create a dramatically pleasing form only makes explicit what is true on one level of all revenge tragedy (and ultimately of all drama). This is illustrated by a (supposedly true) story told to me by Hob Broun about a road company production of *Hamlet*. The troupe was performing in a small town in the Midwest, and they were running late; their director told them to hurry up or they would miss their train. They reached the scene in which Hamlet sees Claudius at prayer. The actor playing Hamlet intoned, "Now might I do it pat, now's is a-praying; / And now I'll do it" (3.2.73–4); he then turned to the audience, said "Why not?" and stabbed the king (presumably catching his train). "Why not," of course, is that it makes for a pretty terrible play – and this is, from one perspective, the reason for every revenger's delay.

14 Like Marlowe's plays, *The Revenger's Tragedy* repeatedly calls our attention to the sexual as well as the intellectual meaning of "wit." And as always, the words and actions of the Duchess's sons here parody those of our heroes: when Ambitioso and Supervacuo believe that they have arranged the death of the Duke's son (having in fact arranged that of their own brother), they exult that "things fall out so fit" (3.3.29) and quarrel over who should receive the credit (3.1).

15 For arguments that Vindice and Hippolito are corrupted by their revenge, see H. H. Adams "Cyril Tourneur on Revenge," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 48 (1949): 72–87; Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 105–18; Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order* (London: Methuen, 1962) 80; Hallett and Hallett, *The Revenger's Madness*, 223–43. For an antithetical reading, maintaining that Vindice is a purely heroic revenger who "execute[s] justice and affirm[s] older, medieval ideals of chastity" see Karen Robertson, "Chastity and Justice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," in *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*, ed. Carol Levin and Karen Robertson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 215–36.

16 On the bawdy use of "box" in Shakespeare's plays, see Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, rev. edn. (New York: Dutton, 1969), 70, 130; on noses in early modern texts, see Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 138.

17 Stallybrass, "Reading the Body," 129. Stallybrass does note that "it is as if the separation of virtue . . . from vice . . . can never be securely established" in the play ("Reading the Body," 129).

18 Cf. Mullaney, "Mourning and Misogyny," 257; Stallybrass, "Reading the Body," 140. See also Gail Kern Paster's groundbreaking analysis of women's status as "leaky vessels" during this period in *The Body Embarrassed*: *Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 23–63.

19 Stallybrass comments that "the *hortus conclusus* of a deathly chastity reasserts the *hortus conclusus* of male honor. The silencing of the women's voice reaffirms the differentiation between possessor and desirer. More than that, within this sexual economy the possessor is freed by the lady's death from the challenge of the desirer" ("Reading the Body," 130). See also his extremely influential discussion of the sexual politics of enclosure in "Patriarchal Territories."

20 After arranging for the Duke to kiss the poisoned lips of his dead beloved ("those that did eat are eaten"), Vindice completes his triumph by nailing down the Duke's tongue.

21 For differing perspectives on the force of "castration" in early modern England, see Dympna Callaghan, "The Castrator's Song: Female Impersonation on the Early Modern Stage," in *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 49–74; and Gary

Taylor, *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (New York: Routledge, 2000). My own view accords more with Callaghan's, whose essay I have found very useful. While Taylor's important study provides a valuable service by emphasizing the literal meaning of "castration" and calling our attention to its prominence during this period, he goes too far, I believe, in denying the existence of early modern male anxieties about and images of penile amputation, which are clearly present even in the works of his chosen author, Middleton; see my discussion of *The Changeling* in Chapter 7.

22 See, for example, the letters in *Edward II* and *The Duchess of Malfi.*

23 Vindice even explicitly discusses the concept of "beneficial perjury" (2.2.101).

24 See Stallybrass, "Reading the Body," 139–40, on the difficulties in telling the "good" and the "bad" families apart. For a differing view, see Jonas A. Barish, "The True and False Families of *The Revenger's Tragedy*," in *English Renaissance Drama: Essays in Honor of Madeline Doran and Mark Eccles*, ed. S. Henning, R. Kimbrough, and L. Knowles (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976), 142–54.

25 See Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women*, for an analysis of similar problems in the plays of Shakespeare and others.

26 Hippolito, of course, collapses this final distinction by exclaiming "Faith and in clothes too we, give us our due" (3.5.83).

27 Thomas Moffett, *The Silkewormes and Their Flies (1599): A Facsimile*, ed. Victor Houliston (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989), 19. Since the poem is unlineated, all references are to page numbers.

28 See Moffett, *Silkewormes*, 38–40, 61–2, 65, 66. Because silkworms supposedly mate for life, the female following the male into death (he after copulation, she after laying her eggs), Moffett sees them as an archetype of "true love," the Pyramus and Thisbe of the animal kingdom:

> Bleed, O my heart, whilst I record anew,
> How wives lay by them [their "faithful husbands dead"] beating, now their head,
> Sometimes their feet, and wings, & brest most true,
> Striving no less to be delivered,
> Then *Thisbe* did from undefi ed [*sic*] life,
> When she beheld her *Pyram* slaine with knife. (38)

29 Moffett, *Silkewormes*, xv.

30 See, however, Hamlet's similar reference to "my Lady Worm" in the graveyard scene (5.1.82), and see also the discussion of this scene in Philippa Berry, *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring Death in the Tragedies* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 69–70.

"MY BODY BESTOW UPON MY WOMEN": THE SPACE OF THE FEMININE IN *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI*

1 Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 78, 134. Irigaray's work has helped me to

formulate many of the larger problems involved in attempting to conceptualize sexual difference within the framework of Western culture (although the particular forms that these problems take in the texts I examine are often specific to the early modern period). For the larger problems involved in thinking about Irigaray (including the now generally discredited charge of "essentialism"), I have found the following especially useful: Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1991); all the essays in Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford, eds., *Engaging with Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), especially Schor, "This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray," 57–78, and Burke, "Irigaray through the Looking Glass," 37–56; and Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993). I have also been helped by Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, eds., *The Essential Difference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Jane Gallop, *Thinking through the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

2 Quotation of Webster's plays is from the New Mermaids editions: *The White Devil*, ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan (New York: Norton, 1993); *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan, 3rd edn. (New York: Norton, 1993).

3 Dollimore develops this idea at length in "Subjectivity, Sexuality, and Transgression: The Jacobean Connection," in *Renaissance Drama As Cultural History: Essays from Renaissance Drama 1977–1987*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 335–63 (reworked slightly in *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 231–46; see also his illuminating discussion of *The White Devil* in *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, 2nd edn. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 231–46. Despite my divergence from Dollimore, I have found his analyses extremely helpful; the strategy that I outline in *The Duchess of Malfi* could, in fact, be viewed as another form of "transgressive reinscription."

4 See Irigaray, *This Sex*, 83–5; *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 133; "The Poverty of Psychoanalysis," trans. David Macey, in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). See also Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 151–2.

5 Thus, the nominally "good" characters in the play, Marcello and Cornelia, revere those above them (as Lodovico comments, "The violent thunder is adored by those / are pash'd in pieces by it," 1.1.11–12) and displace their aggression downwards – kicking and striking the black maid Zanche (who, when given the chance, plots to rob Vittoria). The only character who does not attempt to violate another is Isabella, who self-destructs.

6 Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, 235.

7 I by no means wish to conflate female sexual desire with reproductive sexuality (although I think it is arguable that the play does); I do, however, want to note that such a perspective – which we tend to think of as conventional – can be potentially subversive. Cf. Patricia Parker's examinations of female "dilations" in *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987); and *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a commentary on the dangers of collapsing sexuality and gender (as well as an acute analysis of the subversive potential of pregnancy), see Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 50–70, 91–116.

8 Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1970) 46, 78. See also Dympna Callaghan, *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of* King Lear, Othello, The Duchess of Malfi *and* The White Devil (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 50.

9 For a different account of the insistent doubling in the play, see Lynn Enterline's extremely suggestive reading in *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 242–303. See also Charles Wilkinson, "Twin Structure in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Literature and Psychology* 31 (1984): 52–65. For a defense of the play's repetitive structure in terms of its dramatic potential, see Christina Luckyj, *A Winter's Snake: Dramatic Form in the Tragedies of John Webster* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

10 This desire, as I conceive it, is continuous with but not confined to the impulse toward aristocratic exclusivity that Frank Whigham has outlined in his seminal article on the play and his more recent book: "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *PMLA* 100 (1985): 167–86; *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 188–225. It is, I would argue, a particularly intense expression not only of aristocratic self-preservation and heroic self-definition but of conventionally constructed romantic love. For acute criticisms of Whigham's perspective, see Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 157–62; Cristina Malcolmson, "'What you Will': Social Mobility and Gender in Twelfth Night," in *The Matter of Difference: Feminist Materialist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 52–3; and Enterline, *The Tears of Narcissus*, 252–4.

11 As numerous critics have noted, the lines following Ferdinand's threat, with their invocation of the "tongue" and puns on "tale" (1.2.157–580) explicitly bring speech into this nexus.

12 See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 98–103; Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. 105–65; Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1982), 33–42. See also Stephen Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," in *Shakespearean*

Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 66–93. Laqueur and Eccles argue for the near-universality of this belief; Laqueur uses it to substantiate his argument for the dominance of the "one-sex model." Cadden, however, shows authoritatively that the multitude of questions and debates concerning sexuality and conception at the time are not easily reducible to Laqueur's model (3); the arguments she recounts nevertheless offer abundant evidence for the currency of the belief in the necessity of the female orgasm for conception, and it is regularly assumed in English midwifery manuals (including those which call the one-sex model into question). See, e.g., Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (1671; New York: Garland, 1985), 99; John Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636), 108–9, 118; and Nicholas Culpepper, *A Directory for Midwives* (London, 1656), 70, in addition to the works cited below. For other important criticisms of Laqueur's historical and theoretical model, see Katharine Park and Robert A. Nye, "Destiny Is Anatomy," *The New Republic* 18 February 1991: 53–7; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 16–17; Patricia Parker, "Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germain," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 337–64; Valerie Traub, "The Psychomorphology of the Clitoris," *GLQ* 2 (1995): 81–113 (revised as chapter 5 of her *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002]); Janet Adelman, "Making Defect Perfection: Shakespeare and the One-Sex Model," in *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 23–52.

13 Ambroise Paré, *The Works of the Famous Chirurgion*, trans. Thomas Johnson (London, 1633), 889; Paré, *Oeuvres* (Paris 1579), quoted in Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 272.

14 Cf. the "sportful" hands in which the imagined boy actor in *Edward II* holds "an olive-tree / To hide those parts which men delight to see" (Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. W. Moelwyn Merchant, New Mermaids [New York: Norton, 1987], 1.1.63–4).

15 This and the stage direction following line 68 ("*She sees* FERDINAND *holding a poniard*") are, of course, editorial additions; but they are generally accepted and seem to accord with the logic of the text.

16 Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985), 197.

17 That is, it is not simply demanding that women be treated or valued like men but questioning the structures upon which valuation depends, not simply asserting the identity or equality of the sexes but trying to open up a space of difference between them – a space that will allow "woman" to exist. See Irigaray, "Equal to Whom?" trans. Robert L. Mazzola, in *The Essential Difference*, ed. Schor and Weed, 63–81. See also "Equal or Different," trans. David Macey, in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Whitford:

> Demanding equality, as women, seems to me to be an erroneous expression of a real issue. Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of comparison. Equal to what?

What do women want to be equal to? Men? A wage? A public position? Equal to what? Why not to themselves? (32)

18 In a fascinating discussion of "Sleep, Conscience, and Fame in *The Duchess of Malfi*," Garrett Sullivan somewhat similarly interrogates the conventional celebration of "integrity of life" that is articulated in the final lines of the play (5.5.119–20); he demonstrates that neither the Duchess nor her brothers are presented as self-identical, whole, or undivided. See Garrett Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 109–31.

19 *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 2nd edn., ed. Brian Gibbons, New Mermaids (New York: Norton, 1991).

20 The phrase is Irigaray's; see her *Amante marine de Friedrich Nietzsche* (Paris: Éditions de la Minuit, 1980), 97. See also Margaret Whitford's excellent discussion in *Luce Irigaray*, 45–6.

21 Cf. the silencing kisses in Shakespeare's plays, discussed in Chapter 4.

22 I am appealing here to culturally constructed ideas of bodily form and capacities, rather than to biological determinism. I have been influenced by the lucid discussions of Irigaray's distinction between "morphology" and "anatomy" in Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 112–19; and Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 58–9, 150–2. For a criticism of this kind of argument, see Traub, "Psychomorphology."

23 Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 150–65; cf. Laqueur *Making Sex*, 50–1, 64; Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 35.

24 Translation in Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 159.

25 Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 85. Although both Gerard and Hildegard are medieval writers, the arguments in which they are involved and the distinctions they are making persist into later periods. See, for example, Helikiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (London, 1615):

> But whether the pleasure of the man or of the woman be the greater, it would be a vaine and fruitlesse disquisition to enquire. Indeede the woman conceiveth pleasure more waies, that is in the avoyding of her owne seede and also in the attraction of the mans: for which cause the *Tyresian* Priest who had experience of both sexes preferred the woman in this kinde: but the pleasure of the man is more intense, partly because his seede is more hot and sprituous, & partly also because it yssueth with greater violence and with a kinde of Almaine leape or subsultation. (288)

26 He describes this with relish:

> One would suspect it for a shop of witchcraft, to find in it the fat of serpents, spawn of snakes, Jews' spittle, and their young children's ordure, and all these for the face. I would sooner eat a dead pigeon, taken from the soles of feet of one sick of the plague, than kiss one of you fasting. (2.1.37–43)

There seems to be a suggestion here – and in Bosola's spying in general – of the horrified fascination with peering into women's "secret" parts that

Patricia Parker outlines in "*Othello* and *Hamlet*: Dilation, Spying, and the 'Secret Place' of Woman," *Representations* 44 (1993): 60–95 (revised in *Shakespeare from the Margins*, 229–72). See also Katharine Eisaman Maus, "A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," in *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 182–209); Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 187–8; Celia Daileader, *Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage: Transcendence, Desire, and the Limits of the Visible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7–11, 80–106.

27 If the Old Lady bears the brunt of Bosola's conventionalized disgust with rotting flesh, Julia is similarly made the focus for his sexual nausea. And both forms of disgust are conflated in his queasy descriptions of the Duchess's pregnancy:

> 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;
> And contrary to our Italian fashion,
> Wears a loose-bodied gown. (2.1.71)

See also Callaghan, *Woman and Gender*, 107–8, 143–5; Theodora A. Jankowski, *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 174–5; Martha Ronk Lifson, "Embodied Mortality in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Pacific Coast Philology* 23 (1988): 47–59.

28 Not only does the Duchess's teasing proviso ("Till my brothers / Consent to be your gossips") constitute a condition contrary to fact, it is, within the world of the play, perhaps the ultimate condition contrary to fact (and it is important that it is marked as such); but like all such conditions, it necessarily involves imagining what "can't happen."

29 Adrian Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation," in *Women As Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (New York: Routledge, 1990), 71. See *OED*, "gossip," noun 2b.

30 See Natalie Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 124–51. Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, concedes the "general outlines of [Wilson's] account" (185), but criticizes this reading as overly optimistic; she argues that

> whereas pregnancy and childbirth *were* instances of female empowerment, that empowerment was constrained by a whole host of stratagems, both real and symbolic designed to counter an understanding of the maternal body as polluted and polluting. (165)

See also Donna C. Stanton, "Recuperating Women and the Man behind the Screen," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 247–65. I would suggest that both Wilson's optimistic and

Paster's more pessimistic readings are clearly inscribed in Webster's play – and it is further implied that the former is necessarily created out of (and is therefore, in Paster's words, "hard to distinguish from," 189) the latter. For an interesting argument that Webster first elicits the audience's fears about pregnancy and the female appetite (especially when the Duchess devours the "apricocks," 2.1.133) and then counters them "in the culminating tragic action," see Lori Schroeder Haslem, "'Troubled with the Mother': Longings, Purgings, and the Maternal Body in 'Bartholomew Fair' and 'The Duchess of Malfi,'" *Modern Philology* 92 (1995): 451–9.

31 Adrian Wilson, "Ceremony," 87. He notes that the network of gossips both "partly mirrored the male hierarchy . . . [and] partly cut across that hierarchy" ("Ceremony," 96–7). See also Caroline Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), for an argument that midwives and gossips were powerful participants "not only in the cultural codes of reproduction . . . but in the act of cultural production itself" (9).

32 *OED*, "gossip," noun 3 ("A person, mostly a woman, of light and trifling character, esp. one who delights in idle talk"), and verb 3.

33 See Adrian Wilson, "Ceremony"; Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 45–7; and Linda Woodbridge, "The Gossips Meeting," in *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540–1620* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 224–43.

34 *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony* (London, 1683), 24; see also *The XV Comforts of Rash and Inconsiderate Marriage* (London, 1682). Another interesting example, which simultaneously valorizes and undercuts female speech, appears in the 1612 translation of Jacques Guillemeau's treatise on midwifery:

> Some do observe, that the Navell must be tyed longer, or shorter, according to the difference of the sexe, allowing more measure to the males: because this length doth make their tongue, and privie membres the longer: whereby they may both speake the plainer, and be more serviceable to Ladies. And that by tying it short, and almost close to the belly in females, their tongue is lesse free, and their naturall part more straite: And to speake the truth, the Gossips commonly say merrily to the Midwife; if it be a boy, *Make him good measure*; but if it be a wench, *Tye it short*.
>
> (Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-birth, or, the Happy Delivery of Women* [London, 1612], 99)

35 In addition to its other meanings, the phrase "labouring men" may position Antonio as a pregnant father, as the Duchess's speech before her looking-glass clearly does; see *OED*, "labour," verb 16, "Of women: To suffer the pains of childbirth; to travail. Also *fig.*," examples recorded from 1454 to 1711. The lighthearted references to the judgment of Paris clearly contrast with the earlier evocation of the Trojan War:

> FERDINAND: You are a good horseman, Antonio; you have excellent riders in France, what do you think of good horsemanship?

ANTONIO: Nobly my lord: as out of the Grecian horse issued many famous princes: so out of brave horsemanship, arise the first sparks of growing resolution, that raise the mind to noble action. (2.64–7)

36 On caskets, see Sigmund Freud, "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), vol. XII, 291–30.Cf. Castiza's "box" in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 2.1.40.

37 This shift and similar ones (including some of those I consider below) are discussed in somewhat different terms by Whigham, *Seizures*, 201–10; Rose, *Expense of Spirit*, 155–72; and Jankowski, *Women in Power*, 163–79.

38 Whigham, *Seizures*, 204. The limitations of Whigham's perspective are more evident in his earlier essay, in which his description of this passage concluded: "The tones are martial, not erotic" ("Social and Sexual Mobility," 172). But while he has clearly attempted to modify his stance here in response to the criticisms of Rose and others, his revised version reintroduces, in my view, the difficulties it tries to suppress. Webster, he maintains, creates sympathy for his heroine by "split[ting] gender and sexuality, masculinizing the duchess while diverting specifically erotic heterodoxy onto other characters." He persists in viewing the Duchess's defiance as uttered in the "the unmistakably masculine voice of the Renaissance hero"; and he concludes: "Going knowingly to colonize a new social realm of privacy, she arrogates to herself a defiance that here speaks essentially of gender, and only incidentally of sexuality. 'As men . . . so I.'" (*Seizures*, 204).

39 Cf. Marlowe, *Dr Faustus*, 2nd edn., ed. Roma Gill, New Mermaids (New York: Norton, 1989), 2.1.135. The phrase frequently appears in male doctors' and writers' description of the beliefs and practices of midwives, which are dismissed as "Old *Wifes* Frivolous *Clatters*, or Crafty *Fictions* some *Midwifes* uses to amuse silly Credulous *People*" (Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 93). For discussions of the invasion of the midwives' province by male practitioners during the seventeenth century and of the rivalry that existed between the two groups, see Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660–1770* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 79–92; and Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 158–83. See also Mary Ellen Lamb, "Engendering the Narrative Act: Old Wives' Tales in *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*," *Criticism* 40 (1998): 529–53; and Bicks, *Midwiving Subjects*, 22–59.

40 Rose, *Expense of Spirit*, 155–77.

41 The primary meaning of "wink," in the Duchess's speech, is, of course, "to close one's eyes" (*OED* 1); the meaning, "to 'shut one's eyes' to something faulty, wrong or improper" *(OED* 5) is clearly also present. The *OED* records another contemporary meaning that may be relevant here: "To give a significant glance, as of command, direction, or invitation" (7, gives examples of

sexual invitation). And Garrett Sullivan further suggests that the Duchess may be "both retooling and scoffing at her brothers' scornful reference to heavy sleeps" in an earlier speech ("those lustful pleasures, are like heavy sleeps / Which do forerun man's mischief," 1.2.244–5; see *Memory and Forgetting*, 110. Sullivan cites *OED*, "wink," verb 3, "To have the eyes closed in sleep; to sleep; sometimes to doze, slumber," and goes on to demonstrate that throughout the play, sleep both "connotes and enables sexual desire" (Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting*, 118). His reading of the Duchess's speech is supported by another passage that associates "wink[ing]," "dream[ing]," and (implicitly) sexuality – Delio's response to the news that the Duchess has had two children since his last visit:

> Methinks 'twas yesterday. Let me but *wink*
> And not behold your face, which to mine eye
> Is somewhat leaner: verily I should *dream*
> It were within this half hour. (3.1.8–11; my italics)

42 For an extended discussion of the early modern association of gossips, pregnancy, old wives' tales, and romances (with particular reference to Shakespeare's plays), see Richard Wilson, *Will Power*, 158–83.

43 Cf. the repeated phrase in *The Winter's Tale*, "like an old tale" (5.2.29, 61; 5.3.117); see also Ben Jonson's scornful assessment in *Bartholomew Fair* of the unnatural, topsy-turvy form of "Tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries" (Induction, in *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. G. R. Hibbard [New York: Norton, 1977], 124–6).

44 Also interesting in this context is the Duchess's image a few moments earlier, when she referred to marriage as "this sacred Gordian, which let violence / Never untwine" (1.2.393–4).

45 Brennan, ed., *The Duchess of Malfi*, 31.

46 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (1975): 7; cited in Rose, *Expense of Spirit*, 171.

47 The evocations of pregnancy, breeding, and child-rearing here are, of course, also significant.

48 But see Rose, *Expense of Spirit*, 162, 169; and Jankowski, *Women in Power*, 177–9; and cf. Linda Woodbridge's assertion that, in contrast to contemporary depictions of Neoplatonic aspirations, "what is remarkable [about the Duchess] is that she is a hero of *ordinary* desire" (Linda Woodbridge, "Queen of Apricots: The Duchess of Malfi, Hero of Desire," in *The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 178.

49 Cf. Ferdinand, 4.2.261–3.

50 These lines – carefully poised between a command and a request – pick up and alter the "rhetoric of will-making" that the Duchess employs in her marriage proposal; see Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 307–9.

51 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 50. Cf. Katharine Park's comment on the laws, customs, and beliefs in late sixteenth-century France: "Penetration was a central topos in these, for the ultimate figures of unnatural sodomy were the penetrating woman and the penetrated man" ("The Rediscovery of the Clitoris: French Medicine and the Tribade, 1570–1620," in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio [New York: Routledge, 1997], 185).

52 Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 98. These binaries are from a longer list of hierarchical distinctions originally outlined by David Halperin in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Halperin argues that they helped to constitute a "cultural poetics of manhood in ancient Athens" (102). His list also includes "master vs. slave, free vs. unfree, dominant vs. submissive . . . customer vs. prostitute, citizen vs. non-citizen" (102–3).

53 Edelman, *Homographesis*, 98.

54 Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 155. Whitford quotes Irigaray:

> In order for [sexual] difference to be thought and lived, we have to reconsider the whole problematic of *space* and *time* . . . A change of epoch requires a mutation in the perception and conception of *space-time*, the *inhabitation of place*, and the *envelopes of identity*. (Irigaray, *Éthique de la Différence Sexuelle* [Paris: Éditions de la Minuit], 15, trans. Whitford)

See also Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 173–6; and Sue Best, "Sexualizing Space," in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (New York: Routledge, 1995), 181–94.

55 Cf. Irigaray:

> One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it . . . To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself – inasmuch as she is on the side of the "perceptible," of "matter" – to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means "to unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere*. (*This Sex*, 76)

See also Emily Bartels, "Strategies of Submission: Desdemona, the Duchess, and the Assertion of Desire," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36 (1996): 417–33, for an argument that the Duchess uses submission as a strategy.

56 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 45.

57 See Belsey, *Subject of Tragedy*, for an argument that the "affective ideal" that is at the heart of the play's "liberalism" has been assimilated by patriarchy over time (199–200).

58 Webster's own gender, of course, makes his stance more self-contradictory here than in *The White Devil*, and one could argue that his use of the Duchess is (must be) yet another example of the appropriation of women's voices by men. But I believe that it is important to emphasize the radical (and unusual) nature of the strategy he deploys. Cf. Carol Thomas Neely's exhortation, in "Constructing the Subject: Feminist Practice and the New Renaissance Discourses," *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988), to focus on "the possibility of human (especially female) gendered subjectivity" in early modern texts (15).

59 Cf. Schor's analysis of two exemplary, diametrically opposed feminist positions, held by Beauvoir and Irigaray:

> Just as Beauvoir lays bare the mechanisms of othering, Irigaray exposes those of what we might call by analogy, "saming." If othering involves attributing to the objectified other a difference that serves to legitimate her oppression, saming denies to the objectified other the right to her difference, submitting the other to the laws of phallic specularity . . . If exposing the logic of othering . . . is a necessary step in achieving equality, exposing the logic of saming is a necessary step in toppling the universal from his/(her) pedestal. ("This Essentialism," 65)

Each position, Schor suggests, "has its own inescapable logic" (65), and each inevitably risks falling victim to what the other exposes. See also Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, on the strategic value of "risking" essentialism.

60 It is also, of course, significant that the play's conception of the Duchess's sexuality does not seem to involve the kinds of mutually exclusive choices that characterize modern sexual identities; indeed, it is deployed *against* an image of all-consuming exclusivity.

61 See Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

"I(T) COULD NOT CHOOSE BUT FOLLOW": EROTIC LOGIC IN *THE CHANGELING*

1 In the first scene, De Flores had kneeled to Beatrice, and begged to be of "service" (2.2.116, cf. 54, 59, 69, 93, 119, 140); now, she humbles herself before him. Both scenes additionally recall the kneeling in the subplot of the madmen before their masters, who control them with "commanding pizzles," making them "as tame as the ladies" (4.3.62); see Cristina Malcolmson, "'As Tame as the Ladies': Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*," *English Literary Renaissance* 20 (1990): 321–39.

All quotation of *The Changeling* is from the New Mermaids edition, ed. Joost Daalder (New York: Norton, 1990).

2 Lisa Hopkins points out the allusion to the second set of lines in "Beguiling the Master of the Mystery: Form and Power in *The Changeling*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 9 (1997): 154–5; and "An Echo of *Hymenaei* in *The Changeling*," *Notes and Queries* 43 (1996): 184. Hopkins's work is differently focused from my own; she sees the play as Middleton's "revenge" on

Frances Howard ("Beguiling," 155). The allusion to *Hymenaei* 408–9 has also been noted in editions of *The Changeling* edited by David L. Frost, in *The Selected Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, 359); and N. W. Bawcutt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 12.

All quotations from *Hymenaei* follow the text of Ben Jonson, *The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

3 See Marie H. Loughlin, "'Love's Friend and Stranger to Virginitie': The Politics of the Virginal Body in Ben Jonson's *Hymenaei* and Thomas Campion's *The Lord Hay's Masque*," *ELH* 63 (1996): 833–49; Heather Dubrow, *A Happier Eden: The Politics of Marriage in the Stuart Epithalamium* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 217; David Lindley, "Embarrassing Ben: The Masques for Frances Howard," in *Renaissance Historicism: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987) 246–64.

4 For a fascinating account of Howard's life that carefully examines the mythology surrounding her and effectively problematizes traditional readings of her character and crimes, see David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993).

5 For analyses of this connection from a number of different perspectives, see Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 178–9; J. L. Simmons, "Diabolical Realism in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*," *Renaissance Drama* 11 (1980): 135–70; and A. A. Bromham and Zara Bruzzi, *The Changeling and the Years of Crisis, 1619–1624: A Hieroglyph of Britain* (London: Pinter, 1990); as well as Hopkins, "Beguiling"; Lindley, *Trials*; and Malcolmson, "Politics and Gender."

6 See, for example, the final scene of Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (5.2), in which a parody of the masque becomes the occasion for multiple sexually motivated murders.

7 See Lindley, "Embarrassing Ben." For reflections upon the strengths and limitations of the practice of reading literary texts for commentary on contemporary events, see Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

8 Jonson, *Complete Masques*, p. 522. The note continues: "See Festus [under *rapi*] and that of Catullus [lxi 3–4]: 'You who carry off the tender maiden to a husband . . . '"

9 Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 187–8; see also John Stachniewski, "Calvinist Psychology in Middleton's Tragedies," in *Three Jacobean Revenge Tragedies*, ed. R. V. Holdsworth (London: Macmillan, 1990), 238. For a somewhat differently focused discussion, see Arthur L. Little, Jr. "'Transshaped' Women: Virginity and Hysteria in *The Changeling*," in *Madness in Drama*, ed. James Redmond, *Themes in Drama* 15 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 31–2.

10 For "perfection" in *The Changeling*, see 1.1.59, 117; 2.2.54; 3.4.117; 4.3.53, 215; 5.3.115. For an illuminating discussion of Jonson's use of the term in his epithalamia, see Dubrow, *Happier Eden*, 219–20, 223, 230; and note the following lines from *Hymenaei*: "Telia, for Hymen, perfects all, and ends" (265); "Here stay, and let your sports be crowned / The perfectest figure is the round" (361); "Your bride, that, ere the morn, / Shall far more perfect be" (426–7); "That you may both ere day / Rise perfect every way" (486–7, repeated with slight variations, 494–5, 502–3); "Shut fast the door; and as they soon / To their perfection haste, / So may their ardors last" (513–15); "Virgins in their sweet and peaceful state / Have all things perfect, spin their own free fate, / Depend on no proud second, are their own / Center and circle, now and always one" (717–20). In his own notes, Jonson associates "Telia [which] signifies *Perfecta*, or as some translate it *Perfectrix* [she who makes perfect]," with marriage (*Complete Masques*, 520). See also the popular ballad about Frances Howard, "A mayd of more perfection," which ridicules her assertion of "Virginity" (l. 5) at the time of her annulment ("Poems from a Seventeenth Century Manuscript with the Hand of Robert Herrick," ed. Norman K. Farmer, Jr., *Texas Quarterly* 16 [1973], Supplement 91).

The contradictory suggestions of "perfection" here are similar to those of the "hymen" as conceived by Jacques Derrida; see "The Double Session," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 173–286. See also Sheila Cavanagh's discussion of the hymen and Edenic sexuality in relation to Edmund Spenser in *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in* The Faerie Queene (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 16–18.

11 Shakespeare, *Love's Labor's Lost* 5.2.789.

12 These lines refer literally to the antimasque that is to be performed by the madmen at Beatrice's wedding, but they have an obvious double meaning. The absence of the anticipated performance from the play has worried a number of critics. Richard Levin, in *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), suggests that "we are missing a major scene" (47); and Sarah P. Sutherland, in *Masques in Jacobean Tragedy* (New York: AMS Press, 1983), goes to great lengths to argue that the play is complete as it stands (101–11). I am suggesting that the whole play (not merely the subplot, as some readers have claimed) functions as a kind of marriage antimasque; cf. Mohammed Kowsar, "Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*: The Besieged Temple," *Criticism* 28 (1986): 145–63.

13 Cf. Little, "Virginity and Hysteria," 40, n. 34. Little cites suggestive uses of "cherry" in Thomas Dekker's *The Witch of Edmonton* (3.1.18–19) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (5.1.192); see also *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.2.210; *Volpone* 1.1.89.

14 Cf. *The Changeling* 4.1, in which Diaphanta's disavowal of sexual fears makes Beatrice doubt she is a maid.

15 Daalder, "Introduction," *The Changeling*, xxviii.

16 Deborah G. Burks, "'I'll want my will else': *The Changeling* and Women's Complicity with Their Rapists," *ELH* 62 (1995): 771. See also Karen Bamford, *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

17 All quotation of *Women Beware Women* follows the text of the New Mermaids edition, ed. William C. Carroll (New York: Norton, 1994).

18 J. R. Mulryne provides a good summary of earlier critical commentary in the Revels edition of *Women Beware Women* (London: Methuen, 1975), lxv–lxvi; he asserts (following William Empson to some extent) that we are, in fact, dealing with "two Biancas, each elicited by circumstances, maintained as a single character only by the accident of sharing the same name" (lxvi). For more recent responses, see Anthony Dawson, "*Women Beware Women* and the Economy of Rape," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 27 (1987): 303–20; Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 119–27; and Celia Daileader, *Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage: Transcendence, Desire, and the Limits of the Visible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 25–59.

19 Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

20 See Dubrow, *Happier Eden*, especially on fears and delays in Herrick's celebrations of marriage, 239–58; on "virginal desire" see also Loughlin, "Love's Friend," and Marie H. Loughlin, *Hymeneutics: Interpreting Virginity on the Early Modern Stage* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1997). One of the poems discussed in Dubrow, *Happier Eden* (240), Herrick's "Julia's Churching, or Purification," presents us with an interesting variation on these themes, as a woman's preserving her fear of sexuality in a faithful marriage is seen as effectively preserving her virginity (and thus keeping her ever desirable):

> *She who keeps chastley to her husbands side*
> *Is not for one, but every night his Bride:*
> *And stealing still with love, and feare to Bed,*
> *Brings him not one, but many a Maiden-head.* (13–16)

For a feminist revision of this set of ideas, see Margaret Cavendish's play, *The Bridals*.

21 George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589; Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1970), 66. Cf. the description of the effects of the virginity test that Beatrice finds in Alsemero's closet in *The Changeling* (4.1.44–51; 4.2.111, 140–4), as well as Alsemero's remarks on things both "loved and loathed" 1.1.124–7), discussed earlier. See also Marjorie Garber's reading of the virginity test as causing a woman to manifest "the telltale signs of . . . *orgasm*" ("The Insincerity of Women," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 356).

22 Puttenham, *Art of English Poesie,* 67; English italics mine.
23 Dale Randall, "Some Observations on the Theme of Chastity in *The Changeling*," *English Literary Renaissance* 14 (1984): 350. Randall is concerned to argue against earlier readers who maintained that the term only applies to Antonio, and to assert that "Beatrice Joanna is ultimately *the* changeling in a play that is full of changelings" (350).
24 Although it seems likely that Vermandero is speaking of Beatrice's mother (imaged as her daughter's twin), his speech simultaneously calls up the image of a (good) twin *sister*, for whom Beatrice was exchanged. Significantly, after Diaphanta is substituted for Beatrice in the bed-trick, Beatrice associates her with her sister: "Were it my sister, now she gets no more" (5.1.112).
25 Cf. Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre*: "It is not so much a question of topical allusions, but rather of social patterns and sensibilities" (179), quoted in Lindley, *Trials*, 115. For general studies of the bed-trick, see Wendy Doniger, *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Marliss C. Desnes, *The Bed-Trick in English Renaissance Drama: Explorations in Gender, Sexuality, and Power* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1994). Doniger points out in her wide-ranging study that one kind of bed-trick involves the substitution (in either direction) of "lovely" and "loathly" ladies; this is clearly at work in *Sophonisba* and, in a metaphorical form, in *The Changeling*; it resonates interestingly with the latter play's assertion (and demonstration) that "there's scarce a thing but is both loved and loathed."
26 My attention was first called to the relevance of this play by DeeAnna Phares-Matthews's suggestive essay, "Blood's Appetite: Carnality and Violation of the Female in Marston's *Sophonisba*," presented to the "Rape and Representation" seminar at the 1999 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, San Francisco. All quotation of *Sophonisba* follows the text of John Marston, *Selected Plays*, ed. Macdonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
27 Cf. the repeatedly interrupted consummation in *Othello*.
28 Dubrow, *Happier Eden,* esp. 49; for a wealth of interesting background on Edenic marriage and sexuality, see James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
29 See Little, "Virginity and Hysteria," 25 on the evocation of Petrarch's Laura and Dante's Beatrice here. David Duncan, in "Virginity in *The Changeling*," *English Studies in Canada* 9 (1983): 25–33, comments on Alsemero's appeal to Edenic marriage, but he clearly believes that this "bold notion" is unusual. (27).
30 On the Fall in linearity, see also Neill, *Issues of Death,* 181.When Alsemero discovers Beatrice out of bed on their wedding night, she tells him, "When I missed you, / I could not choose but follow" (5.1.83–4); and when De Flores tells Alsemero, in a rhymed couplet, that in addition to being a killer, Beatrice is a "whore," Alsemero replies: "It could not choose but follow" (5.3.106–8). See also 1.1.101–2 ("Must I be enjoined / To follow still whilst she flies from me"); 1.1.232–3 ("I know she hates me / Yet cannot choose but love her"); 5.1.79–80 ("Hie

quickly to your chamber; / Your reward follows you"); 5.3.175–7 ([De Flores, dying:] "Make haste Joanna, by that token to thee [the finger] / Canst not forget, so lately put in mind; / I would not go to leave thee far behind").

31 Beatrice tries out this "test" (a potion) by giving it to Diaphanta, and later fakes its effects when she herself is tested.

32 Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus*, 2nd edn., ed. Roma Gill. New Mermaids (New York: Norton, 1989).

33 My text for Fulke Greville's poetry is *Certaine Learned and Elegant Workes (1633): A Facsimile Reproduction* (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1990). I follow Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Poems and Drama of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), and other modern editors in emending "in downe" to "downe in" in line 6 of *Caelica* 37. I prefer, however, to avoid their other (minor but somewhat irritating) corrections. To cite one example with some relevance to the following discussion: Thom Gunn's modernization of Bullough's edition, while retaining the capitalization in the third quatrain of this poem, removes it from "Knowledge" in line 5, apparently attempting to remove from the word some of the ambiguous agency present in the folio; see *Selected Poems of Fulke Greville*, ed. Thom Gunn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

34 See, e.g., Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 38 ("This night while sleepe begins with heavy wings"), Sir Thomas Wyatt, "Unstable dreme, according to the place," and John Donne, "The Dream" (which plays with conventional expectations); I would suggest that Wyatt's "They fle from me" is also a variant on this tradition.

35 Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander,* 403, in Richard S. Sylvester, ed., *English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology* (New York: Norton, 1984).

36 See Turner, *One Flesh*, chapter 1, for discussion of this conflation in interpretations of Genesis.

37 For a different, but not unrelated, reading of this poem in the tradition of dream sonnets (and in connection with Spenser), see Dorothy Stephens, *The Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative: Conditional Pleasure from Spenser to Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48–51.

38 Spenser, *Faerie Queene,* 1.1.48:

> And she her selfe of beautie soueraigne Queene,
> Faire *Venus* seemde vnto his bed to bring
> Her, whom he waking euermore did weene
> To be the chastest flowre, that ay did spring
> On earthly braunch, the daughter of a king,
> Now a loose Leman to vile service bound:
> And eke the *Graces* seemed all to sing
> *Hymen iô Hymen*, dauncing all around
> Whilst freshest *Flora* her with Yuie girlond crownd.

These images are unpacked in the final canto, where the dream is fulfilled in a positive manner in a regained Eden. Una is first compared to Diana,

crowned with a "girland" and celebrated as a "goodly maiden Queene" (1.12.7–8); she is then married to Redcrosse, and the two join together in a passage that recalls the water imagery in the dream ("Yet swimming in that sea of blisfull ioy . . . ," 1.12.41). Both images had, of course, appeared in negative contexts earlier in the Book, when Redcrosse, attempting to escape his dream, ended up enacting it with Duessa (canto 7).

All quotation from *The Faerie Queene* follows the text of J. C. Smith (Oxford, 1909), reprinted in Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977).

39 For a complex exploration of this technique, see Susanne Lindgren Wofford, *The Choice of Achilles: The Ideology of Figure in the Epic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), esp. 235–6.

40 The later substitution of Duessa for Una furthers the bed-trick motif. It is only when Duessa is unveiled as the true "vncouth sight" (1.1.50) that Una can appear (however briefly) as "a virgin wife / . . . most happy in [her] husband's arms" (*Fairie Queene* 5.4.103, 106).

41 Paul Alpers, *The Poetry of the Faerie Queene* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1967).

42 Sidney, for example, differentiates between nondramatic works, in which genres may be mingled, and proper comedies and tragedies, which should be constructed with Aristotle's unities in mind (Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson [New York: Macmillan, 1970], 77–8). And Jonson repeatedly complains of the unnatural form of dramatic romances, which he dismisses as "Tales, Tempests, and such like drolleries" in *Bartholomew Fair* (Induction, 125, *Bartholomew Fair*, ed. G. R. Hibbard [New York: Norton, 1977]). Renaissance plays, of course, regularly broke the rules laid out for them, and *The Changeling*, with its double plot, is no exception. Still, early modern dramatists were acutely aware of the theoretical expectation of unity and were self-conscious about flouting it when they did.

43 Thus, critics frequently refer to the "mythic" resonances in the play; for an extended reading along these lines, see Robert Jordan, "Myth and Psychology in *The Changeling*," *Renaissance Drama* 3 (1970): 157–65.

44 Una Ellis-Fermor first called Beatrice a "spoilt child" in *The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation* (London: Methuen, 1936), 147, and the characterization has been repeated by many critics. Simmons, "Diabolical Realism," declares that "the beautiful witch is now seen as the hag she is" (151), and explicitly compares Beatrice's unmasking to that of Duessa (150). Sara Eaton also makes this comparison, but from a critical, feminist point of view, in her "Beatrice Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love," in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), 278. Stachniewski, "Calvinist Psychology," comments that "Alsemero and Vermandero quickly perceive that their beloved Beatrice is really a piece of human refuse and take comfort in their spiritual brotherhood" (240). For a discussion of the scapegoat mechanism in the play from a somewhat different perspective, see

Sharon Stockton, "The 'broken rib of mankind': The Sociopolitical Function of the Scapegoat in *The Changeling*," *Papers on Language and Literature* 26 (1990): 459–77.

45 Cf. Beatrice's response to Alsemero's calling her a "whore":

> What a horrid sound it hath!
> It blasts a beauty to deformity;
> Upon what face soever that breath falls,
> It strikes it ugly. (5.3.31–4)

46 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 22. See also Kaja Silverman's elaboration and complication of Mulvey's ideas in *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), *The Acoustic Mirror* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), and *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

47 Cf. Lee Edelman's suggestive comments on castration narratives in *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 269.

48 Lindley, *Trials*, 78.

49 Lindley, *Trials*, 78, 79. T. S. Eliot's assessment is from "Thomas Middleton," in *Selected Essays,* 3rd edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 163.

50 See in this context Keith Thomas's classic article, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959): 195–216.

51 Coppélia Kahn comments on this passage, "these words . . . epitomize the fantasy of women's sexual appetite on which the term of whore is founded," and notes its similarity to "Othello's despairing fantasy that 'the general camp, pioners and all' might have tasted Desdemona's body"; see "Whores and Wives in Jacobean Drama," in *In Another Country*, ed. Dorothea Kehler and Susan Baker (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1991), 252.

52 Ellis-Fermor, *Jacobean Drama*, 147. See also Irving Ribner's Calvinist reading: "The dominant motif of the play is the working out of a kind of inexorable fate which makes impossible any real change" (*Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order* [London: Methuen 1962], 130).

53 Cf. Jordan, "Myth and Psychology," 165.

54 Sigmund Freud, *Three Case Histories*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier, 1996), 34–5; emphasis in last sentence mine. I thank Stephanie Gaynor for calling my attention to this passage.

55 See *The Changeling* 1.1.89; 1.2.102; 3.4.3, 4; 4.1.1.

56 Cf. Eaton, "Beatrice Joanna," 278, 286.

57 Neill, *Issues of Death*, 171, sees the conclusion as "a re-enactment of Othello's eroticized murder-suicide from *Othello*" (which, I have argued, is itself a rethinking of the end of *Romeo and Juliet*). On the play's general relation to *Romeo and Juliet*, see Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), 186; and Nicholas Brooke, *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy* (London:

Open Books, 1979), 72. See also Kowsar's final evaluation of Beatrice: "Hers is the true love story" ("Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*," 162). As many readers have noted, Bianca's suicide in *Women Beware Women*, which "turns death / Into a parting kiss" (5.2.194–5), also parodies Juliet's.

"OLD MEN'S TALES": LEGACIES OF THE FATHER IN *'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE*

1 Clifford Leech, *John Ford and the Drama of His Time* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), 64; Leech asserts that Ford's "achievement" here is to "re-create . . . the Jacobean tragic spirit" (49). See also Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation* (London: Methuen, 1936). Ellis-Fermor views Ford as "the inheritor of security of the later Jacobean mood"; she declares that he "comes, if not chronologically yet in effect, at the end of a period of dramatic evolution, gathering up its conclusions and leaving in his work the final expression of certain moods, idea and technical habits which there find their natural close" (227).

2 The association of romances with the feminine is apparent even during the early modern period; see Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 158–83; Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

3 For a recent reassessment of the play as "decadent," see Carla Dente, "Reading Symptoms of Decadence in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," in *Romancing Decay: Ideas of Decadence in European Culture*, ed. Michael St. John (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 27–38. See also T. S. Eliot's well-known complaint that the play lacks both "general significance and emotional depth": "Ford's poetry, as well as Beaumont and Fletcher's, is of the surface . . . It is the absence of purpose . . . which makes their drama tend towards mere sensationalism" ("John Ford," in *Selected Essays*, 3rd edn. (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 198, 204.

4 See especially Kathleen McLuskie, "'Language and Matter with a Fit of Mirth': Dramatic Construction in the Plays of John Ford," in *John Ford: Critical Revisions*, ed. Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 97–127; Richard S. Ide, "Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and the Benefits of Belatedness," in *"Concord in Discord": The Plays of John Ford, 1586–1986*, ed. Donald K. Anderson, Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 61–86.

5 On *Romeo and Juliet* and *'Tis Pity*, see H. J. Oliver, *The Problem of John Ford* (Carlton, Australia: Melbourne University Press 1955); Ronald Huebert, *John Ford, Baroque English Dramatist* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1977); R.L. Smallwood, "*'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Romeo and Juliet*," *Cahiers Elisabéthains* 20 (1981): 49–70; Mark Stavig, "Shakespearean and Jacobean Patterns in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," in "*Concord in Discord*," ed. Anderson, 221–40. After noting the many comparable characters, discussions of the similarities

between the two plays tend to center around the bars to the lovers' alliance and the "star-crossed" nature of their love. On Ford's play and *The Duchess of Malfi*, see especially Michael Neill, "'What Strange Riddle's This?': Deciphering *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," in *John Ford*, ed. Neill, 168–72; and Terri Clerico, "The Politics of Blood: John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 423–4.

6 All quotations from *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* follow the text of Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin, eds., *Drama of the English Renaissance*, vol. II, *The Stuart Period* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

7 Derek Roper, ed., *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1975), "Introduction," xlv. McLuskie also notes: "Throughout the play what makes the action between the incestuous lovers so startling is that their scenes together consist of familiar 'lover routines' – the plighting of a troth, the morning after consummation, the accusation of infidelity – and the crucial fact that they are *incestuous* love scenes depends on the surrounding scenes of repentance and contrition, which involve a rhetoric taken from a different theatrical mode" ("Dramatic Construction," 119–20).

8 Cf. Marion Lomax, ed., *'Tis Pity She's a Whore and Other Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), "Introduction," xix. On the narcissism involved in this fantasy, see also Rowland Wymer, *Webster and Ford* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 136–8; Richard A. McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 232–3.

9 All quotation of Donne's poetry follows the text of *The Complete English Poems*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Penguin, 1971).

10 See Cyrus Hoy, "'Ignorance in Knowledge': Marlowe's Faustus and Ford's Giovanni," *Modern Philology* 57 (1960): 151; Nathaniel Strout, "The Tragedy of Annabella in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," in *Traditions and Innovations: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. David G. Allen and Robert A. White (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 168; Reid Barbour, "John Ford and Resolve," *Studies in Philology*, 86 (1989): 357, n. 37; Lisa Hopkins, "Incest and Class: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and the Borgias," in *Incest and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Elizabeth Barnes (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), 98; David M. Bergeron, "Brother-Sister Relationships in Ford's 1633 Plays," in "*Concord in Discord*," ed. Anderson, 222, 213. Martin Butler establishes connections between Ford and Donne's circle in "The Connection between Donne, Clarendon, and Ford," *Notes and Queries* 34 (1987): 309–10; and "*Love's Sacrifice*: Ford's Metatheatrical Tragedy," in *John Ford*, ed. Neill, 202–3.

11 Cf. Donne:

> Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
> Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown,
> Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.
> ("The Good Morrow," 12–14)

12 Cf. Ide, "Ford's *'Tis Pity*," 79–81.

13 In addition to the lines quoted above, see Othello's suicidal cry, "I took by th' throat the circumcised dog, / And smote him – thus (5.2.55–6), as well as his earlier description of the kisses he exchanged with Desdemona: "And this, and this, the greatest discords be / That e'er our hearts shall make" (2.1.199–200).

14 Quotation of *The Duchess of Malfi* follows the text of the New Mermaids edition, ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan, 3rd edn. (New York: Norton, 1993).

15 Neill, "'What Strange Riddle,'" 172.

16 Neill, "'What Strange Riddle,'" 172. Clerico takes a different approach in "Politics"; influenced by Frank Whigham's seminal article, "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*" (*PMLA* 100 [1985]: 167–86), she considers Giovanni's desires within the framework of a "complex narrative of class struggle in which social and sexual fantasies are incestuously intertwined" (425). Bruce Thomas Boehrer, in contrast, argues that within the world of the play "traditional systems of ascribed social rank become impaired to the point of meaninglessness"; *'Tis Pity*, he asserts, "explores what might happen if the individual nuclear family were to be assigned independent value as a political unit – if it were to be dissociated from the language of royal absolutism and viewed as a perfectly self-contained political entity" (*Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England: Literature, Culture, Kinship, and Kingship* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992], 125).

17 For a related though different argument see Molly Smith, *Breaking Boundaries: Politics and Play in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998). Smith maintains that

> 'Tis Pity simultaneously desacralizes the institution of patriarchy which had for so long maintained associations with the divine even as it sacralizes the act of sibling incest, which by its very nature constitutes a defiance of patriarchy. This simultaneous movement may be traced to Ford's dexterous appropriation and subversion of the patterns and vocabulary of traditional devotional literature, a genre in which the devotee addresses God, the ultimate patriarch (103).

For other treatments of incest during the period, see McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Moral Law*; Boehrer, *Monarchy and Incest*; Mark Shell, *The End of Kinship: "Measure for Measure," Incest, and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Susan J. Wiseman, "*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*: Representing the Incestuous Body," in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540–1600*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion, 1990), 180–97; Lois E. Bueler, "The Structural Uses of Incest in English Renaissance Drama," *Renaissance Drama* 15 (1984): 115–45. For a radically different view, see Maureen Quilligan, *Incest and Agency in Elizabeth's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). Quilligan argues that incestuous desire was potentially empowering for women in this period; she glances only briefly at *The Duchess* and *'Tis Pity*, but she does acknowledge, as she does so, "the problematic position in which the far greater power of brothers puts [their] sisters" (206).

18 Clerico, "Politics," 423.

19 For an analysis of this anxiety in early modern England (and elsewhere) see Shell, *The End of Kinship*.

20 Lois E. Bueler, in "Role-Splitting and Reintegration: The Tested Woman Plot in Ford," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 20 (1980), notes that in several plays "Ford's structural pattern involves elaborate role-splitting among the male participants in the test [of a central woman character], a splitting designed to make complex psychological relationships dramatically accessible" (325).

21 These exchanges are often in close proximity to similar references to Florio, further connecting and blurring the line between the two patriarchs. For instance, after the exchange between Giovanni and the Friar in the first scene (in which they repeatedly address each other as "father" and "son"), Giovanni is told to "hie to [his] father's house" and perform religious penitence (1.1.69); and later, almost immediately after Florio asks the Friar, "Did you call, father," he questions Annabella, "Daughter, are you resolved," to which she replies, "Father, I am" (3.6.43, 49).

22 Richard Marienstras, *New Perspectives on the Shakespearean World*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 195; Lomax, ed., *'Tis Pity*, "Introduction," xix.

23 Cf. Beatrice Joanna's dead mother/twin in *The Changeling* 3.4.3–5.

24 Roper, ed., *'Tis Pity*, note; Roper further notes that "[N.W.] Bawcutt [ed., *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (London: E. Arnold, 1966)] comments that 'the meaning is not clear,' but glosses from *O.E.D.*, 7, 'notion or idea (of the sort that fathers usually have).'" Colin Gibson, ed., *The Selected Plays of John Ford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) also provides the gloss "loving notion."

25 Lomax, ed., *'Tis Pity*, note.

26 For the myth of Athena's birth as responding to an "uneasiness about paternity," see Shell, *The End of Kinship*, 5.

27 Shell, *The End of Kinship*, passim. See also Claudine Defaye, "Annabella's Unborn Baby: The Heart in Womb in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," *Cahiers Elisabéthains* 15 (1979): 35–42; Defaye maintains that "the whole development of the tragedy establishes that incest and procreation are incompatible" (36).

28 Speaking of the Duchess, Ferdinand says to Bosola: "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" (*The Duchess of Malfi* 4.1.119–21).

29 Clerico, "Politics," 413. Brian Morris first commented on the prominence of the word "blood" in his introduction to the New Mermaids edition of the play (New York: Norton, 1968), xxiv–xxvi.

30 Marienstras, *New Perspectives*, 195.

31 Boehrer, "'Nice Philosophy': *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and the Two Books of God," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 24 (1984): 355–71; Smith, *Breaking Boundaries*, 114. In contrast, Clifford Leech, among others, sees Giovanni's statement as a blatant lie (*John Ford*, 290), while Irving Ribner maintains that "he is saying to the audience that although he has followed the

ritual of the church it has offered him no help (*Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order* [London: Methuen, 1962]), 166.

32 See, e.g., Clerico, "Politics," 419–21; Hoy, "Ignorance," 147; Mark Stavig, *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 104; Dente, "Reading Symptoms of Decadence," 34–5; and Boehrer, who points out the Friar's reasoning is equally specious ("'Nice Philosophy,'" 359).

33 Cf. T. F. Wharton, *Moral Experiment in Jacobean Drama* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 91–3; Wharton calls attention to some of the ambiguous connotations of "wit" at this time and in Ford's play.

34 It seems significant that the play begins with the command, "Dispute no more" (1.1.1). See also Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 101–3.

35 Bergetto's foolish comment to Annabella, "Sirrah sweetheart, I'll tell thee a good jest; and riddle what 'tis" (3.5.69–70), parodies and comments upon the various questions about meaning in the play, especially the question posed to Giovanni when he appears with Annabella's heart, "What strange riddle's this?" (5.6.31).

36 Citation of *Dr Faustus* follows the text of the New Mermaids edition, ed. Roma Gill, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 1989).

37 See especially Neill, "'What Strange Riddle'"; Huebert, *John Ford*, 144–7.

38 Neill, "'What Strange Riddle,'" 65.

39 In the New Mermaids edition, Morris notes that the title "inevitably recalls Othello's 'Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,' and later 'but yet the pity of it Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago'" ("Introduction," xv; *Othello* 3.3.359; 4.1.195–6). I would suggest that Ford's play brings out the ambiguity in Othello's command, making clear the ways in which the proof he asks for is both deeply desired and already determined.

40 For another reading of the play from Annabella's perspective, see Strout, "The Tragedy of Annabella," 163–76; Strout feels that "For an author and an audience to whom feminine deference and Christian morality were part of the official culture, Annabella's life can be tragic precisely because of her submissiveness to men" (173).

41 John Ford, *'Tis Pitty Shee's a Whore*, London, 1633.

42 Neill, "'What Strange Riddle,'" 163. Lisa Hopkins, quoting an early modern account of an assault on a pregnant woman, similarly describes Giovanni as a "'tragicall midwife'" who "violate[s] not only the traditionally female private space of the birth chamber, but the secrets of the womb itself" (*The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* [New York: Palgrave, 2002], 136); and Carol C. Rosen comments on how death, consummation, and childbirth combine into a single image here ("The Language of Cruelty in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," *Comparative Drama* 8 [1974]: 356–68). See also DeFaye, "Annabella's Unborn Baby," 39–40.

In attempting to demonstrate her thesis about the necessary imbrication of heterosexuality and narrative, Judith Roof comments that "one species of

narrative expression that might confirm the ending concatenation of reproduction and death is literary narrative. Unfortunately, the literal combination of sex, reproduction, and death in literary narrative is unusual even though the elements are pervasive" (*Come As You Are*: *Sexuality and Narrative* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996]), 22. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* seems to provide us with a striking example of this combination.

43 Cf. Lomax, who comments that "women associated with dangerous sexual passions are controlled through the mutilation of their bodies" (*'Tis Pity*, xviii). Wiseman also notes, in reference to Putana's fate, that "the Oedipal punishment for incest is transferred from the male to the female body, as well as down the social scale" ("Representing the Incestuous Body," 192).

44 See McLuskie, "Dramatic Construction," 120. McLuskie argues that this is true of Ford's plays generally: "The only irreversible theatrical reality is sexual consummation or violent death . . . Meaning is held in abeyance unless it confronts the most violent and irreversible narrative facts" (118, 120). She herself sees this as a deliberate strategy, but she provides examples of negative criticism of Ford's techniques (97–9); see also Ide, "Ford's *'Tis Pity*," 61–2.

45 Roper, *'Tis Pity*, xlvii.

46 In what seems an effort to exempt Marlowe from these criticisms the middle section and the comic scenes of both the A and B texts are regularly assigned to other hands. The excellent new Norton edition of Renaissance drama, for example, dismisses the B text and states unequivocally that the comic scenes in the A text are by a "collaborator," although it offers no hard evidence to bolster this claim; see David Bevington, "Introduction" to *Doctor Faustus*, in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. Bevington *et al.* (New York: Norton, 2002), 249.

47 See Hoy, "'Ignorance,'" 145–54.

48 The presentation of Edward's death is ambiguous, causing at least one critic to argue that Marlowe did not intend the impalement to occur (Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Early Modern England* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 47–8). But while this scene, like much of *Edward II*, plays with what we can and cannot see, it undeniably evokes the well-known image of Edward's death. As Ashley Shelden has pointed out to me, one difference between the images in the two plays is precisely their relative visibility; Shelden argues persuasively that this difference reflects the different genders of the two victims. I believe that it also reflects the different forms of sexuality explored in the two plays: the homoerotic, in early modern England, often exists only implicitly, while the anxieties surrounding the heteroerotic frequently surface in explicit contradictions (compare, e.g., the different sorts of paradoxes in Shakespeare's sonnets 94 and 138, and cf. Joel Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*: *The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986]), 165–7).

THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERDESS: THE CASE OF MARGARET CAVENDISH

1 Because Cavendish's works are not lineated, I refer to page numbers as well as acts and scenes to assist the reader in locating citations. References to *The Unnatural Tragedy*, *The Presence*, *Youths Glory, and Deaths Banquet*, and *The Female Academy* are to [Margaret Cavendish,] Duchess of Newcastle, *Playes* (London, 1662). I use Anne Shaver's edition, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) for citations from *The Convent of Pleasure* and *Loves Adventures*, The Second Part of *Loves Adventures*, *The Bridals*, and the prefatory material to *Playes*, 1662 (cited parenthetically as Prefaces). References to the *Sociable Letters* are to James Fitzmaurice's edition (New York: Garland, 1997).

2 In his verse prologue to *The Unnatural Tragedy*, William Cavendish identifies tragedy as normally masculine; he says that his wife "'gainst her Sex the Tragick Buskins wears" (324). For readings that complicate this identification, see Lisa Hopkins, "Crime and Context in *The Unnatural Tragedy*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 14 (2004): 1–8, available at http://purl.oclc.org/emls/si-14/hopkunna.html; Marguèrite Corporaal "An Empowering Wit and an 'Unnatural' Tragedy: Margaret Cavendish's Representation of the Tragic Female Voice," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 14 (2004): 1–3, available at www.chass.utoronto.ca/emls/si-14/corpempo.html.

3 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 106–7.

4 Douglas Grant, *Margaret the First* (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), 161.

5 See Judith Peacock, "Writing for the Brain and Writing for the Boards: The Producibility of Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Texts," in *A Princely Brave Woman: Essays on Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle*, ed. Stephen Clucas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 88–104; Julie Sanders, "'A woman write a play!': Jonsonian Strategies and the Dramatic Writings of Margaret Cavendish; or, Did the Duchess Feel the Anxiety of Influence?" in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594–1998*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 1998), 293–305; Gweno Williams, "'Why may not a lady write a good play?': Plays by Early Modern Women Reassessed as Performance Texts," in Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, *Readings*, 95–8; Alison Findlay, Gweno Williams, and Stephanie J. Hodgson-Wright, "'The Play is ready to be Acted': Women and Dramatic Production, 1570–1670," *Women's Writing* 6 (1999): 129–47.

6 See, in addition to the examples cited below, Andrew Hiscock, "'Here's no design, no plot, nor any ground': The Drama of Margaret Cavendish and the Disorderly Woman," *Women's Writing* 4 (1997): 401–20; Gisèle Venet, "Margaret Cavendish's Drama: an Aesthetic of Fragmentation," in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 213–28.

7 A seventeenth-century version of this disagreement can be found in the quarrel between the Book-holder and the Stage-keeper in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* ("The Induction to the Stage"), where the two conflicting perspectives are conceived, respectively, as learned (or text-based) and popular (or stage-based).

8 For a suggestive consideration of some of the issues raised by including early modern women in the canon, see Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), esp. chapter 1.

9 Sylvia Bowerbank, "The Spider's Delight: Margaret Cavendish and the 'Female' Imagination," *English Literary Renaissance* 14 (1984): 393.

10 Dale Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama 1642–1660* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1995), 328.

11 Sara Mendelson, "Playing Games with Gender and Genre: The Dramatic Self-Fashioning of Margaret Cavendish," in Cottegnies and Weitz, eds. *Authorial Conquests*, 198.

12 Shaver, ed. *The Convent of Pleasure*, 251.

13 Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 156.

14 In one of her epistolary prefaces, Cavendish opines that adherence to the unity of time can only produce "Comedies" that are "very flat and dull, and neither profitable nor pleasant"; she continues:

> For though Ben. Johnson as I have heard was of that opinion, that a Comedy cannot be good, nor is a natural or true Comedy, if it should present more than one dayes action, yet his Comedies that he hath published, could never be the actions of one day; for could any rational person think that the whole Play of the Fox could be the action of one day? or can any rational person think that the Alchymist could be the action of one day? (Prefaces, 256)

Randall finds Cavendish "the most un-Jonsonian playwright imaginable" (*Winter Fruit*, 328), while Sanders maintains that Jonson served as her model, and that she uses his plays as justifications for her own practices ("'A woman write a play!'"). Although I believe that Sanders occasionally misreads Cavendish's ironies at Jonson's expense (as in her discussion of the unity of time, above), I would argue that both critics' characterizations are fundamentally correct.

15 Cf. Linda R. Payne, "Dramatic Dreamscape: Women's Dreams and Utopian Vision in the Works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660–1829*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991), 21; Laura J. Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 75.

16 Bowerbank, "The Spider's Delight," 407.

17 For a theoretical formulation of this strategy, see Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*:

> One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it . . . To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. (trans. Catherine Porter [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985], 76)

18 See Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649–88* (London: Virago. 1988), 107–8. Gweno Williams also remarks that the inset plays detailing the miseries of conventional women's lives "may in fact be the very first staging of a gossips' meeting by a woman dramatist" (Findlay, Williams, and Hodgson-Wright, "'The Play is ready to be Acted,'" 143).

19 *OED*, "cloister," 1b. See also the discussion of the importance of "private female closets and analogous spaces" in Cavendish's plays (131) in Julie Sanders, "'The Closet Opened': A Reconstruction of 'Private' Space in the Writing of Margaret Cavendish," in Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman*, 125–55.

20 Cf. Marlowe, "The Passionate Shepherd":

> A gown made of the finest wool
> Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
> Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
> With buckles of the purest gold.
> (Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations*, ed. Stephen Orgel [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971], 13–16)

Although Cavendish does not refer to Marlowe as frequently as she does to Jonson and Shakespeare, she clearly knew his most famous works; she has the heroine of *The Presence* exclaim: "I am of *Marlow's* opinion, Who ever lov'd that loves not at first sight!" (1.3; p. 11; this quotation of *Hero and Leander*, of course, also recalls Shakespeare's citation of it in *As You Like It* 3.5.80–1: "Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might / 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'").

21 It repeats, in any case, the male threat of taking women by force that was contained in the inset plays (3.10; p. 233).

22 The play thus seems, as Judith Roof notes on *Victor/Victoria*, to "illustrate . . . beautifully the maxim that narrative can proceed to closure only after the correctly oppositional, appropriately gendered heterosexual components are sorted out." Roof further comments that our prior knowledge in the film that the cross-dressed Julie Andrews is "really" a girl reflects "a prior knowledge about the way stories really go (boy meets girl). The reader's knowledge is not really a knowledge of 'real' gender that the story then reveals as true; knowledge of gender is produced by a knowledge of the way the story must go" (*Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996], 76). Her comments seem even more apposite to Cavendish's play, in which the absence of any earlier revelation concerning the Prince/ss's "real" gender – or any dramatic irony – makes it

clear that "his" masculinity is produced wholly by "knowledge of the way the story must go."

23 Shaver notes in her edition: "Newcastle is credited with his contributions on printed strips pasted into the text of both *Playes* (1662) and *Playes, Never before Printed* (1668). Here, since no terminus is given, it seems that he is the author of the final two scenes and the epilogue" (238).

24 Robin DeRosa, "'What Have I On a Petticoat?': *The Convent of Pleasure* and the Reality of Performance," *In-Between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 9 (2000): 275. DeRosa also argues that "the (double) cross-dressing, the friendship ruse, and the pastoral all operate as normative ornaments which serve to conceal the taboo sexuality underneath" (280). I am suggesting that, as in Marlowe's works, "ornament" and "taboo sexuality" are equated here. Despite my minor disagreements with DeRosa, I have benefitted both from her article and from discussions with her.

25 Sophie Tomlinson, "'My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance," in *Women, Texts and Histories 1575–1760*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (New York: Routledge, 1992), 156. Tomlinson's article is invaluable both for its reading of the gender ambiguities in *The Convent* in particular, and for its analysis of Cavendish's investment in female performance in general.

26 Williams also notes that "Cavendish frequently uses the phrase 'as . . .' to give specific directions to the actors: 'Enter a Lady as almost distracted.'" (Findlay, Williams, and Hodgson-Wright, "'The Play is ready to be Acted,'" 141).

27 Similar ambiguities surround many of the details in the play. Thus, some critics see the pastoral "May-pole" (4.1; p. 235) around which the women dance as a sign that patriarchy has triumphed well before the unveiling of the Prince/ss: "They erect a phallic Maypole, ushering patriarchy's valorization of fertility in to their previously separatist space. The pastoral production obliterates the 'Varieties' of pleasure that animate earlier moments of the play" (Erin Lang Bonin, "Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Utopia and the Politics of Gender," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 40 [2000]: 350; cf. Shaver, *The Convent of Pleasure*, 235). But one could equally well see the "May-pole" (which, in Cavendish's spelling, seems double-gendered) as reducing the phallus to the fetish – the perfect sign of a space in which surface reigns supreme, and all the "men" are played by women (Cf. Judith Butler's remark on the performance of gender, "As one lesbian femme explained, she likes her boys to be girls"; *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* [New York: Routledge, 1990], 123).

28 For an analysis of Cavendish's deployment of static speech and spectacle here and throughout her works, see Rebecca D'Monté, "'Making a Spectacle': Margaret Cavendish and the Staging of the Self," in Clucas, *A Princely Brave Woman*, 109–26.

29 Irene Dash compares *Love's Labor's Lost* with *The Convent of Pleasure* in "Single Sex Retreats in Two Early Modern Dramas: *Love's Labor's Lost* and

The Convent of Pleasure," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (1996): 387–95; the comparison seems perhaps even more relevant and fruitful here. In his play, Shakespeare provides motivation for the couplings that occur towards the end, and then undermines the closure that the expected marriages seem to promise. *The Female Academy*, I would suggest, works in exactly the opposite manner.

30 See, e.g., the readings by Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642–1737* (London: Harvester, 1988), 126; Bonin, "Margaret Cavendish's Dramatic Utopia"; Payne, "Dramatic Dreamscape," 27.

31 Act 5, sc. 5:

> Enter Princess as a Bride, and the Prince as a Bridegroom sitting under a State. Enter also Conversant and Quick-wit, Observer and Self-conceit, as Brides and Bridegrooms, and all the rest of the Court. Then the Prince, and Princess and the rest of the Company, dance a Ball after the French fashion; and after this there is an Anti-Mask presented to the Prince and Princess. (p. 92)

There are twenty-nine "Scenes" following this, continuing for sixty-three more pages in the original edition.

32 Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists*, 80.

33 Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists*, 80; cf. D'Monté, "'Making a Spectacle'": "[Sanspareille] eschews earthly marriage, instead achieving apotheosis as she goes to a more fitting nuptial alliance in Heaven – the 'Death's Banquet' of the title" (118).

34 While this line and the conclusion most clearly recall *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Innocence also strews flowers, Ophelia-like, before her death (4.20; p. 174).

35 In addition to *The Unnatural Tragedy*, one might consider the subplot concerning Lady Jantil in *Bell in Campo*.

36 Cf. *Romeo and Juliet* 1.5, esp. 62–3: "Oh child, O child, my soul and not my child! / Dead art thou! Alack my child is dead / And with my child my joys are buried."

37 One notes, for example, the reappearance of the questions about "jest" and "earnest" that were characteristic of *'Tis Pity* – "I hope you speak not in Earnest: / In truth Sister I do no [*sic*] not jest" (3.19; p. 344) – as well as the repeated assertion that the father, "having but . . . two" children, is particularly concerned about his posterity (1.1; p. 325; see below). See also Hopkins, "Crime and Context," 2–3, for other examples.

38 All quotation from *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* follows the text of Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin, eds., *Drama of the English Renaissance*, vol. II, *The Stuart Period* (New York: Macmillan, 1976).

39 See *The Duchess of Malfi* 1.2.261, discussed in Chapter 6.

40 See also Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists*, 60; Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, 160.

41 See, for example, D'Monté, "'Making a Spectacle,'" 118; Theodora A. Jankowski, "Pure Resistance: Queer(y)ing Virginity in William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*," *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 218–55.

42 See also Rosenthal's insightful discussion of Cavendish's attempts "to reconfigure the property relations so profoundly intertwined with reproduction" (*Playwrights and Plagiarists*, 77).

43 Cf. *Convent* 2.1:

> TAKE-PLEASURE: Dost thou think I shall get the Lady *Happy?*
> DICK: Not if it be her fortune to continue in that name.
> TAKE-PLEASURE: Why?
> DICK: Because if she Marry your Worship she must change her Name; for the Wife takes the Name of the Husband, and quits her own . . . Women never think themselves happy in marriage. (p. 221)

See also *The Bridals*, which confronts the male anxieties about female chastity (and the societal connection of that virtue to a bride's "necessary" fear of sex) that we examined in *The Changeling*. In Cavendish's play, Lady Coy, who expresses the expected fear and shame at her wedding, changes her name and her nature after marriage (she becomes "Lady Amorous"), while her friend, who frankly embraces marital pleasures, retains both her name and her integrity, remaining always Lady Vertue (it is perhaps also significant that this admirable lady declares, when the other women inquire about her appearance: "I hope I do not appear worse then I did, when I was a Maid; for I have not been Married so long as to have Children, Cares and Troubles, to decay my Youth and Beauty," 2.2; p. 181).

44 Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists*, 79, 81.

45 Mendelson, "Playing Games with Gender and Genre," 208; the final phrase is quoted from Tomlinson, "'My Brain the Stage,'" 147.

46 Mihoko Suzuki, "Gender, the Political Subject, and Dramatic Authorship: Margaret Cavendish's *Loves Adventures* and the Shakespearean Example," in *Cavendish and Shakespeare, Interconnections*, ed. Katherine Romack and James Fitzmaurice (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 120.

47 When Affectionata suggests that he might want a conventional family, he replies: "Children I desire none, since I have thee, and wives care not for, but what are other mens" (The Second Part of *Loves Adventures*, 3.22; p. 89).

48 The Duke of Venice "adopts" Affectionata without consulting the page, and sends Ambassadors who advise, "You must not deny him; Besides he will have you"; Affectionata replies: "Tell him he may force the presence of my person, but if he doth, it will be but as a dead carcase without a living soul" (The Second Part of *Loves Adventures*, 3.17; p. 84). Even the Pope is "extremely taken with [Affectionata]," so much so that an observer remarks "if *Jove* had so much admired him, he would have made him his *Ganimed*" (3.24; p. 90). He offers to make the page a Saint or a Cardinal; a bit earlier, however, Affectionata had expressed a not unwarranted fear: "Pray heaven his Holynesse doth not put me into a Monastery, and force me to stay behind you [Lord Singuarity]" (3.22; p. 89).

49 On the "humanist . . . ideal of faithful reproductive copying, dependent on removing the contaminating taint of female sexuality," see Patricia Parker,

Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 140; Stephanie Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing*, 75–6.

50 Jonson's followers were, of course, called the "Sons of Ben." See David Lee Miller's brilliant reading connecting Jonson's "An Epistle Answering to One That Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben" and "On My First Sonne" in *Dreams of the Burning Child: Sacrificial Sons and the Father's Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 162–76. Miller's entire book is extremely suggestive in the context of the ideas discussed here.

51 E.g., "I did dislike any should follow my fashions, for I always took delight in a singularity, even in accoutrements of habits" (Margaret Cavendish, *Natures Pictures, drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* [London:1656], 387); "I endeavour . . . to be as singular as I can; for it argues but a mean nature to imitate other; . . . for my nature is such that I had rather appear worse in singularity, than better in mode" (Cavendish, *The Description of a New world, Called The Blazing World*, in *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilly (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), 218. See also Catherine Gallagher's foundational article, "Embracing the Absolute: Margaret Cavendish and the Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Early Women Writers: 1600–1720*, ed. Anita Pacheco (London: Longman, 1998), 133–45; and Elaine Hobby's questioning of Cavendish's self-characterization in "'Delight in a singularity': Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, in 1671," *In-Between: Essays and Studies in Literary Criticism* 9 (2000): 41–61.

52 Masten, *Textual Intercourse*, 157.

53 See Irigaray's assertion that thinking sexual difference would produce "a new age of thought, art, poetry, and language: the creation of a new poetics" (Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993], 5).

AFTERWORD: FOR(E)PLAY

1 Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, ed. Anne Shaver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 255–6.

2 Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5.

3 Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 15, 16, and passim.

4 Cf. Richard Strier, "Afterword: How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can't Do Without It," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 207–15.

5 Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 193–221. For a critique of

Greenblatt's notion of the "will to play" (and its development in Marlowe criticism), see Richard Wilson, "'Writ in blood': Marlowe and the New Historicists," in *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*, ed. J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 116–32.

6 Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 221, 220 (emphasis in original). Greenblatt is, of course, acutely aware of the "grotesquely comic" element in Marlowe's plays (195), but the simultaneous lament for and celebration of tragic self-creation that is evident in these lines is the primary force of his chapter. He does not, significantly, deal with any of Marlowe's nondramatic works.

7 Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 188–225.

8 Catherine Gallagher, "Embracing the Absolute: Margaret Cavendish and the Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Early Women Writers: 1600–1720*, ed. Anita Pacheco (London: Longman, 1998), 133–45.

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