A CONSIDERATION OF THE MORALITY CONTAINED IN THE THREE LOVE TRAGEDIES OF JOHN FORD

by

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Since Gerard Langbaine's Account of the English Dramatic Poets in 1688, there has been much criticism of the morality in John Ford's plays. His three love tragedies, however, have never been exhaustively examined to determine their basis in morality. This thesis analyzes the morality in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, The Broken Heart and Love's Sacrifice through a study of the texts and attention to the probable Renaissance reaction to some elements in the plays.

'Tis Pity She's A Whore has been adjudged immoral because it is alleged that Ford paints two incestuous lovers sympathetically. In this play, however, he also presents the traditional moral view of incest as a foul sin. Any glory attached to the lovers is the result of their selfless attachment to one another; any ignominy is the result of their sin. Ford is merely presenting two views of sin and the sympathetic view of the sinners as lovers does not overbalance the moral view of the lovers as sinners.

Critics also consider that Ford betrays too much sympathy for a pair of lovers, Penthea, a married woman, and Orgilus, in The Broken Heart. There is sympathy created for Penthea in her loveless forced marriage to a rich old man, but this cannot be called immoral. This view is merely realistic and human. Orgilus voices the opinion that he and Penthea have a right to adultery for they are, in effect, married because of their exchange of vows of love before her

forced marriage. Orgilus' view, however, cannot be called that of Ford because this character is discredited as the play progresses and Penthea, for whom much sympathy is created, rejects any thought of adultery.

Love's Sacrifice, however, can be called immoral, because Ford holds a pair of sinful lovers up to admiration, not only as lovers but also as sinless models of chastity. Bianca, the unfaithful wife, and Fernando, her husband's friend who betrays him are treated as saints at the outcome of the play. Here, Ford holds up for moral emulation, two immoral characters.

Ford uses sin and the temptation to sin as the tools of character revelation. In the first two plays, he cannot be said to advocate immorality merely because he paints immoral situations. The third play leaves itself somewhat open to this charge, however, because of the extravagant praise lavished on the two sinners.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Gerard Langbaine, in his Account of the English Dramatic Poets, says of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore: "it equalls any of our Author's Plays; and were to be commended, did not the Author paint the incestuous Love between Giovanni, and his sister Annabella, in too beautiful Colours."[1] This was the first of a long line of criticisms of John Ford's morality which have lasted until the present day. The adverse criticisms have far outnumbered the favorable and balanced interpretations of his moral outlook.

In 1808, Charles Lamb, in his Dramatic Specimens, restored John Ford to the attention of the British theater with his enthusiastic appreciation. Lamb differentiates between the nobility of the sinners and the degradation of their acts. Ford, he said, paints the sublimity of great natures and "discovers something of a right line even in obliquity, and shows hints of an improveable greatness in the lowest descents and degradations of our nature."[2]

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[1](Oxford, 1688), II, 222.

[2]"Dramatic Specimens and the Garrick Plays," The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), IV, 218.

Francis Jeffrey, in the Edinburgh Review for August, 1811 conceded that Ford was a great dramatist, but went on to say that the subject of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore was "somewhat revolting; though managed with great spirit,"[1] and that parts of The Broken Heart contained "atrocious indecencies with which the author has polluted his paper...."[2] In 1820, William Hazlitt went even further, claiming that Ford's only talent was "that of playing with edged tools...."[3] Where Ford was not morally obtuse, Hazlitt considered him dull.

Swinburne, in 1875, reiterated Lamb's distinction between condoning sin and merely dramatizing it. He approved of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and The Broken Heart. With admirable perception, he turned his moral attack on Love's Sacrifice, which he called "utterly indecent, unseemly and unfit for handling."[4] He continued, "The incestuous indulgence of Giovanni and Annabella is not improper for tragic treatment; the obscene abstinence of Fernando and Bianca is wholly improper. There is a coarseness of moral fiber in the whole work which is almost without parallel in our old poets."[5]

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[1]"John Ford," Essays on English Poets and Poetry (London: George Routledge & Sons, Limited), p. 58.

[2]Jeffrey, p. 65.

[3]The Complete Works of William Hazlitt in Twenty-One Volumes, ed. P. P. Howe (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1931), VI, 269.

[4]The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1926), II, 381.

[5]Swinburne, p. 382.

Swinburne's understanding of Ford was ignored, however, by such writers as Vernon Lee[1] and Adolphus Ward[2] who could not overlook their personal objections to the playwright's subject matter to observe what he was actually saying. Ward makes the almost comic statement that "in his nature, finely endowed as it was, there must have been something unsound."[3]

Hippolyte Taine, in accordance with his theory of "race, milieu et moment," rang in twentieth century Ford criticism by blaming the author's sensationalism and moral shortcomings on his "violent, over-fed, melancholy race."[4] T. S. Eliot exceeded this view with his very stuffy disapproval of Ford and especially of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, calling Giovanni "a monster of egotism" and Annabella "virtually a moral defective."[5] With a blindness not characteristic of his criticism, he said that their love was carnal with little of the spiritual in it.

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[1] Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and Mediaeval in the Renaissance (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1884), I, 75-76.

[2] A History of English Dramatic Literature (London: Mac Millan and Co., Limited, 1899), pp. 71-89.

[3] Ward, p. 89.

[4] History of English Literature, trans. Henry Van Loun (New York and London: The Co-operative Publication Society, 1900), I, 300.

[5] "John Ford," Selected Essays, 1917-1932 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p. 174.

With the increase of serious Ford scholarship in the twentieth century, moral judgments of his plays have become less rigorous. There are a few critics, such as Stuart P. Sherman, G. F. Sensabaugh and Clifford Leech, who consider that Ford was trying to illustrate a general principle in the particular situations in his plays. Professor Sherman believes that Ford had a love theory which allowed the commission of any sin in its interest.[1] Mr. Sensabaugh thinks that the dramatist was supporting and illustrating a Neo-Platonic love code, which the critic attributes, with many distortions of its tenets, to the court of Queen Henrietta Maria, the consort of Charles I.[2] Mr. Leech also believes that Ford was influenced by the court and that he was trying to work out a code of stoical ethics for the use of the great.[3]

Only M. Joan Sargeaunt[4] and H. J. Oliver[5] examine Ford's ideas accurately in the context of the plays. Miss

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[1]See 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and The Broken Heart, ed. S. P. Sherman. The belles-Lettres series. Boston, 1916.

[2]"John Ford and Platonic Love in the Court," SP, XXXVI (1939), 206-226; "John Ford--An Historical and Interpretative Study: With Special Reference to Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' and to the Court of Henrietta Maria" (diss. Chapel Hill, 1934); The Tragic Muse of John Ford (California, 1944).

[3]John Ford and the Drama of His Time (London, 1957).

[4]John Ford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1935).

[5]The Problem of John Ford (Melbourne, 1955).

Sargeaunt claims that it is silly to treat a dramatist as a crusading moral reformer, no matter what the ideas and situations contained in his plays. She says that Ford was primarily a dramatist and interested in the odd situations he handled for their dramatic interest, not their moral lesson. Mr. Oliver thinks that Ford used strange moral situations to shock the Jacobean audience, which was becoming used to extreme horror on the stage. Both critics, however, because they are forced by their predecessors to give some consideration to the dramatist's morality, state that, understood in context, there is little immorality in the plays. Miss Sargeaunt refuses to confuse Ford's sympathy for his sinners with approval of their sin. Mr. Oliver says, "the more one examines Ford's allegedly daring assaults on conventional morality, the more absurd the charge becomes."[1]

These are only samples of the vast body of Ford criticism based on reactions to his morality. His three love tragedies have never been exhaustively examined, however, to determine their basis in morality. This thesis intends to analyze the morality in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, The Broken Heart and Love's Sacrifice, through a study of texts and attention to the probable Renaissance reaction to some elements in the plays.

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[1]Oliver, p. 66.

CHAPTER II

'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

'Tis Pity She's A Whore is John Ford's most maligned and misunderstood play. To interpret the drama correctly is a difficult task, because of the sensational nature of its theme and its many "inconsistencies." What most critics fail to realize is the duality of the theme that Ford is pursuing. This failure leads to the view of the play as immoral or inconsistent.

The basic problem of the drama is that Ford is juxtaposing the personal attractiveness of two sensational sinners and the traditional Christian view of the sin's repulsiveness. Annabella and Giovanni are sympathetic characters functioning within a Christian context and performing an action interpreted as love by themselves and as sin by their surroundings. These two worlds, the personal and the Christian, are consciously contrasted throughout the play, to the detriment of one or the other, or both.

As Ford presents them, Annabella and Giovanni are two good people who fall into sin. They are like Macbeth, who elicits sympathy even in his deserved sufferings and death. Giovanni is renowned for his "government, behavior, learning,

speech,/ Sweetness, and all that could make up a man!"[1] Annabella is famed "As well for virtue as perfection..." (II.i.117). They are respected and likeable and kind to one another and the people who surround them.

Moreover, Ford gives them the most exalted speeches and the noblest part to play. Giovanni is magnificent in the final scene as he foils his enemies and dies bravely. Annabella has a pathos, especially in her final scene, which shows her to be a tender being forced to play a bitter part in a cruel world. Her spirit and sympathy under Soranzo's abuse shows the desperate strength she can call upon in such situations. Such characters can be destroyed but never broken.

In Act I, Scene i, the play opens with an argument over incest between Giovanni, the incipient sinner, and the Roman Catholic Church, represented by Friar Bonaventura. Much has been made of Giovanni's atheism, one of the strongest pieces of evidence used by the critics who believe that he is not an attractive character.

Admittedly, "atheist" was a word that connoted evil to a Renaissance audience. Even Thomas More, in his liberal Utopia, in which complete freedom of religion is granted, calls an atheist unfit "for human society" and "hardly a

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[1]John Ford, "'Tis Pity She's A Whore," John Ford, ed. Havelock Ellis (London: T. Fisher Unwin), Act I, Scene i, p. 101.

man." Christopher Marlowe was imprisoned and scheduled for trial on a charge of atheism and Thomas Kyd was tortured on suspicion of it. "Atheist" was a Renaissance bogey, but it must be kept in mind that "Catholic" was one also. An example of the English Protestant view of Catholics occurs in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.

> But above all others, that High Priest of Rome, the dam of that monstrous and superstitious brood, the bull-bellowing Pope...hath played his part. Whose religion at this day is mere policy, a state wholly composed of superstition and wit...that useth Colleges and religious houses to as good purpose as Forts and Castles, and doth more at this day by a company of scribbling Parasites, fiery-spirited Friars, Zealous Anchorites, hypocritical Confessors, and those Praetorian soldiers, his Janissary Jesuits, that dissociable society, as Langius terms it, the last effort of the devil and the very excrement of time, that now stand in the fore-front of the battle, will have a monopoly of, and engross all other learning, but domineer in Divinity, and fight alone almost (for the rest are but his dromedaries and asses), than ever he could have done by garrisons and armies. What power of Prince, or penal Law, be it never so strict, could enforce men to do that which for conscience' sake they will voluntarily undergo? ...What so powerful an engine as superstition? Which they right well perceiving, are of no religion at all themselves. For truly (as Calvin rightly suspects, and as the tenor and practice of their life proves) the first of the secrets of these theologians, by which they rule, and in chief, is that they hold there is no God, as Leo X. did, Hildebrand the Magician, Alexander VI., Julius II., mere atheists, and which the common proverb amongst them approves, the worst Christians of Italy are the Romans, of the Romans the priests are wildest, the lewdest priests are preferred to be Cardinals, the baddest man amongst the Cardinals is chosen to be Pope, that is an epicure, as most part the Popes are, Infidels

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> and Lucianists, for so they think and believe; and what is said of Christ to be fables and impostures, of Heaven and Hell, day of Judgment, Paradise, Immortality of the soul, are all dreams, toys, and old wives' tales.[1]

To the typical Elizabethan, the Catholic Church was a political threat to British national sovereignty, headed by atheists and doing the work of the devil.

Italian Catholic churchmen were traditional villians of Renaissance drama. In this play, the Cardinal is a wicked character, protecting a follower from just punishment for committing a murder. The Friar, though not actually malicious, proves to be superstitious and unreasonable. To a society becoming interested in science, his argument that it is better "to bless the sun than reason why it shines..." (I.i.99) is hardly convincing. Furthermore, his slavish superstition is evident in his use of magic numbers in his advice to Giovanni to:

> ...weep, sigh, pray
> Three times a-day and three times every night:
> For seven days space do this.... (I.i.101)

He extracts repentance from Annabella by painting lurid pictures of hell, sees nothing wrong in marrying her to Soranzo while she is pregnant with Giovanni's child and,

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[1]Robert Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Incorporated, 1927), The Third Partition, Section 4, Member I, Subsection 2, pp. 884-885.

finally, flees the city in a cowardly refusal to be witness to the impending disaster. Thus, to an Elizabethan, the somewhat atheistic Giovanni disputing with the Friar is Beelzebub arguing with Satan.

Moreover, at the outset, Giovanni expresses nothing overtly atheistic. It is the Friar who accuses him of atheism. Actually, in the first scene, Giovanni is not questioning the existence of God but the social origin of **what is taught as a law of heaven.** In Roman Catholic thought, to argue with a doctrine of the Church is to deny the infallibility of the Pope (which was widely believed though not yet officially declared as a dogma). This denies the existence of the one, true Church and, therefore, of God who has designated it so. This play, however, was performed for Church reformers who had no Pope and could question a doctrine of their Church without attacking the whole structure. At the time of Ford, there was a tradition in the Anglican Church, represented by theologians such as Richard Hooker and John Jewel, which emphasized the role of reason in matters of faith. In fact, these beliefs were the basis of Locke's and Tillotson's later rejection of all revelation contrary to reason.[1] Therefore, when Giovanni calls the law forbidding incest "...a peevish sound/A customary form from man to man" (I.i.100), he says the law is a mere convention of human origin, but he does not, in the

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[1]S. L. Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (New York: Roy Publishers), 1951, Chap. II.

eyes of the Protestant audience, call the existence of God into question.

It is not until Scene iii, that Giovanni denies his religion. His reasons, however, are not to repudiate religion in order to love Annabella, but to cast it aside as of no use in the practical trials of life. At the close of Scene i, the Friar advises him to pray for a week to free himself from the curse of loving Annabella. Giovanni replies:

> All this I'll do, to free me from the rod
> Of vengeance; else I'll swear my fate's my god.
> (I.i.102)

Giovanni does not want to be punished for what he knows is a sin, so he will pray to be delivered. It is here that his disillusionment with religion sets in, for when we next see him, at the beginning of Scene iii, he is relinquishing religion as ineffectual.

> I have even wearied Heaven with prayers, dried up
> The spring of my continual tears, even starved
> My veins with daily fasts: what wit or art
> Could counsel, I have practised; but, alas,
> I find all these but dreams, and old men's tales,
> To fright unsteady youth; I'm still the same....
> (I.iii.107)

He has conformed to the religious practice of fasting and praying to be rescued from temptation, but this has accomplished nothing. Therefore, he reasons, prayers are foolish, for there is either no god to whom to pray, or prayers are not the right method of approaching him. All Giovanni knows is that he has failed to contact heaven and is left

to the mercy of his incestuous longings.

On the other hand, he may think that he has received an answer. This would explain his remark to Annabella:

> I have asked counsel of the holy church,
> Who tells me I may love you....(I.iii.110)

In the religious convention in which Giovanni was raised and which he tried to utilize in his present need, God answered all prayers. Since Giovanni's immoral desires were not taken away when he prayed, he may assume that he is to keep them. Nevertheless, in a passionate, lyrical scene of heroic love, this statement has the unfortunate note of casuistry, if not prevarication. Perhaps it is not included to reveal Giovanni's state of mind so much as to give Annabella added reason for yielding to him. She never questions religion and repents her sin twice during the play. She must be told that the Church permits her brother to love her as part of the effort to keep her in character. Her passion seizes this remark as an aid to submerging her sense of sin. She does not wake from this lovely, self-deluding dream until the Friar tells her the opposite.

Giovanni, once released from the restraints of religion, uses his reason alone as a source of his ethics and discards revelation completely. This was wrong to the religious minds of the Renaissance, as the Friar points out:

> Indeed, if we were sure there were no Deity,
> Nor Heaven, nor Hell, then to be led alone
> By Nature's light--as were philosophers
> Of elder times--might instance some defence.
> But 'tis not so: then, madman, thou wilt find
> That Nature is in Heaven's positions blind. (II.v.128)

Ford, however, was writing at a time when some scientists and philosophers were beginning to call upon religion to defend revelation against the attacks of reason. Giovanni was not alone in observing the discrepancies between reason and revelation.

Giovanni's enthusiasm in discarding his former beliefs is further bolstered by his pleasure in his love for his sister. He believes that he has gained an advantage by living exclusively for the gratification of his desires, without any thought of heaven. In fact, he has created his own heaven.

> My world and all my happiness is here,
> And I'd not change it for the best to come:
> A life of pleasure is elysium. (V.iii.168)

His happy hedonism leads him to tell the Friar, in his first overtly atheistic remark, that hell is an invention of "fond superstitious fear." He has found not only that he can live without heaven, but also that it is more enjoyable to do so. He controls his own destiny and need not depend on Divine Providence. This leads him to make the unpleasant remark that his pleasure in Annabella is undiminished by her marriage to another. But the impression created by this statement is mitigated by his mention of the spiritual quality of their love.

> ...O, the glory
> Of two united hearts like hers and mine!
> (V.iii.168)

In the lightheadedness engendered by his mastery of fate, Giovanni refuses, at first, to understand the impending disaster. The Friar's report and Annabella's letter, written in her own blood, fail to convince him that he can be overcome. He has committed the folly of many Greek tragic heroes; he considers himself a god. When Annabella pleads with him to understand that he is in danger, he sees his own position being threatened by the Christian God. Instead of responding to the threat of death, he answers this more dire one with the scientific argument that if God claims he will destroy the earth by fire, how does he propose to burn the waters. Annabella, who believes in her religion, cannot understand what all this academic quibbling has to do with the situation in which they are involved. His confidence in his own god-like power is already crumbling under this new proof that he does not control events, and he questions Annabella pathetically on what the afterlife is like. She answers him distractedly and then impatiently demands that he consider their present physical danger. Giovanni abruptly decides to control what meager portion of future events is left to him and to preserve his role as his own god. He will kill Annabella rather than have an outside force impose itself upon them. He will also strike down his enemies, after the manner of gods. He calls Annabella's murder "this act/Which I most glory in"(V.v.176),

and in preparing to revenge himself on Soranzo, he says:

> Shrink not, courageous hand, stand up my heart,
> And boldly act my last and greater part!
> (V.v.176)

He is a god and, as he boasts, he controls the "twists of life," the cords woven by the fates.

He has become an unrepentant atheist. The words he speaks to Annabella at her death, which have puzzled critics because they seem to deny this, must be uttered solely for her comfort.

> Pray, Annabella, pray! Since we must part,
> Go thou, white in thy soul, to fill a throne
> Of innocence and sanctity in Heaven.
> Pray, pray, my sister! (V.v.175)

This statement could not reflect Giovanni's belief, not only because of his persistence in acting the part of God, but also because of the manner of his death. When the Cardinal exhorts him to cry to God for mercy, he refuses. He has exacted justice from the world and this is enough. The only heaven he will plead for is the company of Annabella. Once he becomes used to living without heaven, he is forced to vindicate his life by the manner of his death.

Giovanni's atheism does not severely damage his role as a sympathetic character, because it is not evident in the first scene of the play, while the Friar is at his most odious. Only after he has gained a certain amount of audience sympathy, does he begin to degenerate into atheism through pride and hedonism. Yet before the audience can

completely lose sympathy with him, he flouts his enemies and dies bravely. His atheism is part of Ford's deliberate effort to create mixed feelings in his viewers about the sinner and his sin.

Not only does Giovanni's atheism not damage him as much as it might, but also Platonism adds its prestige and glory to the lovers and their affair. The lovers use the traditional Elizabethan language of love which lends their affair the beauty of soul in love with soul and removes some of the flavor of dangerous sin. Giovanni says:

> ...If ever after-times should hear
> Of our fast-knit affections, though perhaps
> The laws of conscience and of civil use
> May justly blame us, yet when they but know
> Our loves, that love will wipe away that
> rigour
> Which would in other incests be abhorred.
> (V.v.175)

G. F. Sensabaugh has stated that Ford's Platonism is that of the Platonic coterie established by Queen Henrietta Maria.[1] He interprets the coterie as upholding a general principle that Platonic love excuses illicit carnal relations. He concludes that Ford follows their reasoning and advocates free love.

That there are resemblances between the Platonism of the court cult and that of John Ford is granted, but it

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[1] G. F. Sensabaugh, "John Ford and Platonic Love in the Court," SP, XXXVI (1939), 206-226; "John Ford--An Historical and Interpretative Study: With Special Reference to Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' and to the Court of Henrietta Maria" (diss. Chapel Hill, 1934); The Tragic Muse of John Ford (California, 1944).

is probable that 'Tis Pity She's A Whore was written too early to be influenced by the new court fashion. 'Tis Pity She's A Whore was published in 1633, along with two other Ford plays, The Broken Heart and Love's Sacrifice. Ford ended his period of collaboration with other dramatists in 1625, the same year Henrietta Maria came to England. The only early independent play of his for which we have a date is The Lover's Melancholy which was licensed to be played on November 24, 1628. In his dedication of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, Ford calls this play "these first fruits of my leisure" (p.96), which probably indicates that the play was written between 1625 and 1628, too early to be influenced by the court cult. When Henrietta first came to England, she met strong opposition to her French customs, both without and within the court. It is significant that no drama proceeded from those closest to the Queen until 1631. The next outright Platonic drama was written in the Winter of 1635-36 by Thomas Killigrew.[1] Thus, the influence of the coterie was felt very slowly. William Montague, the writer of the first court Platonic drama, was laughed at when his play appeared. Suckling, himself in court circles, wrote of him:

> Watt Montague now stood forth to his trial,
> And did not so much as suspect a denial;

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[1]Alfred Harbage, Cavalier Drama: An Historical and Critical Supplement to the Study of the Elizabethan and Restoration Stage (New York, 1936), p. 104.

But witty Apollo asked him first of all,
If he understood his own pastoral.[1]

Henrietta's French ideas of Platonism and preciosite found expression in a new court drama, based on pastoral romances. The first full-fledged drama of this type was Montague's Shepherd's Paradise, performed at Whitehall in 1633 and published in 1659.[2] These plays had slight characterization, an interminable, incredible plot and myriad love debates during which the action would stop while two characters discussed the pros and cons of fantastic love situations in equally exaggerated language. There was a special group of writers, frequenters of the court, who produced these dramas as an avocation. William Davenant, who wrote a masque of love at the Queen's request, immediately wrote a satire, The Platonic Lovers, for production on the popular stage, where the court Platonism was an occasion for laughter.

'Tis Pity She's A Whore does not resemble the court plays inspired by the circle around the Queen. Ford's is a tragedy, not a pastoral with a happy ending. His characters are fully developed, not romantic types with little to distinguish one from the other. The Platonic principles

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[1]Quoted in Harbage, p. 95. Suckling did not write the first of his own Platonic pastorals until 1637.

[2]Harbage, p. 264.

are articulated in the course of character development. They serve a dramatic purpose in the play, rather than existing for their own sake. They are not mere mouthings, but part of the motivation of the play. They serve to glorify the love of Giovanni and Annabella and to explain partially Giovanni's reasoning process. The action does not stop for a debate on Platonic love. Rather this debate serves as part of the naturally antagonistic situation which exists between the Friar and Giovanni. Moreover, this play has none of the impossibilities of plot which occur in the court drama of this time, such as lost heirs, lovers in disguise and kidnap by pirate bands. Also, Ford employs the comic sub-plot and, no matter how unfortunate his attempt at comedy may be, his use of it separates his play from the humorless dramas of the court playwrights.

Ford was writing for the popular stage and the precieuse principles of the Platonic coterie had no place there, except, as already stated, as objects of satire. The "Court Platonick" was a figure of fun in Caroline popular literature. He was most frequently characterized as a blackguard who mouthed Platonism to disguise his lust, for the Platonic coterie emphasized purity. The plays based on it did not condone illicit carnal relations. In fact, it put severe restrictions on the licit ones. Lovers exchanged kisses as the extent of their physical relations. Sensabaugh believes

the contrary--that the love affairs in plays inspired by the coterie were consummated and that conventional morality presented no barrier to this. For proof, however, he uses such plays as Davenant's Platonic Lovers, an obvious spoof on court practices, and Suckling's Aglaura, which shows characters wishing for adultery or incest, but never practicing them.

The older Elizabethan Platonism, however, while not actively advocating sexual relations according to a formal code, admitted them and it is to this tradition that Ford subscribes. Giovanni worships beauty in his sister, but does not abstract this beauty and appreciate it in its essence in the Platonic spirit of Castiglione's Il Libro del Cortegiano and Spenser's "Hymne in Honour of Beautie." His appreciation of beauty is the Platonic ideal as strained through Petrarch and preserved in Elizabethan sonnets, such as those of Sir Philip Sidney. Giovanni's statement that the gods would worship Annabella's beauty is an echo of Astrophel's plea to the personification Virtue in Sonnet IV of Astrophel and Stella that

> ...my heart such one shall show to thee,
> That shrines in flesh so true a deity,
> That, Virtue, thou thyself shalt be in love.[1]

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[1]Sir Philip Sidney, "Astrophel and Stella," Silver Poets of the Sixteenth Century, ed. Gerald Bullett (New York, 1947) Sonnet IV, p. 174.

Giovanni is also a believer in the Platonic doctrine of the unity of souls. He and Annabella will be "One soul, one flesh, one heart, one all..."(I.i.100). They have "a double soul" (I.iii.110). This idea is also found in Sidney who speaks of a kiss "which souls, even souls, together ties/ By links of love..." (LXXXI, p. 203).

Both Astrophel and Giovanni, however, concentrate more on the physical attractions of their mistresses than on their spiritual beauty. Giovanni, in the Petrarchan tradition, refers to Annabella's eyes as stars or jewels, her complexion as lilies and roses, her hair as threads of gold and her breath as perfume. The object of both Giovanni and Astrophel is not to abstract beauty from these women for purposes of contemplation, but to enjoy them physically. The argument between virtue and passion, so fully developed in Astrophel and Stella, is seen also in Annabella and her brother. Annabella tells Giovanni that she has loved him for a great while, but that virtue has prevented her from ever confessing it. Giovanni also fights his illicit desires until they overpower him.

Another Platonic belief that Giovanni shares with the Elizabethan writers is that a beautiful body is but the reflection of a virtuous soul.

> ...the frame
> And composition of the mind doth follow
> The frame and composition of the body:
> So, where the body's furniture is beauty,
> The mind's must needs be virtue....(II.v.128)

Ford, later, has Annabella repudiate this doctrine in the practical light of the catastrophe that overtakes her and her brother. She laments:

> Beauty that clothes the outside of the face
> Is cursed if it be not clothed with grace.
> (V.i.165)

Ford's Platonism is Elizabethan and, therefore, cannot be used as a proof that he wrote 'Tis Pity She's A Whore to advocate a free love ethic. The Platonism is included in the play to add splendor to the incestuous love affair.

Another extenuating circumstance of the sin of Giovanni and Annabella is the presence of fate. They do not choose to love one another, they are chosen. Ford inherited this dramatic device from Greek drama through his predecessors in the Renaissance theater. As a mere device, it does not deny the other theme of the play--that of Christianity.[1]

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[1] In fact, in two senses, fate is tied up closely with Christianity in this play. Overpowering love causes Giovanni to sin. As a result of this sin, he is doomed to punishment. The Friar tell him:

> Thou art a man remarked to taste a mischief.
> Look for't; though it come late, it will
> come sure.... (II.v.128)

Thus, the fated catastrophe is also a punishment for sin. The close alliance of fate and Christianity can also be seen in the Hippolita plot. As a result of his sins with regard to her, Hippolita curses Soranzo's marriage to Annabella,

> Take here my curse amongst you; may thy bed
> Of marriage be a rack unto thy heart....
> (IV,i.154)

The curse becomes the fate of Soranzo and, at the same time, a punishment for his sin.

At the end of Act I, Scene i, Giovanni accedes to the Friar's request that he pray for heavenly guidance in his dilemma. He ends with the ominous words:

> All this I'll do, to free me from the rod
> Of vengeance; else I'll swear my fate's my
> god. (I.i.102)

When Giovanni realizes that there is no deliverance from his love for his sister, he laments:

> Lost! am lost! my fates have doomed my death:
> ...'Tis not, I know,
> My lust, but 'tis my fate that leads me on.
> (I.iii.107)

Annabella, when she realizes that she and Giovanni are approaching catastrophe, wishes that her brother had "been less subject to those stars/That luckless reigned" (V.i.165) at her birth. She and Giovanni are star-crossed lovers. In the heat and triumph of requited love, Giovanni thinks that he has mastered fate and is directing the course of events, but the final disaster shows that a malignant fate masters him.

Sensabaugh says that this control of the lovers by fate is a borrowing from the Platonic coterie, but the idea of fate embodied in the play is difficult to attribute to one source. Fate as a force in drama originated with the Greeks. The gods took volition from the characters and forced them to certain actions. For instance, in the Oresteia, Apollo sent Orestes to kill Clytaemnestra and then left him to act out the punishment. The belief in love as an irresistible force

impervious to reason also has its roots in classical antiquity. Eros, the Greek god of love, is the personification of love as an inescapeable fate. He singled out a victim, usually at random, shot him with one of his arrows and the hapless mortal had no choice but to love. Cupid and various love charms and philtres were used to express this idea in the Renaissance. Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream has, as its main theme, love directed by outside forces. Thus, Ford is merely continuing the tradition of employing fate as a dramatic device.

Another circumstance which shows the lovers to be sympathetic characters is that they act out their tragedy against a background of scoundrels. Vasquez is the typical "Machiavellian" villain, for whom no sympathy is ever elicited in Renaissance drama. He ingratiates himself with Hippolita in order to ruin her, arranges the murderous banquet at Soranzo's house, tricks Putana and causes her eyes to be put out and has the Banditti murder Giovanni. The only factor that saves him is his devotion to his master, in whose service he commits all these wrongs. The Cardinal forgives him at the close of the play and banishes him for his own safety and not as a punishment for crime. The Cardinal's forgiveness is suspect as a criterion for judging right and wrong, however, for he seems to be in the habit of pardoning murderers for other than moral considerations. He forgives Vasquez because he did wrong, not

for himself, but for his master.

The Cardinal, himself, is a villain, as most Italian Cardinals were in Renaissance drama. He haughtily arranges destinies and deals out sporadic justice subject to favoritism. He prevents the punishment of his aide Grimaldi for the murder of Bergetto by taking him under his protection and berates Donado and Florio for coming to him for justice against the murderer. Donado and Florio, the only two thoroughly good and responsible men in the drama, pass judgment on the Cardinal's action.

> Don. Is this a churchman's voice? dwells
> justice here?
> Flo. Justice is fled to Heaven, and comes
> no nearer....
> Come, come, Donado, there's no help in this,
> When Cardinals think murder's not amiss.
> Great men may do their wills, we must obey;
> But Heaven will judge them for't another day.
> (III.ix.150)

Grimaldi is also a villain and a coward into the bargain. He is bested by Vasquez in a duel and resolves to murder Soranzo in the dark, because he cannot win in fair swordplay. After his mistaken murder of Bergetto, he scurries for the Cardinal's protection and so passes out of the play.

Richardetto, a thoroughly unconvincing character in many instances, commits the sin of revenge, giving Grimaldi poison to tip his sword in the murder of Soranzo. Since Ford does not approve of this method of redressing wrongs, this revenge attempt, like all others in the play, back-

fires. It foils Richardetto's attempt to marry his niece to the rich Bergetto. His employment of his niece, Philotis, is unscrupulous and he sends her to a convent when she is of no more use to him.

Hippolita is another unattractive character. Her affair with Soranzo is never painted in a sympathetic light. She is called lustful because she is not selfless in her love as is Annabella. In the throes of her love for Soranzo, she tries to arrange her husband's death and when her lover repudiates her, she plots a horrible revenge.

Soranzo himself is an outright scoundrel who commits adultery with Hippolita, persuades her to send her husband to his death and then abandons her. This episode with Hippolita is included to make us see Soranzo as a villain. He is an unworthy rival for Annabella's love as are the fool, Bergetto, and Grimaldi, the assassin. He so alienates our sympathy by his treatment of Hippolita that we feel no compassion for him when he discovers Annabella's infidelity. Moreover, the savagery of his treatment of his wife confirms us in our alienation. His completely unsympathetic role allows the audience to rejoice in Giovanni's thwarting of his rival's revenge plans and in his moral victory at seeing him expire first.

The death of Giovanni and Annabella does not prove that their love was wrong, for, of all the evil characters,

only two are punished by death. Death descends upon the undeserving Florio and Bergetto and upon Putana, whose only crime was her crudity. Vasquez, the Cardinal, Grimaldi and Richardetto go free at the close of the play. The atmosphere of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore resembles that of Webster's grim world where the good are punished for being and catastrophe is no respecter of merit.

For all these reasons, despite their sin, Annabella and Giovanni are more attractive than most of the characters in the play. Their love affair, which is both sinful and glorious, is acted out against a background of villainy and folly which throws into bold relief their youthful ardor and idealism. They are capable of a refinement of feeling which contrasts sharply with the lust and savagery of those who surround them. Their love is Platonic and rhapsodic, presented in a language which characterized the glorious love affairs of Renaissance literature. Furthermore, the lovers are star-crossed victims of a malignant fate. Finally, Giovanni's atheism is muted as an antagonistic element because its chief opponent, Friar Bonaventura, embodies a superstitious and morally corrupt type of religion which, in Ford's day, was a stereotype of Italian Catholicism. Through these circumstances, Ford creates sympathy for his sinners as human beings.

Yet he never loses sight of the fact that his human beings are sinners. The traditional Christian view of

incest as a foul sin is well represented. The official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Friar and the Cardinal, although they are of doubtful moral character themselves, do mouth the proper reactions to incest. Although it loses much of its moral force because it is uttered by the Cardinal, the verdict on Annabella which ends the play is:

> Of one so young, so rich in nature's store,
> Who could not say, 'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE?
> (V.vi.181)

To make this statement the title of the play, however, is an ironic comment on the opposing points of view.

Although she tries to delude herself initially, Annabella is aware that she and Giovanni are flouting heaven and jeopardizing their salvation. Her sense of sin prevents her from expressing her love for Giovanni until he unexpectedly confesses that he loves her. At this declaration, she exclaims:

> Forbid it, my just fears!
> If this be true, 'twere fitter I were dead.
> (I.iii.109)

She is constantly troubled by the shame of the act, but her love is stronger than her regard for convention.

> ...O, how these stol'n contents
> Would paint a modest crimson on my cheeks,
> Had any but my heart's delight prevailed!
> (II.i.115)

When the Friar paints the tortures of hell for her, she repents under the strain of her illicit pregnancy and the horrors he depicts. She knows she has done wrong. After

her marriage to Soranzo, however, she falls prey to her love for Giovanni again and adds adultery to her sin of incest. When she realizes that she has been discovered, she repents again and, this time, calls her love lust. She has never denied her Christianity under the stress of sin, as Giovanni has done, and she falls back easily into the traditional moral view.

> My conscience now stands up against my lust
> With depositions charactered in guilt,
> And tells me I am lost.... (V.i.165)

At her death, she cries to God:

> Forgive him, Heaven--and me my sins! Farewell,
> Brother unkind, unkind--Mercy, great Heaven!
> (V.iv.176)

Annabella lives, commits her sins, repents and dies in the Church. Despite the fact that she temporarily succumbs to Giovanni's love, she never lets the audience forget the moral view of incest.

The arrogance that develops in Giovanni as a result of his success at sinning without punishment, however, decreases the audience sympathy. His behavior is in accordance with the Christian view of the blind pride of the sinner. It is a psychological as well as an eternal verity. His atheistic statements seem to be uttered as schoolboy efforts to shock, and his confession that his pleasure in Annabella has not been diminished by her marriage shows his coarsening through sin. He is an example of the old Christian adage that "pride goeth before the fall" and

vindicates the Christian view in this respect. His unjust suspicions of Annabella's motives for repentance do not flatter him. His sin starts to bring about his moral ruin before death cuts the process short.

Putana serves to emphasize both the vileness of incest and the personal beauty of the two sinners. Her innuendoes and crude opinions of incest bring out all its ugliness.

> ...what though he be your brother? your brother's a man, I hope; and I say still, if a young wench feel the fit upon her, let her take any body, father or brother, all is one. (II.i.116-117)

Yet her pragmatic blindness to the moral implications of the situation serves to show up the delicacy and moral awareness of the two sinners.

Moreover, the fact that Annabella and Giovanni's affair brings about the death of Florio condemns it as a wrong in the world of human values. When Florio dies of grief at the sins of his children, these children are to blame and thus they lose some of the audience's sympathy. Furthermore, Florio, as one of the two morally competent characters in the play, consider incest foul, thus voicing what could be considered the normal and responsible moral view.

If the play is seen in this light, human values and necessities versus those of religion, Ford's view of incest is no longer puzzling. He does not think that love is an excuse for sin. Rather, it is an explanation of it,

He does not approve of incest, for he allows it to be seen in a vile light. Neither does he unequivocally disapprove of the people who commit it. His tragedy is set in this world, not the next, and in this one, there are no final answers.

Basically, Ford is presenting a moral situation for purposes of character revelation. Incest is not advocated here, because the author is not primarily concerned with it. It is his tool, his dramatic situation, out of which he constructs his drama.

CHAPTER III

THE BROKEN HEART

The Broken Heart presents another problem in Ford's moral point of view, though not so great a one as that in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore. Critics who argue that Ford was preaching disregard of conventional morality claim that he condones adultery in this play. Not only does he not condone it, he condemns it, but he condemns it for reasons which have more to do with human values than with divine commands.

Ford states in the prologue to The Broken Heart that

> What may be here thought Fiction, when time's youth
> Wanted some riper years, was known a Truth....[1]

This statement has sent scholars scurrying through Renaissance history looking for the scandal upon which Ford based his play. Stuart Sherman sees a parallel in the situation underlying Sidney's Astrophel and Stella.[2] It

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[1]John Ford, "The Broken Heart," John Ford, ed. Havelock Ellis (London), p. 187.

[2]Stuart P. Sherman, "Stella and 'The Broken Heart,'" PMLA, XXIV (1909), 275.

is true that Ford had already defended Lady Rich's divorce and second marriage in his Fames Memoriall, and so he might have defended her real or supposed affair with Sir Philip Sidney. But the story line of The Broken Heart actually has few parallels with the story of Penelope Devereux and many differences from it. Bassanes, in his fool's jealousy, is no characterization of Lord Rich and Orgilus' impatience and plots for revenge make him the opposite of the meek Astrophel. H. J. Oliver claims that Penthea's actions recall Stella's treatment of Astrophel, but this is not true.[1] The picture of the coy game that one pieces together from Sidney's sonnets is very different from the deathly serious battle of wills in Ford's play. Astrophel tries to win Stella's love; she almost yields to him, allows him to kiss her, but then withdraws. In Ford's play, Penthea and Orgilus are already in love and have acknowledged this fact to each other. Penthea never allows Orgilus to think that she will yield to his pleading. In fact, she will not even suffer him to touch her. One could agree that the play is a highly romantic version of Sidney's story, but the great number of differences make even this interpretation unlikely. It could be the dramatization of a true story that Ford had heard and which has since been lost to history, or it could

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[1] H. J. Oliver, The Problem of John Ford (Melbourne University, 1955), p. 60.

be an apocryphal Spartan tale which was current at his time. Since any theory of the origin of the play is mere conjecture without more external proof, the Astrophel and Stella theory can not be used to support the idea that Ford wrote the play to excuse adultery.

Moreover, the play cannot be considered a drama of love pitted against conventional morality, for the truth of the play demands that it be Ithocles and not convention which thwarts the lovers, because he suffers for the deed through the agencies of his own conscience, his sister and Orgilus. He is tortured by the memory of his treachery and Penthea increases his agony by upbraiding him when he asks her for forgiveness. Her madness and subsequent death are direct results of his act and he realizes this and suffers. Finally, Orgilus kills him to revenge Penthea's unhappy life. Ithocles youthful pride is the reason that Orgilus and Penthea were never united. Certainly, to marry women for money was a convention, but Ithocles' father, before his death, was not going to follow this practice with regard to Penthea. He was going to allow her to marry Orgilus, whom she loved. Never to forget a wrong was characteristic of young ignorance and passion and the play indicates that nursing a grudge did not have much currency among the mature, for everyone disapproves of Ithocles' action, including the older and wiser Ithocles, himself. He also broke a strong conven-

tion in flouting his father's wishes after his death. This is sacrilege to the noble Spartans of Ford's drama. When Ithocles, in his remorse, expresses to Penthea the wish that he had died at birth, she retorts:

> You had been happy:
> When had you never known that sin of life
> Which blots all following glories with a vengeance,
> For forfeiting the last will of the dead,
> From whom you had your being. (III.ii.227)

All the conventions in the play support the love of Orgilus and Penthea, but Ithocles thwarts them all and forces her to marry Bassanes.

Once married to the old man, Penthea considers herself "a faith-breaker,/A spotted whore..." (III.ii.228). G. F. Sensabaugh says that this proves her to be trapped by convention, that she considers herself a whore because she remains faithful to Bassanes.[1] Penthea, however, has no thought of violating her marriage vows. Rather, as Oliver maintains, she considers herself a strumpet because, while loving Orgilus, she allowed her body to be sold to Bassanes.[2] She is a whore whose favors have been sold to the highest bidder.

She also says that she "lives/In known adultery with Bassanes..." (III.ii.228). By this she means that she

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[1] G. F. Sensabaugh, "John Ford and Elizabethan Tragedy," PQ, XX (1941).

[2] Oliver, p. 66.

has exchanged sacred vows of love with Orgilus and has broken them to marry Bassanes. In fact, she calls herself "wife to Orgilus." She is his wife in that she was bethrothed to him, but she is actually wife to Bassanes and the fact that she sleeps with him shows that she knows where her duty lies. The vows she made to Bassanes, however, are binding but not sacred. Her regard for morality prevents her from leaving Bassanes.

It is her honor, however, which prevents her from going to Orgilus. Because she has broken faith with Orgilus, she will not give herself to him.

> The virgin-dowry which my birth bestowed
> Is ravished by another; my true love
> Abhors to think that Orgilus deserved
> No better favours than a second bed.(II.iii.220)

Penthea is dedicated to the preservation of her honor. Her name has already been injured, though not through her own volition, by her breaking faith with Orgilus. She will not injure it further by being seen with him and having it surmised that she is committing adultery. When Orgilus makes himself known to her in the garden, she exclaims:

> Rash man! thou lay'st
> A blemish on mine honour, with the hazard
> Of thy too-desperate life.... (II.iii.219)

She loves Orgilus and, since she is in all truth his wife, she should give herself to him, but if she cannot do this proudly and exhibit their relationship to the world with pride, she will remain in her present state. Her honor demands this.

Honor is the motivating force of the drama; all the characters are preoccupied with it. They are Spartan stoics dedicated to acting with honor in all situations. They must show a brave exterior to the world and bear their sufferings silently. This is the chief reason for Calantha's dancing scene, which is purported to be theatrically effective, but which actually seems silly divorced from the Spartan ethic, for she accomplishes nothing but a demonstration of superhuman restraint in ignoring the news of the deaths of Penthea, Ithocles and her father, in order to complete a dance. As seen in the perspective of the play's emphasis on honor, however, this scene has a reason for being. Even Bassanes, so ridiculous and loquacious at the outset, learns, through his trials and the example of others, to act with dignity and honor. For Penthea, honor is not only the guiding force of her actions, but also, as such, the cause of her suffering.

Orgilus is the only character in the play who advocates adultery. His pleadings to Penthea in the garden are sometimes interpreted as the voice of Ford, claiming that the separated lovers have a physical right to each other. In view of the play's emphasis on stoic honor, however, Orgilus is one of the least likely candidates to represent Ford's personal views. Orgilus loses honorable standing steadily as the play progresses. His sulking in the garden is sinister and sometimes comic, as in his asides during the

love scene of his sister Euphranea and Prophilus.

> Pro. ...Bright Euphranea,
> Should I repeat old vows, or study new,
> For purchase of belief to my desires,--
> Org. (Aside) Desires!
> Pro. My service, my integrity,--
> Org. (Aside) That's better.
> .....
> Euph. What can you look for,
> In answer to your noble protestations,
> From an unskilful maid, but language suited
> To a divided mind?
> Org. (Aside) Hold out, Euphranea! (I.iii.201)

He proffers to Penthea what she calls a dishonorable love and plans to revenge himself on Ithocles after the man has realized his fault, admitted it and suffered for it. Moreover, he murders Ithocles treacherously. Orgilus is a completely unsympathetic character as his victim faces death bravely. Ithocles, trapped in a rigged chair, says scornfully to his murderer:

> Thou look'st that I should whine and beg
> compassion,
> As loth to leave the vainness of my glories;
> A statelier resolution arms my confidence,
> To cozen thee of honour; neither could I
> With equal trial of unequal fortune
> By hazard of a duel; 'twere a bravery
> Too mighty for a slave intending murder.
> (IV.iv.266)

Not even his own Spartan death can save Orgilus' shattered image. His views on adultery are discredited in the disintegration of his character.

Penthea, not Orgilus, is the moral center of this play and she does not approve of adultery. No matter what the

reasons for her disapproval (and she does not give reasons based on Christian morality because she is an ancient Greek), her view is the honorable one in the play. Thus, it cannot be said that The Broken Heart supports adultery.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE'S SACRIFICE

Of the three plays studied, only Love's Sacrifice has a spurious morality. Its views of what constitutes a violation of marital vows are rather lenient. Fernando and Bianca, who fall in love after Bianca's marriage to the Duke of Pavia and confess their love for one another amid much kissing, are finally vindicated as chaste and good, while Bianca's vengeful husband redeems his name only by a remorseful suicide at their tomb. Critics are justified in questioning the morality of this play.

It seems, from the construction of the play, that Ford intended to present two glorious lovers with whom the audience would have complete sympathy. He gives Bianca an old husband whom she cannot love, pictures her as struggling heroically with her passion for his friend, makes the lovers basically good and presents a series of base and lustful love affairs as foils for theirs. Furthermore, the lovers employ Platonic convention and the characters who are the cause of their apprehension and punishment are evil themselves.

When the Duke upbraids Bianca for her infidelity, she retorts:

> What ails you?
> Can you imagine, sir, the name of Duke
> Could make a crooked leg, a scambling foot,
> A tolerable face, a wearish hand,
> A bloodless lip, or such an untrimmed beard
> As yours, fit for a lady's pleasure? no:
> I wonder you could think 'twere possible,
> When I had once but looked on your Fernando,
> I ever could love you again....[1]

Since she is yoked to an old husband who continually reminds her how he raised her from poverty to her present position, she may seek a younger and handsomer substitute. Bianca goes further to say that the Duke married her for her beauty and for the same reason, she loves Fernando.

The lovers themselves are paragons of virtue and kindness and enjoy the good opinion of all, both before and after their affair is discovered. The Duke himself says at the beginning of the play, with what turns out to be tragic irony:

> I am a monarch of felicity,
> Proud in a pair of jewels, rich and beautiful,--
> A perfect friend, a wife above compare.
> (I.i.292)

That they are compassionate creatures is proved by their attempt to get Roseilli reinstated at court, at the risk of incurring the Duke's displeasure themselves.

Bianca is further redeemed by her initial struggle to control her love for Fernando. Four times she resists his pleading until it becomes too much to bear. When she decides

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[1]John Ford, "Love's Sacrifice," John Ford, ed. Havelock Ellis (London), Act V, Scene i, p. 362.

to go to his bed, she resolves to kill herself in the morning rather than live a disgrace to the Duke's name. It is only later in the play that her desire to commit adultery begins to overcome her reason. Then she asks Fernando:

> Why shouldst thou not be mine? why should
> the laws,
> The iron laws of ceremony, bar
> Mutual embraces? what's a vow? a vow?
> Can there be sin in unity? (V.i.359)

But she knows that in some unity, there is sin. The "iron laws" effectually bar her from folly, for she catches herself here and says that, had she no conscience, she could commit adultery. Also, she protects Fernando from the Duke's wrath at the risk of her own life by taking all the blame for the affair, when actually the larger share of the blame should fall to her lover.

The Platonism of the lovers is also intended as a glorifying element. The exchange of the "chaste" kisses of Platonic love is all the corporeal satisfaction that they are allowed. Platonic love admits no jealousy and makes Fernando's love for Bianca greater than the Duke's, for the Duke murders her in jealousy.

The characters who condemn the lovers on moral grounds are the play's chief villains, the Duke's sister Fiormonda and D'Avolos, a court climber. Fiormonda wants Fernando and Bianca to be found and punished because Fernando has spurned her offers of love. Also, one suspects, from her attitude to Bianca when they are together on the stage, that Fiormonda

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resents her sister-in-law's beauty and power in the court in view of her humble origins. D'Avolos serves Fiormonda in this revenge in order to advance himself at court. Also, he lies to bring about the punishment of the sinners, telling Fiormonda and the Duke that he has seen Fernando and Bianca "begetting an heir to the dukedom..." (IV.i.347), when, in truth, they never do more than kiss one another. Fiormonda and D'Avolos are completely unsympathetic villains whose machinations against the unsuspecting Fernando and Bianca are intended to switch sympathy to the lovers.

The inclusion in the play of other, less worthy lovers is intended to heighten the purity of Fernando and Bianca. As in the other two dramas studied, the sub-plots here are connected in theme with the main one. The base lust of Ferentes and his three mistresses allows Fernando and Bianca to show to advantage. Fiormonda's bold wooing of Fernando is called lust by him, chiefly because she is a widow and she attempts to blacken Bianca's name in order to win him, calling her "that Circe" and a "sorceress." Lust produces evil effects in the one who possesses it and is thus distinguished from love. Ferentes lies to his three mistresses, taking advantage of their credulity. They become murderesses to avenge themselves. Fiormonda provokes the murder of Bianca. Fernando and Bianca, on the other hand, remain "chaste" and good.

In spite of all these factors, the lovers never completely gain the sympathy of the audience. One of the chief reasons for this is the characterization of the Duke. In 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, the wronged husband was a villain who deserved no sympathy in his plight. In Love's Sacrifice, however, he is a kind old man who married a young woman in good faith, only to be plunged into a situation with which he cannot cope. For this reason, Annabella is magnificent in the scene where she taunts Soranzo with her love for Giovanni and dares him to kill her, while Bianca seems too cruel in the analogous scene with her husband. Duke Caraffa does not deserve this harsh treatment; consequently, there is too much of a division of sympathy in this scene. Though both the Duke and Soranzo seek vengeance for the infidelity of their wives, Caraffa has to be pushed by D'Avolos and Fiormonda to kill Bianca and even then he quails, not wishing to harm someone he loves. Soranzo, on the other hand, prepares a banquet so that all can witness his horrible revenge on Annabella. The pathos in the portrait of the old Duke makes the grandiose speeches of the lovers seem a bit callow and selfish.

Also, the Platonism of the lovers does more to injure their cause than it does to strengthen it. Fernando is essentially dishonest when he tells the Duke that he has not

> ...tasted
> More of her love than what without control
> Or blame a brother from a sister might....
> (V.ii.367)

He and Bianca do not love one another as a brother and a sister do and their longing for sexual relations prevents their kisses from being "chaste." Their Platonic code, which is intended to glorify their love, succeeds only in making it shabby.

What injures the lovers and their play more than any other factor, however, is the odd morality it contains. Adultery, in its strict definition as sexual intercourse outside of marriage, is called dishonorable. Yet it is not considered dishonorable for a man to protest his love to a friend's wife and kiss her repeatedly, nor for the woman to reciprocate. It is implied that had the Duke known that all his young wife and his friend were doing was kissing and protesting their love for each other and their desire for sexual union, he would never have felt impelled to wreak revenge; he would have had no right to do so. He stabs Bianca because he does not believe that she did not wrong her "lawful bed." Though Fernando does admit that he "did exceed/In lawless courtship..." (V.i.367), he insists that he was free from "any actual folly." When he finally convinces the Duke that this is true, the old man refuses to kill him, again calling him "friend." At the end of the play, the lovers are vindicated in the opinion of all. The Duke approaches Bianca's tomb saying:

> ...Let not the touch
> Of this my impious hand profane the shrine

Of fairest purity, which hovers yet
About those blessed bones inhearsed within.
V.iii.371)

He wishes to be buried with his wife and his "unequalled friend." Adultery is punishable but infidelity that stops short of actual adultery is blameless.

Of the three plays, this is the only one with a point of view which could be called immoral. It contains a moral situation reminiscent of Beaumont and Fletcher, in which all the prurience and sensation is squeezed out of events and then wiped away in a glorious vindication. Fernando and Bianca love one another and violate good conduct in indulging in love talk and kissing. Their behavior is then glorified as the epitome of virtue. This play is unworthy of the John Ford who handled incest in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and the desire for adultery in The Broken Heart with such complete honesty. As Swinburne said, "the conception is essentially foul because it is essentially false; and in the sight of art nothing is so foul as falsehood."[1]

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[1] The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (London, 1926), II, 381-382.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Ford wrote at a time when sensational subjects were being portrayed in dramas for their shock value. Horror was an increasingly common element in the Jacobean and Caroline theater. Ford, too, includes horrible scenes in his plays, such as the carving out of Annabella's heart and the mechanical chair used as a death trap for Ithocles.

The sensational sins in his plays, however, were used to reveal personality and tragic greatness. Tragedy, since the Greeks, has dealt with the transgression of some code and the resulting catastrophe. Ford, in using these spectacular transgressions or the desire for them, was showing the effect of great passion on the sinner. The more sensational sins of his plays reveal great character in the grip of violent emotion. This is more true of the greatest of his plays, 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, than it is of his other two love tragedies. It was Ford's particular talent to reveal strong and overwhelming passing in a character, and when he mutes this passion to pathos, as in The Broken Heart or degrades it to ridiculousness, as in Love's Sacrifice, he loses part of his power and individual flavor.

In the light of his concern with the effect of passion on character, we must judge Ford's morality. 'Tis Pity She's A Whore does not disregard ordinary standards of morality by advocating incest. Rather, it demonstrates the horror and degradation this sin brings in its wake. Annabella and Giovanni are attractive inasmuch as they love selflessly and unattractive inasmuch as they sin. Ford is extremely realistic in demonstrating that it is not always hardened villains who commit crimes. He is dealing with a specific situation arising between two specified characters and in no sense can he be said to be advocating incest as a general principle. He doesn't support even the incest of Annabella and Giovanni; he merely uses the situation for its dramatic possibilities.

The Broken Heart is even more impervious to charges of immorality. Penthea is morally admirable in her resistance to adultery. Her Spartan code of honor is comparable to the Christian moral laws. The fact that sympathy is created for her in her thralldom to a foolish old husband whom she does not love is not immoral. It is another example of Ford's realism, for forced marriages were not based on love, nor did they always result in it. The dramatist certainly has the right to paint the situation as it is. Orgilus' opinion that he and Penthea have a right to commit adultery is discredited by his later treachery and, in no case, can he be considered Ford's mouthpiece.

When we arrive at Love's Sacrifice, however, we can defend Ford no longer. There is no startling immorality in this play, the treatment of the moral conflict is dishonest. In Love's Sacrifice, Ford seems to subscribe wholeheartedly to the view that infidelity is immoral only when it involves sexual intercourse, but permissible and even admirable when the characters flirt with danger through kisses, embraces and protestations of love. The fact that this love-making is gloriously exonerated at the outcome of the play runs counter to accepted morality. But what lends to the morality of the play the ring of falsehood is that these lovers, who feel anything but chastely toward one another, are held up to an almost hysterical admiration as miracles of chastity. It is an essentially weak play, a spurious and beclouded circumvention of truth.

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